

Online Transportation Survey: Summary of Comments Provided

This survey was open from April 29 to May 8, 2016, and was conducted by the Calgary Board of Education with support from Delaney & Associates. A summary report of survey results is posted on the CBE website at www.cbe.ab.ca/dialogue/transportationdialogue. Below is a summary of the comments provided on the online survey, grouped into categories.

Notes on responses

- Many good ideas that were offered are not under CBE's control.
- Every effort was made to include the ideas provided in every comment, but it was not possible in all cases.
- Within the topics, comments are presented in order based on the number of times they were mentioned and the number of times they were mentioned is provided in brackets. If there is no number, assume there was one mention.

Overarching Themes/Agreements

Fees

Significantly more respondents requested fees be kept affordable, (keeping fees the same or marginally increased) than those reporting a larger increase was acceptable.

- Particular concern was noted by families with multiple children, and the combined cost of transportation and lunchroom supervision fees.
- Concern that high fees would increase people choosing to drive rather than take the bus.

Alternative programs

Respondents were about equally split on whether there should be or should not be fee differentiation, based on their personal understanding of choice, fairness, equity, and costs.

Kindergarten

The majority of respondents did not want mid-day kindergarten busing removed, or if it was, wanted some form of full day kindergarten.

- They have no other way to get children where they need to be, especially for working parents.
- They don't want to cut down potential kindergarten registrants.

Waivers

Of those commenting, almost all felt families should be requested to pay at least partial fees.



Walk distance

Most of those who commented thought the walk distance from home to the bus was too far, and some of those were willing to pay more for a shorter walk.

Detailed response data

Use of learning dollars (21)

Do not use learning dollars for transportation (19)

Do use learning dollars for transportation (2)

Fees (153)

- Do not increase, already expensive (25)
- Please keep affordable (17)
- Most made reference to current economy
 - Fees create a vehicle problem/means I or others will drive (13)
 - All scenarios too high (13)
 - Will pay more for same or better service (11)
 - For multiple children but don't qualify for waivers, fees are too high (9)
 - No choice about using Calgary Transit, so should not have to pay more (6)
 - \$500 and up not okay (6)
 - Continuing increases not okay (5)
 - Should be no fee (5)
 - Calgary Transit should not be more than yellow, we don't choose which we ride (5)
 - Must pay for itself (4)
 - If you live far away, pay more (4)
 - Busing plus lunch plus materials fee too high (4)
 - Small increase okay (3)
 - With all the other fees, adds up for two children (3)
 - Needs to be less than \$300 (2)
 - Increase to \$500 (2)
 - No fee if no community school
 - \$100 increase a year okay
 - Pay full cost if outside walk zone
 - Cost of gas & wages have increased, fees should too
 - Do not do by distance
 - Charge more for lunch room supervision for walking families
 - Less fee if no choice re busing
 - Increases will just increase waivers
 - If increase, then family maximum
 - Too high will prevent alternative choice vs walking to community if you have more than one child
 - I can drive my two kids to school for 60per cent of what you charge.
 - Waivers will cover those who cannot pay increase for better service
 - Willing to pay more so junior high not on transit
 - High school to Career and Technology Centre should pay own way
 - Consider a discount/incentive for early registration



- Junior high pay what is costs, safety not the same issue

Waivers (35)

- Parents should pay some portion of the fee (19)
- Ensure only those who really need get (8 including 2 below)
- Get rid of principal waivers, people abuse (2)
 - Comment reflect lack of knowledge re availability of principal waiver (3)
 - Rather pay more to have all families' needs met
 - 50 per cent for alternative, 25 per cent regular
 - 50 per cent for all
 - People who choose to stay home and only have one income do not need waivers
 - No one should be waived

Family Maximum (13)

- Please consider (9)
- Have 3 kids, won't bus if no family max (2)
- Less for more than one child on same bus
- Do not consider, it's their choice

Alternative Program (121)

- CBE offers so should be same price/ all CBE kids should have busing (49, comments below included)
- Alternative is closer than designated (10)
- Community school is full (8)
- No community school (7)

Parents who choose to send their kids to out of area schools or specialty schools should pay more for busing (41, comments below included)

- assumption students are being bused farther or have community choice a factor in decision (12)
 - No extra fee for language alternatives (4)
 - Would pay more to keep alternatives (4)
 - Treat all alternatives the same (3)
 - A choice, cover own costs fully (2)
 - Stop offering non-language alternatives (2)
 - Too many programs in general (2)
 - Not fair, Traditional Learning Centres would pay more and may cost less (2)
 - Put Traditional Learning Centres in more schools instead of fixing busing (2)
 - An "open to all" survey works against alternative programs
 - No busing at all
 - No busing for alternatives with few students
 - Busing must be considered when starting programs
 - Extra fee will decrease enrollment
 - Leave alternatives other than French Immersion to the charters
 - Apply a surcharge if they are going out of the community



