



Toronto Student Transportation Group

Annual Report 2020-2021

General Managers Report

It is with pleasure that I provide this annual report on the activities of the Toronto Student Transportation Group over the past school year. This report summarizes the activities and plans that the transportation consortium has undertaken over the past school year. The summary of data, activities, challenges, and successes is reflective of the joint transportation unit that has been supplying transportation services to the Boards for over a decade.

The school year was like one that we have never seen before. With students working remotely for a portion of the year and buses running half full when students were in school to encourage physical distancing, we embarked on a new way of doing business. The tracking of covid cases on the buses and the communication between Toronto Public Health, the schools, School Board, and bus Operators threatened at times to fill a full day for transportation staff. The education of drivers to address their pandemic concerns and the personal protective equipment that was being delivered to bus companies for drivers and staff allowed us to maintain a sufficient number of drivers to deliver service for our students and families.

Almost every transportation task and decision were influenced by the pandemic. The workday for many in Transportation involved securing new equipment to ensure everyone could work remotely if needed. In fact, for most of the school year, a majority of staff members were working remotely in efforts to minimize contact within the office and thereby minimize any threat of spread to other members. Some of our bus operators were not as lucky as covid cases swept through some divisions making it difficult for them to support their drivers who were still on the road on a daily basis. We do want to acknowledge the splendid work of our drivers and bus companies who made sure that we maintained transportation services for our students and families.

This report highlights some of the issues, challenges, and successes that the Toronto Student Transportation Group has experienced over the past school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin Hodgkinson", followed by a horizontal line.

Kevin Hodgkinson
General Manager

Mission and Vision Statement

Mission Statement

Service: To facilitate the provision of safe, secure, and consistently on-time delivery of student transportation services for those students entrusted in our care.

Cost Effective: To provide adequate, equitable, and fair services to those members that actively look for the best means to achieve cost effective transportation solutions.

Accountable: To provide effective, efficient, and accountable solutions that meets the needs of our stakeholders.

Communications: To actively pursue initiatives that will maximize the level of service provided to our stakeholders.

Responsibility: To actively pursue economic, environmental, and social initiatives that will allow us to lead the way in meeting public demand.

Human Resources: To actively pursue programming and training that will assist staff in delivering a level of service that exceeds our shareholder's expectations.

Vision Statement

To provide and facilitate intermodal transportation solutions so that all school aged children can equally access education.



Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
History	5
A Look Back.....	6
A Return Home.....	6
Covid Start-Up.....	7
Remote Work.....	8
A Look Ahead	9
Technology Supervisor	9
Student Transportation Advisory Committee	10
Three Point Seat Belts	11
Student Transportation Services	12
Financial.....	12
Programming.....	15
Special Education.....	15
Operations	16
Level of Service	16
Operators	18
Fuel	19
Operator KPI.....	20
TSTG.....	21
Transportation Planning	22
Service Delivery	22
Safety.....	24
School Bus Safety Program.....	24
Accident Statistics.....	24
Incidents.....	25

INTRODUCTION

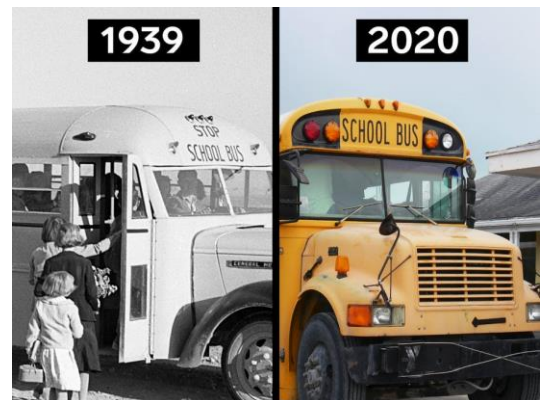
The Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG) is a consortium formed to manage and facilitate the student transportation services for the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) & Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The TSTG provides transportation services for approximately 50,000 students in more than eight hundred schools and centres throughout the City of Toronto. Seven different school bus operators in eleven divisions provide more than 1800 vehicles to provide transportation services for students with a budget of just over \$100,000,000.

The consortium is physically located at 2 Trethewey Dr with a staff of twenty-eight individuals responsible for the operation, planning, technology, and safety of transported students.

History

The TDSB & TCDSB have been sharing transportation services since 1995. Laidlaw Planning Services was originally hired to implement a computerized routing solution that optimized the TCDSB regular home to school fleet and integrate the TCDSB and North York School Boards special education routes. These two routing solutions removed over one hundred buses from the road and saved the Boards over \$3.2M in transportation expenditure. Over the next eight years, the former cities making up the current City of Toronto were systematically introduced into the combined routing solution removing an additional thirty-eight buses from the system.

In 1998 the key planning staff from Laidlaw was recruited to form the nucleus of shared transportation services provided by the Boards. The introduction of new staff was complemented by an introduction of an upgraded transportation planning management software from Education Logistics. With staff and technology in place, the Boards had the key component to managing and maintaining transportation services. Transportation staff from both Boards relocated in 2005 to the TDSB's Trethewey facility where the operations, planning, technology, and safety units work together to facilitate and deliver transportation services. In September of 2011, the two School Boards signed a membership agreement officially creating the 'Toronto Student Transportation Group'.



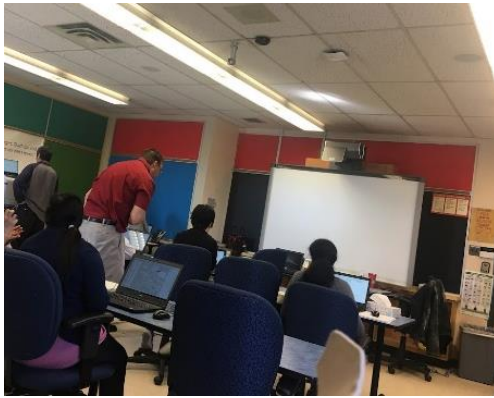
A Look Back

The 2020 -2021 school year provided the Toronto Student Transportation Group with several challenges that not only provided obstacles but also opportunities to understand and improve the way we do business.

A Return Home

We cannot start talking about 2020-2021 until we talk about our return home.

TSTG staff spent about nine months working out of our disaster recovery site located at the former Our Lady of Mount Carmel site located in the Finch and 404 area. Taking over three computer labs, Department staff began to create a new working space for themselves. Feeling like we were back in high school



working on long work desks staff adjusted to the new daily routine. IT Services were quick to help us get all technology up and running in the new location. We were also introduced to our new facility colleagues as several other program units were also working out of the same site.



Early in 2020, the Transportation office

at Trethewey was re-opened. Staff returned to find new paint and carpet along with new workstations and refurbished washrooms. With York Memorial still under construction a protected walkway was constructed to connect the back parking lot to the building for staff access. A return to normalcy was a positive influence for all staff who appreciated the proper work environment.



Covid Start-Up

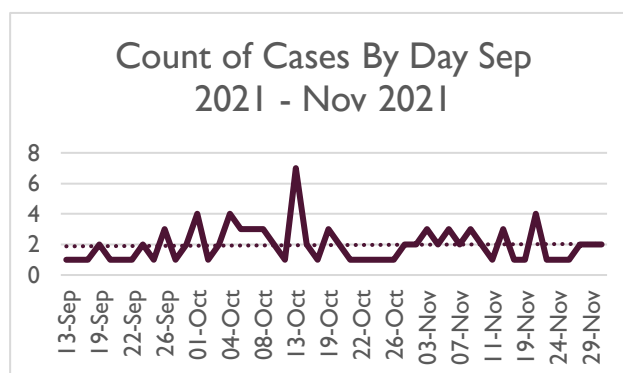
Planning began as normal for the 2020-2021 school year in the spring, but the summer required a plethora of practical options to be generated for consideration for September. Over forty different variations of options were developed in order to implement for September depending on how the pandemic was progressing. These models looked at various bus capacities, a review of eligible students, and the suspension of possible service. All these models were ranked from those with minimal risk to considerable risk depending upon the variable used. In the end it was the Provincial guidance that dictated the delivery of service to be implemented for September.

Risk Assessment for Transporting Students During Covid

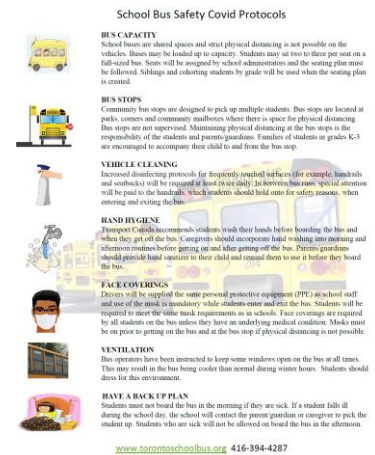
Question: How can you safely transport students?

