



Online Transportation Survey: Summary of Comments Provided

This survey was open April 7-16, 2016, conducted by the Calgary Board of Education with support from Delaney + Associates. There is a report of the responses to the questions posted on the CBE website, cbe.ab.ca/dialogue. Below is a summary of the comments that we received from the on-line survey, grouped into categories.

We should note that:

- Many good ideas were offered that are not under CBE's control, and are listed as such.
- Comments may or may not accurately describe a situation, but are still recorded.
- An honest attempt was made to include every comment.
- Within the topics, comments are presented in order based on the number of times they were mentioned, which appears at the end of the initial category , otherwise assume 1 mention.
- If there were enough similar comments to generate a theme, it is noted in theme headings.

Overarching Themes/Agreements

- Support for Complex Learning Needs (special needs) is not debated; the vast majority of people feel those students should pay no more than a regular rider
- General consensus that we should continue investigating any improvements that would come from partnering/collaborating with CTS, even though this is not a perfect solution for everyone and would for the most part occur for the 2017-18 school year
- Of those who commented, more parents believe that classroom dollars should *not* support transportation than the reverse
- Of those who commented, more parents believe there should be some consideration for those who cannot attend a community school (none or on overflow) than for those who choose not to attend for whatever reason
- Non-alternative program parents think alternative programs should pay more, and alternative programs parents have a variety of reasons why they disagree
- Most of those with no choice about being bused think they should pay less, with no agreement on alternative program students in this situation
- Waivers generated 42 comments, with a common theme arising of asking people to pay something, rather than all or nothing

- A greater number of people preferred bus stops closer to home than any other distance/time solution, some willing to sacrifice ride time and some willing to pay more to have this happen
- There is a desire to have routes posted earlier so parents can plan
- There is also a desire for the use of caregiver addresses
- Many, but certainly not all, non-language alternative program parents would be okay with going back to congregated stops, which is what many signed up for initially. We should the following:
 - It does limit access for those who do not drive
 - In many cases it's cheaper and faster, if you do drive
- Younger students should walk a shorter distance, no specific agreement as to number, but 800-1000m would likely be acceptable
- Indication that changing bell times to save transportation costs would be disruptive to families, bad for learning, and no agreement on what a good change would look like and be acceptable
- Of the comments regarding yellow buses, the biggest concern is late buses
- Some parents did combine comment about noon supervision fees with transportation concerns, which are not reported in this document

Frequently Occurring Words

- Indicate high interest in a topic, whether or not that interest leads to a solution, or reflects an accurate description of what it references
- Alternative programs gave rise to 222 comments, 73 on the topic in general, and 149 specific to fees. About 25,000 (20%) students attend alternative programs, and about half of them use yellow bus transportation. They are also about half of the yellow bus riders.
 - 50 people thought it was an inappropriate question to ask for a variety of reasons
 - 78 thought alternative programs should pay more, with disagreement about French Immersion
 - There is a belief that alternative program students could simply return to their community schools
- Safety was a frequently used word, describing many different issues, and is of high concern to parents. Cold, dark, bad drivers and unsafe walk routes were most frequently occurring concerns.
- Distance was a frequently used word, with the idea that distance travelled should influence the fee in a variety of circumstances; some but not all referring to alternative programs.
 - No consensus on what might trigger a distance charge
- Choice was a frequently occurring word, and in most cases people thought those who chose should pay more. However, what constituted choice was varied and not agreed upon, including:

- Where you choose to live
- How many children you choose to have
- How you choose to spend your money
- Which program you choose for your child and why
- How far you choose to live from a school
- Whether you choose to work or not
- How many schools your kids go to, separate from grade level considerations

General Comments (21) including:

Fine the way it is (13)

- current plan is good (9)
- appreciate what we have (4)

Do whatever it is you need to do to provide good bus service (3)

Do whatever is most cost effective (5)

Who Gets Bussed, General (33)

- Every family has different circumstances and needs, can't meet them all (10)
- When junior high and high schools are on the same lot, let high school kids ride the yellow bus (8)
- Bus stops should only exist if there is no neighbourhood school (4)
- Parents responsibility to get their kids to and from school (4)
- Paid busing should only be available to closest school (3)
- Except special education
- There should be busing for kids up to grade 10 only (2)
- Offer programs closer to where children live and fund transportation properly
- Have high school kids attend their own school, except special education

How to decide Fee (150) (not including alternative program issue which is a separate theme that follows)