- If you are going to do it phase it in, so those registering know they will have to pay more
- Close under- utilized programs
- If we can't afford it, don't offer it, if we offer it, no different fee

French Immersion

- Should not be considered alternative (19)
- Languages in general should be same as other alternatives (3)
- French should be same as other alternative languages
- New schools should be dual track French and English
- Only offer French Immersion as an alternative

Choice, where you live

- You choose where you live, pay the price of transportation (7)

Kindergarten (78)

Do not eliminate mid-day, essential (50, comments below included)

- Especially hard for working parents (9)
- Concern students will not attend kindergarten (8)
- Parent no longer has kindergaren child but still responded (8)
- If no midday service, need full day kindergarten (10)
- If no midday need alternating full day (8)
- Not fair/punishing, should not need a car for kindergarten (4)
- Must be mid-day bus for safety
- Increase fee to keep kindergarten
- Eliminate, half day kindergarten is not worth it
- Parents can organize it among themselves at noon
- Only eliminate for alternative programs
- Mid-day unless ridership is low

Complex Learning Needs (20) no changes proposed in scenarios

- Same price as regular (10)
- Essential for GATE (4)
- Not sure how any of these scenarios affect special needs
- Learning and Literacy need door to door service
- Should pay more
- Some students do not need, take Calgary Transit on weekends
- Why do they get door to door?
- Kids are leaving complex needs programs because the busing is so poorly organized.

Ride times (21)

- Do not increase (7)
- Over an hour too long (4)
- Decrease (2)
- 30-40 min max (2)
- Would pay more for shorter ride time (GATE) (2)
- Stop transporting so far from home
- 45 minutes for a 5 minute drive is not reasonable
- Should be a priority



- Increase if it would save costs

Walk Distance to bus (55)

- Too long at present distance (14)
- Pay more to walk less (13)
- K-3 not more than 800 m (7)
- K-6 not more than 800 (2) additional
 - Kids need exercise/increase walk zone (5)
 - Do not increase (4)
 - Up to 1.0 km okay (2)
 - Not more than 800m for anyone
 - Shorter distance means more riders and more income
 - Should be a priority
 - 4-6 in middle school same distance as elementary
 - 1.5 km is appropriate
 - Junior high can walk the longer distance
 - Should be measured by actual streets and walking routes
 - Add stops on current routes to make distance shorter

Walk distance to school (18)

- Do not increase, not safe (7)
- Increase (5)
- Offer winter busing if increased (2)
- 2.4k walk in Calgary in winter is unacceptable
- Elementary at 2 km too far
- Needs to be shorter
- Should be the same as walk to bus

Safety (20)

- Winter is cold, dark, not safe (6)
- More important than fees (4)
- Walks need to be safe (3)
- More cost= fewer riders= more drivers= less safe near school (2)
- Distance cannot increase due to safety
- Need options that change with the weather
- Parent drivers are unsafe
- Neighbourhood safety concerns
- Crossing busy roads unsafe

Bell times (11)

- Change bell schedule, share bus among schools (4)
- Do not change (3)
- Start time before 8:20 a.m. not good (3)
- Not more than ½ hour either way



Routes (28)

- Need them out earlier to plan (9 including below)
- many routes don't change year over year and the wait is unnecessary.
 - Increase shared routes between schools (8 including below)
- share routes coming out of same community (2)
- share alternate programs-elementary with same junior
 - Make fewer changes once posted (4 including below)
- Our son's route has changed 3 times this year - significantly. We've had a maximum of 3 days notice - it's really, really challenging to deal with.
 - Variable routes for winter, add more (2)
 - Will drive next year, no reason specified
 - Shared route means junior high starts half hour earlier
 - Pick up time too early, we drive
 - More stops could be on main routes instead of going into communities
 - Priority should be to designated school

Congregated Routes/Low Ridership (39)

- Use congregated stops for all programs as needed (12)
- Eliminate low ridership routes in general (5)
- Don't bus to alternatives with low ridership (4)
- Yes, use congregated stops, specifically for alternative programs (4)
- No, do not use congregated stops, specifically for alternative programs (3)
- Alternatives should pay more for low ridership routes (3)
- Low ridership in general should pay more (2)
- Include mid-day kindergarten if eliminating for low ridership
- Congregated stops mean we don't use the bus
- In some cases adding one stop would make a difference for congregated being usable
- Congregated routes are better than higher fee
- If you are congregating, one year's notice
- Congregated stops unsafe

Service levels in general (43)

- Must be convenient or will not use (time, distance) (10)
- ALL students should be provided for (5)
- Present level is fine (5)
- Ridership will drop if fees go up (3)
- Is an essential service, especially K-6 (3)
- Late buses an issue (2)
- Goal should be keeping children in their community (2)
- To closest school only(2)
- Service for past four years has been very poor.
- Not September 2015 service levels
- Keep conditional riders (pay to ride in walk zone)
- I will need bus for my kids born 2011, 2014, 2015
- Have always walked but will need bus in junior high
- Keep elementary the same
- Restore to 2014-15 or prior levels