Model	Service	Considerations	Impact	TCDSB - Full Size	TCDSB - Mini Bus	TCDSB - Total Capacity
1. Model 1	Cancel transportation. Service cannot be provided without risk to students or drivers.	Considerations: Take savings from transportation and hire or extend school staff to provide supervision at schools. Possibly recruit school bus drivers to provide supervision at schools.	Impact: 47047 (students without service)	TCDSB - 29170	TCDSB - 17877	
2. Model 2	Implement social distance policy on bus as best as possible - students in every other seat and staggered access from one another. No mini van or WC service. Maintain school centric routing so only students from same school on same bus to avoid cross contamination. Only one bus used per school with no doubling and no secondary group to use the bus.	Considerations: Students in harness, aides or nurses travelling with students could not be accommodated.	Impact: Reduced capacity - TCDSB - 24,709 TCDSB - 12,628 (students without service)	TCDSB - Full Size - 3088 Mini Bus - 1373 Total Capacity 4462	TCDSB - Full Size - 2588 Mini Bus - 9683 Total Capacity 3551	
3. Model 3	Same as Model 2 but introduce alternate week service.	Considerations: If multiple groups are required then 4 day week and alternate weeks to allow for natural decontamination over the 3 day weekend. Students in harness, aides or nurses travelling with students would not be accommodated.	Impact: Reduced capacity - TCDSB - 20248 TCDSB - 7375 (students without service)	TCDSB - Full Size - 6176 Mini Bus - 2748 Total Capacity (alternate week) 8924	TCDSB - Full Size - 5176 Mini Bus - 7326 Total Capacity (alternate week) 10502	
4. Model 4	Same as model 2 but introducing more tiers of bus service possible within time frame. Also introducing service for high needs and WC students with 1 bus per student.	Considerations: Multiple students using the same seat at different times. Possible use of full size buses to accommodate students with special needs or those other individuals using a mini bus.	Impact: Reduced Capacity - TCDSB - 21,620 TCDSB - 11,038 (students without service)	TCDSB - Full Size - 6176 Mini Bus - 1373 WC - 28 Mini Van - 8 Total Capacity - 7587	TCDSB - Full Size - 5176 Mini Bus - 3663 WC - 151 Mini Van - 69 Total Capacity - 7056	

As an added incentive to reduce the capacity on the school bus the Boards temporarily suspended the empty seat procedure to various degrees. The intent was to minimize the number of students on the bus to promote physical distancing as best as possible. With no limitation to the number of students on the bus, the number of students that decided to participate in remote learning along with the absence of empty seat students allowed some degree of spacing on some buses to start the school year. Covid cases on the school bus tended to reflect those in the schools and community as well. There was, however, no confirmation that there was any spread on the bus itself. When cases started to stretch the capacity at community hospitals the province moved the entire school system to online learning. In order to ensure that the transportation system was able to respond when called upon to resume service, carriers were provided a portion of their daily rate with direction to ensure that all drivers continued to be paid.



Since physical distancing is not always possible on the school bus a number of other covid protocols were put in place to ensure the safety of the students and driver. New covid video shorts were created to help students understand what was expected of them with the new rules on the school bus. First and foremost, similar to the school protocol, was that all students complete a health screening prior to getting on the bus which ensured they did not have any indicative symptoms. Once on the bus they would be met by signage reminding them to stay at home if they were sick, keeping apart as best as possible, washing their hands, and to continue to wear their masks. On the bus, the seat behind the driver was left empty to provide a safe space for them and windows were required to open partially to allow ventilation for all occupants. To counter physical transmission, bus operators were required to provide an accelerated cleaning schedule including between morning and afternoon runs, cleaning high touch surfaces such as handrails and seta tops between runs, and taking the bus out of circulation for 72 hours in the event a positive case was reported on the bus. If students became ill at school during the day, parents would be called to pick up the child to avoid transporting a suspected positive case on the school bus.

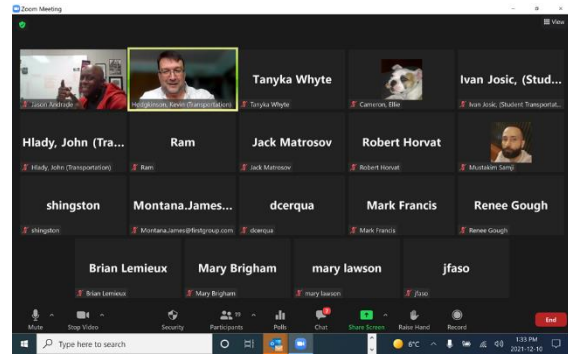


Remote Work



With the onset of the pandemic, a different way to perform our work was also required. In order to keep staff safe and maximize physical distancing the office was split into two groups where one group was in the office for one week while the second group worked remotely. Some office furniture was removed, and travel markers placed to help encourage the limiting of staff interaction in the office. Our experience at our disaster recovery site helped prepare transportation staff for a new way of doing business. In fact, the change of venue forced the department to start utilizing technologies that were current with today's best practices. Faxes and Paper application forms were replaced with email workflows and online requests that could be retrieved from anywhere.

It was not just transportation that had to transform business operations but our stakeholders as well. Video calls were a rarity prior to the pandemic. With the onset of remote work, it was more important than ever that we continue to be able to connect with our staff and stakeholders. Tools like Zoom, Skype, GoTo Meetings, Teams, WebEx were all put into service to ensure that communication did not lapse. In some regards, the use of remote meeting tools allowed more parties to participate in meetings and conferences helping to keep all staff and partners up to date on current issues.

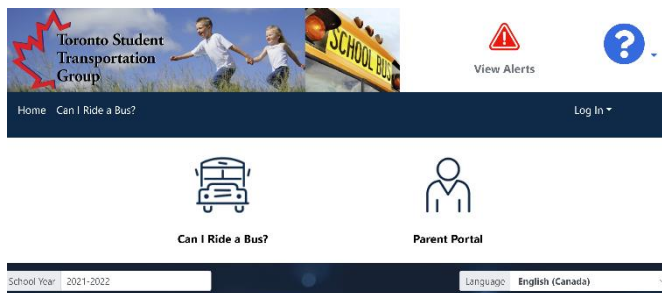


A Look Ahead

While successfully transporting over 50,000 students to and from school safely each and every day for another year we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities that the upcoming school years will hold for us.

Technology Supervisor

The Pandemic changed how business was performed in a number of diverse ways. The need to speed up the acquisition of a technology supervisor will be a high priority to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our stakeholders. Parents and schools see innovative technology out on the market and in their own personal cars and expect that same type of information and access to be available with the school bus fleet as well. Leveraging the current GPS technology on the buses will be a priority in order to provide parents and schools better information in regard to not only where the bus is but the confirmation that the student is on the bus or discharged at their bus stop location. To help streamline those services an MDT (mobile data terminal) will be investigated to not only help in vehicle substitution (so we can map the correct bus to the correct route) but to be able to push information to the driver as well. A substitute driver will get directions pushed to their



MDT and voice navigation can assist them in turn-by-turn instructions. Furthermore, new camera technology will also be reviewed, and the images can be streamed to the MDT for driver awareness as well.

Some of the modern technologies to be investigated are those that manufacturers are starting to equip school buses with. Items like crash avoidance technology and driver assist utilities will be reviewed as a means to improve the level of safety offered to our students and the general public. Covid-19 brought concerns around how to keep students and drivers safe on the school bus and recent technologies will be reviewed to ensure that we are better equipped to address any future pandemics.



Student Transportation Advisory Committee

The pandemic interrupted the regularly scheduled meetings for the newly formed Student Transportation Advisory Group. With a move to virtual participation we envision these meetings to resume next year. The virtual aspect may in some ways improve participation as the group is composed of individuals from all over the Province. The committee composition included TSTG Operation committee members but also School Principals and field Superintendents, Members from the Special Education committees, parents, and school bus operators and Associations. The participation by such a varied group allows for a diverse voice and set of perspectives that the



Toronto Student Transportation Group
Operation Policy
Manual



group can review and discuss. Members from outside of Toronto can also bring issues and solutions that have impacted other consortia for discussion with our committee group.

The group was in the middle of reviewing TSTG protocols when last we met so a continuation of that task will be presented when we meet next. These protocols impact how student transportation is delivered in Toronto so the community review of these protocols is

important to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our stakeholders. Once all protocols are reviewed, they will be brought forward to the TSTG Governance committee for approval.

Three Point Seat Belts

Starting in September of 2022 all school buses manufactured that require seat belts will be required to have three-point system put in place. Buses built prior to this date will be allowed to continue to use the lap belts that are currently in place in our minibuses. Seat belts are not required to be installed in school buses, but the Toronto Boards have made it a requirement for our minibuses. The large buses in Toronto are not required to have seat belts installed. Given their larger frame, the compartmentalization used on the bus, and other safety features that are included in the bus it was felt that the seat belts did not provide any further value for the occupants. The safety record for school buses would further support those claims that the school bus is one of the safest modes of travel to use today.

The three-point seat belts will be the same as those used in the family car. Students should be familiar with their use and how to secure themselves in the vehicle. The decision to equip the minibuses with seat belts focused on two aspects. With a smaller number of occupants would be easier for the driver to ensure students are buckled in properly. Secondly, the smaller vehicles do not have the same stability as large buses which increases their possibility of roll over in a significant impact.



