



**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BUSINESS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC MEETING**

INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: February 9, 2022
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
Pete Sabo, Executive Director Planning & Operations
Tracy Mowat, Transportation Manager
SUBJECT: 2021/2022 Annual Bus Route Review

Background:

In January of 2017, Administrative Procedure 512 (AP512) was adopted which resulted in updating a long-standing Transportation Policy. To include consideration for items such as safety and utilization, the document calls for an annual route review process. Since inception NLPS has completed annual route reviews. These reviews determine whether any recommendations for changes have arisen from the prior year's operations, while considering average ridership levels. Recommendations stem from the Transportation Departments review of the routes. The routes are then reviewed at the district level and reported to the Business Committee, with recommendations, if any. Further, the AP was amended in October of 2021 to include consultation improvement along with other minor operating adjustments.

In July of 2021, at the start of the 21/22 budget year, Tracy Mowat, the new Transportation Manager, started. One of the many tasks assigned to her to be completed was the annual route review. While intended to be a comprehensive overview of all routes, this was a ultimately a familiarization year and while not all routes have been ridden, staff feel that this year's route review benefitted from a new perspective given Mrs. Mowat's experience with Surrey school district.

The following information continues to be noted in the annual review:

- 1) About 88 students are served by two buses between Ladysmith and North Oyster to a program of choice. The district does not typically provide bussing for programs of choice, except in this circumstance as per board direction. This route was made permanent (subject to future review) by the following Board motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) rescind Motion S14/02/19-02:

“That the Board of Education of School District 68 (Nanaimo- Ladysmith), utilizing existing transportation routes, provides school bus transportation services from stops at Davis Road Elementary, Ladysmith Primary and Ladysmith Intermediate to North Oyster Elementary for students currently enrolled in French Immersion at Davis Road Elementary. The service will be offered on a transition basis until June 2021, with parents receiving annual reminders that the service will be discontinued after that date. Courtesy riders will be permitted, if space permits, with first priority given to siblings of French Immersion students.”

Ridership since the closure of Davis Road had dropped consistently each year but has shown an increase in the 2021-22 school year:

- When NLPS started bussing to Ecole North Oyster from the Davis Rd/Ladysmith area in 2014, bus routes 11 & 12 would regularly transport 70 to 75 students each per load
- In 2020-21 bus routes 11 & 12 transported 30 students each per load
- In 2021-22 bus routes 11 & 12 transport 44 students each per load

We will continue to monitor these routes and return to the Board if changes are to be recommended.

- 2) There is an option area in North Oyster, including mainly the Stz'uminus First Nation reserve #13, offering bus service to schools either in Ladysmith or Ecole North Oyster. This has been in place for more than three decades, pre-dating most all staff.
- 3) Bus service for students from the former Rutherford catchment to Frank J Ney is provided. As per the following Board Motion, this service was scheduled for one year. It was made subject to the guidelines of the Transportations AP512 and therefore part of the annual route review process. This bus route currently has 91 registered students and an average of 57 students that ride each day. The average distance these students would have to walk to attend Frank J Ney would be approximately 2.7km

Folio R18/04/25-15

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) adopt Option 2: Use Spare Bus and Driver, for a one-year period. This route is subject to review pursuant to the guidelines of the Transportation Policy and Procedure.

Folio R21/03/10-10

That the Board of Education of School District No.68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) include bus route #16 as a regular route in its transportation busing plan; and that this route will remain a regular route until such time that the annual transportation review identifies a ridership below 50% of bus capacity.

4) Further Observations not previously noted in the route review but of interest include the operation of the following routes that transport students primarily outside of the guidelines for the walk limits. It is likely that route/trips servicing these areas were put in place for either safety (walkability or at the time of the construction of the parkway).

