



Toronto Student Transportation Group

Annual Report 2023-2024

Blank

APPENDIX 'A'

General Manager's 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 delivery of student transportation services can be an unceremonious business. A school bus driver shortage across the province did not leave Toronto unscathed and we were pitched back into delays throughout the start of the school year. Living in Toronto, with a population in excess of two million people, you would think that we should have the ability to fill these positions readily. Sadly, service was negatively impacted for many families as we worked with our school bus operators to 'right the ship'. It is this partnership with our school bus operators that makes student transportation a different kind of business found within the School Boards. One that relies on both parties to ensure the success of the other. It is these relationships that we must build upon to improve the level of service that we provide to our stakeholders.

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 extending to the right.

Kevin Hodgkinson
General Manger

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
- No Snow Days!..... 6
- New Carrier Onboarding..... 7
- Retention & Recruitment Download 8
- A Look Ahead 9
- RFID..... 9
- Electronic Workflow 10
- School Staff Training..... 11
- Student Transportation Services 12
 - Financial..... 12
 - Programming 15
 - Special Education 15
 - Operations 16
 - Level of Service 16
 - Operators..... 19
 - Fuel 20
 - Operator KPI 21
- Active Transportation 23
- Safety..... 25
 - School Bus Safety Program 25
 - Accident Statistics..... 25
 - Incidents 27



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 45,000 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 \$120,000,000.

The consortium is physically located at 270 Cherokee Blvd 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'. The organization in 2023 has relocated to the former TCDSB Our Lady of Mount Carmel site located on Cherokee Blvd in North York.



communication blitz is then in order to ensure that all families are aware of the cancellation of service for the day.

New Carrier Onboarding

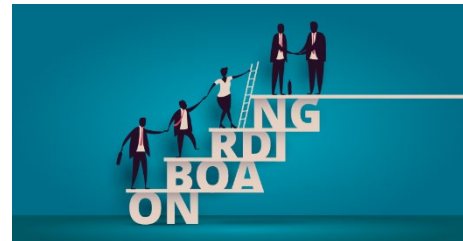
With a new contract ready to be implemented for the 2024-2025 school year the TSTG implemented an on-boarding process to ensure our new school bus carriers were prepared for the new school year. These onboarding sessions included sessions on daily operations, contract requirements, and compliance, transportation software in use and how



to use it, invoicing and contract financials, safety items and expectations, parking, and summer school. The onboarding also included site visits to the new carrier divisions to ensure operational readiness and school visits so that TSTG and school staff can provide feedback on how transportation services work at the schools here in Toronto. All carriers including the two new carriers were also required to reach out to at least two school Principals prior to the school year start to get their feedback on operational concerns and issues they have experience over the years to hopefully head off any repeat of issues from the past.

The onboarding process took place over 8 months prior to the school year start. Our existing carriers were also invited to participate to facilitate a reminder for them as well but also to allow them to share some of their experiences working in Toronto with the new carriers.

Having all buses equipped with GPS and having the companies dry run their routes early was a way to ensure that the company confirmed their drivers were comfortable with the new runs but also to identify issues if the timing of the run or order of stops may need to be reviewed by TSTG staff. TSTG staff used this time to ensure that all technology and access points were set up and tested for the new carriers to avoid any delays once the school year started.



Retention & Recruitment Download

The Ministry of Education had started a Driver Retention Program for the school bus industry several years ago to help direct funding directly to school bus drivers for dedicated and consistent service. School Bus driver shortages were reported throughout the Province directly



impacting the School Boards ability to ensure all students were safely and consistently delivered to and from school. As employees in an environment where there is significant competition for part time workers it was found that many school bus drivers were transient in nature and left in many cases if another job opportunity presented itself. As paid remuneration for drivers varied throughout the Province, the Ministry established this new program to support drivers who stayed with their school bus company for specific periods of

time. The hope was that the additional monetary bonus would help retain drivers and act as a recruitment enticement as well.

Starting in the 2023-2024 school year, the Ministry of Education downloaded this program to the School Boards and Transportation Consortiums. Renamed the Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Program the School Boards and consortiums were expected to create some form of contractual agreement with their school bus operators to continue to flow through the funds to the drivers. As the funding was added to the Transportation Grant the money was intended to flow through the School Boards and to the carriers who would directly compensate their drivers who met the criteria established in a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The TSTG maintained general requirements outlined in the Ministry agreement with carriers including the threshold of 95% driver attendance but eliminated all exceptions with the exception of those guaranteed under the Ontario Employment Standards Act.



A Look Ahead

While successfully transporting over 45,000 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.

RFID

Technology continues to be a significant area where we see improvements to school bus transportation. The last student transportation contract saw the continuation of GPS requirements on all buses and a new requirement to have tablets installed on all buses to



improve communication and confirmation of vehicle assignment to improve the accuracy of the GPS. The TSTG plans to investigate RFID technology in the coming years to see if it provides any value to the student transportation system. An RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) system requires student to be issued a tag that can be read by an RFID reader to confirm

that individual has passed by the scanner. So, on a school bus, students would be issued tags and tap the card to the reader when entering and exiting the bus, so we have confirmation of their location.

The reason this technology is of interest to the consortium is three-fold. Students falling asleep on the bus and missing their stops continues to be an issue. Each bus is already equipped with child check technology, but an RFID system would immediately notify a driver at their last stop or school if there were students still on board when there shouldn't be. The tags

also allow consortium staff to better track and manage student loads on school buses. Currently, all eligible students are assigned to the bus, but not all students are using the service, and many do not

alert the school to this issue. By knowing exactly how many students are using the bus each day, there is a possibility of creating more efficient and effective bus routes given the accurate data. The third benefit if a higher functioning reader is in place is to ensure that students are getting on and off the bus are the correct location. Currently, there are issues at large bus stops where students flood off the bus but using a card system will ensure that the one student that is to get off at another stop does not mistakenly get off at the wrong stop. Improving safety and efficiency are the hopeful goals of using this new technology.



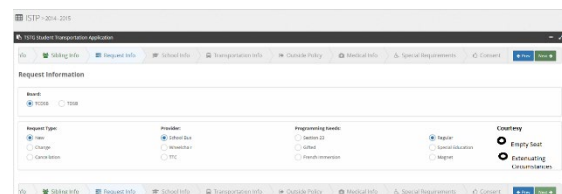
Electronic Workflow

The TSTG has been working with our software vendor to enhance the student transportation application process. Currently, all applications are filled out on a form either electronically or handwritten and then scanned and set to the transportation unit for processing. Attempts to modernize this process has led us to the electronic workflow as a means to ensure greater



accuracy and improve timeliness of application processing. Currently, a transfer of data happens overnight between the School Boards and the Transportation database. This updates all student data in the transportation database minus those that are protected due to their significant transportation needs and arrangements. With the data already housed in transportation it allows the school, and later the parents, to simply autofill the form when they are applying for transportation.

The first stage will see the schools continue to process the applications at their end sending the information to the transportation unit. Once any issues with the processing have been addressed, stage two will see the applications be open to the parents who will be able to autofill their own child information into the application which is then sent to the school who confirms the data and then the application automatically moves to transportation unit once the form has been signed off at the school level. The forms themselves have required fields so that all the data that is required for transportation staff to set up transportation is documented on the form. One of the major delays in setting up transportation previously was the need to send the form back and forth between the school and transportation to ensure all this data is collected so the appropriate transportation can be set up. The workflow will also allow the end user some accessibility controls so that it is easier for them to complete and submit.



School Staff Training

Since Covid, the School Boards and Transportation consortium have had to revisit how some services are provided. With ever changing needs and the continuous flow of new staff members into the system it is important that we keep them updated on how to access



transportation resources and where to find the tools so that school staff can facilitate transportation at the local level. The evolution of remote learning tools will allow the consortium opportunities to provide this training to our school staff. Gone are the days of forcing school staff to select certain days to come into facilities to receive in person training. This adds travel time to their days and time away from the office.

With these new virtual tools, the transportation consortium will be setting up live virtual interactive training sessions with school staff. This process has all the benefits of in person learning yet allows the staff member to remain at their station and participate as required. The recording of these sessions will also be captured so that the individuals who may not be able to participate have the ability to review the session at their leisure. Having this material situated in an easy to find location on our websites will be a starting point for new staff administration to get them up to speed on transportation requirements for their schools.



