



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

DATE: March 5, 2025
TO: Strategic Directions Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
Pete Sabo, Executive Director Planning & Operations
Tracy Mowat, Transportation Manager
SUBJECT: 2024/2025 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. All routes are reviewed at the district level and reported to the Business Committee now Strategic Directions, with recommendations, if any. Further, the AP was amended in October of 2021 to include consultation improvement along with other minor operating adjustments.

A new Transportation Policy 3.8 was adopted and the current AP512 requires adjustment to reflect the new wording. This is work that staff are planning for the near future.

It is important to note that transportation by school bus is provided to NLPS students by virtue of the District Policy 3.8. The *School Act* does not require districts to provide busing.

Typically, changes following appropriate consultation are within the authority of staff. However, the Board has issued direction when proposed changes have, in the opinion of the Board, significant impact on the community. A new policy is under discussion to clarify board vs staff decisions.

Over the years several exceptions to AP512 have been established which continue to be noted in the annual review. The following information outlines these exceptions and some history behind them.

- 1) Buses from Ladysmith to Ecole North Oyster for the French Immersion program were introduced when Davis Road Elementary was closed. About 48 students are currently transported daily by two buses for this purpose.

The District does not consider students attending choice programs to be eligible riders, 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 priority given to siblings of French Immersion students.”

- 2) Transportation is provided to students wishing to attend QQS. The BCTEA agreement supports additional funding for this.
- 3) There is an option area in North Oyster, including the Stz’uminus First Nation reserve, offering bus service to schools in either Ladysmith or Ecole North Oyster. This has been in place for more than three decades, pre-dating most current staff. The BCTEA agreement supports additional funding for this.
- 4) The Learning Alternatives Programs (Woodlands) has students attending from areas throughout the district. Busing was previously added to support the program and continues to be used by an average of 49 students daily, with 74 registered. The BCTEA agreements support partial funding for students living on reserve.
- 5) The following routes primarily transport students outside of the guidelines for the walk limits. It is likely that route/trips servicing these areas were put in place due to unsafe walk conditions.
 - 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)
- 6) Route #1 to Pleasant Valley has a specific stop for courtesy riders that is not a hazard condition at Island Connect-Ed. It is in the walk limits of PLV but was put in place several years ago to provide service to PLV when Mount Benson was closed. There were many indigenous students affected. This stop remains on the route and currently picks up about 10 students daily.

Annual Route Review Alterations

All changes made to bus routes based on the annual route review process are added to the “Bus Route Review Recommendations” document, attached as Appendix A.

Current Operations

The Transportation Department operates 21 school bus routes completing 67 trips daily. As per Transportation policy 3.8, walk limits are 4.0 kms for students in K-3 and 4.8 kms for students in grade 4-12. Most courtesy riders (students living inside the walk limits) face some hazard issues associated with their route to school.

Student Bus Registration Numbers

The 2024-25 school year has a total of 2201 registered riders. This number is up by 116 students from last year, 5% increase. There are also 67 students registered to ride on diverse ability buses, up 23 students from last year, 34% increase.