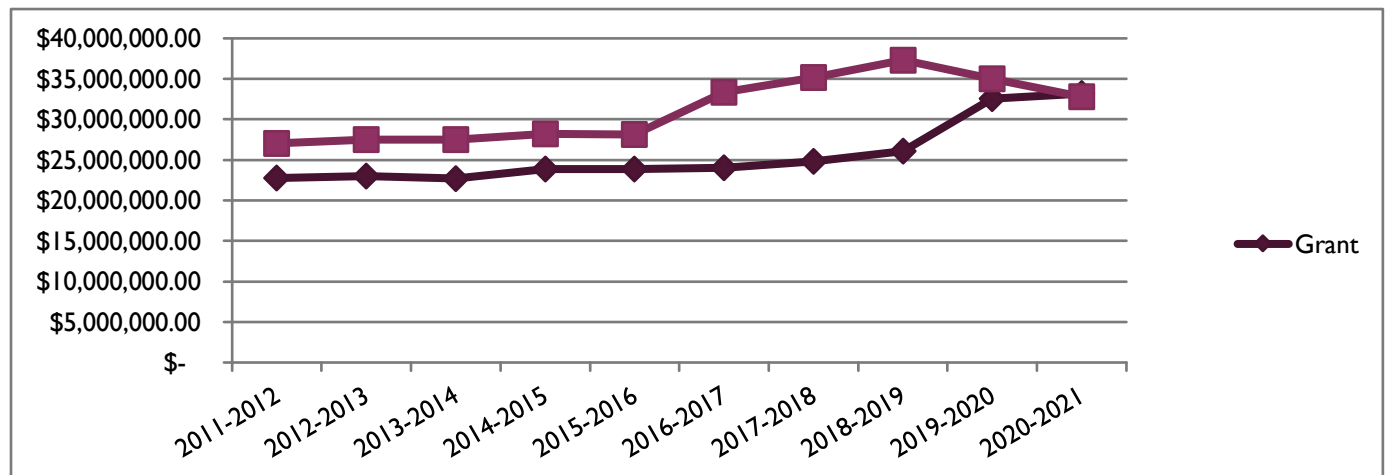
Student Transportation Services

Financial

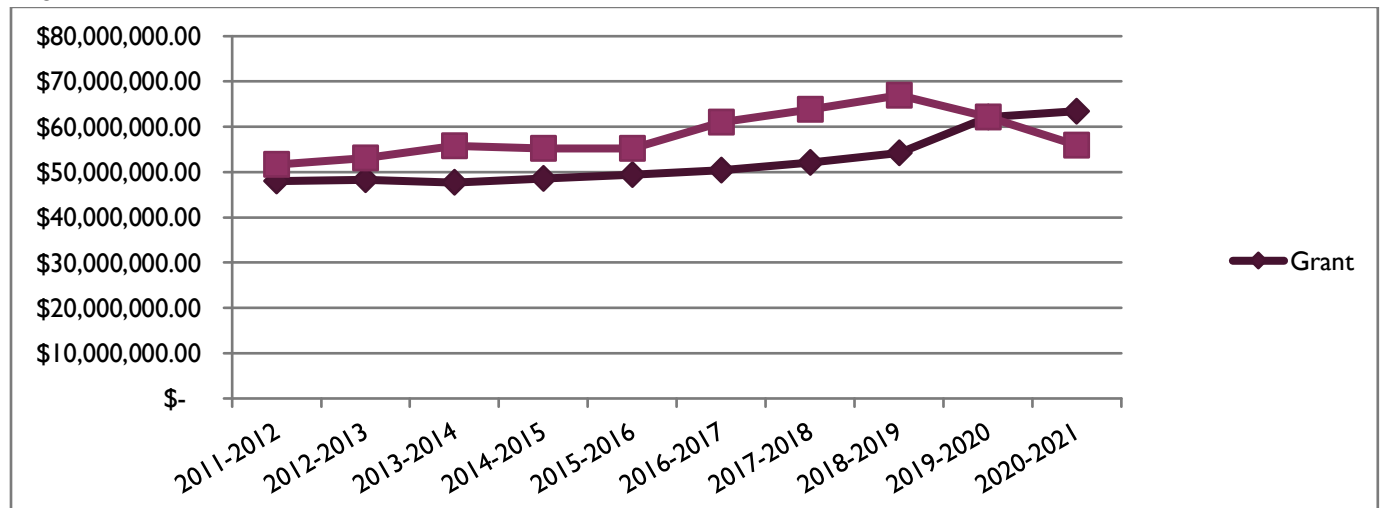
The Toronto Student Transportation Group was to spend about \$101M on transportation services for the TCDSB and TDSB for the 2020-2021 school year. With the onset of Covid-19 however, expenditure reached about \$89M. The Ministry of Education provided a transportation Grant in 2020-2021 of approximately \$33.1M for the TCDSB and \$63.4M for the TDSB. A breakdown of the transportation budget along with a historical summary of the Transportation Grant and Expenditure is displayed below:

1. Historical Transportation Grant vs. Expenditure

TCDSB

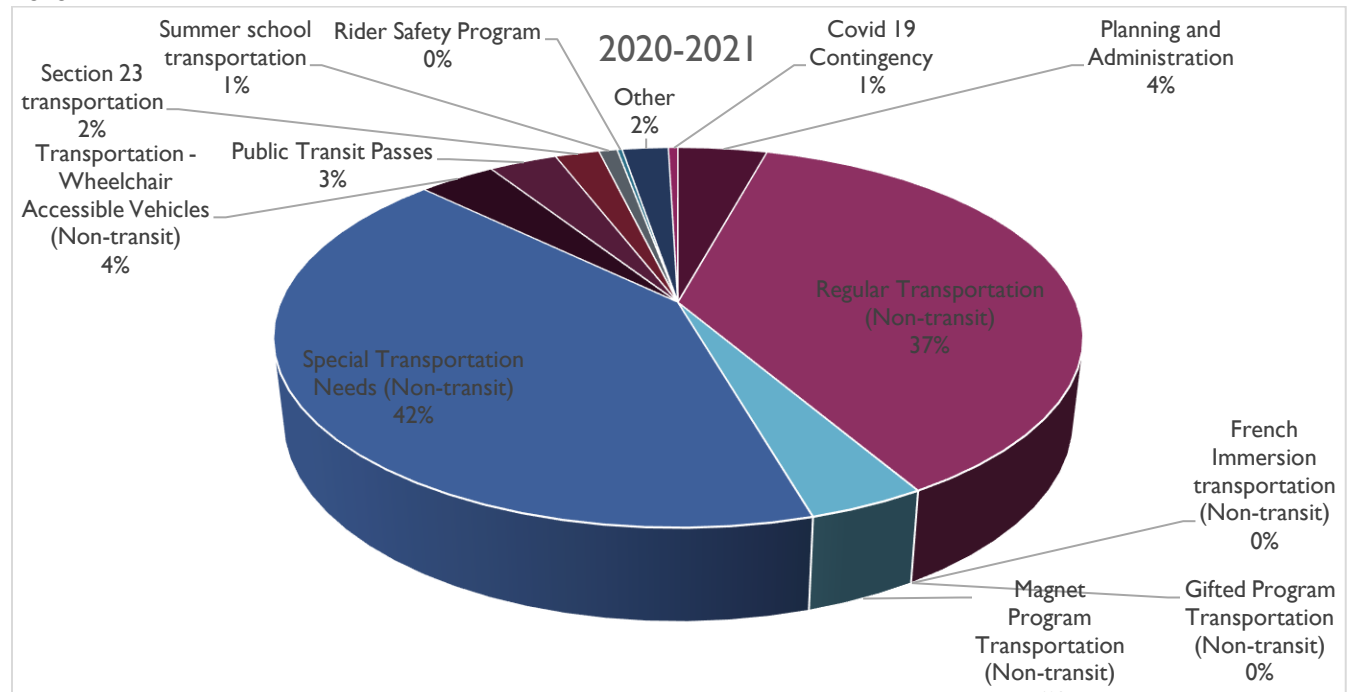


TDSB

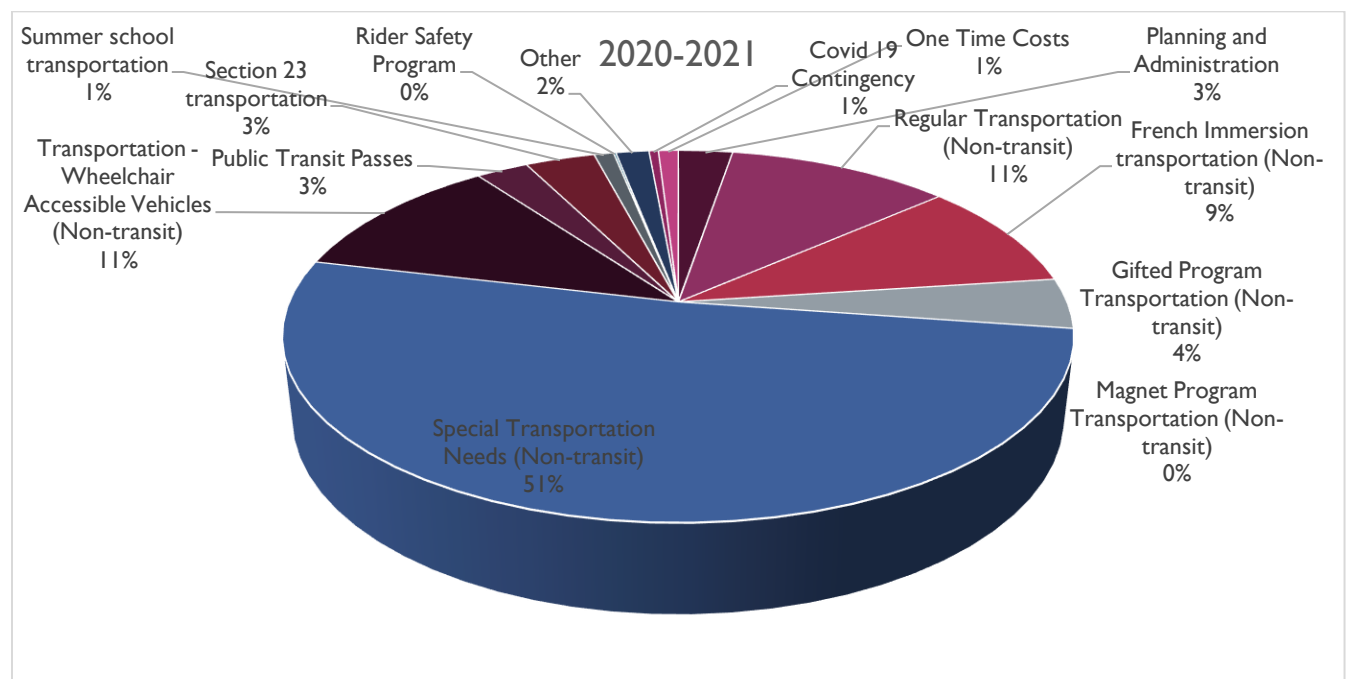


2. Transportation Expenditure by Area

TCDSB

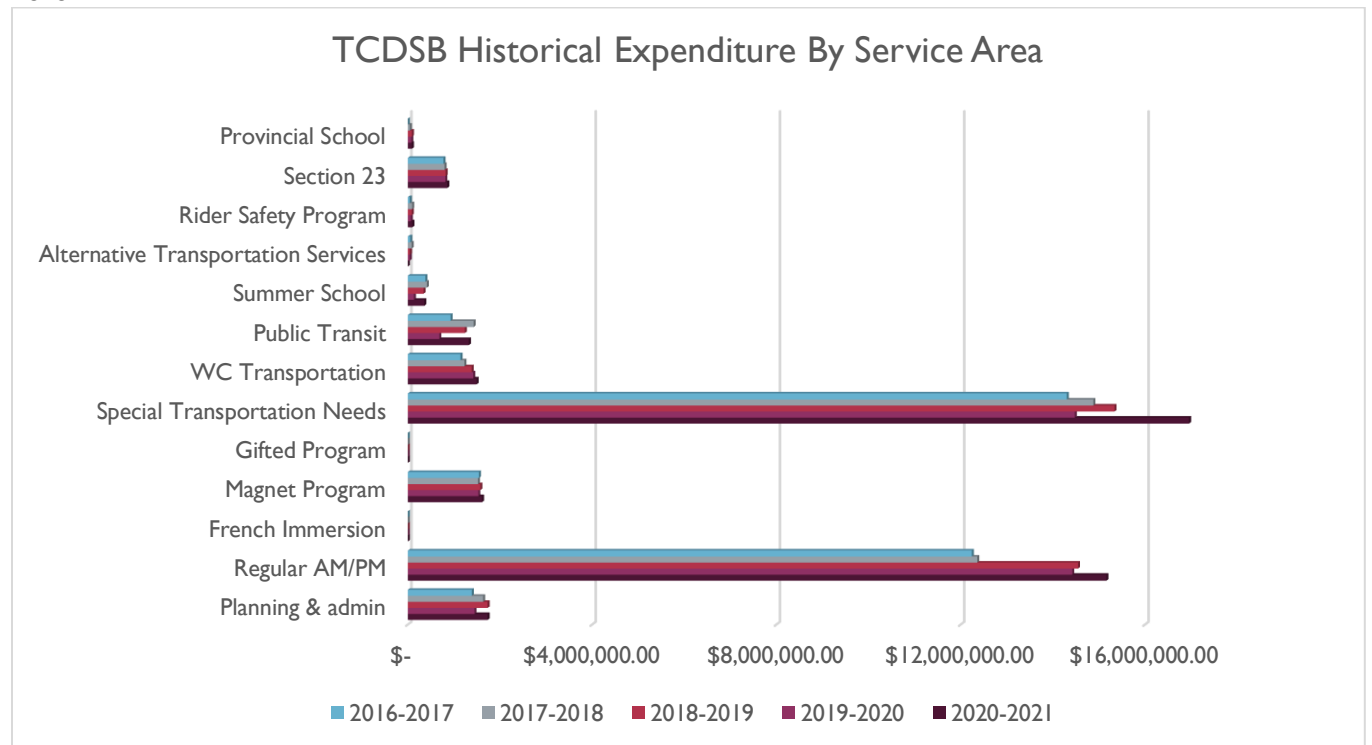


TDSB

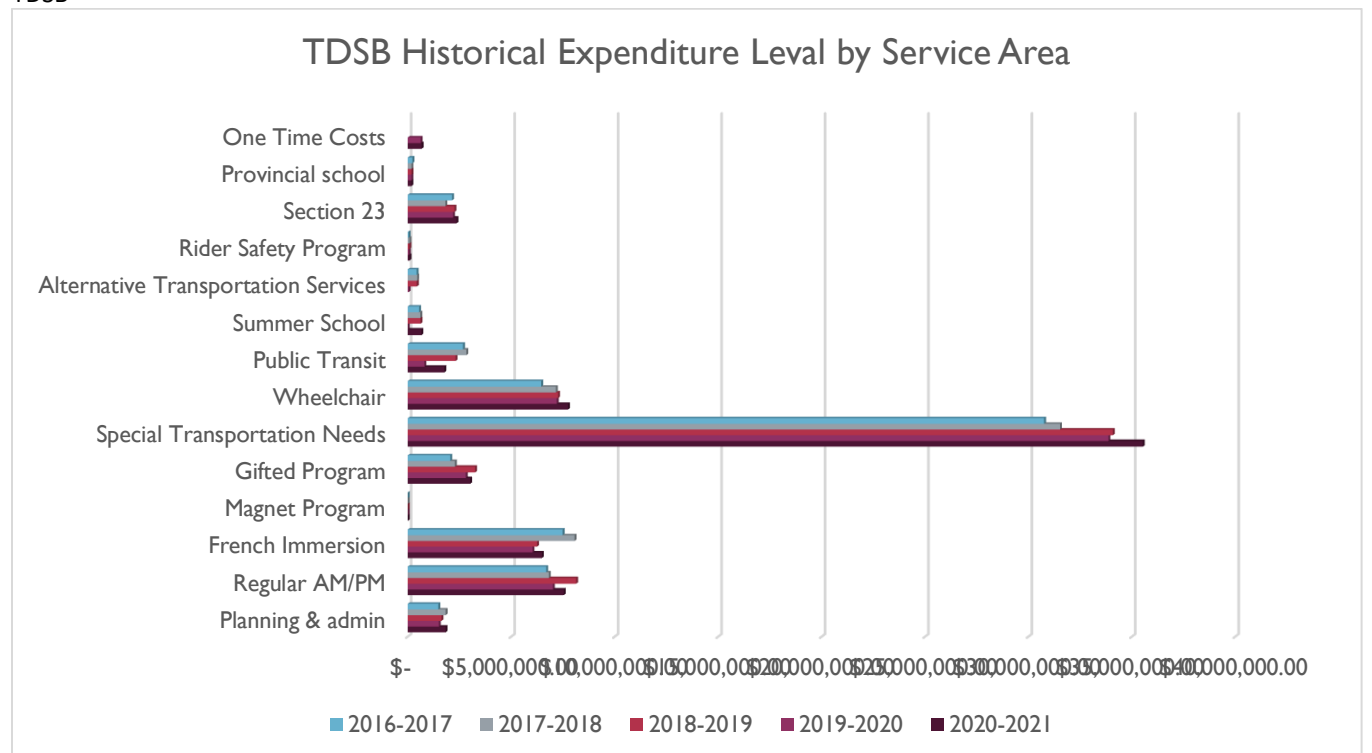


3. Historical Summary of Transportation Expenditure 2014 - 2019

TCDSB



TDSB



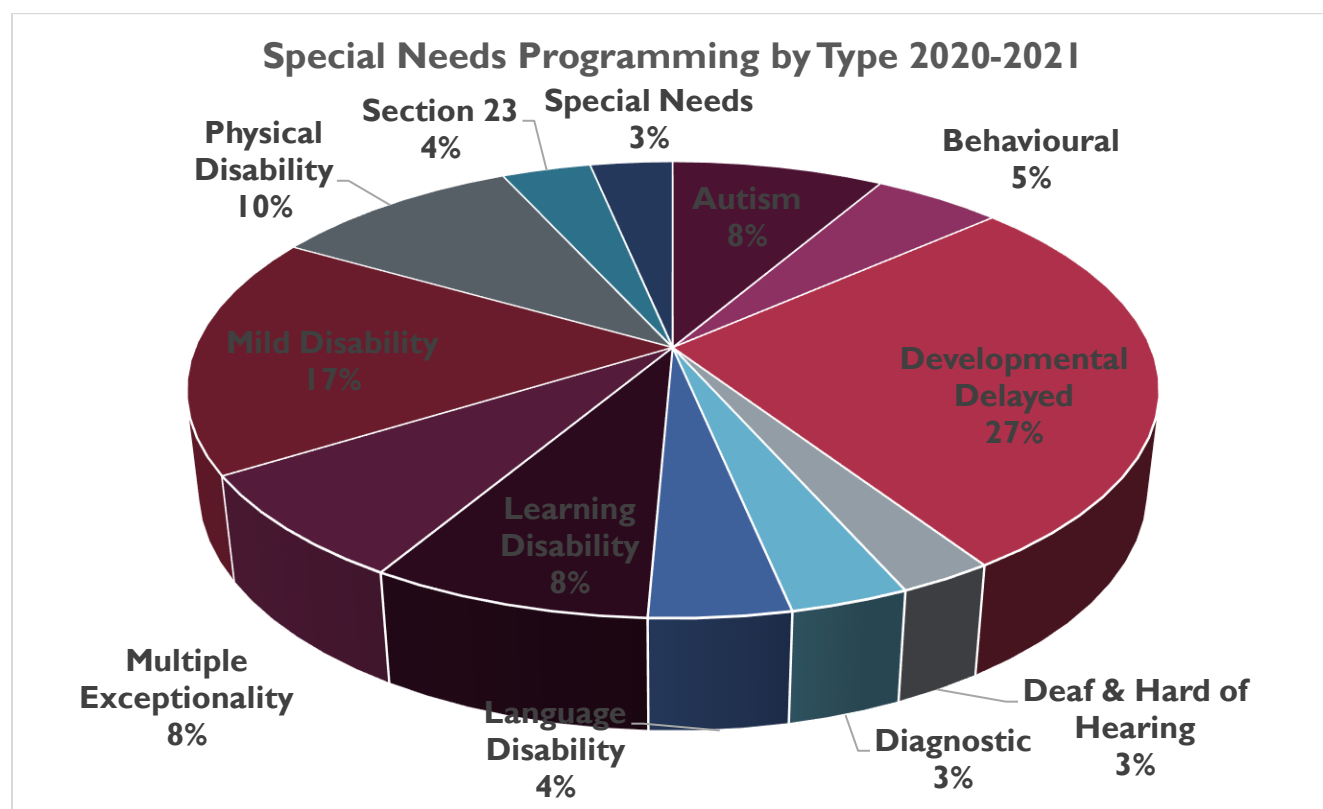
Programming

The TSTG services a large and dynamic student population within the City of Toronto. A majority of funding dollars is directed towards the student transportation services for students with special needs. Unique needs, geography, and modified program hours are just some of the factors impacting the delivery of transportation services for students with special needs. French Immersion, Gifted, and specialized withdrawal programs also contribute to the complexity involved in transporting students.