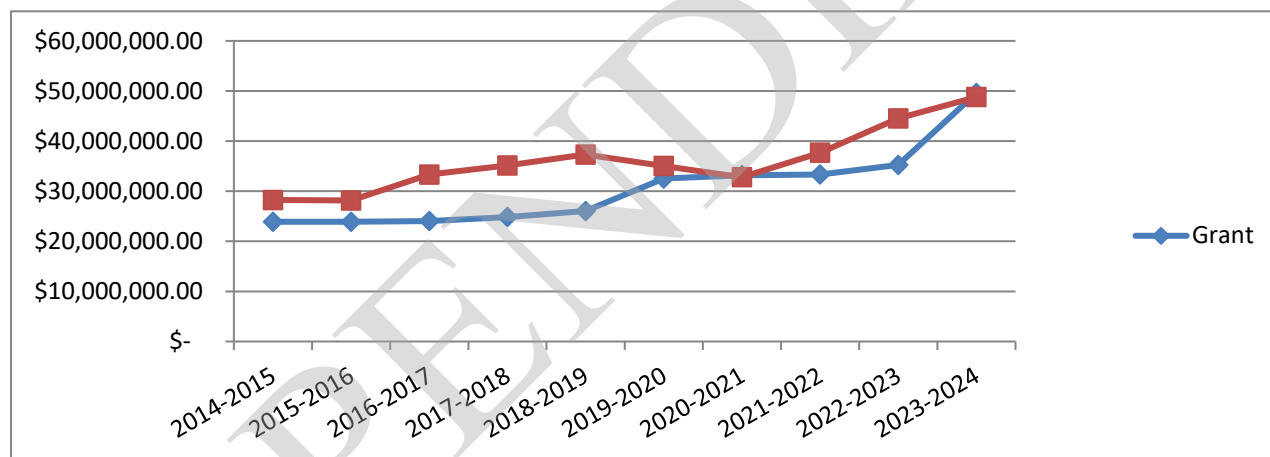
Student Transportation Services

Financial

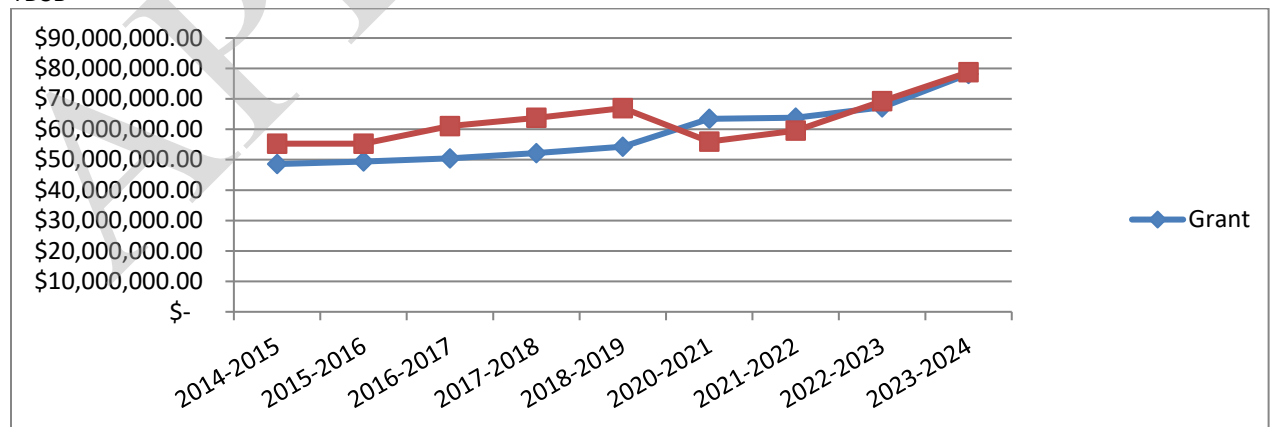
The Toronto Student Transportation Group was to spend about \$128M on transportation services for the TCDSB and TDSB for the 2023-2024 school year. The Ministry of Education provided a transportation Grant in 2023-2024 of approximately \$49.6M for the TCDSB and \$78.1M for the TDSB. The Ministry of Education introduced a new transportation funding formula which has benefited the Toronto School Boards by providing dollar amounts closer to real expenditure. 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