- Distance travelled (unrelated to program) (37)
- If I want to attend my community school but can't (it has been closed, capped, don't have one etc.) than my fee should be lower/nothing (16)
- Do not use education dollars (15)
- User pay only, not from everyone's fees (9)
- All parents should contribute to fix the deficit, I don't have a choice about being on a bus (8)
- No one should pay fees for public education (7)

- Need a family maximum (6)
- Fees should be lowered no matter what program (6)
- We should pay whatever the cost is (6)
- All regular program students on buses could pay a bit more in fees (6)
- Fees should be no more than we receive from government (4)
- Parents choose to live in an area without a community school, fees should reflect that (4)
- Not too big an increase or will lose ridership (3)
- Distance with a min and max cap (2)
- Having more than one child on the bus going to the same place should be eligible for a discount. (2)
- \$330 per year is CHEAP (2)
- Two tier; offer a choice where people who want the closer stop choose to pay a premium for this service (2)
- Fees are a necessary evil, or tax increases
- No family maximum, people made a choice about how many kids they had
- Lower the conditional rider fees, it is a bonus
- Pay similar to now for regular program
- Make sure everyone is actually paying or waived if they ride
- All students in elementary school should pay the same transportation fee regardless of program
- Two-Tiered system for elementary and junior high.
- Middle school should use dedicated Calgary Transit with a subsidy from CBE.
- High School should use regular Calgary Transit and pay full
- Family income
- Modified school students should pay more
- Fee we get from government for 10-12 transportation should go to bus rebate
- Transit and yellow same fee
- If provincial funding is \$549 per student then transportation decisions should be formulated on the walk limit and number of stops that can be provided using that funding alone.
- Low rider areas should have to pay more or access stops in a different community with more kids.

Complex Learning Needs (48)

- Pay same as regular program (33)
- Special needs door to door depending on their needs (7)
- Same or subsidized (4)
- All students registered in all schools should have to contribute to the cost of busing for special needs students (3)
- Pay more, cost more (3)
- No fees at all (3)
- The costs of special needs transportation should NOT be charged to other parents

- Change the conditional rules for siblings of special needs students, can't wait until October, need to be in the same school

Programs of Choice/Alternative Programs General (73)

- Don't think French Immersion should be treated like other alternatives, dual language country (16)
- Family responsibility, no bus (11)
- Alternative programs as privilege/choice not a right (9)
- Get rid of specialized programs, promote community schools (6)
- There are fewer people in alternative programs so of course you will get majority of responses saying alternative programs should pay more (5)
- Eliminate the ones with few students (4)
- If an area has insufficient capacity and alternative programs balance the student load, is it more cost efficient to bus kids vs build local capacity (4)
- TLC and FI have so many riders and sites they do not cost more (4)
- Should be congregated stops only (3)
- Only offer French Immersion (2)
- Alternative programs should not accept applicants city-wide; alternative programs should be expanded to cover more areas. (2)
- Look at CBE policy 3044.4
- Optional programs you should expect to travel on the bus for a longer period of time up to 45min - 1 hour
- Maybe if some of those programs were eliminated the reduced costs of transportation could be reapplied to classrooms and hiring teachers.
- Concern with cost recovery for alternative programs: if prices are increased too much, those programs will be impacted on viability
- High school language programs need other options than transit

Fee for Alternative Programs (149)

- I don't think "overall cost" of alternative programs is a fair criterion (50) (including those below)
 - Should not have to pay more if there is no school in the community, or school is on overflow anyway (12)
 - Distance should be considered, alternative may be closer or former community school for the area (9)
 - You opened programs to fill schools, not fair to change the rules now (6)
 - Some people have lost their community school and have to bus (6)
 - If one school has a regular and alternative program, fee should be the same (4)
 - Alternative programs often accommodate special needs, gifted as an example (4)
 - The school suggested my child would benefit, I should not have to pay more (4)

- Two tier fees for alternative and regular programs (48)
- Alternative programs pay full cost (15)
- Alternative pay the same, to be accessible to all, public programs (12)
- Two tier for alternative except FI and regular programs (6)
- Programs with lower costs like FI, TLC should not be subsidizing those with higher costs (6)
- Alternative slightly higher cost than regular (6)
- If the cost is higher, currently enrolled kids should be grandfathered and not have to change mid-stream due to cost (3)
- Should be higher, but not double hit for distance too
- I will pay higher fees for alternative program for increased service levels
- If there is a bus rebate again, alternative programs should get it too