Special Education

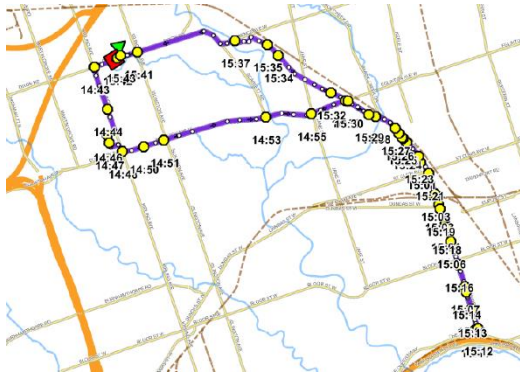
Transportation for students with special needs has continued to grow from year to year. Given the geographic diverseness of this student population there is a significant expenditure required to ensure the safe and timely delivery of these students to their program locations. The following graph shows the percentage of students receiving transportation by program.

4. Transportation of special needs students by programming type



Operations

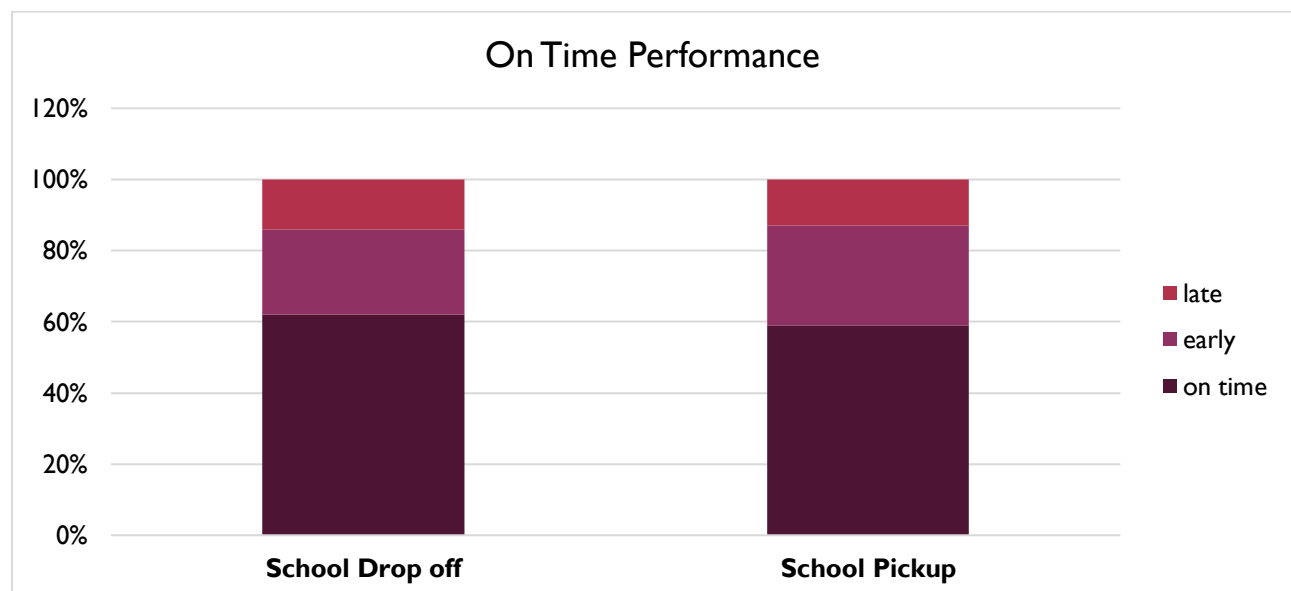
The transportation operations unit is responsible for the on-road delivery of transportation services. Staff facilitates the communication of planning changes, monitors school bus operations, evaluate operator qualifications and performance, and resolve operational problems. Operational staff uses several resources to help monitor the integrity of the transportation system and our performance.



Level of Service

As part of the Consortiums annual review of routes, statistics are collected that identify trends in terms of how well services are provided. The most direct information is from schools and parents through surveys but there are also indicators that can be used to better understand service levels.

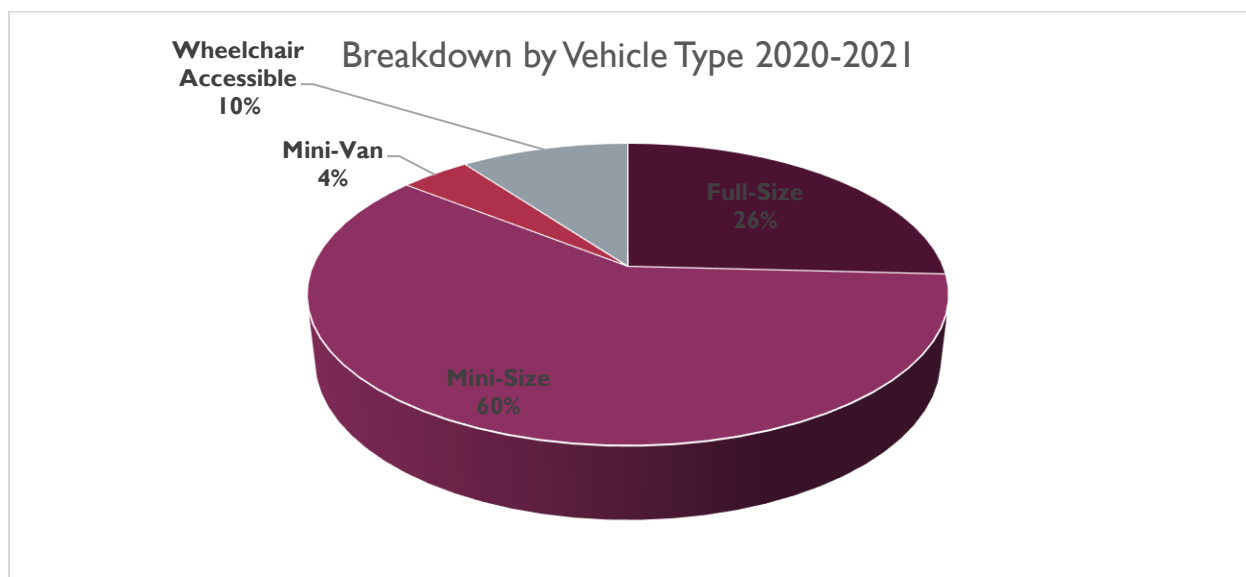
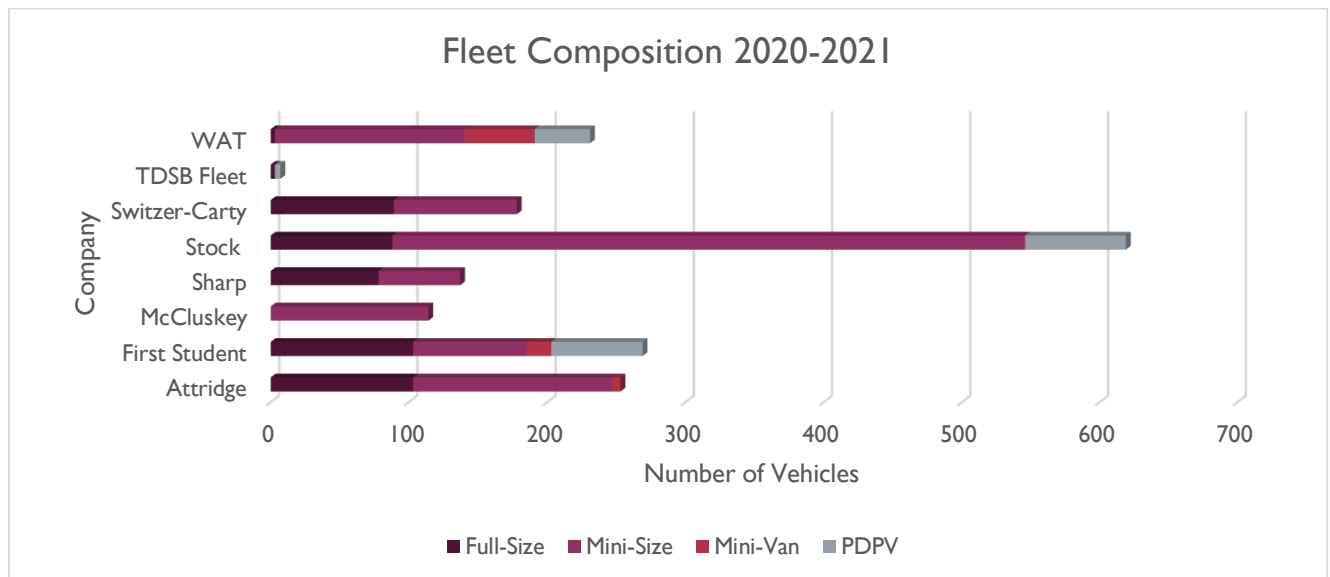
5. GPS and On Time Performance



Operators

The Toronto Student Transportation Group secures transportation through a competitive procurement process. The 2016-2017 school year was the first year of a new contract with a term of six years plus two one-year options. The following chart highlights the number of Operators that are providing service for the TSTG in 2020-2021.