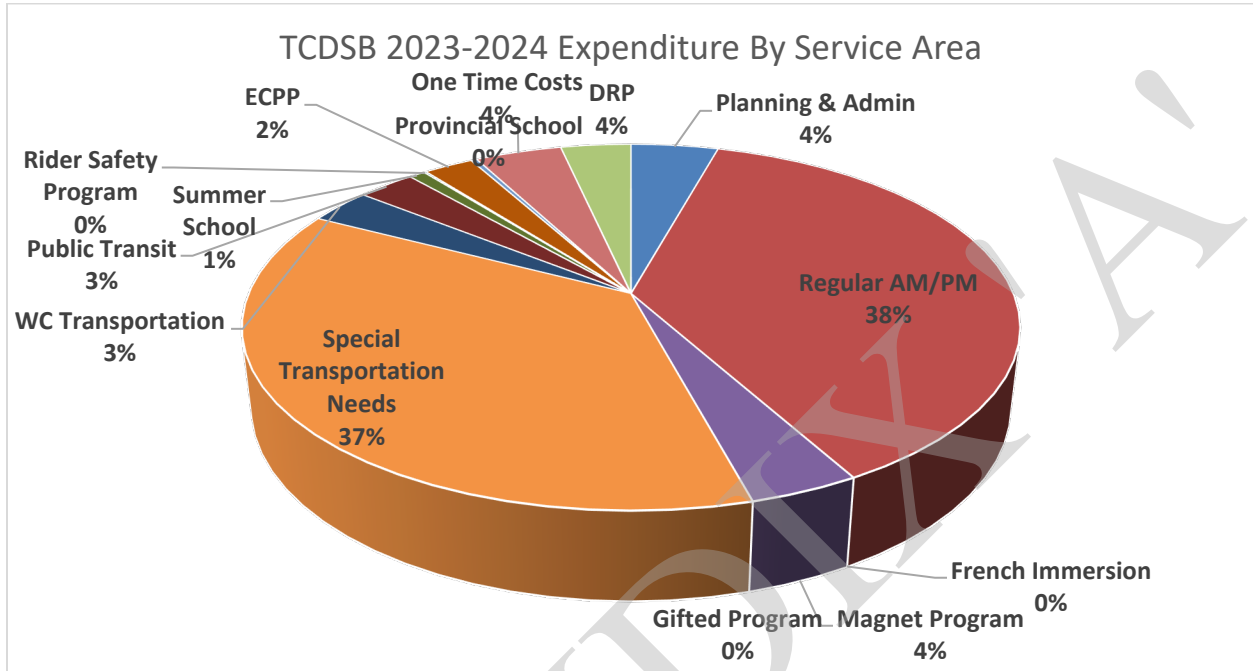


TDSB

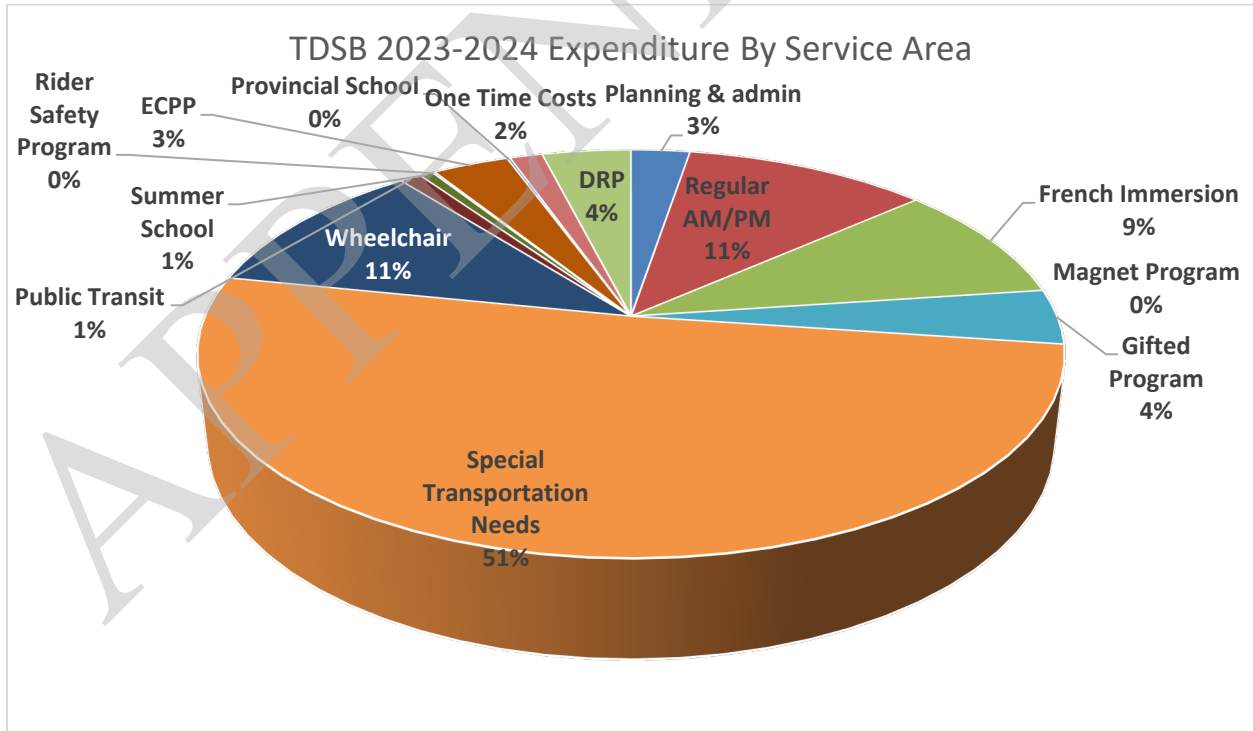


2. Transportation Expenditure by Area

TCDSB



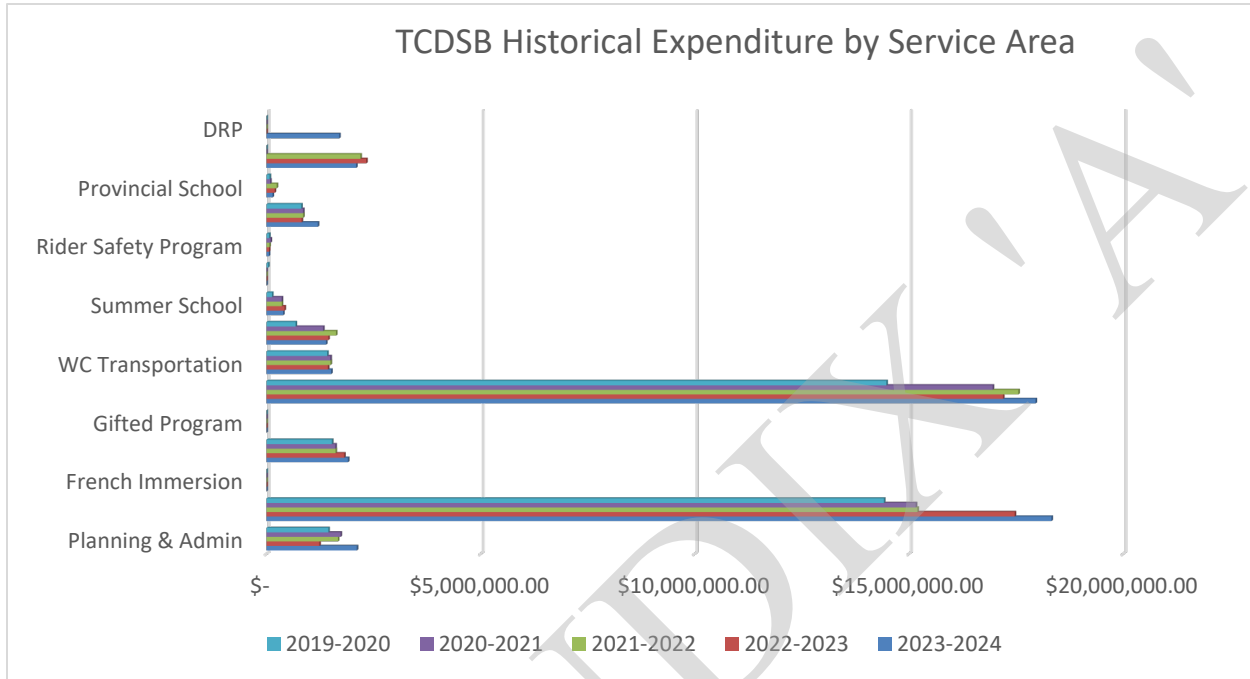
TDSB



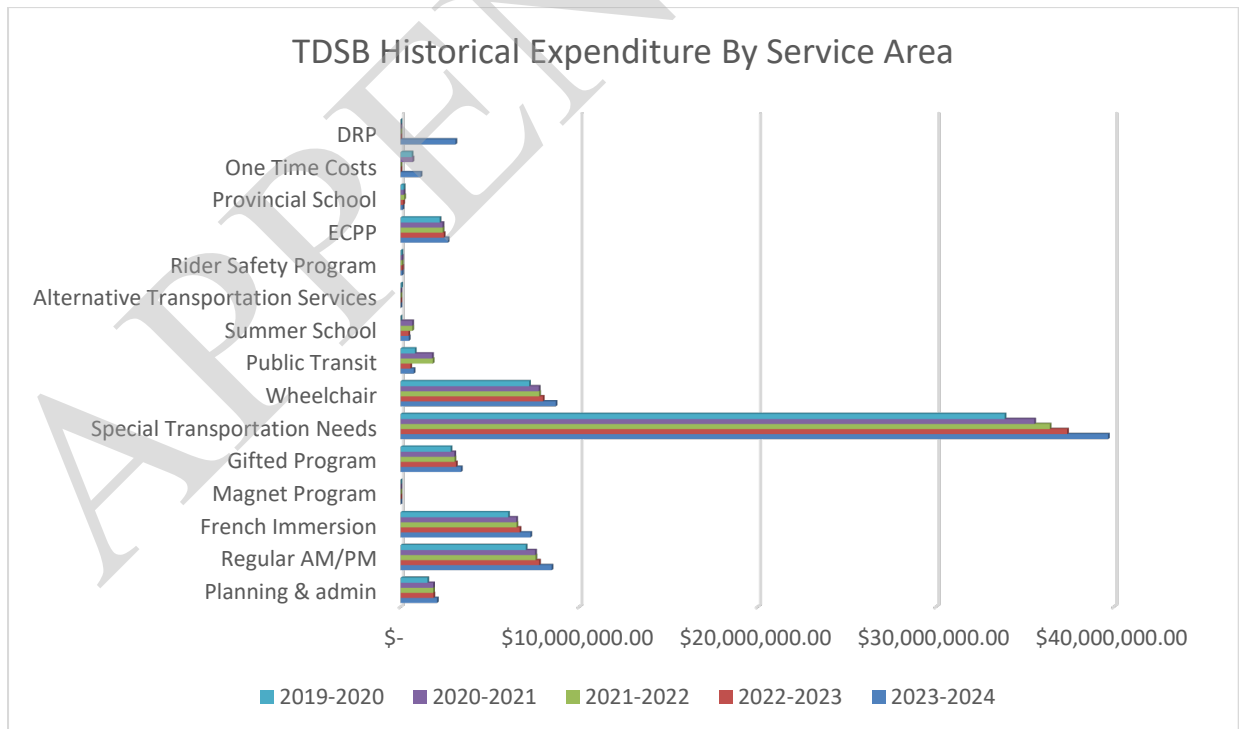


3. Historical Summary of Transportation Expenditure 2019 - 2024

TCDSB



TDSB



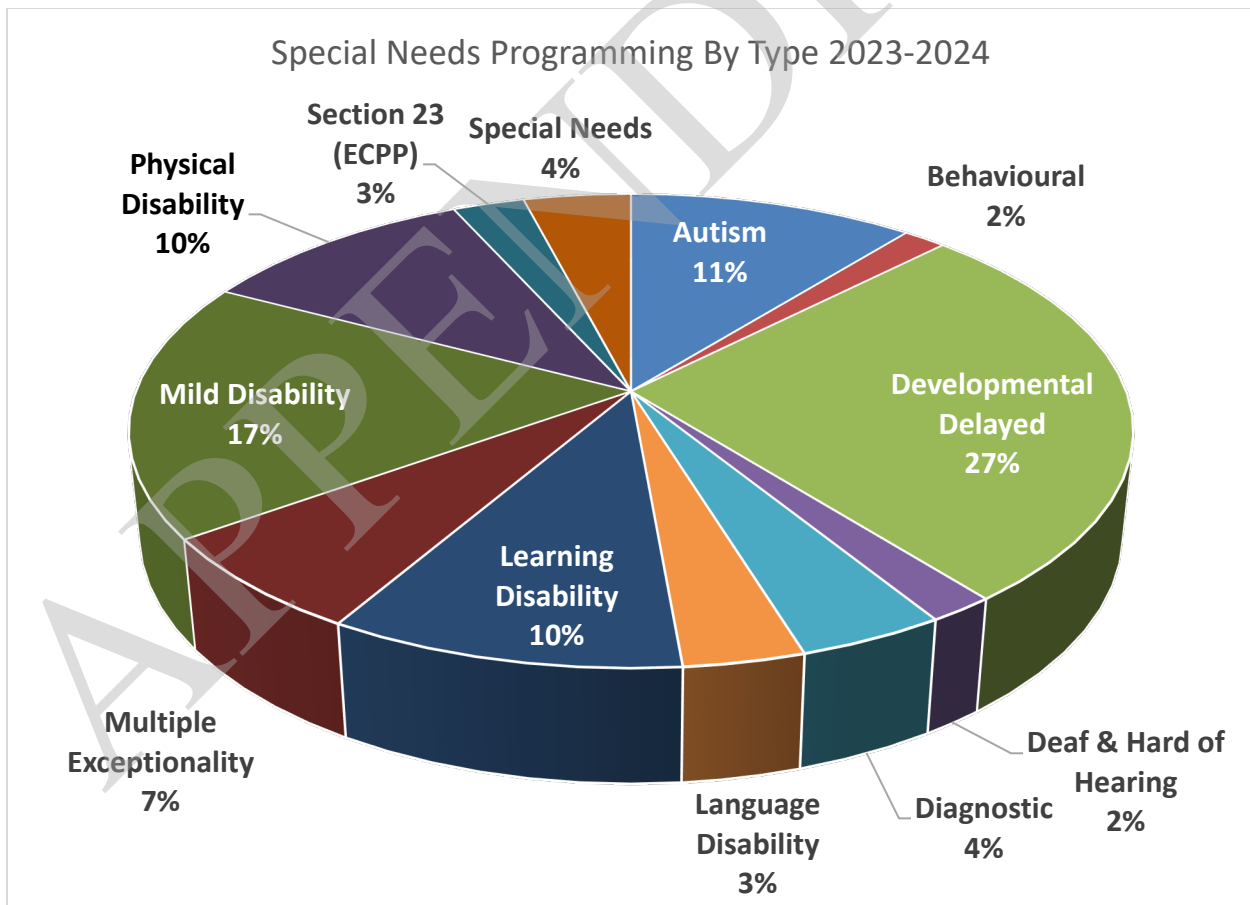
Programming

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

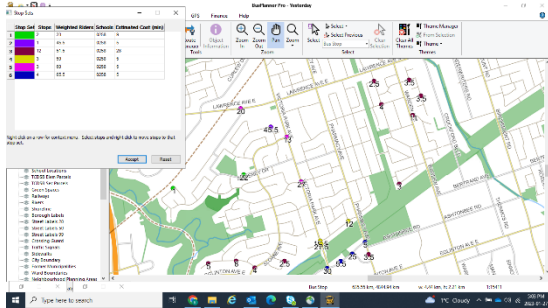
Transportation for students with special needs has continued to grow from year to year. Given the geographic diverseness of this student population there is a significant expenditure required to ensure the safe and timely delivery of these students to their program locations. The following graph shows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

4. Transportation of students with special needs by programming type.



Operations

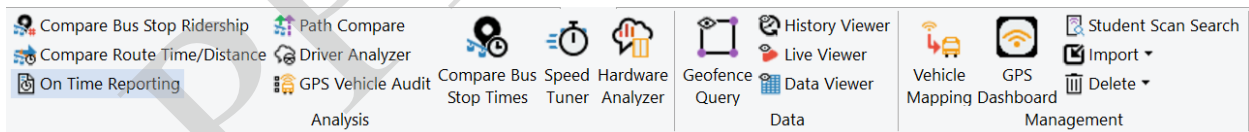