2023 – 2024 Registrations 2085

2023 – 2024

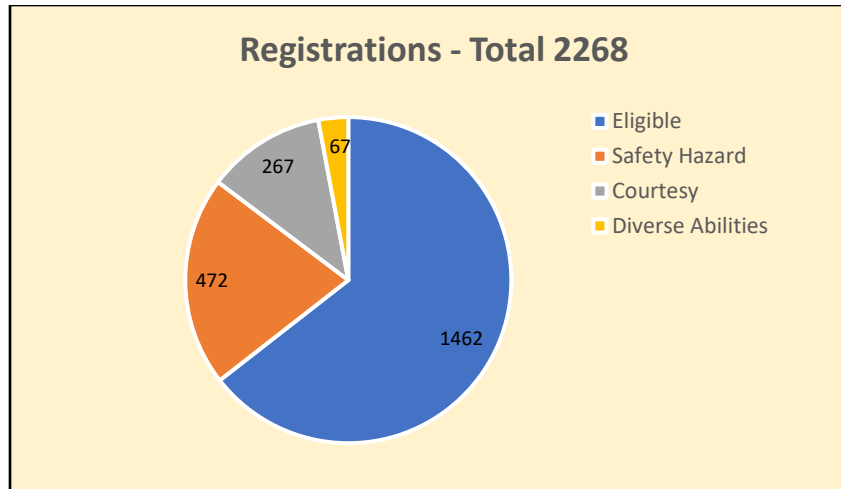
Diverse Ability Registrations 44

2024 – 2025 Registrations 2201

2024 – 2025

Diverse Ability Registrations 67

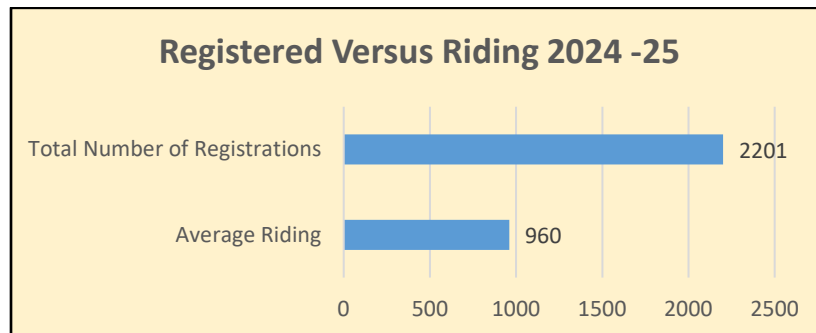
	Eligible Registrations	Courtesy Registrations Safety Hazard	True Courtesy Registrations not a safety hazard	Accessible Busing Registrations	Services
Cedar Community Secondary	168	56			4 bus routes, overflow rt 2
Cedar Elementary	69	60		1	3 bus routes
Chase River	58			2	1 bus route
Dover Bay Secondary	116	31		5	2 bus routes, diverse abilities bus
Fairview	3			4	Part of Rt 2, diverse abilities bus
Frank J Ney			75	4	1 bus route, diverse abilities bus
Gabriola Elementary	58	29			1 bus route
John Barsby Community Secondary	89		35	1	1 bus route, diverse abilities bus
Ladysmith Intermediate	84		18		2 bus routes
Ladysmith Primary	29		3		2 bus routes
Ladysmith Secondary	219		35		3 bus routes
Mountain View	95	164		5	3 bus routes
Nanaimo District Secondary	134		2	19	3 bus routes, diverse abilities bus
North Oyster	175	30			4 bus routes
Pleasant Valley	12	53	25	1	1 bus route, diverse abilities bus
Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulh	69	4			1 bus route
Seaview	84	45			1 bus route
Learning Alternatives			74		Part of Rt 6, 11, QQS
Brechin Elementary				3	Diverse abilities bus
Georgia Avenue Elementary				15	Diverse abilities bus
Randerson Ridge				1	Diverse abilities bus
Sywen'ct Elementary				2	Diverse abilities bus
Wellington Secondary				4	Diverse abilities bus
	Eligible	Safety Hazard	Courtesy	Diverse Abilities	
Totals by Category	1462	472	267	67	
Total Registered	2268				



Student Bus Ridership Numbers

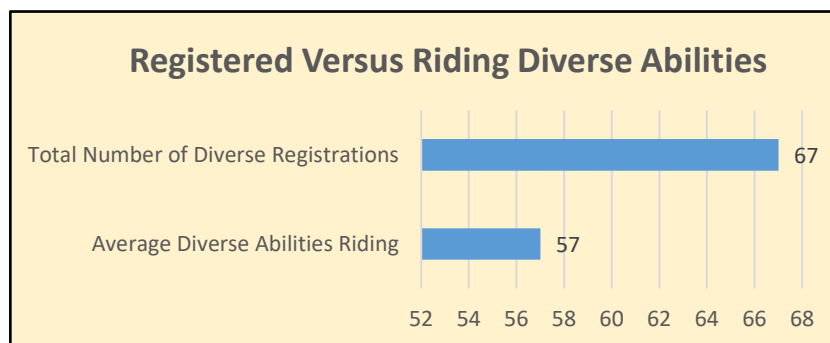
Of the 2201 registered regular riders about 960 regularly ride each day. This is a typical percentage of actual riders compared to those that register. Average daily riders has increased 3.4% from 2023-2024.

2023 – 2024 Average daily riders	929
2024 - 2025 Average daily riders	960



Of the 67 diverse ability riders about 57 regularly ride each day. The average daily riders has increased 28% from 2023-2024.

