



REPORT TO

CORPORATE SERVICES, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF TCDSB TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES AND MINISTRY REFORM OF TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND FUNDING

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Romans 13:1 (NRSVCE)

Created, Draft

February 6, 2018

First Tabling

February 8, 2018

Review

J. Volek, Acting Comptroller of Planning and Development Services

INFORMATION REPORT

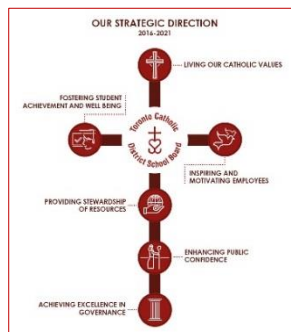
Vision:

At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Mission:

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.

We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.



Rory McGuckin
Director of Education

D. Koenig
Associate Director
of Academic Affairs

M. Puccetti
Acting Associate Director
of Planning and Facilities

L. Noronha
Executive Superintendent
of Business Services and
Chief Financial Officer

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG) has been faced with many challenges over the years in its efforts to offer transportation services to its students in an efficient and effective manner.

In the 2016-17 school year, the TCDSB faced a serious school bus driver shortage, which resulted in un-serviced routes and delays for many families. As a result of parent complaints, the Ombudsman's Office launched an investigation into the issue. The Ombudsman's Office issued a report in the summer of 2017 that highlighted 42 recommendations—all of which were accepted by both boards and the consortium.

In the 2017-18 school year, delays have still been reported as bus companies continue their struggle to recruit and retain licenced drivers—in Toronto and across the province.

This year, the TCDSB is expected to spend \$10.7M more than it receives in transportation funding from the province.

The Ministry of Education recognizes the transportation challenges experienced by boards across the province and have released a discussion paper that speaks to the development of a new student transportation policy and funding framework.

The Minister has stated that it is crucial that they consider the perspectives of students, families, communities, educators and school boards, and have since hired professional facilitators to help develop and guide a fulsome public engagement process. A Web-based platform for stakeholders to provide input and feedback is now available online and details are also available on our Board's Website.

The consultation process is open until March 29th, 2018.

The cumulative staff time required to prepare this report was 5 hours.

B. PURPOSE

To provide a summary update to the Board of Trustees on the challenges faced by the Toronto Student Transportation Group, and to provide an update on a new initiative by the Ministry of Education that will help guide the development of a new student transportation policy and funding framework.

C. BACKGROUND

Facts and Figures

1. The TSTG operates 1813 school purpose vehicles and transports over 50,000 students.
2. On average each month, the TSTG processes over 2000 applications (additions, changes, and deletes) and receives approximately 2000 phone calls and over 18,000 visits to the consortium Website.
3. Even in Toronto's urban environment, school purpose vehicles are travelling over 70,000 kilometres each day.
4. On average each month, the consortium will spend over \$7M to provide school bus service for students—utilizing 7 different school bus companies operating out of 12 divisions throughout the city.
5. An additional 6000 students are provided transit fares and approximately 80 students are serviced via taxicabs.

Transportation Funding History

6. Funding constraints in the mid-1990's resulted in the need for the realization of savings for school boards. At that time, transportation was one of the key areas where savings could be achieved. The TCDSB undertook significant transportation reform and adopted cutting edge technologies with a focus on route optimization and reduction in the number of required buses—Laidlaw Planning Services was contracted to provide student transportation planning services.
7. The implementation of a computerized routing solution and integration of the TCDSB with the former North York Board of Education special education routes resulted in the removal of 100 busses from the road and a savings of over \$3.2M.
8. Following amalgamation in 1998, the remaining Toronto boroughs were systematically introduced into the combined routing solution, resulting in the further removal of 38 buses.
9. **1998**—the funding formula for transportation was frozen and boards were only allocated what they spent on transportation services during that fiscal

year on a go-forward basis. This negatively impacted TCDSB and other school boards that had recently undertaken transportation reform as their budgets were frozen in a state of deficit. In the years to follow, school boards across the province have experienced significant cost increases.

10. Boards that undertook transportation reform prior to the freeze had relatively less opportunity to further realize savings as their expenses had already been rationalized. At this time, the TDSB had not undertaken significant reform.

Effectiveness and Efficiency Reviews

11. **2006**—the Ministry mandated the formation of transportation consortiums between coterminous boards in an effort to realize transportation efficiencies through economies of scale. With the creation of transportation consortiums, the Ministry began using “Effectiveness and Efficiency” (E&E) reviews by third party consultants as its sole mechanism to address transportation funding pressures.
12. **December 2010**—The TCDSB and TDSB transportation units received their first E&E review. Overall, the consortium scored a “moderate” rating, which resulted in the TCDSB receiving an additional \$1.5M in transportation funding. The consortium was given a series of recommendations to implement which would allow it to achieve a possible “high” rating.
13. One significant challenge faced by the TCDSB is the E&E review recommendation for policy harmonization with the TDSB. This would significantly decrease TCDSB transportation services levels and would also impact the greatest amount of students despite an anticipated budget savings of approximately \$2M.
14. **February 2014**—the Ministry of Education cancelled E&E reviews for consortiums. Further requests by the TSTG for a second E&E review have been declined by the Ministry. By not receiving a second E&E review, the TSTG becomes ineligible for additional grant money.