The transportation operations unit is responsible for the on-road delivery of transportation services. Staff facilitates the communication of planning changes, monitors school bus operations, evaluate operator qualifications and performance, and resolve operational problems. Operational staff uses several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



Level of Service

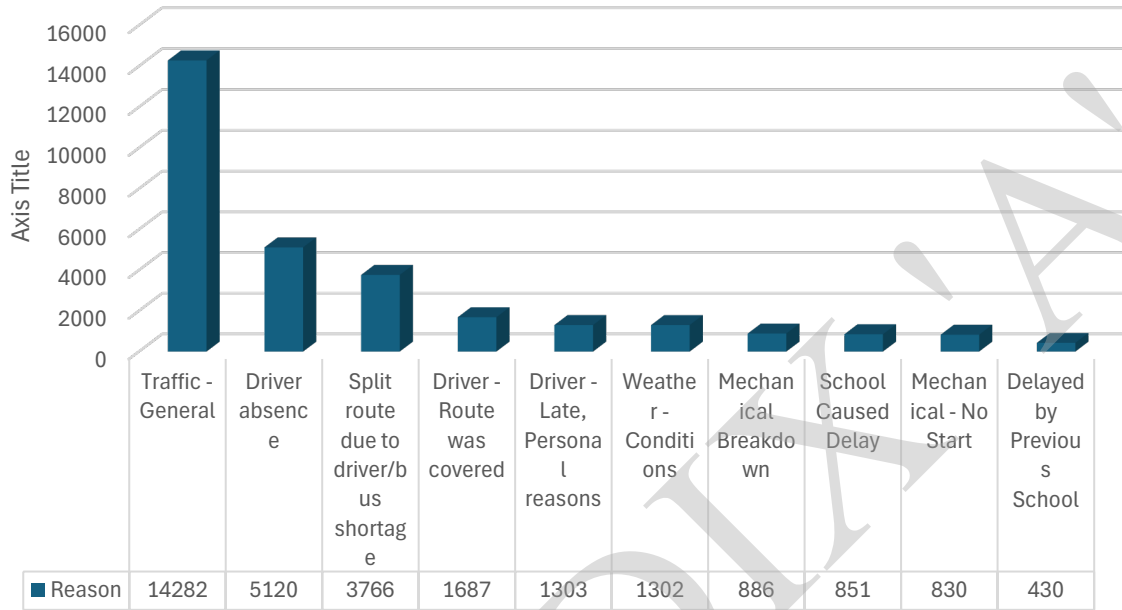
As part of the Consortiums annual review of routes, statistics are collected that identify trends in terms of how well services are provided. The most direct information is from schools and parents through surveys but there are also indicators that can be used to better understand service levels. All buses are equipped with GPS units. However, the school bus operators must assign the correct vehicles to the correct routes so that the data that is pushed to the public interface is correct. This has proven problematic for many of our carriers so we will have tablets as part of the bus for the 2024-2025 school year so that drivers can sign into their route prior to operating it that day. That should improve the accuracy of the data and minimize cases where the data is not available to the end user.