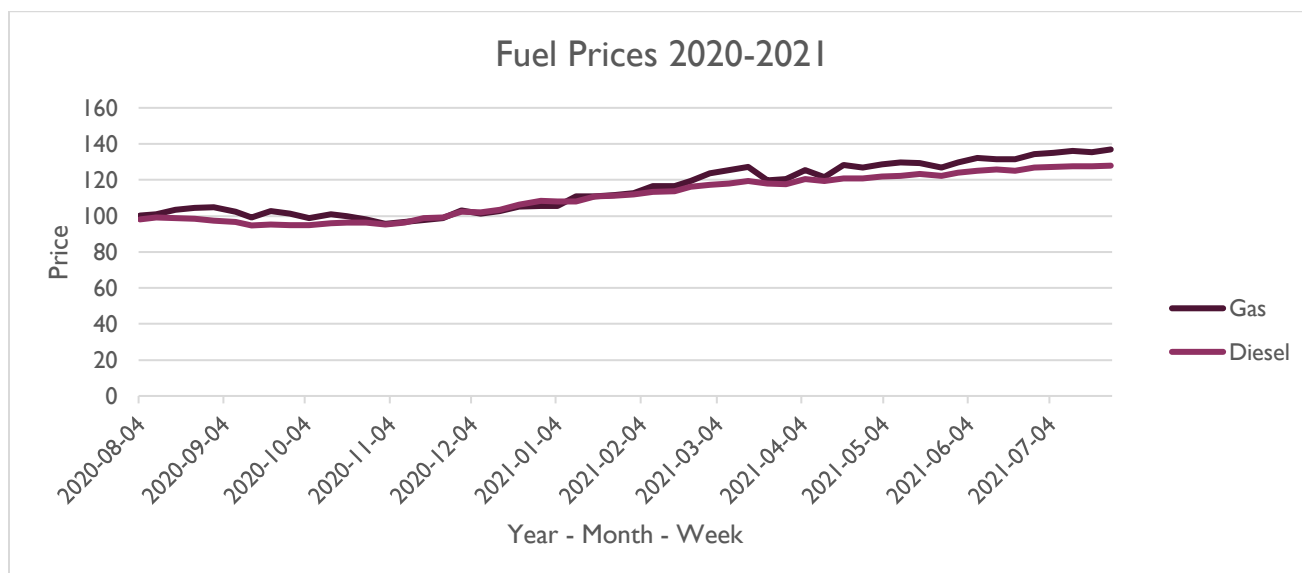
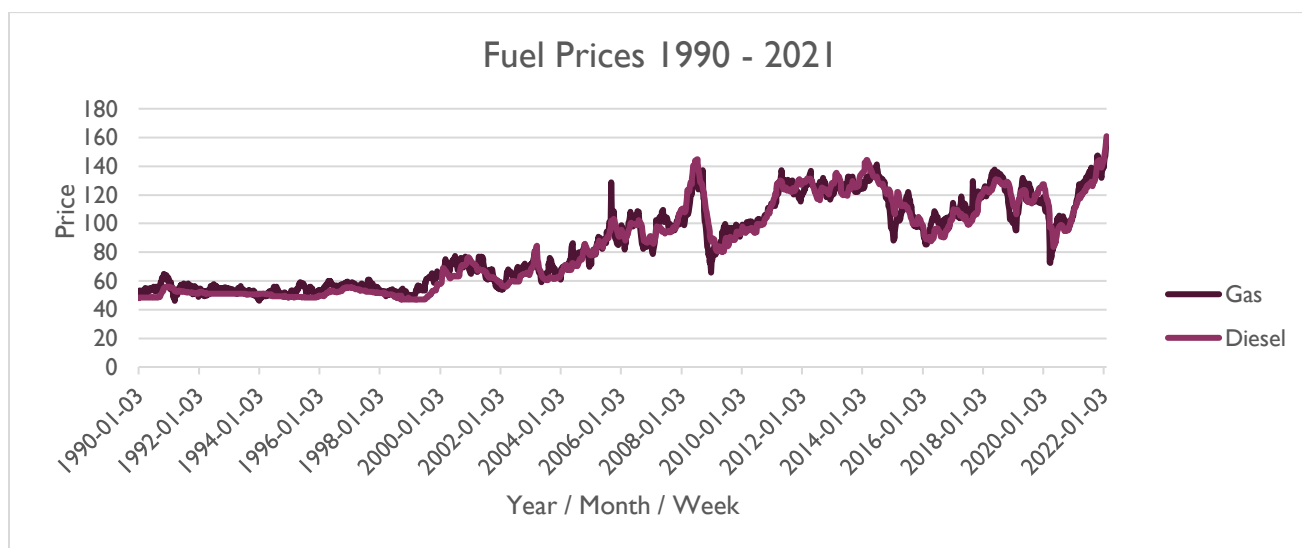
7. Breakdown of contracted fleet



Fuel

One of the most volatile and unpredictable elements to funding transportation services is the costing for fuel. Both gas and diesel type vehicles using various engines with different fuel economy travelling varying distances generate different costs to be funded. Perspective is everything. Looking at fuel trend line for the past ten years it shows a declining fuel trend. If we extended the time frame out over 30 years, we would see an increasing trend line. The following chart highlights the fuel costs over the years.

8. Fuel Trend over the last 30 years

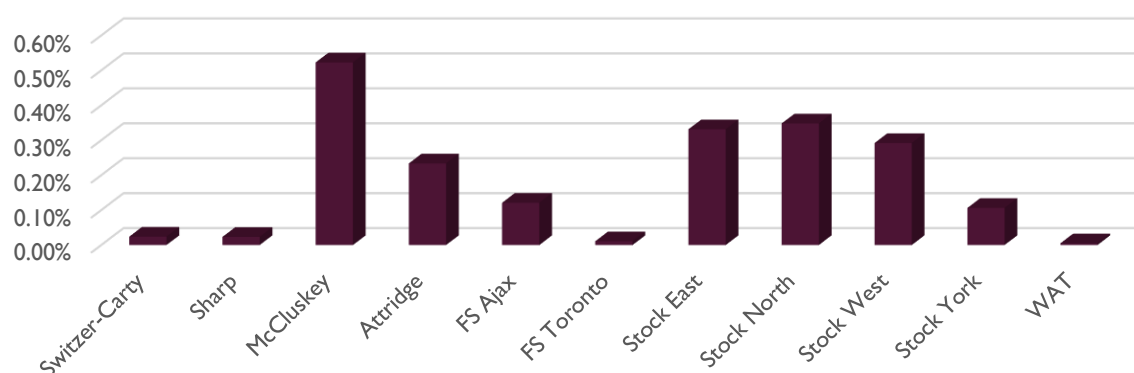


Operator KPI

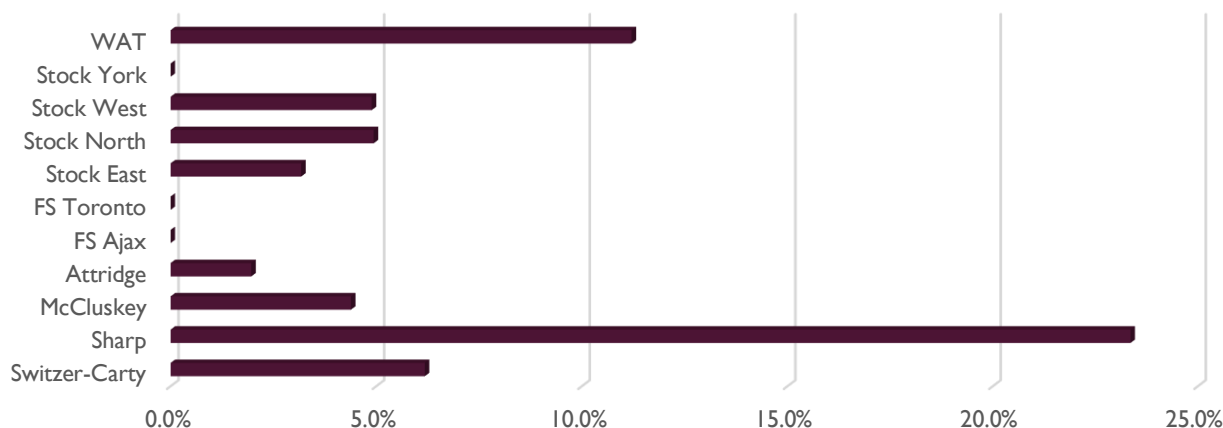
To monitor school bus operator performance a key performance indicator package is submitted by the operators to the Consortium each week. The statistics provide an overview of how well operations are proceeding at each individual division. In cases like below where 'open coverage' is positive, the department is aware of operational deficiencies at the division and can take steps to address the situation.

