



OSTA

Ottawa Student
Transportation
Authority

Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) Meeting of the Board of Directors

Held on
Monday, October 23, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA)
1547 Merivale Road, Suite 300, Ottawa (Nepean)
Teleconference (Google Meet)

REGULAR SESSION MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

President/Chairperson: Joanne MacEwan

Directors: Matthew Lee
Pino Buffone
Tom D'Amico
Lisa Schimmens
Randall Gerrior
Cindy Simpson
Donna Dickson

Alternate Director: None

Absent: None

Interim Operations Manager: Cindy Owens

Guests: Jeff Redmond, Controller, OSTA
Joanne Glaser, Director, Cornerstones Management Solutions
Jake Enwright, VP of Public Affairs, Syntax Strategies

Recording Secretary: Jennifer Carroll

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. with Joanne MacEwan in the Chair.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Ottawa Student Transportation Authority respectfully acknowledges that we are located on the ancestral, traditional and unceded Indigenous territory of the Anishnaabeg Algonquin Peoples, on whose territory we learn, play and work.

3. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

None.

4. Approval of the Regular Session Agenda

**Moved by Donna Dickson
Seconded by Tom D'Amico**

THAT the Regular Session agenda be approved. Motion Carried.

Regular Session Action Items

5. Draft Revised Budget 2023-2024

A budget amendment to the OSTA draft budget approved by the Board of Directors in April 2023 was presented. There have been significant changes in the Ministry funding framework, which has affected revenues, and a number of other financial impacts have affected OSTA operations.

Proposed changes and notations for the budget amendments are summarized as follows:

- Ministry Driver Retention and Recruitment (DRP) retention expenses have totaled \$1.3M
- Ministry funding formula for fuel escalation changed in the current year, while member Board/operator agreement obligations remain contractually tied to the old formula, therefore funding provided does not offset actual costs
- OSTA's Driver Recruitment Campaign – \$116,000 has been added to budget for the remainder of the 2023-2024 year
- Economic adjustments for vans
- Large Vehicle economic adjustments and route savings – \$3.09M in savings
- Public Transit services increased by 1.6% or \$216,000. Initial budget was based on forecasts, but the estimate has been revised using September actuals. There has been significant growth in the use of single tickets vouchers due to bus driver shortage
- Walking School Bus program has been removed from the budget; as well as internal cameras, GPS and tablets
- Placeholder for a new tech initiative to track student loading has been added, with an estimated cost of \$800,000
- One temp administrator has been added to staffing, as well as a recommendation to add another full-time permanent employee
- Additional communication and professional costs have been incurred, resulting in an additional one-time cost of \$96,000

The Secretary and Treasurer provided comments from the perspective of the school boards. Supplementary funding of \$1.8M from the Ministry has been split 60/40. In terms of deficits, that means \$2.3M deficit for OCSB, \$1.62M after supplementary funding, and a \$4.1M deficit for

OCDSB, \$3.0M after supplementary funding. The schedule on page 9 of the budget amendment document will provide a running trend on where the boards are sitting in terms of the funding situation, as it shows where we have moved from the original budget. The schedule also highlights the additional expenses with respect to the Driver Retention Program and fuel escalations funding shortfalls. Notably, fuel funding is not provided for vans, which is significant. In the future, OSTA will have to investigate changing contracts to reflect the new fuel funding model.

Questions were answered accordingly.

**Moved by Pino Buffone
Seconded by Randall Gerrior**

**THAT the OSTA amended budget for the 2023/2024 year as presented, be approved.
Motion Carried.**

Regular Session Information Items

Jake Enwright joined the meeting (5:58 p.m.).

6. Operational Update

The Interim Operations Manager provided an operational update and shared a list of activities performed by the representative from Syntax Strategies, since October 2, 2023. The Interim Operations Manager's primary goal has been to communicate with parents/guardians, informing them that their concerns are important, and the implementation of internal and external crisis communications which included media.

The Board was informed of the strategy being used and shared that she has met with various parent groups, which have been productive. Parents/Guardians that have experienced family hardship due to the driver shortage and route cancellations have also been contacted.

The Treasurer highlighted the transportation successes that have occurred since the beginning of October 2023. This includes:

- The removal of full-time EDP students from bus lists have freed up thousands of seats
- Empty space audit taking place in the region's largest high schools will also identify unused seats
- The use of Coach buses
- French transportation consortium is sharing space with OSTA, to allow use of their excess capacity
- Vans are being added in the west end of the region
- Drive Yellow campaign is being extended
- A retired Peel Consortium individual has been contracted to handle operator performance issues
- AODA compassionate forms from Principals to assist families in severe circumstances or where students have not been able to get to school at all
- School Principals have been surveyed on status of student attendance to determine "hot spots" for prioritization

- Premier Bus Lines has been brought back with one route, will add more if driver recruitment is successful
- Initiation of parental subcommittee
- Communication of interest for one new entrant into the Ottawa market

The Treasurer continued by outlining longer-term positive steps that are being investigated. They include:

- Bell time review
- Ride sharing between school boards
- Tap on, tap off student loading system
- Policy review in a number of areas
- Preliminary discussion on the use of 20 passenger vehicles versus the current van model

Questions were answered accordingly.

6. Parent and Community Subcommittee Update

The Interim Operations Manager provided an update on the parent and community subcommittee. Potential representative names have been collected, including stakeholders (e.g., bus drivers, operators, parent groups, school community groups, and elected officials from communities impacted by the driver shortage). The goal of the subcommittee is to work together to provide solutions.

Arrangements are being made for the subcommittee's first meeting, with future meetings taking place every 6 weeks. The frequency will be re-evaluated as required.

Questions were answered accordingly.

7. November Public Meeting

The OSTA Board of Directors is hosting a virtual public governance meeting on Monday, November 6, 2023. As of Friday, October 20, OSTA has received 92 registrations, of which 18 have interest in presenting a delegation.

The Board discussed the viability of compensating parents having to transport their children due to cancellations. Due to funding, this additional cost is not an option, and the Board decided to communicate the decision to parents/guardians.

Jake Enwright left the meeting (6:45 p.m.).

Jeff Redmond left the meeting (6:46 p.m.).

8. Long Range Agenda

- Annual Audit/Management Report
- Draft Audited Financial Statements and Variance Analysis
- Operational Update

9. New Business, Regular Session

None.

10. Board Meeting Schedule: 5:30 p.m. start time:

Future Board Meeting Dates:

November 6, 2023 – Public Meeting

December 4, 2023 – AGM

January 29, 2024*

February 25, 2024

March 25, 2024

April 29, 2024 – Public Meeting

May 27, 2024

June 26, 2024*

August 19, 2024

* indicates optional meeting dates, dependant on agenda requirements.

11. Resolve In Camera

Moved by Donna Dickson

Seconded by Cindy Simpson

THAT the committee resolves In Camera. Motion Carried.

Signature

Title

Signature

Title