5. GPS Dashboard and tools to monitor school bus operations

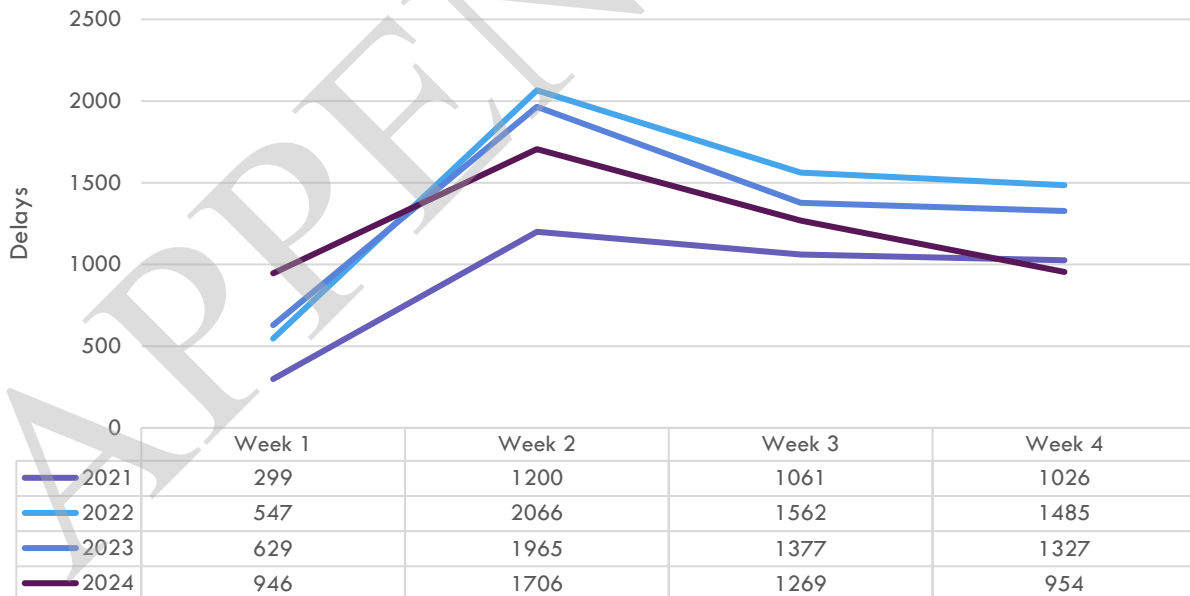




Top Ten Reasons for School Bus Delays 2023-2024



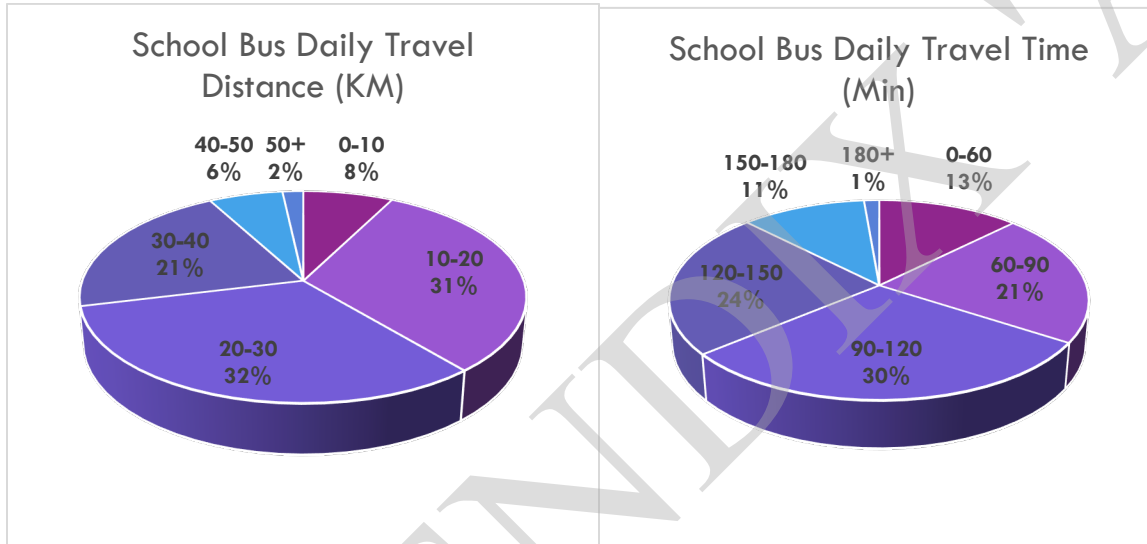
Delays by Week - Year over Year



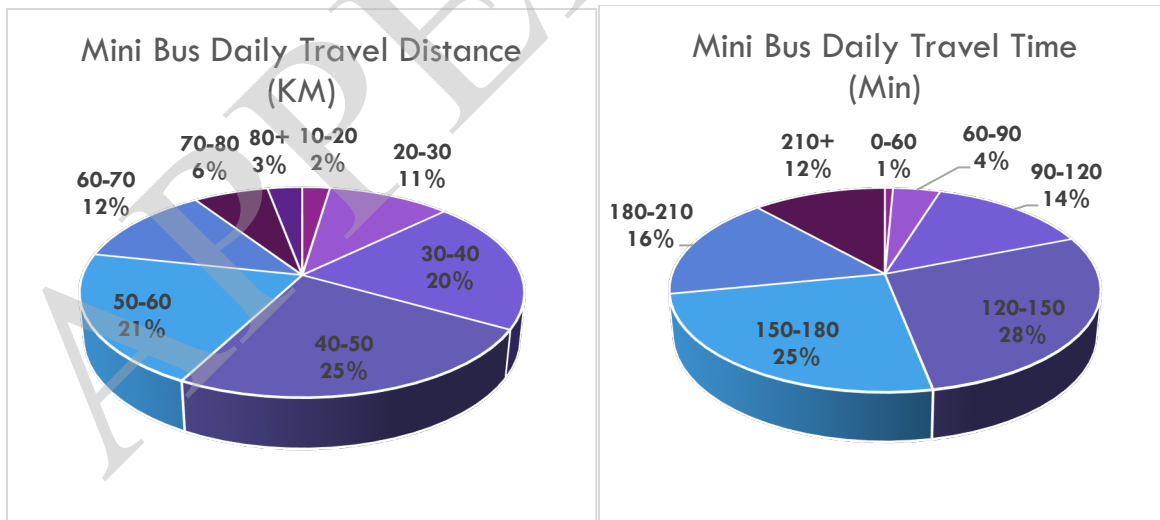
6. Service Level Indicators

Travel time and distance for students with special needs provides a picture of how services are provided for that group. Although we utilize almost two thirds of our buses to accommodate these students, most students use the large conventional school buses. The daily route time and distance travelled by these three modes of transportation is highlighted below.