2023 – 2024 Average daily diverse ability riders	41
2024 - 2025 Average daily diverse ability riders	57



Assigned Route	Service Details	Average # Riders AM	Average # Riders PM	Legal Bus Capacity	Average Bus Capacity for student demographics	Percent Capacity AM	Percent Capacity PM
1 - Trip 1	Doumont/Jingle Pot - Dover Bay	19	22	76	52	37%	42%
1 - Trip 2	Aulds/Jingle Pot/Island ConnectEd - PLV	43	49	76	65	66%	75%
2 - Trip 1	Gabriola Ferry - NDSS	40	44	72	50	80%	88%
2 - Trip 2	Country Hills - Cedar Secondary (route 9 overflow AM only)	42	45	72	50	84%	63%
3	North Jingle Pot - Mountain View	40		84	70	57%	
3 PM Trip 1	MTVW - North Jinglepot		32	84	70		38%
3 PM Trip 2	MTVW - Westwood Lake, College Heights		56	84	70		67%
4 - Trip 1	Gabriola Ferry - NDSS - Gab Ferry	36		84	56	64%	
4 - Trip 2	College Heights - Mountain View -College Hghts	47	43	84	70	67%	61%
5- Trip 1	Lantzville - Seaview	37	58	76	65	57%	89%
6 - Trip 1	Lantzville - Dover/Alternate Progam Woodlands	26	39	76	52	50%	75%
7 - Trip 1	Cedar By the Sea - Cedar Elem/Cedar Sec	32	65	84	70	46%	93%
8 - Trip 1	Cassidy - Ladysmith Secondary/North Oyster	37	39	76	65	57%	60%
9 - Trip 1	Nanaimo Lakes/River - Chase River	30	36	76	65	46%	55%
9 - Trip 2	Cinnabar catchment - Cedar Secondary	39	42	76	65	60%	65%
11 - Trip 1	Cassidy/Chemainus -Ladysmith P/Int/Sec	41	48	84	70	59%	69%
11 - Trip 2	Davis Rd/Ladysmith - North Oyster French Immersion	25	25	84	70	36%	36%
11 -Trip 3	Learning Alt. - Woodlands	20	25	76	52	26%	48%
12 Trip 1	Kulleet Bay/Brenton Page Rd - Laydysmith P/Int/Sec	32		84	70	46%	
12 Trip 2	Ladysmith - North Oyster French Immersion	33	48	84	70	47%	69%
13 - Trip 1	Gabriola Island - Ferry (NDSS)	8	18	77	65	12%	28%
13 - Trip 2	Gabriola Island - Gabriola	27	28	77	65	42%	43%
14- Trip 1	Yellow Point Rd - North Oyster Cedar Schools	32	44	76	65	49%	68%
15 - Trip 1	Yellow Point Rd - Ladysmith Secondary	20		77	52	38%	
15 - Trip 2	Kulleet Bay - North Oyster	25		77	65	38%	
15 - PM	NORY, LADI, LADP - Kulleet Bay		41	77	65		63%
16 - Trip 1	Mountainview area - NDSS	9	12	76	52	17%	23%
16 - Trip 2	North Hammond Bay - Frank J Ney	51	55	76	65	78%	85%
17 - Trip 1	Nanaimo Lakes/River & Extension - John Barsby	32	45	84	56	57%	80%
17 - Trip 2	South Wellington area - Cedar Elem/Sec	29	31	84	65	45%	48%
QQS	Nanaimo area - QQS/ Learning Alt	39	39	77	65	60%	60%
20 - Trip 1		13	13	39	22	59%	59%
21 - Trip 1		14	14	24	18	78%	78%
22 - Trip 1		14	14	24	18	78%	78%
23 - Trip 1		12	12	24	18	67%	67%

Routes Below 50% Utilization

The annual route review assesses bus routes with less than 50% utilization to determine if any adjustments or staff recommendations are needed.

For the 2024-25 school year, an analysis of individual trips—some routes include up to three trips in both the morning and afternoon—reveals that only one route is consistently underutilized across all trips: Route 13, which serves the Gabriola Island community. Both trips operate at less than 50% capacity.

- Trip 1: Transports high school students to the ferry for NDSS.
- Trip 2: Transports elementary students to Gabriola Elementary.

Several other routes have specific trips with lower utilization, but at least one trip remains well-utilized.

Reasons for allowing underutilization on some trips can include:

- Being linked to another trip that exceeds 50% capacity.
- Serving a First Nations-supported route.
- Supporting a Learning Alternatives program.
- Being required by a Board motion.
- Geographic or time constraints that prevent consolidation with other routes.
- Routes being split into multiple trips due to buses reaching capacity.

This review ensures that routes remain efficient while continuing to meet the transportation needs of students across the district. No changes are recommended arising out of this review of utilization.

