



February 28, 2018

Att: To The Independent Review Panel for the Funding Allocation System of B.C's K-12 Public Education System

C/O: www.k12fundingreview@gov.bc.ca

Thank you for the opportunity to share our organizations perspective on the K-12 Funding Allocation System.

We have discussed this at our executive meetings with our zone representatives to try and gain thoughts and perspectives around needs and challenges throughout the province and have requested feedback from our members throughout the province.

We have found one of the greatest challenges and barriers with regard to transportation for students is the absence of targeted transportation funding and lack of provincial guidelines and mandate for transportation of students in British Columbia. In Canada all of the provinces except for British Columbia have some form of guidelines, funding and/or mandate for school transportation. The absence of government regulation has led to inconsistent transportation service levels across the province. Transportation departments are hearing from parents that the need is high and expectations are equally or increasingly high for a service which is not required to be provided.

In 2002 School Transportation Funding was frozen. In 2004 school bussing was removed from the BC School Act. Individual districts are now responsible to determine the level of service they are able to provide within the resources they have available. In 2010 targeted funding for school transportation was removed from the Ministry of Educations funding formulas and rolled into the general budget. Funding now rolled into the student allocation amount results in transportation funding needs competing with classroom funding needs.

As you can imagine the price of wages, fuel, supplies, repairs and maintenance etc. have all increased substantially since 2002 when funding was frozen. This has left some districts facing the choice to transfer funds previously used in education to transportation to maintain service, or to reduce service levels, or to remove transportation to and from school, leaving a need and a deficit in communities and families.

Transportation funding which is no longer targeted is now often viewed as removing funds from the classroom; this has led to transportation services often being viewed as disposable or the candidate for service reductions, especially in times of financial constraints. Many families were left in turmoil after service reductions and were voicing concerns to school districts and government officials. Recognizing the increased costs and the needs of families, in 2016 transportation funding grants were provided to school districts to assist them to provide the transportation services needed by families. We are

concerned that the allocations of these new funds were based on old data and were not calculated using current transportation data, nor were current district transportation requirements considered, again resulting in further inconsistencies.

It is the right of every child to receive an education and there are families who lack the ability or resources to transport their children to school. We believe in order to fulfill the rights of children these services should be mandated, adequately funded, and resourced in school districts across the province to provide an equitable service to the children and families of British Columbia.

We know that a school bus is the most economical, efficient, environmentally responsible, and safest way to transport students to and from school, and would like to see mandated, funded, consistent service being provided across the province. There is also a need for extra funding for extracurricular trips so that the extra cost of necessary travel for educational purposes and needs are met.

We believe a funding formula for transportation should consist of and consider many factors including funding for km.'s and students as well as a rural factor. When developing a funding formula for school transportation some of the items we believe need to be considered are:

- Previously frozen funding allowed for funding of students who live up to a 4.8 km distance from their school. We would suggest that today's families do not feel that 4.8 km is a reasonable or acceptable walk for a student and that it would be reasonable to fund for a much lower walk zone. What should today's parent responsibility zone be?
- Guidelines for rider eligibility vs courtesy riders.
- How should a rural factor be incorporated?
- What is the average cost of transportation/student around the province?
- What is the average cost of school transportation/km around the province?
- Rural Vs Urban costs.
- How can we support districts to provide transportation in an equitable, cost effective manner provincially?
- Best Practices for school transportation should be provided to districts to assist in their decision making processes.

The Ministry of Education is doing great work through the Services Delivery Project and the SDP Transportation Working Group would be a good source and avenue to help determine what the transportation needs and service levels are across the province. A group such as this could also assist in determining best practices for service levels. They already hold a large amount of school transportation data and would be a good venue to collect and provide the data necessary to determine costs and potentially assist in determining an appropriate way to model funding for transportation.

ASTSBC has worked to address the lack of training available for school transportation specialists across the province and have made significant progress in making Canadian content training available. There is a need to ensure that district transportation services have access to training, trainers and relevant content and funding to maintain a safe, effective and efficient service to the people of British Columbia. Support to continue this work and provide guidance and resources to districts on appropriate and

necessary training for managers, dispatchers, mechanics and staff would increase the ability to provide the best service possible in a cost effective manner.

ASTSBC provides training and guidance to school district transportation departments across BC and is a good resource to help determine best practices for safe, efficient and effective transportation in the province. We applaud the work the Ministry is doing and supporting in order to help provide the best possible service within the resources available and look forward to continuing to work with the province on these types of initiatives. We would welcome the opportunity to participate and provide what insight we have on transportation funding needs in the province.

We would appreciate the opportunity to present our thoughts on funding school transportation to the K-12 Funding Independent Panel.

Kind Regards,



Robyn Stephenson
ASTSBC –President
1401 15 Street Vernon BC V1T 8S8
250-549-9281
rstephenson@sd22.bc.ca