- Conditional riders need to be approved faster
- Too many bus breakdowns
- Have had problems with driver disciplining that have not been attended to
- The drivers I have had have been wonderful at the care of safety of my kids, and it is also good for my kids in terms of a certain independence

Use of Calgary Transit (32)

- 7-9 on CT (9)
- Not until grade 10 (5)
- 4-6 not on CT (3)
- No more than one transfer (2)
- Small buses don't carry the load, don't start the year with them until you know they work (2)
- Use only Calgary Transit, not for-profit
- Consider transfer time and issues
- Yellow bus pass should be good on Calgary Transit during school hours
- Partial pass, school days only
- Use Calgary Transit more
- Dedicated route is working
- Have used for 3 years no problem
- Ours is standing room only, yellow bus everyone sits
- Bus often is already full when it gets to stop and drives by, then transfer connection is missed
- Share dedicated routes with more than one community
- More transit buses need to be available at peak time when students finished school

Scenario 2/3 with modifications (2)

Scenario 2

- Shorter walk for elementary, pay for waiver
- Agree, with fee between \$300-\$400

Scenario 5B

- Okay with fee, increased walk zone and program differentiation

Scenario 5A

- Is a no, fees would be up 150 per cent

Survey in general (51)

- 50 characters implies you don't actually want feedback (13)
- Last question does not make sense (13)

Comments re: options

- Need more options (5)
- Aspects of each of these scenarios are great but there is no single scenario that is the 'perfect' solution in my opinion. (4)
- Should have included carpooling option
- Found it very hard to respond to this survey the way the options were bundled.



- Options just don't seem as though they are balanced or even reasonable
- Scenarios did not address walk distance properly

- Excellent approach to engagement and scenario analysis (2)
- Chart to compare all bus options on one page would have helped (2)
- Survey should have been simplified and proof-read prior to being issued (2)
- Should ask for ranking without groups
- Hard to read, sloppy
- Very good to take feedback from us students.
- It may have been better to list all scenarios and have me rank them from 1-5 at the end
- I feel like this is a waste of time and taxpayers money for an inaccurate study
- Much better consultation process this time thank you, vs springing it on us within weeks of school starting

Other: Under CBE Control (46)

Question CBE financial practice

- Manage your money/operating costs better (5)
- Take money out of payroll account, admin (5)
- Sell the building and move outside of downtown/lease comments (4)
- Whole budget needs review (3)
- Should not have spent so much on the new building
- Encourage employees to telecommute
- Cut teachers or their salaries
- Rent out spare space in schools
- Look for a provider who can do it for existing fees/lower cost (4)
- No more early dismissal days/half days (not kindergarten) (3)
- Reassess boundaries to ensure students are attending closest school for program (2)
- Ask the Catholic Board how they do it (2)
- Have fewer PD days
- Extend hours, start summer vacation May 31
- Kids need to go to school in their own neighbourhoods
- Offer incentive to parents who drive
- Charge parents who drive a drop off fee
- Make kids show pass, some are riding and not paying
- Walkers in community school first
- If we lived in Airdrie we would pay less
- Increase revenue by opening up transportation to those in the walk zone
- Close underutilized schools
- If you had not put grade 5/6 in junior high you would not have the problem of busing them
- Should have made the changes when we did this the first time
- Should not be using for-profit providers
- Implement anything you can for 2016-17



Other: Not Under CBE Control (22)

- School bus service should be Alberta government responsibility (6)
- What about a parent-shared-ride program? (4)
- Before and After care does not work with busing (3)
- Need more Before and After care (3)
- Ensure P3s are appropriate in costing
- Cut spending in other government areas to cover costs.
- Need more school buildings, like Catholics
- Build schools where the kids are
- Bus fees need to be tax deductible
- Ask the city for its surplus

Other, General (21)

- Thank you it is an important topic (5)
- This is contentious, good luck (3)
- Unhappy that family split by school re-designations
- So incredibly frustrating ,for you guys and for parents
- Complicated issue
- This "FREE" education is certainly expensive...
- I didn't trust the math.
- Support cycling through infrastructure & advocacy
- Additional means of funds should be considered
- Why are you asking us, we know nothing about transportation?

- What are the principles/values/priorities for making the decisions?
- Just a tactic to get parents to lobby the province
- CBE is on the right track with transportation.
- Transportation is okay, fix report cards
- Ridership vs. parents driving - needs fixing

Unsure as to meaning of comment (4)

- Walk zone students be allowed fee waivers for bus.
- How special needs transportation is funded and used based on cost per child using
- Should be no conditional rider as everyone should be bused to their school if eligible
- Use the model from 30 years ago