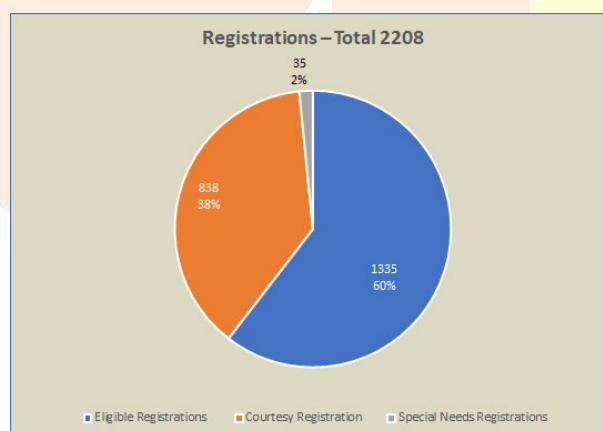
- Lantzville to Dover Bay/Seaview Route 6 Trip 1 – 100% of students are within the walk limits (courtesy riders)
- West Jingle Pot/Westwood/College Heights to Mountainview Route 3 – 100% of students are within the walk limits (courtesy riders)
- West side of Hwy 19 to Pleasant Valley Route 1 – 100% of students are within the walk limits (courtesy riders)

Current State:

The Transportation Department operates 23 school bus routes with 28 buses in the fleet. The 2021-22 school year has a total of 2208 registered student riders of which an average of 950 students are riding daily. Of the total number, approximately 1335 are eligible riders (live outside the walk limits) and 38% are courtesy riders (live inside of the walk limits). As per AP512, walk limits are 4.0 kms for students in K-3 and 4.8 kms for students in grade 4-12. Most courtesy riders face some safety issues associated with their route to school.

Student Bus Registration Numbers:

Bus registration numbers are up significantly in the 2021-22 school year. This can be partially attributed to the many families that were affected by the seismic upgrades at Cilaire and Pleasant Valley. Many of these families chose to register though many are not riding.



	Eligible Registrations	Courtesy Registrations	Special Needs Registrations	Services
Cedar Community Secondary	160	5	1	4 bus routes
Cedar Elementary	119			3 bus routes
Chase River	60			1 bus route
Cilaire Elementary		100		2 bus routes (temporary)
Coal Tye			3	Special Needs Bus
Dover Bay Secondary		100	4	1 bus route 1 special needs
Fairview	2			Part of Route 2 & 4
Frank J Ney	0	91		1 bus route
Gabriola Elementary	67			1 bus route
Georgia Avenue Elementary	73		9	1 Special Needs Route
John Barsby Community Secondary	90	10	1	1 bus route 1 special needs
Ladysmith Intermediate	50	4		2 bus routes
Ladysmith Primary	14	8		2 bus routes
Ladysmith Secondary	200	12		3 bus routes
Mountain View		206	5	1 bus route
Nanaimo District Secondary	99	6	8	3 bus routes, 3 special needs
North Oyster	212			4 bus routes
Pleasant Valley		296	2	4 bus routes (3 temporary)
Quarterway Elementary	1			(rides the bus on Gabriola)
Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulh	54			1 bus route
Seaview	94			1 bus route
VAST/CTC	40			2 bus routes (add-ons to routes)
Wellington Secondary			2	1 special needs
Totals by Category	1335	838	35	
Total Registered	2208			

Truth and
Reconciliation

sustainability

Student Bus Ridership Numbers:

Of the 2208 registered riders only about 950 regularly ride each day in the AM and about 955 in the PM.

