



Revised - Transportation Update on Changes to Bell Times in 2020-21

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: 29 January, 2020

Report No.: 01-20-3832

Strategic Directions

1. Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs
2. Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Revised - Student Transportation Update on Bell Time Changes for 2020-21 be received.

Context

When the Board passed its 2019-20 operating budget, it included a two year implementation plan to balance the Board's budget. The plan included budget changes for 2019-20, as well as planned reductions for the 2020-21 school year.

One of the areas impacted by planned reductions in 2020-21 was student transportation. The initial plan included changes to elementary French immersion and gifted transportation but those were subsequently reversed to ensure that there was time to conduct a review of where these programs are offered and how to ensure equity of access. These changes would have amounted to \$1.9M in savings.

In addition, a second planned change to student transportation involves adjusting bell times to improve route efficiency. This was projected to save the Board \$2.5M annually. This report outlines how staff will implement the Board direction in this area.

Background

Currently, the TDSB spends approximately \$67.2M on student transportation and we receive \$63.7M in funding from the Ministry of Education. This results in a deficit of approximately \$3.5M.

While we understand that changing bell times will be difficult for some families and communities initially, we feel that this option maintains the level of transportation services for our students and is the best solution in the long run. Without these changes other reductions to services would have to be found in other areas of the Board to balance the budget. The projected impact of changing bell times and making routes more efficient will be approximately \$2.5M in annual savings.

In addition to the financial impetus for this change, several other factors were considered:

- *Driver shortages* – centralizing bell times allows us to plan routes more efficiently. An analysis conducted by our software vendor estimated that approximately 55-60 buses will be taken off the roads as a result of greater efficiency in planning resulting from bell time changes. This is done by more efficiently coupling schools to ensure the maximization of usage by each bus. This will minimize the impact of driver shortages by reducing the number of drivers needed across the system by approximately 55-60 drivers/routes. To put this in to perspective, in October, 2019, there were 50 open routes as a result of the driver shortage. The drivers that are freed up as a result of this planning could be available to fill shortages.
- *Limit Service Disruption* – By altering bell times, the Board will ensure that all students who are currently eligible for Student Transportation will continue to have the service.
- *Environmental impact* – Every bus on the road emits approximately 50 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. By removing 55 buses off the roads, over 2,750 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide could be reduced.

In the analysis of this plan provided by our software vendor, Georef, the following parameters were put on the changes:

1. Bell times would be in the following ranges:
 - a. Morning bell times would be between 8:15 and 9:15am
 - b. Afternoon bell times would be between 2:45 and 3:45pm
2. No change in bell times would be greater than 30 minutes

- Only full size (big bus) vehicles were considered that were configured to carry 70-72 students or 41 students.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

The bell time change based on the above parameters is projected to significantly reduce the number of routes required. It is estimated that routes at 145 schools would be impacted. The chart below provides a summary of the changes to bell times across those schools.

CHANGE IN MINUTES	INCREASE IN BELL TIME	DECREASE IN BELL TIME	TOTAL SCHOOLS IMPACTED
5 Minutes	6	1	7
10 Minutes	8	4	12
15 Minutes	20	9	29
20 Minutes	7	9	16
25 Minutes	24	7	31
30 Minutes	22	28	50
Total	87	58	145

Detailed information of the schools impacted will be provided as part of the information sessions.

In order to implement the changes to bell times, staff will follow the procedures outlined in PR504 – Transportation of Students, section 3.4 in Appendix B. The following chart provides an outline of the timeline and communication plans:

Activity/Event	Month	Comments
Identification of Impacted Schools	February 2020	Transportation department will prepare routing to determine impacted schools
Stakeholder Information Sessions	February to March 2020	The information sessions will include the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees • Superintendents

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals • School Staff • Childcares & EDP programs • School Councils • SEAC • PIAC • Parents
Completion and notification of final bell changes	End of March 2020	<p>The transportation department will advise schools of new bell times and provide communication tools for informing parents. Both the board and transportation websites will be updated with information for parents/guardians.</p> <p>A final report on the implementation of the change in bell times will be provided to FBEC in the April round of meetings.</p>

The **information sessions** with stakeholders will be done in two different formats. A public meeting with communities in each Learning Centre will be scheduled during the month of February. **In addition, information will be posted on both school and board websites**, which will also provide background information on the impacted schools and other relevant information. **Information sessions** for principals and school staff will be done through targeted email communications and **information on board websites**.

The impacts of bell time optimization on local child care services will vary from school-to-school. Changes in bell times may require some licensed child care, before-and after-school programs (BASP) and authorized recreation program providers to adjust their hours of operation, capacity and staffing. The Early Years Team, working in collaboration with Communications staff, Superintendents, and Transportation teams, will create a coordinated communication plan for informing all stakeholders. The transition to new hours of operation for child care centres, before-and after-school programs and authorized recreation providers will be contingent on open and regular communication between the principal, child care supervisor and families. The Early Years team will begin **information sessions** with child care staff to fully assess the degree to which operational adjustments are required in each school. A similar process of evaluation will be undertaken regarding the operation of EarlyON Centres in TDSB schools.

Resource Implications

It is anticipated that bell time changes will result in a budget reduction of approximately \$2.5M as outlined in the 2019-20 budget plan.

Communications Considerations

We will work closely with the Communications department to ensure that all stakeholders, including parents/guardians, are provided with the opportunity **attend information sessions**, and are provided with all required information in a timely **manner on school and board websites**. Communications, as outlined in the Action Plan and Associated Timelines in this report, will be completed. Updated information will be provided on both the Board's website and the Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG) website when routing is complete.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

- i. PO20 – Transportation of Students
- ii. PR504 – Transportation of Students

Appendices

- Appendix A: PO20 – Transportation of Students
- Appendix B: PR504 – Transportation of Students

From

Craig Snider, Executive Officer, Finance at craig.snider@tdsb.on.ca or at 416-395-8469.

Garry Green, Senior Manager, Community, Business and Student Transportation Services at garry.green@tdsb.on.ca or at 416-397-3883.