Transportation Budget Deficit

15. The TCDSB has been in a transportation deficit since 2000. The TDSB was in a surplus until the late 2000’s until they initiated expansion of their French Immersion program—now they too are in a deficit.

16. **September 2016**—a new Request for Proposal was issued for a six (6)-year bus operator contract. The new bus operator contract award added an additional **\$9M** to the overall transportation deficit (\$4M to TCDSB deficit).
17. **Based on 2017-2018 projections**—both Boards are expected to spend \$23M more on transportation than they receive in funding from the Ministry of Education (TDSB approximately \$12.3M, and TCDSB approximately **\$10.7M**)

Technology Delays

18. Due to the transportation deficit, there has been a delay in the deployment of new technologies such as live GPS tracking of all buses (for parents) and interior/exterior vehicle safety cameras. As a result, Toronto students and families miss-out on tools designed to improve communications and safety.

Ombudsman Recommendations

19. **September 2016**—a serious school bus shortage significantly impacted families in the City of Toronto and throughout the province of Ontario. As a result of parental complaints, the Ombudsman's Office launched a formal investigation into the issue. A report was generated in the summer of 2017 that highlighted 42 key recommendations—all of which were accepted by both boards and the consortium. A 6-month progress report is currently being developed by TSTG for submission to the Ombudsman.

Non-Qualifying Students

20. **January 18, 2018**—in a report to the *Corporate Services, Strategic Planning and Property Committee* staff provided a summary of non-qualifying students by Trustee ward. Over 7000 NQ students are transported by the TCDSB. These are students who are not eligible for service as they live less than 1.5 km from a school, but have been approved by the Board for transportation service. The three (3) main reasons for NQ transportation is as follows:
 1. Student retention around TDSB schools,
 2. Perceived safety hazard(s),
 3. Provide service to ineligible students on streets abutting established routes and very close to a natural divide (major road, river, rail line, etc.).

21. The issue of transporting NQ students has been raised by both the Ombudsman's Office and by the TDSB as contributing to inefficiencies in routing and adding additional cost to the consortium. It should also be noted that the TDSB transports French Immersion and Gifted students, while the TCDSB does not.

Traffic and Congestion

22. Toronto traffic is one of the most significant factors in the delivery of students in this city. Traffic related delays have accounted for 42% of all delays this year alone, and this is up over last year. It was only a few short years ago that bus drivers could perform twice as many runs as they do today.

Driver Recruitment and Retention

23. School bus operators across the province face a significant challenge with regard to the recruitment and long-term securement of school bus drivers, despite year-round recruitment programs and activities.
24. School bus drivers earn a relatively low income, work split-shifts, are responsible for the safety of up to 72 students on a bus, must navigate busy Toronto streets and require specialized licensing. The new minimum wage may further impact recruitment and retention as driver pay is on par with other forms of part-time employment.

Ministry of Education Public Engagement Process on Transportation Policy and Funding Reform

25. **December 22, 2017**—The Ontario Catholic School Trustee's Association (OCSTA) released a memo to all Chairs and Directors of Education regarding the need for Student Transportation Consultation. The memo speaks to a recently released discussion paper by the Ministry of Education entitled:
"Discussion Paper on a New Vision for Student Transportation in Ontario"
26. The discussion paper specifically speaks to "four pillars" that will guide the development of the Ministry's new student transportation policy and funding framework and its implementation:
 1. **Responsiveness**—does the service contribute to student achievement and excellence?
 2. **Equity**—are transportation services accessible for all students?

3. **Safety and well-being**—are the services conducive to student safety and well-being?
 4. **Accountability**—are services provided in an efficient and effective manner?
-
27. The Minister has stated that it is crucial that they consider the perspectives of students, families, communities, educators and school boards.
 28. The Ministry has retained the services of professional Facilitators Joan Green and Michel Paulin to help develop and guide a fulsome, inclusive public engagement process. This includes several consultant sessions as detailed on the consultation Website noted below.
 29. As part of the public engagement process, TCDSB community members who rely on student bus transportation to get to school are encouraged to get involved and participate directly through the online consultation platform at:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/consultation-new-vision-student-transportation>

Further details are also available on our Board's Website.
 30. The consultation process is open until **March 29th, 2018**.
 31. A memo on the public engagement process was e-mailed to all school Principals for distribution to parents as well as to Trustees on January 30th, 2018, which provided a link to the Ministry's online consultation platform. (*Appendix 'A'*)
 32. A report back to Board on the results of the province-wide consultation will be released in the fall of 2018.

D. CONCLUSION

This report is for the consideration of the Board.