1. Key Performance Indicators used to track Operator contract compliance and performance.

Number of Reported Daily Breakdowns as a (percentage of am/pm routes)

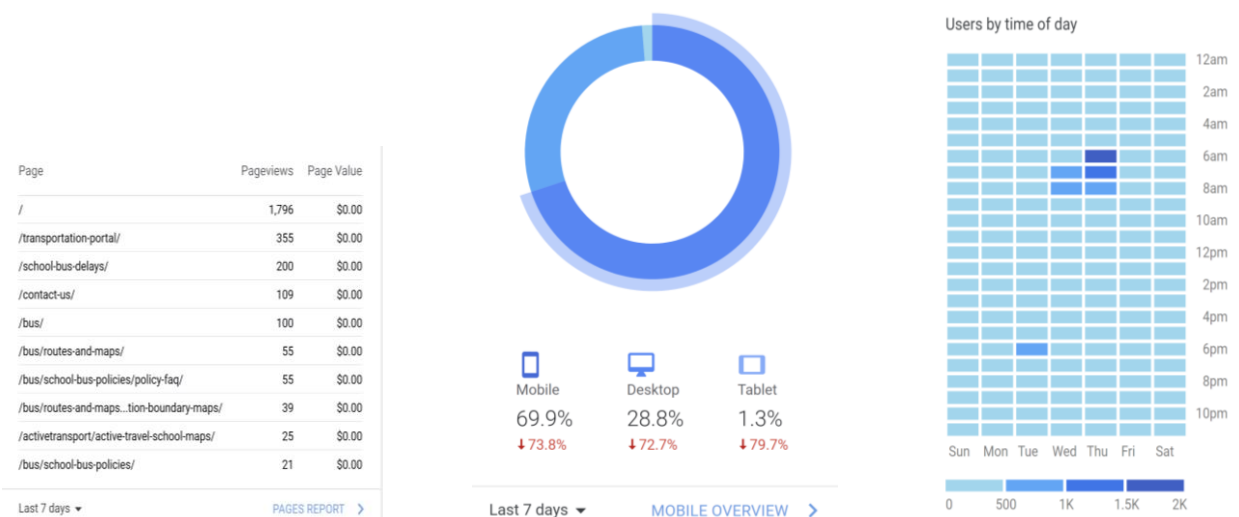


Driver Turnover Accumulated



TSTG

Web Site Visits: Communication is one of the key tools to ensure our stakeholders have accurate and timely information. Spikes in September are historically common as families look for transportation data for their children. Spikes during the winter can likely be identified as inclement weather days and families are reaching out to the website for updates on transportation and whether services are running or not. Surprisingly, eighty percent of visitors to the website are new users. Of primary concern is to ensure that our Operators have the necessary tools and means to minimize school bus delays and as a secondary measure to ensure that we have the communication tools available to notify our communities when those delays are unavoidable.



The screen shots above indicate what, how, and when users are accessing the Transportation resources over a seven-day period. The Transportation portal is the most visited site. Users are going mobile in terms of accessing transportation data. The morning rush looks to be the peak period timeframe when users are accessing the transportation information.

Transportation Planning

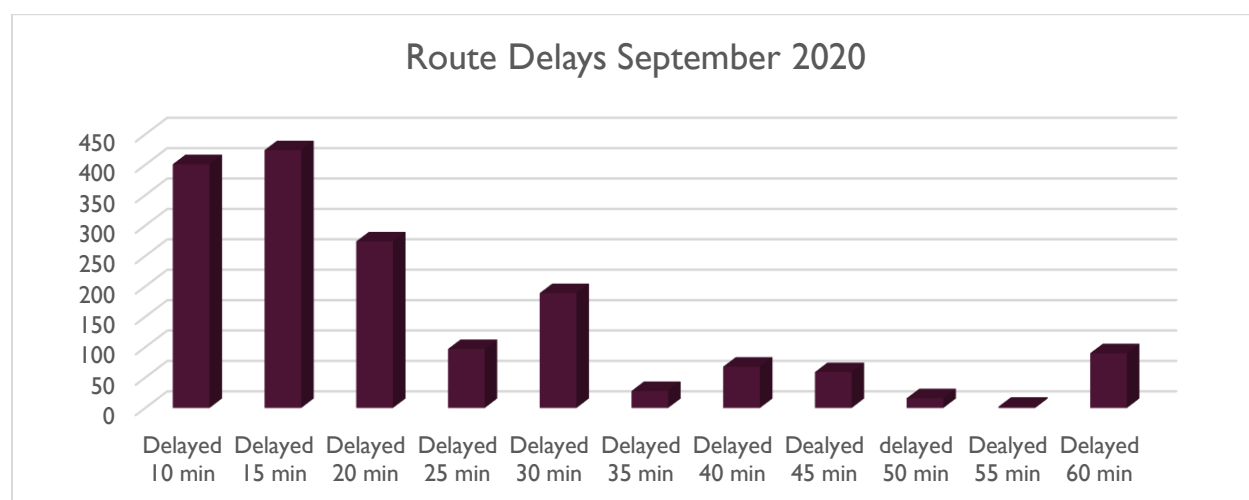
The transportation-planning unit is responsible for the design and maintenance of the school bus routes. To create an effective and efficient transportation system staff utilize GIS based technology to schedule and move students and buses throughout the City of Toronto.

Service Delivery

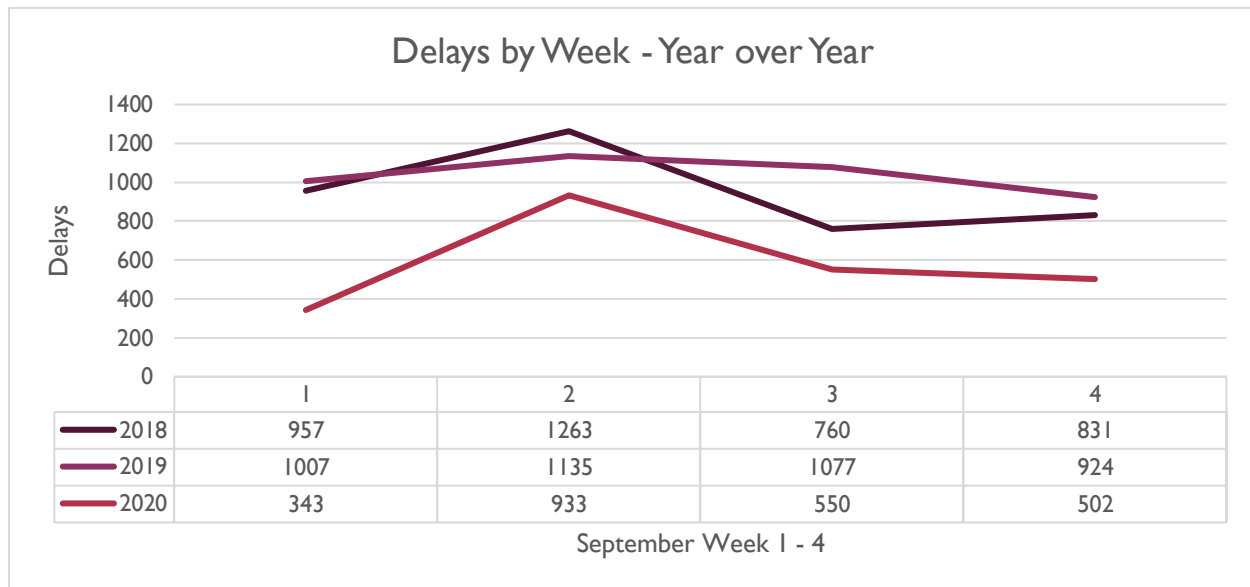
2. Delay Portal

Traffic remains the number one culprit when it comes to school bus delays but operational delays resulting from driver absences, split routes, and mechanical issues remain a concern.

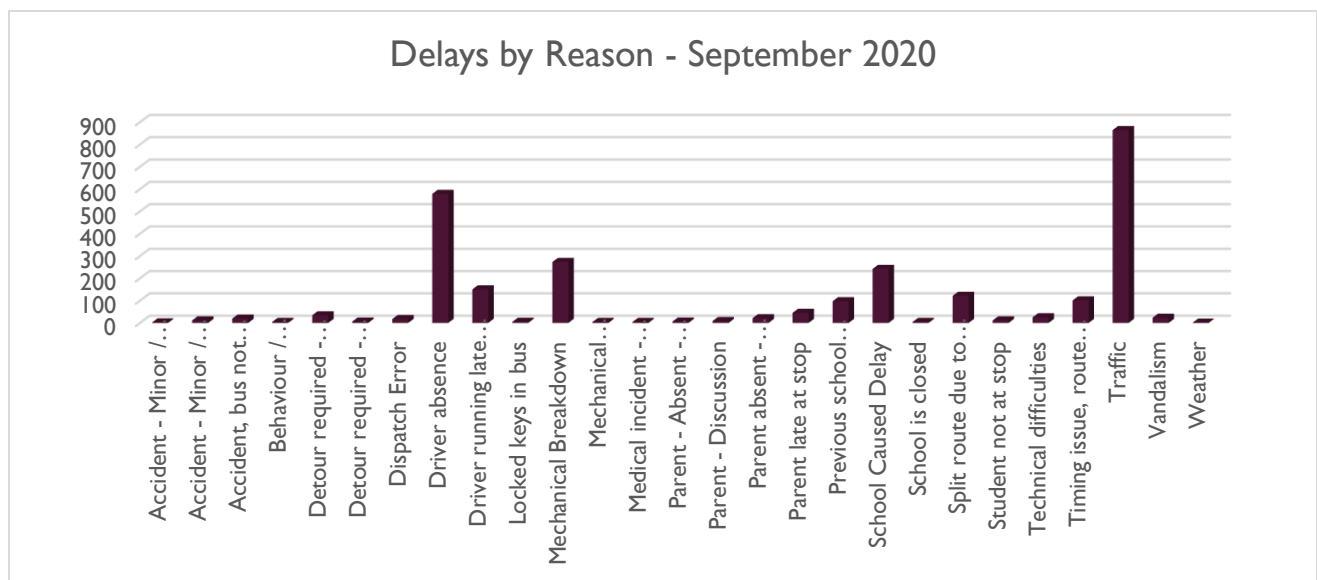
Although most delays are kept to 30 minutes there was a large number of routes that were delayed up 60 minutes in September.