Conditional Riders (9)

- Have to be approved at the same time as everyone else, two months in is impossible (6)
- Need to be maintained
- Honour grandfathered students, should not have to wait to find out
- Let high school students ride yellow buses as CR's when going to the school already (GATE)

Waivers (43)

- Waivers are fine but not if the rest of us have to cover the cost (11)
- I think that fees should be charged on a sliding scale, those more able to afford to pay should pay more and those who can't pay less or nothing (8)
- Becomes a self-perpetuating problem, more waivers, higher fees, more waivers (7)
- Continue waivers as is (5)
- Alternative eligible for waivers (4)
- Not if going to an alternative (2)
- Principals give them to people who don't need them (2)
- Causes a stigma or embarrassment
- Why should we pay for people's lifestyle choices
- Give waiver families an opportunity to contribute a portion of the fees instead of nothing, if they can

General Statements re Time/ distance/ stops (74)

- I prefer a stop close to the house and short transit times even if this means higher fees (15)
- Depends on the safety of the route (15)
- I prefer bus stops close to home even if that means a longer ride time (14)
- Depends on whether you are driving or walking to the stop (12)
- More stops and shorter time on buses for regular programs (9)

- Cost is not the factor, timing is, need to be able to get to work and back and get child to bus (3)
- I would prefer APPROPRIATE SPOTS for stops that are BALANCED with stops and a riding time (2)
- If students go to their designated schools, there shouldn't be a long bus ride
- Junior high starts too early for adolescents
- Kids need more time between end of school and bus leaving
- Have more buses on the roads driving efficient routes to make both riding times and fees low

Bus stop locations (see separate safety comments as well) (49)

- Safety of location main concern (including comments below) (15)
 - Place for parents to park. drop off (3)
 - Safer, near crosswalks (3)
 - Not on main roads (2)
 - Not on main roads (2)
 - Bus stops s/b on main boulevards in neighbourhoods
 - Large number of kids a congregated stops dangerous
- Stops at or near daycares, like Catholic schools (6)
- Add buses in winter (4)
- Bus stops should be closer to home so that fewer people have to drive to stop/school (4)
- Use existing Calgary Transit stops to ensure the bus has a safe place to pull over and for students to board. (2)
- I like how the current bus stops have been aligned with existing Calgary Transit stops. (2)
- Bus stops near to C train stops and in lower-traffic areas
- Drawing a line on a map vs. the actual walk distance to the closest bus stop should be considered in setting up designated pick up spots.
- Connect to population density.
- Evening drop off should be closer to home
- Aggregate all the kids at the community school and bus from there to wherever they need to go
- Stops adjusted on an annual basis to meet needs

Safety (6)4

- Car drivers do not pay attention, kids can't walk alone (12)
- Walking in the dark an issue (10)
- Waiting/walking in the cold an issue (10)
- I feel that no student should have to cross a dangerous road even if it costs more (10)
- No three to a seat on the bus past Div 1 (5)
- Should be a modified winter schedule for elementary with more stops (4)
- Longer bus ride is safer than longer walk (3)

- Location/safety matters more than distance (2)
- Parents leave for work before the students leave for school
- Buses too full
- Appropriate limits on the number of children at any one stop to avoid chaos.
- Kids getting into other parents cars because of late missing buses
- Use crossing guards, as principal says it is unsafe to use kids
- Wildlife concerns, like coyotes
- Too many kids and adults at the stops
- CBE should be actively discouraging parents from driving to school
- Concern with LRT safety

Routing (30)

- Need to know the routes much earlier (8)
- I think each school should do a survey of what parents want (4)
- Stops should be co-ordinated so as to create the shortest ride times when more than one bus in community (2)
- Sometimes one loud voice gets a stop changed that is bad for many other families (2)
- If ride times are shortened with fewer stops, then travel time to reach the stop is increased, so the child's over all travel time may not differ, and vice versa
- Do not want a milk run with several areas on one bus
- Alternate bus stops for part of the school year so that it's not always the same kids who have to walk the longer distance to the bus stop
- Start and end school at staggered times -- particularly schools that might share a bus with another school -
- Drop off at more than one school to fill buses
- Would taxis be cheaper for low ridership routes
- All routes should be fixed year to year if they are appropriate
- First on is not always sensible for first off
- Offer preliminary routes earlier, then final ones
- Combine elementary and middle schools for efficiency
- Need to factor in for traffic
- Consider ONLY public sidewalks running parallel to the street. In other words, NOT "as the crow flies" taking students across ravines, green spaces, or pathway systems
- Communicate with parents when you get rid of a bus stop.
- Multiple programs being served by the same bus where multiple buses appear to be coming to a few stops and leaving partially empty