Assigned Route	Service Details	Actual Riders AM	Actual Riders PM	Full Bus Capacity	COMMENTS
1 - Trip 1	Aulds Rd - PLSV (Rutherford)	19	31	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
1 - Trip 2	Island ConnectEd - PLSV (Rutherford)	52	38	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
2	Gabriola Ferry - NDSS	31	N/A	84	Secondary only - Mostly eligible. PM done by Rt. 19
3 - Trip 1	North Jingle Pot - NDSS & Mountainview	4	37	84	Elementary/Secondary - all courtesy
3 - Trip 2	Noth Jingle Pot - Mountainview	24	36	84	Elementary only - all courtesy
4	Gabriola Ferry - NDSS	34	Rt 19	72	Secondary only - Mostly eligible. PM done by Rt. 18
6 - Trip 1	Lantzville - Dover	18	43	76	Secondary only - All eligible students
6 - Trip 2	Lantzville - Seaview/Alternate Programs Woodlands/Barsby	33	25	76	Elementary only - All eligible students
7	Cedar By the Sea - Cedar Elem/Cedar Sec	38	53	81	Elementary/Secondary mix - mostly eligible
8	Cassidy/Yellowpoint - North Oyster/Ladysmith	59	48	76	Elementary/Secondary mix - mostly eligible
9 - Trip 1	Nanaimo Lakes/River & Extension - Chase River	27	3	84	Elementary only - All eligible students
9 - Trip 2	Cinnabar - Cedar Secondary	47	45	84	Secondary only - All eligible students
10	Pleasant Vally Area - Pleasant Valley (Rutherford)	52	50	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
11 - Trip 1	Cassidy/Chemainus - Ladysmith P/Int/Sec	19	56	84	Elementary/Secondary - equal eligible/courtesy
11 - Trip 2	Davis Rd/Ladysmith - North Oyster	17	26	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
12 - Trip 1	Kulleet Bay/Brneton Page Rd - Laydysmith P/Int/Sec	54	45	84	Elementary/Secondary - all eligible
12 - Trip 2	Ladysmith area - North Oyster	36	27	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
13 - Trip 1	Gabriola Island - Ferry (NDSS)	11	21	77	Secondary only - All eligible students
13 - Trip 2	Gabriola Island - Gabriola	26	13	77	Elementary only - all eligible students
14	Yellow Point Rd - Cedar Elem/Sec	15	22	84	Elementary/Secondary - equal eligible/courtesy
15 - Trip 1	Yellow Point Rd - Ladysmith Secondary	20	17	77	Secondary only - All eligible students
15 - Trip 2	Kulleet Bay - North Oyster	14	17	77	Elementary only - All eligible students
16 - Trip 1	Pleasant Vally Area - Pleasant Valley (Rutherford)	16	62	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
16 - Trip 2	Rutherford attendance area - Frank Ney	52	49	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
17 - Trip 1	Nanaimo Lakes/River & Extension - John Barsby	35	2	81	Secondary only - All eligible students
17 - Trip 2	South Wellington area - Cedar Elem/Sec	28	44	81	Elementary/Secondary - all eligible
18 - Trip 1	Pleasant Vally Area - Pleasant Valley (Rutherford)	26	27	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
18 - Trip 2	Cilaire are - Cilaire (Woodlands)	2	25	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
19 - Trip 1	Cilaire are - Cilaire (Woodlands)	33	31	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
19 - Trip 2	Pleasant Vally Area - Pleasant Valley (Rutherford)	31	29	84	Elementary only - All courtesy
QQS	Nanaimo area - QQS	27	33	77	Elementary only - all eligible
		AM	PM		
Total Average Number of Riders		900	955		

Discussion:

COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 has caused concerns with bus routes in 21/22 by threatening driver availability due to sickness, and buses available for use due to parts inventory issues caused by supply train issues worldwide. Staff have been reviewing and responding to these concerns with proactive plans to utilize mechanics on runs, hiring and training more driving staff, streamlining the implementation of new Electric replacement buses, and using spare parts from a bus damaged in a collision to speed up the repair times. Routes have been triaged with the Department of Learning Services to consider (if applicable) the priorities should the district not be able to service a route. Staff also have a communication plan to advise parents if runs are affected.

Electrification Plans (ZEB)

The district is now in receipt of the two electric buses ordered for this year, making a total of four received to date and active in the fleet.