Year over year in September the number of delays are down.



Traffic remains the number one culprit for delays followed by driver absences.



Safety

One of the primary conditions for the transportation of students is that they are provided a safe trip to and from school. A dedicated safety officer oversees the deployment of various school bus safety programs, ensures schools and bus operators are following proper school bus safety practices, and audits runs and routes to ensure drivers have the proper qualifications and are following routes as planned.

School Bus Safety Program

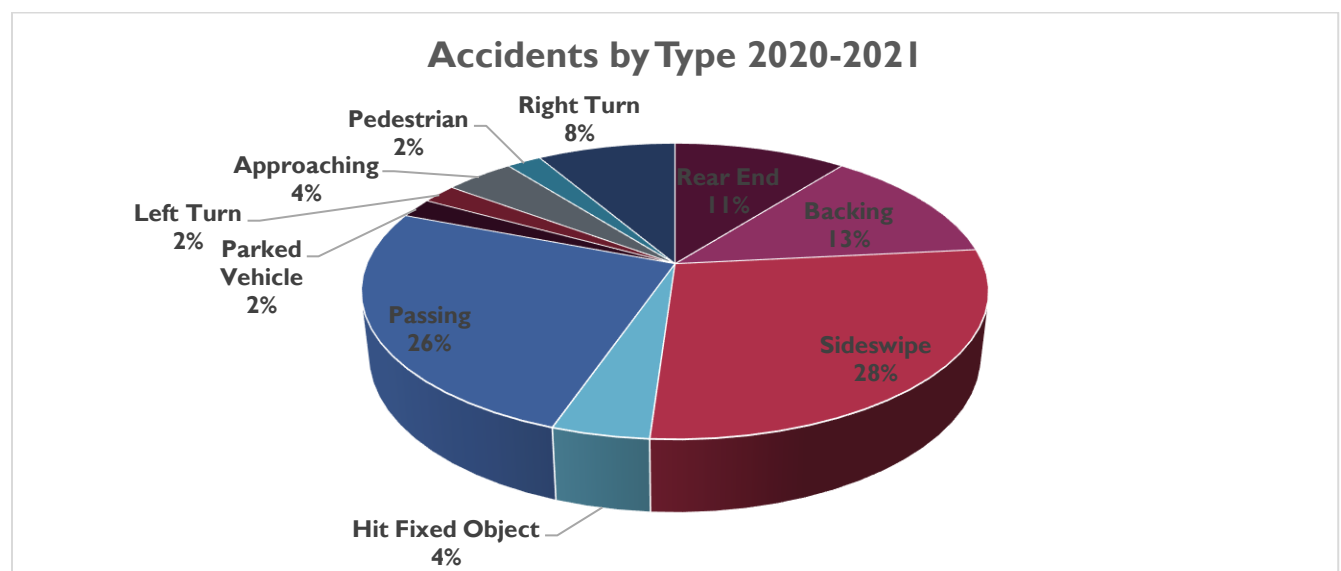


The Toronto Student Transportation Group provides several transportation safety programs to educate our students, families, and the general motoring public. A new program delivered by Intertrain using interactive media to help promote the school bus safety message with our students.

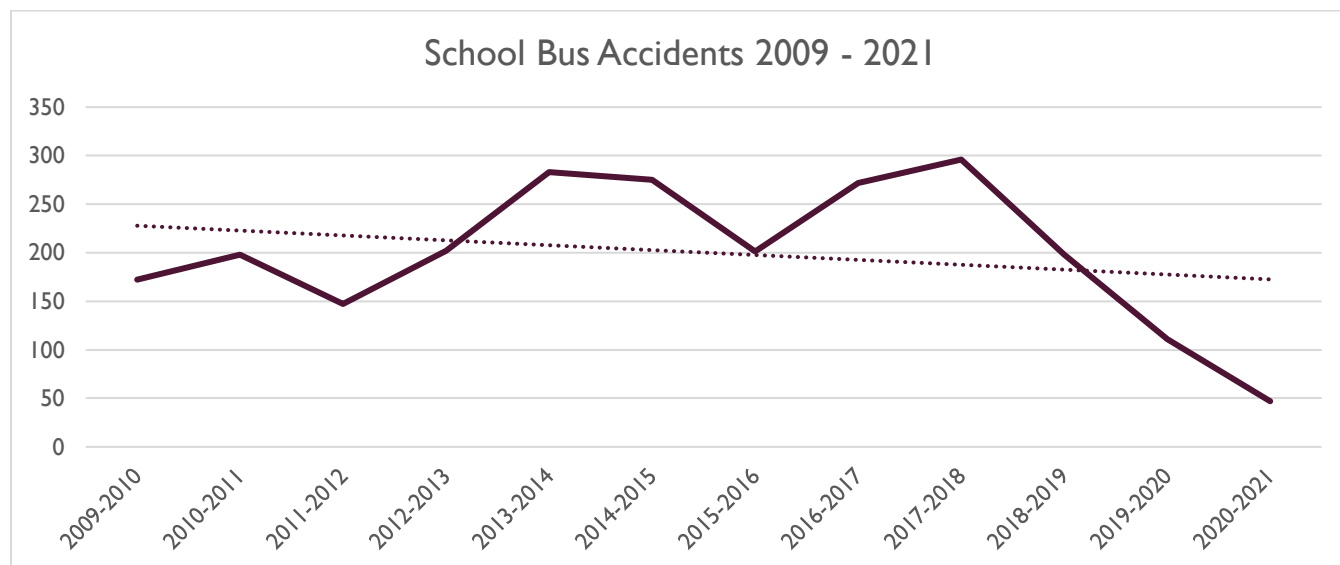
Accident Statistics

School bus accident statistics provide an insight into the type of accidents taking place on the road along with the conditions from which these accidents take place. The reduction of accidents and improving the safety of students in and around the school bus can be achieved through the review of accident statistics.

3. Conditions impacting school bus accidents.



4. Year over year summary of accident statistics

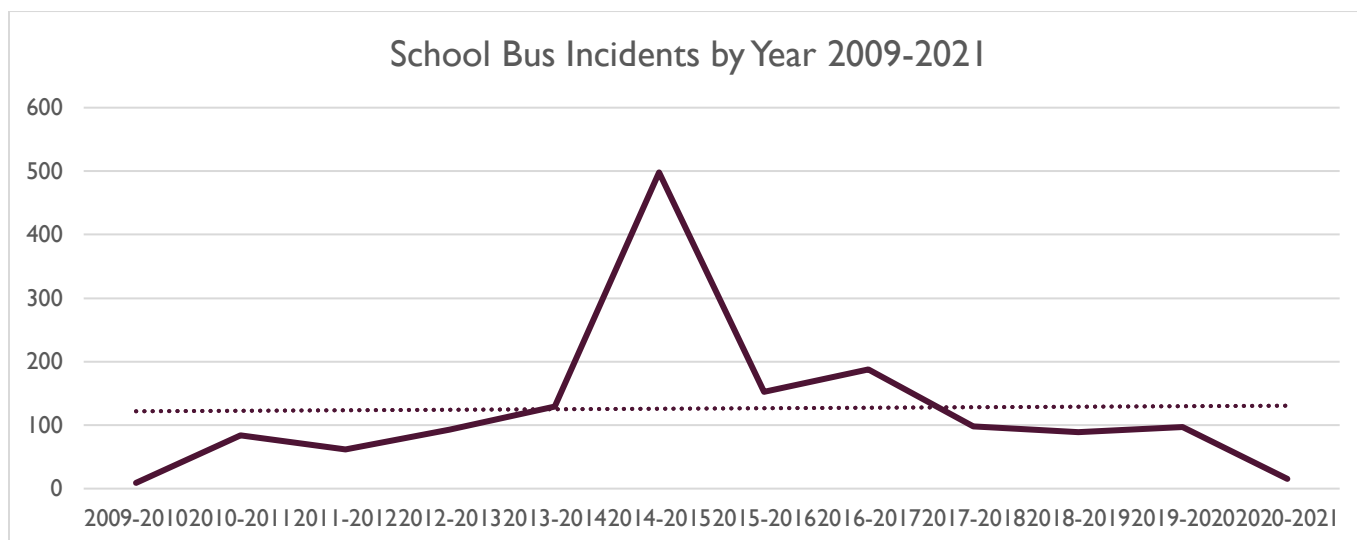


Incidents

In terms of dealing with behavioural or other small incidents on the school bus, a 'pink slip' system is used to communicate these issues to the school Principal so that they can be addressed. If a student continues to misbehave on the bus and they receive multiple pink slips the school Principal may remove the student from transportation for a defined period of time.

When something happens on the bus that is not considered a minor incident then the bus company will document the issue as an incident. This may include several issues including violence, vandalism, or some other act that needs immediate attention. Incidents on the school bus are trending higher as per the graph below and one of the reasons why recruitment of school bus drivers is becoming increasingly harder. Data in the 2014-2015 school year as reported by two carriers has created an anomaly within the dataset. It is likely that all incidents regardless of severity were reported in that year by these two carriers.

Incidents on the decline over the last three years. Pandemic bussing will have a substantial impact on these declining numbers.



Students with special needs may not always understand the result of their actions which triggers an incident report to the school. As an extension of the classroom, behaviour on the bus is reported to the School Principal so they can address with the student/family.