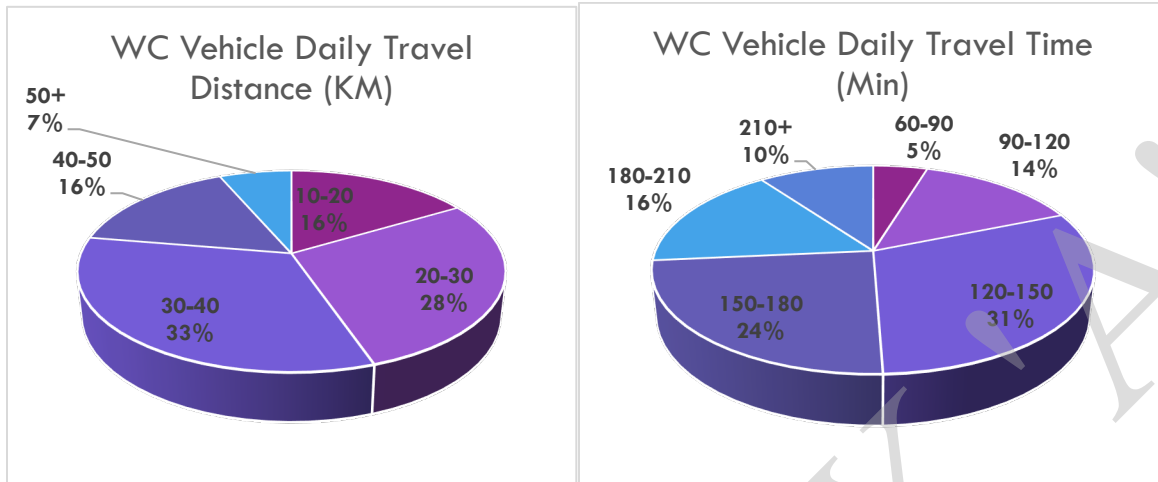
School Bus



Minibus



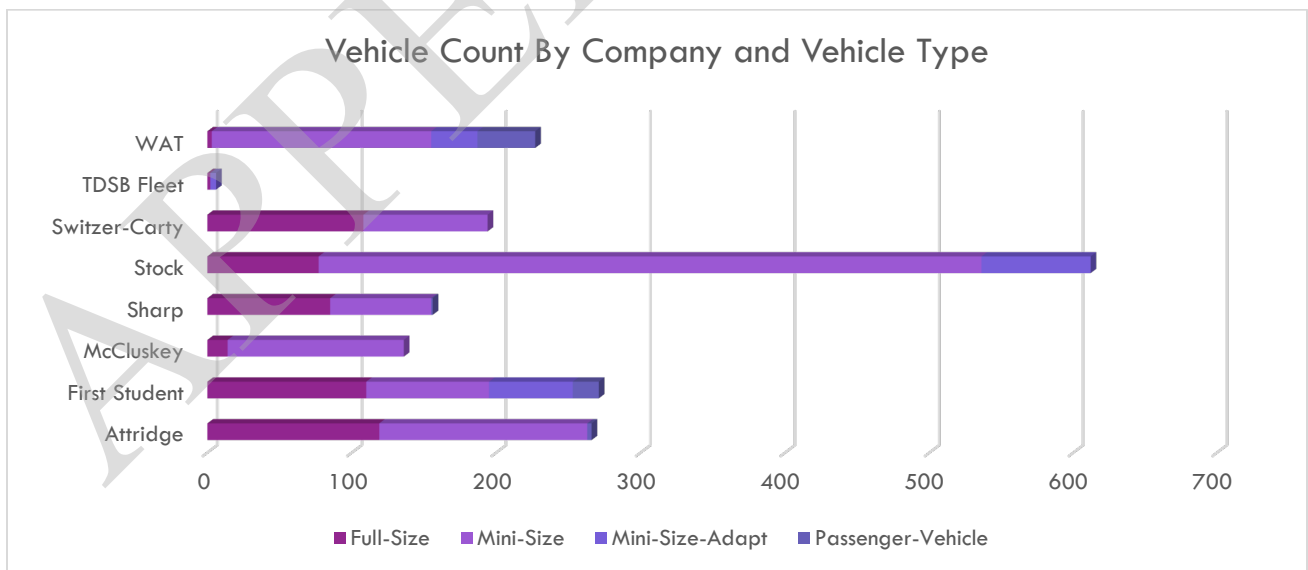
WC Vehicle

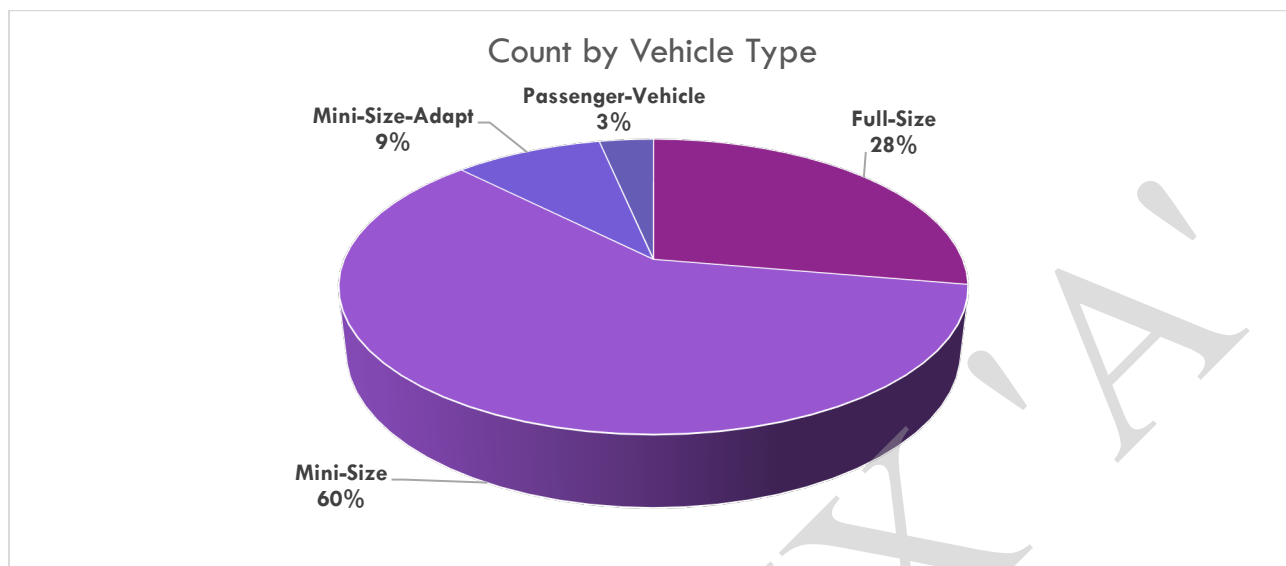


Operators

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 2022-2023.

7. Breakdown of contracted fleet

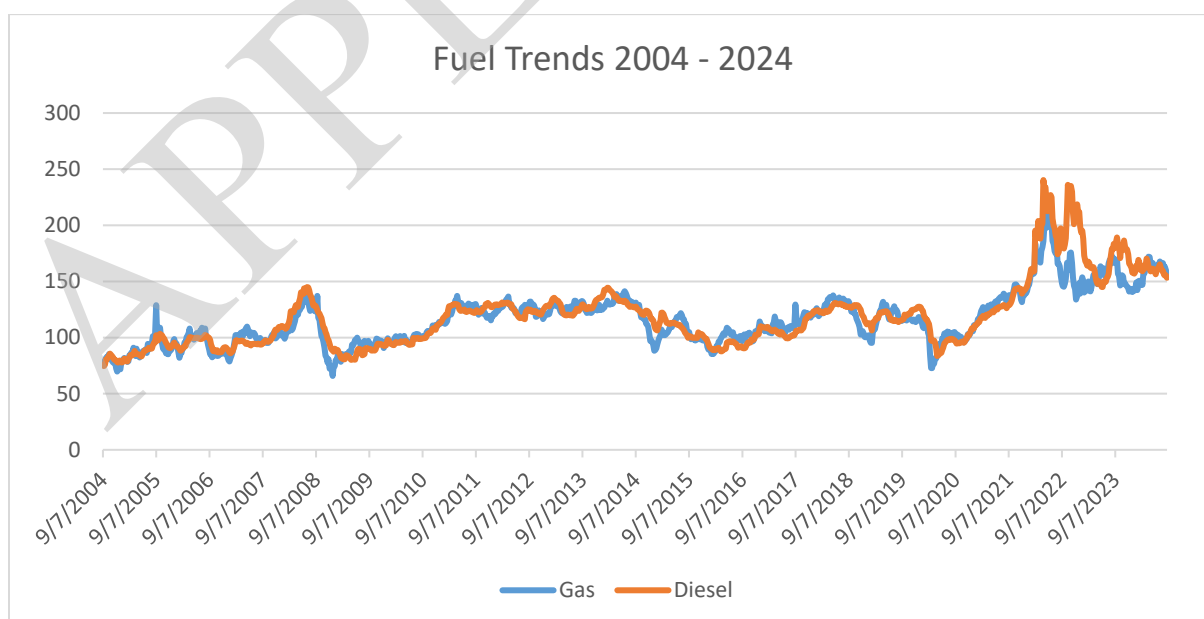


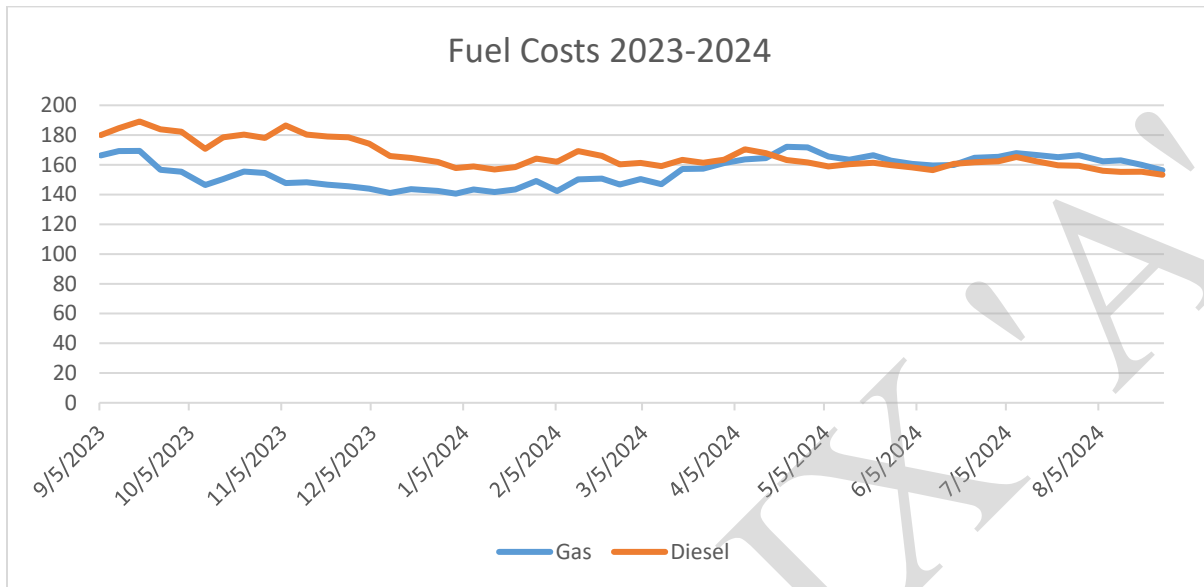


Fuel

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 20 years, we would see an increasing trend line. The following chart highlights the fuel costs over the years.

8. Fuel Trend over the last 20 years





Operator KPI

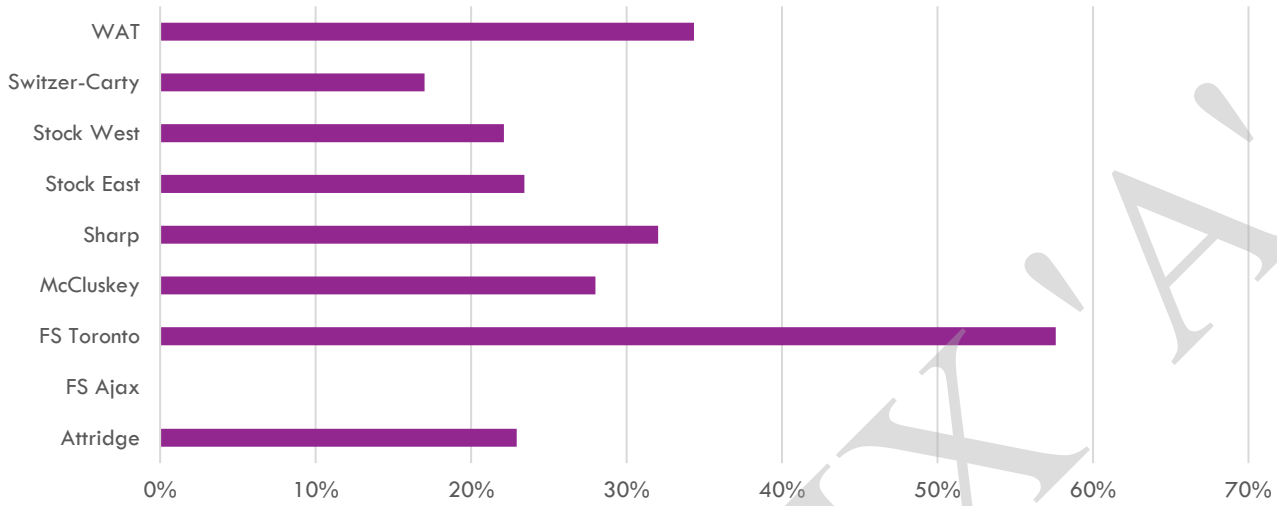
To monitor school bus operator performance a key performance indicator package is submitted by the operators to the Consortium each week. The statistics provide an overview of how well operations are proceeding at each individual division. Driver turnover remains a concern as it has risen year over year resulting in bus companies having to recruit and train more drivers at an accelerated pace. Where breakdowns are a concern impacting the level of service for schools and families, companies have been asked to review their maintenance programs to improve reliability.