Congregated stops (37)

- I am not opposed to congregated stops in general, if they are sensibly selected. (9)
- Were working for alternative programs, why did you change it (5)
- A minimum of 1 bus stop per community (4)

- At least 2 stops per community (4)
- Should be used for alternative programs (4)
- Offer congregated stops and allow parents who are unhappy to organize their own solutions
- Regular congregated stops except winter
- Bus drives past old congregated stop and then idles waiting for kids to arrive
- A less full bus should have more congregated stops to ensure it fills
- Fewer congregated bus stops but within current walk distances (i.e. 1.8km).
- Driving to the bus stop is not something that should be expected as part of a regular routine
- If they are necessary, should be in parking lots or large spaces for parents to park and kids to be safe
- Fine, but not if the way there is unsafe
- Have small buses meet at a transfer hub
- By a shopping mall is not safe

How far to walk, general (15)

- Should walk farther to school than bus, no ride time, not cold at the end (2)
- Closer bus stops within reason (2)
- Keep walking distance to under 600m
- Based on the students' home location to a mid-point for a particular stop
- Bus stops could be placed closer to homes when only one child gets on and off on one stop.
- Distances of the rides should be capped and students required to attend the school within that distance cap.
- They should walk the same distance they would if they attended their closest school.
- Add routes to keep walking distance to under 1000m
- No child should have to walk more than a mile
- Walk distance to school is also too far
- Walking farther is fine, if the routes are safe
- If you are walking with baby/toddler siblings it is double the distance and too far

How far to walk by grade (33)

- Should differ by grade level (less distance k-2/3) (13)
- Close to home with shorter ride times/walk times for the younger kids (9)
- Need to be shorter, especially in winter in the dark, for younger kids (8)
- The stop needs to be within a walkable distance i.e. 1.8 km.
- Should be about the same student to student no matter what school
- Do not increase the walk limits

Stops/ ride time (16)

- One-way travel time to under 45 minutes. (3)

- For community (designated) schools, busing should be 15-30 minutes (2)
- Maximum ride time 50 min (2)
- Fewer stops needed for grades 7-12 (3)
- Fewer stops doesn't always equal a shorter ride time, more kids at a stop can take longer
- The time walking from the house to the stop should still be considered part of the total 'ride' time
- If students ride for longer than 30 mins they should not have to walk more than 1.6 km, that is equal to 45mins- 1 hr travel time!
- Please consider shortening the bus stop wait-time window to reduce the total travel time
- Ride times aren't actually "reduced" if the parents are driving the kids halfway to school
- Younger kids should have shorter time

Number of Riders (11)

- 48 to a bus grade 5 and up (7)
- Have a minimum number of riders per bus or it does not run (not complex learning needs) (3)
- Increase the number of riders on the low ridership routes

Add/cut buses to improve service (20)

- More buses, stops (6)
- Use smaller buses to reduce ride time and stops (6)
- Additional buses in general (4)
- Additional buses for elementary (3)
- My child's route has dropped a stop this year already, good compromise between shorter ride and a longer walk.

Adjust bell times= 40

- In a family with both parents working or with multiple children on different buses a change in route/stop or bell time could lead to profound scheduling issues (18)
- No start before 8 am (6)
- Too late a start in elementary makes it impossible to get to work (4)
- Transportation should not determine bell times, learning should (3)
- Teens should not be on the early shift (3)
- Adjust school start and end times for optimal routing and bus volumes (2)
- Changing the bell times and adding teacher supervision
- Should not be out before 3 pm
- Need to be later start for students on CTS which takes longer
- Later times would be safer when cars are off the road

Yellow bus (64)

- Late buses in general (28) (comments below included)
 - Don't get posted properly (7)
 - Parent is late for work (5)
 - Student is then recorded late
 - Fine companies for late buses
- Enforce discipline and safety rules (8)
- Lack of supervision can't expect them to handle 50 kids and drive (5)
- Drivers are doing great job (4)
- Qualification/care of drivers needs to increase (4)
- Find more competitors through an RFP (3)
- Hire more drivers (3)
- Do not answer complaint calls, or say call CBE, who say the reverse (2)
- Buses need to be in good working order, and in safe condition (2)
- Need reliable bus drivers who show up
- Yearly contracts for competition
- Needs to be communication to parents when road issues/construction is happening
- Drivers do not all speak English
- Please do not discontinue the service
- Stop asking for bus passes from young kids

