



***Results of the Public response
to the recommendations from the Student
Transportation Services Review process and
report***

**Presented To: School District 8 (Kootenay Lake) Board of
Education**

Date: June 16, 2009

Background:

Student transportation services are an important component in the delivery of public education in the Kootenay Lake School District. Almost half of all students in School District No. 8 ride a school bus to and from school.

In recent years the transportation system has responded to service changes necessitated by declines in enrolments, closure of schools, changes to catchment areas and increased client expectations. Escalating energy costs have placed additional pressure on the system's limited resources.

In response to this situation, the Board of Education engaged the services of TRILLIUM *Business Strategies Inc.* in association with Grittner and Associates to conduct a comprehensive review of student transportation services.

The purpose of the review was to:

1. Assess whether student transportation services are being delivered fairly
2. Identify and assess ways of optimizing delivery of student transportation services to achieve efficiencies.

The intent of the process is to ensure that funds available for instruction are maximized.

The Student Transportation Services Review report was presented to the Board of Education on April 21, 2009. The Consultants created a summary of the report to assist in communicating the report findings and specific recommendations. Both the full report and PowerPoint presentation can be found on the School District website at www.sd8.bc.ca.

Following review of the report, the Board of Education requested staff to provide two additional sets of data to assist in their decision-making:

1. A financial analysis of budget impacts to the various recommendations;
2. To create an input and feedback process such that students, parents, staff and other stakeholders are given the opportunity to express their views about the proposed changes to student transportation services in the Kootenay Lake School District.

The intent of this report is to summarize the input received through the feedback process.

The Public Engagement Process:

Objective and Context:

The objective of the public engagement process was to clearly communicate information to students, parents, staff and other stakeholders such that they understood the background, process and proposed recommendations for achieving increased equity and improved efficiencies in the delivery of student transportation services for the Kootenay Lake School District.

The public were asked to provide valuable feedback and comments on the recommendations through the written comment questionnaire.

The recommendations found in the student transportation services report suggest a range of changes to the delivery of the current student transportation service in order to increase equity and improve efficiencies in these services. The reality is that, as humans, we are not particularly comfortable with change. When those changes are seen to be taking something away from us that we have enjoyed, coupled with the fact they involve the children of the community, public response is not expected to be positive.

In fact, the purpose of asking for public input becomes one of measuring the level of opposition to the recommendations, not the level of support for them.

Asking the public to provide input on 'Special Circumstances' is particularly valuable in showing if there are patterns to the needs of transportation users that exist outside of the proposed transportation delivery model, but may still be achievable in the new transportation system.

Offering a further complication to this process is the challenge to understand the relationship between services such as student transportation and educational resources in classrooms. The reality is that continuing the type and level of student transportation services in the School District will restrict educational services for students.

Public Engagement Sessions:

A public meeting style format was used with a PowerPoint presentation that summarized the Student Transportation Services Review report and recommendations, followed by a question and answer period. The PowerPoint presentation can be viewed at www.sd8.bc.ca.

A total of six public engagement sessions were held:

- Wednesday, May 20, 2009
5:00 to 6:30 pm
Prince Charles Secondary School
Creston
Presenter: Doug Hibbins, TRILLIUM *Business Strategies*
- Thursday, May 21, 2009
4:00 to 5:30 pm
Mount Sentinel Secondary School
South Slocan
Presenter: Doug Hibbins, TRILLIUM *Business Strategies*
- Thursday, May 21, 2009
6:30 to 8:30 pm
LV Rogers Secondary School
Nelson
Presenter: Doug Hibbins, TRILLIUM *Business Strategies*
- Tuesday, May 26, 2009
5:00 to 6:00 pm
JV Humphries Elementary School
Kaslo
Presenter: Larry Brown, Director of Operations, SD8
- Wednesday, May 27, 2009
5:00 to 6:00 pm
Crawford Bay Elementary Secondary School
Crawford Bay
Presenter: Larry Brown, Director of Operations, SD8
- Thursday, May 28, 2009
5:00 to 6:00 pm
Salmo Secondary School
Salmo
Presenter: Larry Brown, Director of Operations, SD8

Public Engagement:

Information about the public engagement session was communicated to the public by:

- Advertising, including ads in the Pennywise May 19 and the Nelson Daily News May 15, 19 and 25 as well as radio ads on KBS.
- Posting information on the SD 8 website

Event Attendance:

Number of people attending each event, from six identified groups

<i>Location</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>DPAC</i>	<i>Trustees</i>	<i>Senior Leadership</i>	<i>Administrators</i>	<i>SD8 Staff</i>	<i>TOTAL ATTENDEES</i>
Creston	7	1	3	2	1	3	17
South Slocan	20	1	2	1	3	2	29
Nelson	6	0	1	2	0	0	9
Kaslo	3	0	1	2	2	3	11
Crawford Bay	21	1	1	3	1	1	28
Salmo	3	0	1	1	1	0	6
TOTAL ATTENDEES	60	3	9	11	8	9	100

Collection of Information From the Public:

Comment questionnaires were made available to attendees at the public engagement sessions. People were also informed that the comment questionnaires were available on the School District website and could be submitted:

- at the public engagement sessions
- via e-mail at questconsulting@shaw.ca
- via fax at 1-250-746-9831.

The questions on the comment questionnaires were:

1. *A number of opportunities to increase fairness and improve efficiencies in the delivery of student transportation services have been identified through the Student Transportation Services Review. Are there other potential opportunities to improve fairness and achieve efficiencies that you feel should be considered by the School District?*
2. *A number of recommendations suggest that the School District should use discretion in “special circumstances”. Do you have specific suggestions as to what might constitute a special circumstance?*
3. *Are there any other comments or suggestions that you would like to bring to the attention of the School District as changes to student transportation services are considered?*

The deadline for receipt of all comments was Monday, June 1, 2009. A number of questionnaires were received after the June 1st deadline and these were included in the analysis.

Public Input Received:

A total of 47 pieces of public input were received, as follows:

<i>Source</i>	<i>Number of Input Pieces</i>
Fax	27
E-mail	20
TOTAL	47

All comments were made on the comment questionnaire or equivalent.

Each input piece was reviewed in detail and specific comments were tallied by identified themes / general topics of information. A number of prominent themes emerged in the survey responses. These themes occurred in all three questions, so responses have been aggregated and are not broken down by question.

Theme #1: Safety:

A total of 25 people raised the issue of increased safety risks to students as a result of recommended bus service changes. Particular safety issues are grouped into themes and captured in the tables below:

Road and Traffic Conditions:

<i>Road and Traffic Conditions Comments</i>	<i>No. of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Walking on the Highway / other busy roads	18
No sidewalk / no shoulder / snow on shoulder in winter	18
Speeders	11
High volume of ferry traffic (Crawford Bay issue)	9
SD putting financial decisions ahead of student safety	8
Curvy roads	7
More cars on roads as more parents forced to drive children to school or to bus stop	7
Required to cross highway / no crosswalk	5
Drunk drivers	4
Increased traffic volume around schools and bus stops	3
Required to cross railway tracks	1
Steep drop-offs beside roads	1
Anyone under 12 should be provided busing as they are not old enough to stay home alone, so should not have to go further to a bus stop or walk to school	1

Weather Conditions:

<i>Weather Conditions Comments</i>	<i>No. of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Winter conditions	13
Darkness / low light / low visibility	9
High Winds	1

Other Factors:

<i>Other Factors Comments</i>	<i>No. of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Animal predators (i.e. bears, cougars, coyotes, skunks, aggressive dogs)	14
SD putting financial decisions ahead of student safety	8
Human predators	5

Concerns were particularly expressed by respondents from Crawford Bay (at least 11 respondents) and those from more rural areas.

Five respondents complimented the current student bus service and indicated that it ensures student safety now.

Theme #2: Out of Catchment Bus Service:

A total of 25 people expressed concern with the recommendation to remove out of catchment bus service. Specific comments / concerns are captured in the following table.