76 Passenger: (2) – Route 6 and Route 8

72 Passenger: (1) – Route 1

24 Passenger: (1) – Route 22 (Special Needs)

Prior to having electric buses in the district, NLPS was moving from 84 passenger diesel buses to 77 passenger gas buses. This was due to costly repairs of diesel buses, and to eliminating nasty diesel fumes. Using information from other districts' experiences as well as NLPS, it was determined to be a good resolve, but reduced the capacity of the buses based on gasoline versions available. This trend of smaller bus sizes has continued with the electric buses as larger 84 passenger buses are not yet available on the Canadian market. This downsizing of capacity has worked where the buses were running less than full loads and on routes with lower numbers but cover large distances. Staff will work to understand the impact of running smaller buses and plan to report on findings during next year's route review report. In some cases, this could mean less room for courtesy riders.

While experiencing some growing pains with the charging systems on the first two buses, we are working closely with suppliers to correct the issues. Drivers are incredibly positive about the EV busses sighting drivability, reduced noise and diesel fumes, seatbelts, and not having to visit the fuel pumps as positives.

Seat Belt Pilot Project

Since May of 2021 NLPS has been involved in a seat belt pilot project in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Transport Canada to gather information on how and if seat belts and other safety devices affect the safety of students on buses. It has been proposed by Transport Canada that the project continue through the 2022-23 school at their cost. NLPS has agreed and is working out the details and funding requirements. It is of interest to note that buses with seat belts experience fewer incidences of students standing or moving seats while the bus is in motion, which is positively affecting behavior on buses.

Seismic Projects

With the completion of the seismic projects at Cilaire and Pleasant Valley, scheduled for the summer of 2022, it is expected that the courtesy routes supporting the swing spaces will be removed. This will free up 3 bus routes/buses. At that time staff will review the status of the fleet and upcoming busing needs (new/future seismic projects, covid impacts, charter capacity, etc.) prior to disposing of any buses.

Eligible Ridership Service – Addition

Staff have received several requests for ridership in the Rock Ridge area (west side of parkway off north end of jingle pot) for bus service to Dover Bay Secondary. These requests are from eligible riders where there is currently no bus service to Dover although service is provided to the same area for elementary aged students going to Pleasant Valley. Families of the secondary students are eligible to claim transportation assistance as there is no service, which several do. The route serving Pleasant Valley, Route 1, could provide service to these students, as trip 1 of the route. It is expected that this will result in about 1-hour additional driver time and 25 kms per day. The yearly cost is approximately \$5,200 for driver salary. This route utilizes an EV bus so no extra fossil fuel costs. Current transportation assistance payments are about \$3150 per year so the increased cost would be about \$2,000. However, as more students ride vs claim assistance, the additional cost would be avoided.

Consultation plan shall be in accordance with the NLPS policy on Public Participation 2.17 and will include:

- Written notification to riders/parents affected by this potential change
- Route times of new trip will not affect existing service
- Post on school and district website
- Due to this being a request by parents, staff do not envision a public forum/meeting will be required, however staff will invite, and track comments received.
- Feedback will be considered and reported verbally to appropriate Business Committee. Should the feedback be such that staff question adding the trip a formal report will be brought back to an appropriate Business Committee for further discussion.

Transportation Manager will then:

- Detail the change as indicated
- Communicate to affected stakeholders
- Update NLPS website with any change information
- Continue to answer questions and/or concerns with respect to operational details of the change

Conclusion:

For 22/23 school year staff plan to:

- Reduce the bus runs currently servicing the seismic swing schools
- Add a second trip to Route 1 to service Dover Bay Secondary eligible students.
- Continue to request bus replacements from the Ministry and replace with electric buses
- Review the impact of replacing 84 passenger buses with buses of smaller capacity
- Continue with the seat belt pilot project providing data to Transport Canada

Reference:

Appendix A: Summary of Route review recommendations by year (attached)

Appendix B: AP 512 Transportation