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

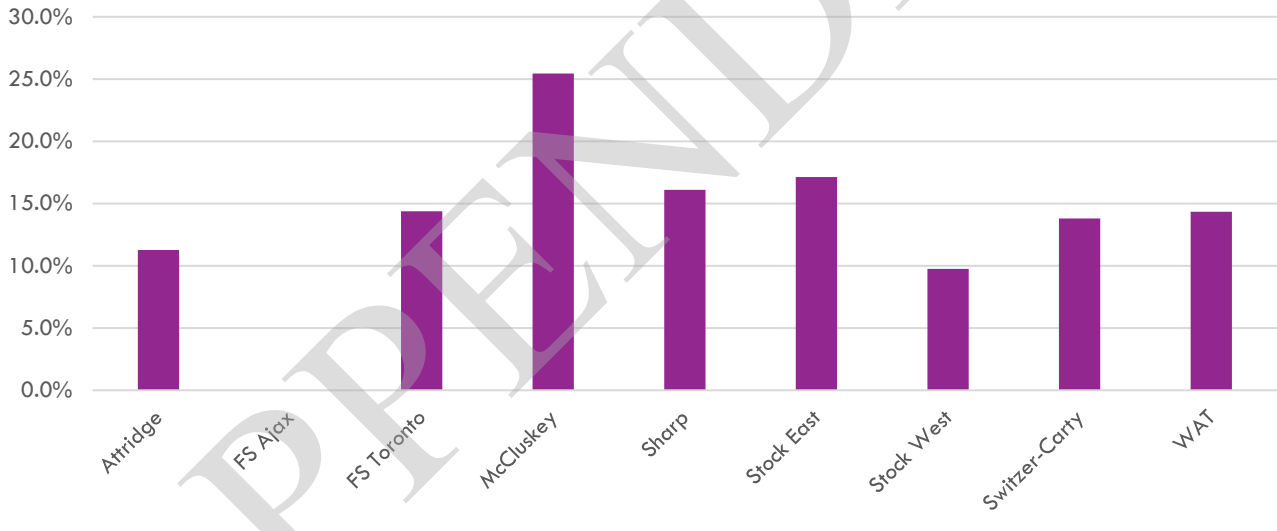
Total Number of Routes Servicing Toronto (AM/PM)
Total Number of Routes Servicing Toronto (Noon)
Grand Total Of Routes (Sum of two above)
Total number of weekly Trips
Open Routes - Yellow
Open Routes - Wheelchair
Open Routes - Mini Van
Open Routes -Total (please specify each individual route below)
Open Routes (percentage of AM/PM routes)
Number of drivers in training this week
Number of additional licensed drivers this week
Accumulated New Drivers
Driver recruitment %
Number of drivers who have left company this week
Driver Turnover Accumulated #
Driver Turnover (percentage of am/pm routes)
Driver Turnover Accumulated
Number of Collisions
Number of Collisions - Accumulated
Number of Collisions reported in TRACS
Collisions (as a percentage of am/pm routes)

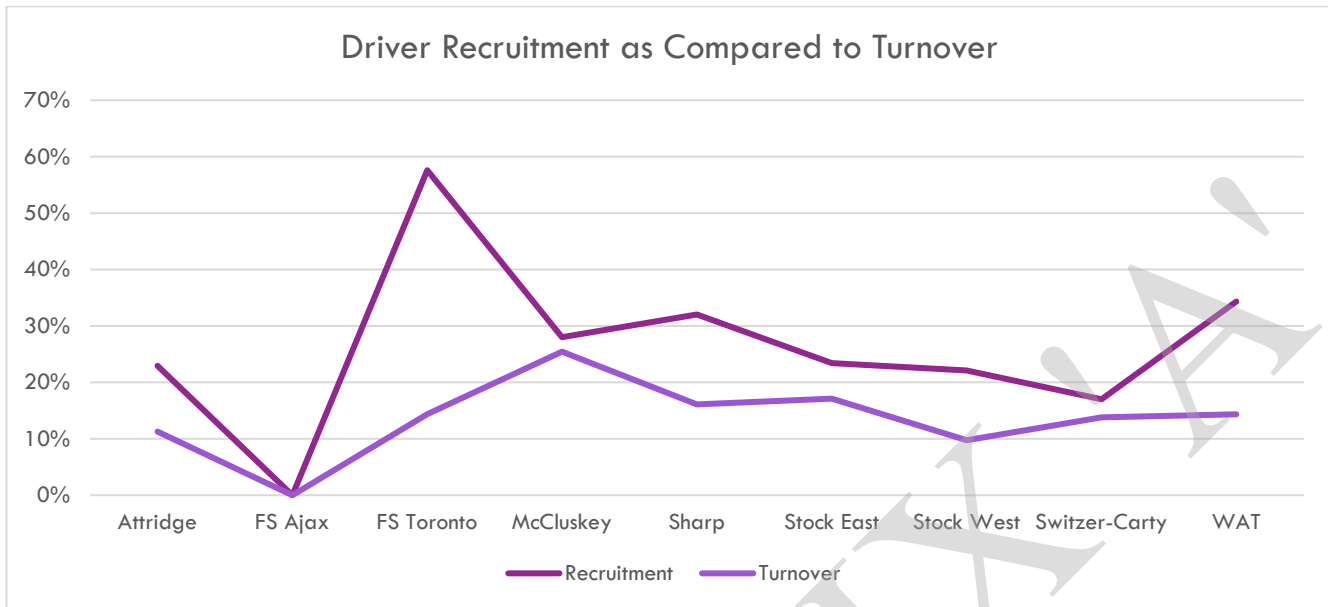


Driver Recruitment 2023-2024 (As % of Total Routes)



Driver Turnover 23-24 (As % of Total Routes)





Active Transportation

The TSTG with funding from the City of Toronto is working towards expanding our active travel initiatives. Working in tandem with the city of Toronto and their Vision Zero project, our active travel initiatives are intended to identify obstacles and issues that parents face and addressing them with active stakeholders to ensure a safe and healthy means to get to and from school. The first year of the project saw over 20 schools being added to the project as a means to help these communities with addressing concerns in and around their schools and communities. The chart below from the TDSB census shows the general travel mode for students in grade 4 to 6.

(5) TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM SCHOOL

(5.1) How do you usually get to school:	TDSB
Walk	47%
Bicycle	1%
School bus	9%
Public transit (e.g., TTC bus, subway)	6%
Car	34%
More than one mode of transportation	3%
Other	1%

(5.2) How do you usually come home from school:	TDSB
Walk	52%
Bicycle	1%
School bus	10%
Public transit (e.g., TTC bus, subway)	7%
Car	26%
More than one mode of transportation	2%
Other	1%

Active Travel teams are out monitoring the morning and afternoon pick up and drop off routines and making suggestions on how all students can pursue more active means to get to and from school.



The Transportation supervisor is working with a team of facilitators at Green Communities Canada to identify issues and hazards that prevent students from walking or cycling to school and recommendations on ways to address. The full report for the 2023-2024 school year that was submitted to the City of Toronto can be found here:

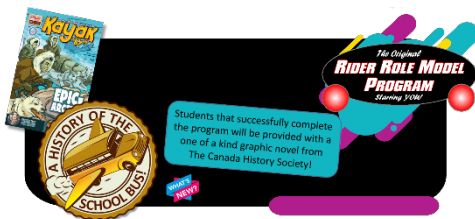
https://www.torontoschoolbus.org/?attachment_id=108775

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

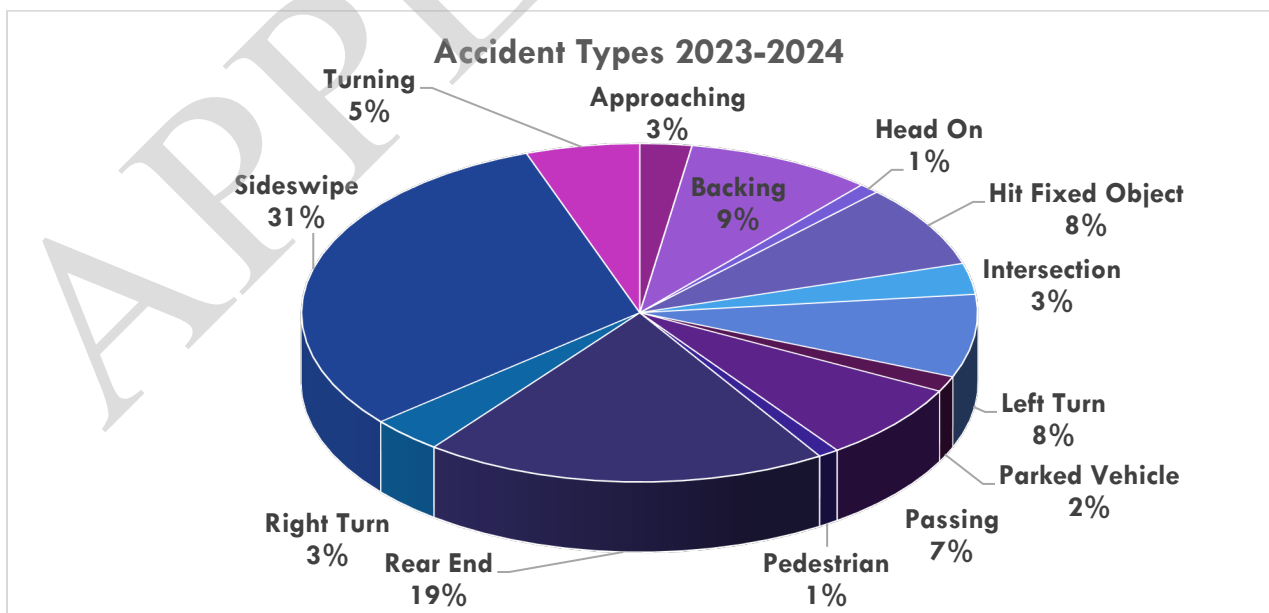
The Toronto Student Transportation Group provides several transportation safety programs to educate our students, families, and the general motoring public. A new program delivered by Intertrain using interactive media helps promote the school bus safety message to our students.