<i>Out of Catchment Comment / Concern</i>	<i># of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Big impact on Blewett School in terms of number of students attending, efficiencies etc. given that about 30% of students are from out of catchment.	12
There are lots of kids at the bus stop and those near to it, both attending schools in the catchment area and out of the catchment area, so doesn't make sense not to continue to service the out of catchment students (bus is coming there anyway)	10
Shared custody situation where the school is conveniently located between where parents live	6
Reduced options for students, especially with respect to French Immersion, Special Needs, Wildflower etc.	4
Moving schools is very disruptive to student success	3
Public transit service does not operate everywhere	3
Location of school is convenient for workplace of working parents	3
Local school is full	2
Schools considered 'local' in Shore Acres and Glade area are in SD 20	2
Retain out of catchment service for South Slokan, Bonnington and Cora Lynn	2
Change catchment areas to reflect enrollment at certain schools	2
Current system offers poor timing for pick up / drop off of out of catchment students	2
Can't afford bus fare or to drive children to school	1
Reduces diversity of schools	1
Impacts on childcare / after-school care	1
Student would still have to take a bus if changed from 'out of catchment' to 'in catchment' school	1

Theme # 3: Service Delivery Issues:

A wide range of comments were made with respect to Service Delivery and are reflected below.

<i>Service Delivery Issue Comments</i>	<i># of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Bus is driving by anyways	8
Equal does not mean 'the same' (i.e. for individuals and communities)	6
Provide bus passes / public transit for out of catchment students throughout School District	5
Charge a fee for 'special' bus service	5
Cost to stop versus cost of empty seats	3
Add bus shelters	2
Parents / schools fundraise to raise dollars to cover some of busing costs	1
Walk limits should be no more than 2 km	1
Need someone in the bus garage on the east side of the lake	1
Minimize long bus rides (45 minutes)	1
Add lights at bus stops	1
Create bus pull outs	1
Add sidewalks	1
Put up signage to alert cars before and at bus stops	1
Don't eliminate occasional rider opportunities	1
Unhappy with bus driver's attitude and tone of voice with students	1
Create one central location for out of catchment pick up / drop off	1
Pleased no fees have been suggested in report	1
Physical disability of student or parent is a special circumstance	1
Reconfigure routes to avoid duplication (i.e. 2 buses on route 22 in morning, should be 1 bus)	1
Optimize bell times	1
Reconfigure out of catchment service to include students within catchment	1
Reduce costs of bus repairs through standardization	1
Improve location of bus stops and timing of buses to attract more riders	1
Amalgamate bus routes	1
Use smaller, hybrid buses	1
Choose less busy pick up points	1
Have funds to buy the buses, but not to run them	1
Concerned about any decisions that decrease high school student opportunities	1

<i>Service Delivery Issue Comments</i>	<i># of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Create transportation that supports visionary thinking	1
Look for government dollars / programs aimed at reducing carbon footprint	1

Theme #4: Review Process / Report Issues:

<i>Review Process / Report Issue Comments</i>	<i># of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Public sessions and questionnaire were not well publicized	3
Short timeframe for input	2
No cost analysis / impact analysis in report for its recommendations	2
Report and recommendations were not circulated directly to parents	1
Timing of meetings were not convenient (work day, dinner time)	1
No definition of 'base level service' in the report	1
Decisions should be made not by one person, but by a panel that includes parent representation	1
Agree with recommendations 7 and 8	1
Questionnaire did not allow for full communication of issues	1

Theme #4: Other Issues:

<i>Other Issues Comments</i>	<i># of Input Pieces That Made Mention</i>
Negative environmental impact / increased GHG emissions due to more parents driving students	11
Impact on parent's time, work schedule, ability to keep job	8
Education is a competitive marketplace between public, private, home schooling etc. Should not be cutting student services.	2
Appreciate the Board of Education trying to be as efficient and maximize money put into student learning	1
Improve / expand school programs (i.e. arts, music, phys ed, teaching assistants, foreign students)	1

Other Comments of Note:

Christine Grossutti, Climate Action Facilitator with the Youth Climate Leadership Alliance is offering to support and assist in ongoing alternative transportation options. Contact info: telephone – 250-354-6947; e-mail – christine.grossutti@gov.bc.ca.

Blewett School PAC has requested a meeting with the School District staff and Board representatives to discuss their particular circumstances.

Concluding Remarks:

The public engagement process to solicit public input about recommended changes to the delivery of bus services for School District 8 was one of integrity. The information gained from this process is valid and can be used as part of the Board of Education's decision-making process.