2024-25 Department Updates

Diverse Abilities Busing – Increased Need

As the number of students with diverse abilities increases, we are facing a growing need for additional transportation resources. These students require specialized accommodations, such as wheelchair-accessible buses and individualized pick-up and drop-off locations. Some students may have sensory sensitivities, medical conditions, or behavioral needs that require quieter, less crowded environments, making it necessary to transport them in our smaller buses.

The number of registrations for this service in our district has increased from 44 to 67 over the past year. While we have continued to provide service to all registrants, the longer route times required to accommodate the growing number of students have resulted in some students having reduced school attendance hours.

To address this challenge, a request has been submitted to the Ministry's Minor Capital Plan for the addition of a new bus to support an additional diverse abilities route. Implementation of this additional route is being planned for the 2025-26 school year in anticipation of a positive ministry response.

BCTEA Tripartite Agreement

Joint First Nation Student Transportation plans were created between First Nations and the school district and submitted to BCTEA in June of 2024. These plans were approved, and funding was granted, including support for improved service to students living on reserve attending Seaview Elementary and Dover Bay Secondary. A new route was created to provide better timing for student pickup and drop off to Dover Bay, particularly on early dismissal days, while maintaining the appropriate pickup and drop off times at Seaview Elementary. Funding has supported the lease of a bus to provide service on this new route for the 2024-25 school year, and a request was submitted to the Ministry's Minor Capital Plan for the addition of a new district bus to support this going forward. Approval of the bus is expected by late March. A permanent driver will be awarded this route once the bus is secured.

Bus Driver/Heavy Duty Mechanic Apprentice

Staffing levels in the bus shop have been impacted over the past three years due to vacant positions. One Heavy Duty Mechanic role remains unfilled due to a lack of applicants. To help maintain service, the district hired a temporary Bus Driver/Mechanic Helper to support operations in the meantime.

During this period, HR with facilities staff worked closely with the union to establish an apprenticeship opportunity, which was officially signed in February 2025. As a result, the temporary mechanic helper has transitioned into the role of a Truck and Transport Mechanic Apprentice and continues to gain hands-on experience in the shop while working toward his Red Seal certification.

Electrification - Busing

The school district currently operates 10 electric buses:

- 76-Passenger Buses (6): Assigned to Routes 1, 5, 9, 14, 15, and QQS
- 72-Passenger Bus (1): Assigned to Route 16
- 24-Passenger Buses (3): Assigned to Routes 21, 22, and 23 (all serving diverse abilities routes)

Benefits of EV Buses

The transition to electric buses has resulted in significant fuel cost savings. On average, diesel buses cost approximately \$0.63 per km, while electric buses operate at \$0.17 per km. Provincial and federal funding has supported the adoption of EV buses, minimizing the financial impact on the school district.

Beyond cost savings, the switch to electric buses has also provided notable environmental benefits, including reduced noise pollution and improved air quality compared to diesel models.

Maintenance and Repairs

Regular maintenance costs have remained within expected levels. However, many unexpected repairs still covered under warranty have been necessary, including major repairs such as:

- Battery replacements
- Transmission replacements
- Air compressor replacements
- Heater and brake system repairs

Once warranties expire, any of above types of repairs will become a significant cost for the district, if and when required.

Challenges and Considerations

One challenge of the EV transition has been the need for smaller capacity buses to 72-76 passengers. Currently, larger 84-passenger buses are unavailable due to insufficient heating options. While the district has managed to accommodate the reduced capacity with existing route structures, there is little flexibility left. Future bus purchases may require route restructuring, additional routes, or fewer available seats for courtesy riders.

Another ongoing issue is the operational complexity of EV buses, particularly related to charging infrastructure and range. Challenges include:

- Inconsistent charging compatibility between various EV bus models and ABB charging stations
- Limited driving range (less than 200 km per charge), restricting charter service options
- Midday charging logistics, requiring frequent bus swaps to ensure adequate charge levels for afternoon routes

To keep buses running efficiently, close collaboration with charger suppliers and manufacturers is essential for troubleshooting and improvements.

Conclusion

While the transition to electric buses has brought cost savings and environmental benefits, operational and logistical challenges remain. Addressing charging limitations, long-term maintenance costs, and capacity constraints will be key factors in planning future EV bus acquisitions and route strategies.

Electrification – White Fleet

The school district currently operates eight electric maintenance vehicles., with one more on order.