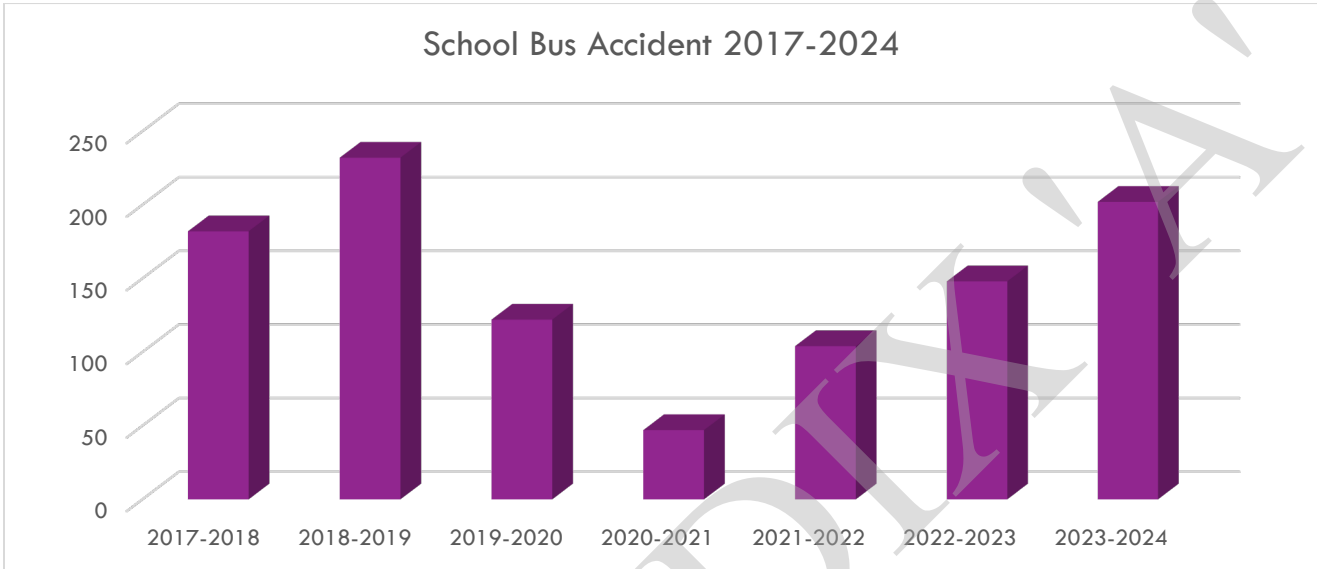
Accident Statistics

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.

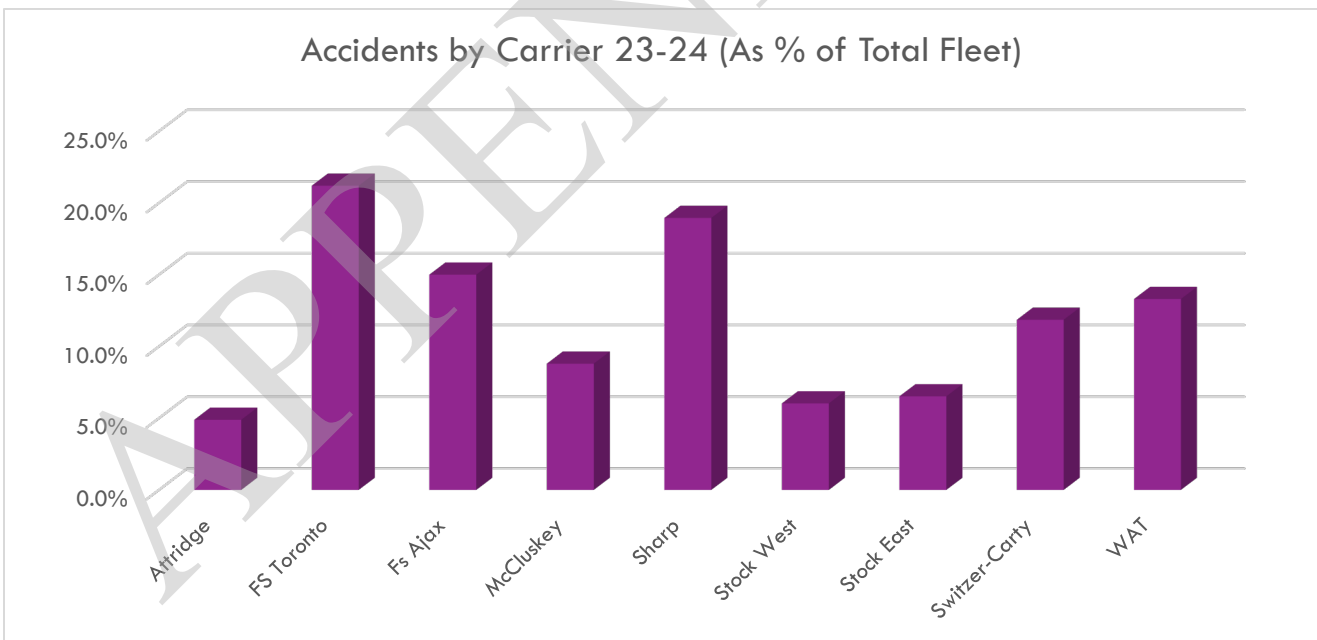
2. Conditions impacting school bus accidents.



3. Year over year summary of accident statistics



- Years with reduced service on account of Covid explain the dip in accidents in the chart above.



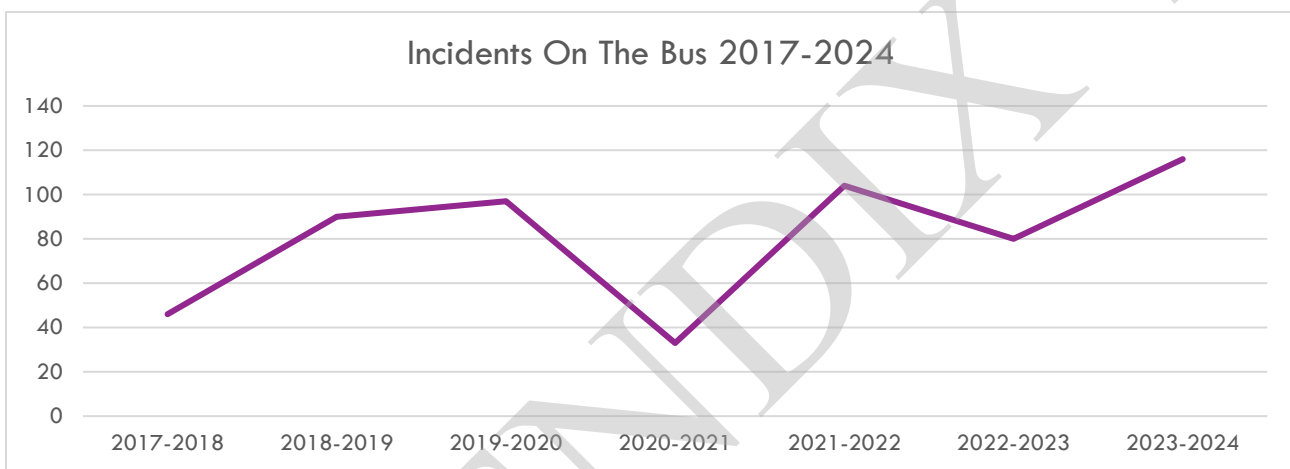


Incidents

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 continue to trend higher year after year with some minor variances including the year with reduced service for covid.



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. The use of safety vests (which are used to help secure students on the bus) has spiked in the 2023-2024 school year as per the chart below.

