



OSTA

Ottawa Student
Transportation
Authority

MEMORANDUM

TO: OSTA Board of Directors
FROM: Vicky Kyriaco, General Manager/CAO
DATE: November 8, 2021
RE: **System Review and Initiatives**

Background

OSTA's driver shortage has historically been managed through a collaborative effort between operators, drivers and OSTA planning staff. Ottawa's evolving labour market, however, indicates that recruitment and retention of drivers is likely to be even more challenging in the future.

In order to ensure there is enough service to transport students to school next year, OSTA will need to make certain changes to its system, in preparation for next year's planning cycle, and for future years.

Current Situation

Proposed Bell Time Review

Under normal circumstances, OSTA has been able to work around school bell times which do not lend themselves well to efficient routes. During the last bell time review, numerous bell times were left alone, with the understanding that there were other aspects of the school community that would preclude a change. We have learned, in the past two years of last minute route redesign, that these bell times are significantly impeding our ability to provide service to those communities, some of which are considered in a high needs category.

OSTA proposes a bell time review be conducted where time changes would not exceed 10 minutes, and which could be approved by the OSTA Board of Directors, per policy T19 Bell Time Management. Some consultation with school communities would be conducted via electronic survey throughout January.

OSTA would then evaluate whether a bell time change would result in better route planning opportunities for yellow buses and will take into account other considerations like van service for students with special needs, walkers, other special morning programs and so on.

Staff would return to the OSTA Board with a request to change bell times at certain schools at the January 2022 Board meeting. This gives enough time for notification to school communities whose bell times would change.

Another, more fulsome bell time review, will be conducted in the future to evaluate the impacts of changes greater than 10 minutes at other schools.

Proposed schools for the bell time review for 2022-23 implementation:

OCSB	OCDSB
Corpus Christi CS	Alta Vista PS
Holy Trinity High School	Arch Street PS
Holy Trinity Intermediate School	Barrhaven PS
Our Lady of Wisdom School	Cairine Wilson SS
Sir Wilfrid Laurier SS	Cambridge PS
ST. Benedict CS	Carleton Heights PS
ST. Cecilia CS	Cedarview Middle School
ST. Marguerite d'Youville School	Centennial PS
ST. Mark High School	Elgin PS
ST. Matthew High School	Elmdale PS
ST. Monica CS	Goulbourn Middle School
ST. Mother Theresa CS	Hopewell PS
ST. Rose of Lima CS	Huntley Centennial PS
ST. Stephen Catholic School	John McRae SS
	Manordale PS
	Metcalfe PS
	Mutchmor PS
	Orleans Wood ES
	Osgoode Township HS
	Pinecrest PS
	Queen Elizabeth PS
	Queen Mary PS
	Robert E Wilson PS
	Roberta Bondar PS
	Sir Wilfrid Laurier SS
	Stittsville PS
	Terry Fox ES
	Trillium ES
	Woodroffe PS

Feasibility of Opt-In Process for 2022-2023

OSTA current plans for all eligible students, regardless of whether they use the bus or not. In some cases, this creates vacant space that is not being used. OSTA prompts parents to “decline transportation” or “opt out” when it becomes apparent a bus is not being utilized to its full capacity.

This, however, does not assist OSTA in planning as efficiently as possible before school starts, and only allows redesigning of routes after school starts. This is a time-consuming endeavour, which does not adequately address the ongoing driver shortage.

In order to plan more effectively, OSTA will evaluate the feasibility to having all eligible students be required to “opt in” or register for transportation services before planning starts. There would

always be some space available for changes throughout the year. Overall, it is anticipated that fewer buses will be needed, and by extension, fewer drivers.

Whichever process is selected, OSTA will ensure that all students who are eligible are reached and their intentions to use transportation, or not, confirmed in writing. This process would be communicated broadly and registration would happen over a period of months.

Bus Technology Platform

OSTA will continue to communicate with the City of Ottawa regarding a bus technology platform that incorporates stop arm cameras with fines, internal cameras, ridership tracking, GPS and a tablet for drivers.

This bus technology is a holistic approach to student safety, ensures a better work environment for drivers and contributes to more efficient use of resources.

Driver Recruitment and Retention

OSTA will continue to work collaboratively with its operators and other corporate partners to heighten public awareness of the benefits and importance of the bus driver role in education. This potentially includes (among others):

- Driver recognition at sports events
- Recruitment bonus for schools who actively assist in getting potential candidates
- Additional radio advertising
- Circulating recruitment videos by operators via OSTA channels
- Creating videos that highlight drivers and are posted online/circulated

Public Transit Review

This year, a number of students whose yellow bus service was cancelled due to driver shortage, were reassigned to public transit. This coming year, OSTA will identify which schools could be serviced by OC Transpo on a permanent basis, rather than yellow bus.

Consultation with the school, students and OC Transpo will assist OSTA in determining whether these are positive changes, along with the impact to efficiency in the OSTA system.

Submitted for Information