- One Ford Focus
- One Hyundai Kona
- One Ford Maverick (Hybrid)
- One Ford Lightning Pickup (on order)
- Five Ford Transit trades vans

They have been well received by drivers and are proving to be exceptionally easy to maintain. Charger issues have not been a problem with these vehicles.

EV Infrastructure Upgrades

The district has taken a strategic approach, working closely with ASTSBC and the BC Ministry of Education and Childcare to identify funding opportunities. Through Federal ZETF (Phase 1 and 2) and a pending Ministry CNCP project approval, the district is looking to secure resources to enhance its electrical infrastructure.

As part of these improvements, plans include increasing electrical capacity at district facilities to support the installation of additional EV chargers, including fast chargers to meet midday charging demands.

Busing Fees

Staff continue to support the idea of a fee or usage charge for students who are ineligible for busing but wish to access service. Many districts have implemented similar fees, such as Sooke and Qualicum, which charge a \$25 annual registration fee, and Chilliwack and Surrey, which have yearly rates of \$300 for courtesy riders. Staff are not currently recommending this approach, however that said, rising demand—particularly from vulnerable students and those facing hazardous walking conditions, some of whom may not have access to regular transit—is placing increasing strain on both our system and budget.

Student Management

With the rise in student behavior issues on school buses, the busing department initiated discussions with the department of Learning Services to seek guidance on best practices for student management and to strengthen support at the school level.

To address these concerns, a stakeholder committee was formed to brainstorm solutions. One key recommendation was renaming behavior reports to "safety reports" to reinforce their importance and highlight the impact of student behavior on overall bus safety. Additionally, the committee emphasized the need for timely communication with parents when students fail to follow bus rules. An internal operating procedure is being developed to ensure clear guidelines for all parties, promoting consistency and accountability in operations.

Drivers will continue to be provided with ongoing professional development, equipping them with proactive strategies to manage student behavior, and maintain safe transportation, while ensuring alignment with school-wide expectations

On Board Camera Systems – Upgrade

Onboard camera systems continue to present challenges due to aging technology and increased hardware failures. It also puts excess demands on staff time to access and utilize footage. To address these issues, a request for an upgrade has been submitted and approved in principle. The department is actively working with IT on finalizing the implementation plan for the upgrades to the camera system to include automatic Wi-Fi download.

Key Benefits of the Camera Upgrade.

1. **Increased Efficiency:** Wireless downloads eliminate the need for manual video retrieval, saving time and resources while ensuring quick access to necessary footage.
2. **Enhanced Safety:** Immediate access to video footage allows for timely review and response to incidents, improving safety and security for students.
3. **Improved Data Management:** Automatic, scheduled uploads ensure footage is consistently updated and securely stored, reducing the risk of lost or missing data.
4. **Reliable Equipment Monitoring:** A web-based platform enables real-time monitoring of system health and connectivity, ensuring cameras remain operational and incidents are properly recorded.

Given the ongoing challenges with student behavior on buses, this upgrade is a valuable investment for the school district, providing a more efficient, secure, and reliable video monitoring system.

Route 16 Changes – Rutherford Re-opening

On September 11, 2025, the Business Committee, through an [Action Sheet](#), recommended to the Board that they approve 11 recommendations regarding the reopening of Rutherford. These recommendations included changes to school boundaries and the transfer of students to the newly established Rutherford and Frank J. Ney boundaries. Number 8 on the Action Sheet asked that the current Frank J. Ney bus route serving students in the Rutherford area be reallocated to the Oakridge/Golden Oaks area. Following this, at the Regular Board meeting on September 25, 2025, the Board formally approved the 11 recommendations presented by the Business Committee.

This reallocation of students on the route 16 bus will be effective September of 2025 and have a neutral effect on the Transportation budget.

Annual Route Review Conclusion:

For 2025-26 school year staff plan to:

- Implement an additional diverse abilities route for 2025-26 to shorten bus route times and better meet student classroom times
- Work with SkilledTradesBC to support certification of our Mechanic Apprentice
- Continue to review the impact and growth of Electrifying the fleet
- Continue to work with department of Learning Services, school administration, and drivers to improve student management practices.
- Finalize the district Bus Safety IP and communicate it out to all schools and drivers
- Continue the work to secure an implementation of the camera system upgrade
- Adjust the bus run for the reopening of Rutherford Elementary
- Work to adjust AP512 to reflect new policy 3.8

Reference:

Appendix A: Summary of Route review recommendations by year

Appendix B: AP 512 Transportation