Promote other means (3)

- Bicycle racks at bus stops
- Promote car-pooling - actually create online plans for parents so they can opt out of transportation all together
- Safe bike/board/scooter racks at schools

Use of CTS= 67

- More collaboration with CTS in general (15)
- Some routes are too long, up to 1.5 hours each way (7)
- Bring back rebate (6)
- Use CTS for all program older students, can babysit at 12 (grade 7) (5)
- Bus drives by, is full or does not come, safety and time issue (5)
- Not fair some 5/6 on yellow and some on CTS, different price , we did not choose (4)
- CTS after grade (4)
- Some areas have no CTS service (3)
- Work with city transit to set up more convenient routes that could transport older alternative program students (3)
- Fine for middle school as long as there is reasonable connection (2)

- Calgary Transit express routes similar to high schools for junior high
- Dedicated Calgary Transit for all grades
- Let us use our money to buy city transit passes. Scrap yellow buses.
- No transit until high school
- Too many kids on the bus
- What about an early bus for sports, band etc.
- Grade 5 too young
- Bring back school time only pass or lower cost pass
- It should be middle school getting the dedicated buses
- Give 7-9 full transit rebates, cheaper than busing them
- Need more time between end of school and bus leaving on dedicated routes
- If CT could help provide dedicated routes for all students and CBE pays for additional support staff (aids) that would also work for me, for younger students
- More use of transit in general.
- Only one transfer

Increase use of technology (8)

- First priority should be better software (2)
- GPS tracking so we know where the buses are/late (2)
- We don't need to spend money micro-chipping little kids (2)
- A more reliable way to track buses is necessary
- Zonar monitoring could ensure the students exit at the right place.
- Invest in this if it will have a long term benefit

Kindergarten (7)

- Two full days/three full days rotation, no mid day (4)
- Cut mid-day routes (3)

Partnering (7)

- With Catholic (5)
- With charter (1)
- With private (1)

Other, at least partially under CBE control

- Cut back high pay/admin like everyone else is (10)
- Your comparisons to other districts are wrong in some way (9)
- Align instructional days, get rid of early dismissal (8)
- Provide more financial detail if you want good answers (8)
- Proper planning so communities go to the closest school (4)
- Making designated schools closer to nearby communities (4)
- More efficient administration by CBE (2)
- Rent a cheaper board building (2)

- Check real addresses for kids so they are going to the right school (2)
- Have dual or integrated programs in every school
- Maintain busing to CTC centre
- Look at using privately driven mini vans like Ontario
- Shared custody is not accommodated, can only use one address
- Advertise voluntary extra payment
- Put grade 5/6 back in community schools
- Focus on benefits to increase number of users
- Advertise for conditional riders to fill underused buses
- Align all CBE school closure dates to save money
- Allow employees to bring their children to employment place for their education, principal choice that fluctuates greatly
- Privatize transportation
- Don't bus kids in overflow schools who can walk because of lottery
- The idea of NIDs days to save on busing costs at the expense of class instruction should be reconsidered
- Use the two years to warn people transportation will only be what is funded
- Penalties for parents who do not register on time
- CBE should be spending 4-6 per cent of budget on transportation rather than 3.6
- Do transportation in house

Other, not under our control

- Government should adequately fund schools and school transportation. (10)
- Parents need to advocate for proper funding (10)
- Build schools not bus routes (3)
- Set up more before and after school programs so that parents are responsible for transportation to and from school and thus less need for busing. (2)
- Schools should have volunteer parents to walk/bike with kids (2)
- Schools should be built closer to student populations (2)
- Let school buses use CTS bus lanes
- Switch over to hybrid vehicles gradually
- Should be able to deduct yellow bus on income tax too
- Government should pay for regular/special needs program transportation in full
- Tax for transportation like a PST
- Advocate for full special needs funding
- Fundraising for transportation
- Have it come from money government gives to private schools
- Levy/tax new communities until there is a school
- If community schools were adequately resourced people would not be going to alternatives and needs could be met on site
- Fees should be the same across Alberta
- Have enough parking spots for kids and parents at high school

- I think there should be more flexible scalable elementary schools (office, gym, washrooms, 8 classrooms with the ability have portables added and removed) especially in the new communities
- Merge public and catholic systems
- Consider corporate partnerships for transportation