



**NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC MEETING  
INFORMATION SHEET**

DATE: February 11, 2026  
TO: Strategic Directions Committee  
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer  
Pete Sabo, Executive Director Planning & Operations  
Tracy Mowat, Transportation Manager  
SUBJECT: 2025/2026 Annual Bus Route Review

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### **Background**

As the Board is aware, transporting students to and from school is not a requirement in the *School Act*. This provides the District with significant flexibility in determining levels of services based on need, finances and Board Policy. This memo will outline the current state of bussing in the District.

Policy 301 – Transportation to and from school indicates District staff shall provide a yearly route review which highlights ridership, costs and potential changes to routes.

At the current time, while there are increasing service challenges, staff are not recommending changes pursuant to Policy 301

### **Discussion**

The District has six predominant ways in which students receive transportation:

1. Set Distance Criteria.
  - Kindergarten to Grade 3 students who live in a residence that is located more than 4 km from their catchment school.
  - Grades 4 to 12 students who live in a residence that is located more than 4.8 km from their catchment school.
2. Unsafe walk routes.
  - While this is more discretionary, typically these are rural areas without sidewalks.
3. Agreements through the BCTEA that provide funding support to transport students from Indigenous communities to school.
4. Courtesy Riders.
  - Riders that live within the set distance criteria or students out of catchment.
5. Transportation to specific programs (Skills for Life, Learning Alt) or certain students with diverse needs.
6. Board directed routes that normally would not fall within any of the above parameters.

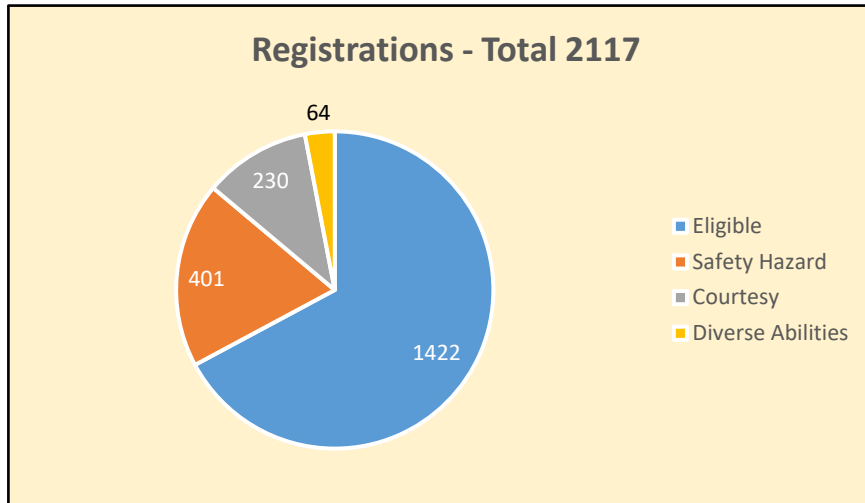
Student Bus Registration Numbers

The Transportation Department operates 23 school bus routes, completing 66 runs daily.

The 2025-26 school year has a total of 2117 registered riders. This number is down by 84 students since last year. There are also 64 students registered to ride on diverse ability buses, down 3 students from last year.

2023/2024	Registrations 2085	2023/2024	Diverse Ability Registrations 44
2024/2025	Registrations 2201	2024/2025	Diverse Ability Registrations 67
2025/2026	Registrations 2117	2025/2026	Diverse Ability Registrations 64

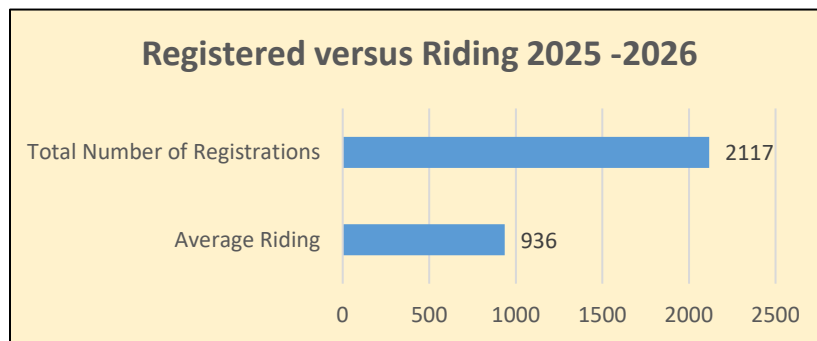
	Eligible Registrations	Courtesy Registrations Safety Hazard	True Courtesy Registrations not a safety hazard	Accessible Busing Registrations	Services
Cedar Community Secondary	202	45		1	5 bus routes
Cedar Elementary	76	31			3 bus routes
Chase River	49		4		1 bus route
Dover Bay Secondary	126	39		3	1 bus route, diverse abilities bus
Frank J Ney	53		2	2	1 bus route, diverse abilities bus
Gabriola Elementary	55	40			1 bus route
John Barsby Community Secondary	101		8	1	1 bus route, diverse abilities bus
Ladysmith Intermediate	49		42		2 bus routes
Ladysmith Primary	15		5		2 bus routes
Ladysmith Secondary	190		66		3 bus routes
Mountain View	93	160		3	3 bus routes
Nanaimo District Secondary	90		5	20	3 bus routes, diverse abilities bus
North Oyster	168	10			4 bus routes
Pleasant Valley	23		67		1 bus route, diverse abilities bus
Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulh	60		6		1 bus route
Seaview	37	76			1 bus route
Learning Alternatives	35		25	3	Part of Rt 6, 11, QQS
Brechin Elementary				3	Diverse abilities bus
Fairview				4	diverse abilities bus
Forest Park				1	Diverse abilities bus
Georgia Avenue Elementary				14	Diverse abilities bus
Randerson Ridge				1	Diverse abilities bus
Rutherford				4	Diverse abilities bus
Sywen'ct Elementary					Diverse abilities bus
Wellington Secondary				4	Diverse abilities bus
	Eligible	Safety Hazard	Courtesy	Diverse Abilities	
<b>Totals by Category</b>	<b>1422</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>64</b>	
<b>Total Registered</b>	<b>2117</b>				




Student Bus Ridership Numbers

Of the 2117 registered regular riders, about 936 riders routinely ride each day. This is a typical percentage of actual riders compared to those that register. The average daily riders have decreased 2.5% from 2024-2025.

- 2023/2024 Average daily riders 929
- 2024/2025 Average daily riders 960
- 2025/2026 Average daily riders 936



Bus Route Data

 <b>2024/25 BUS ROUTE DATA</b>							
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 - Run 1	Doumont/Jingle Pot - Dover Bay	20	17	76	52	38%	33%
1 - Run 2	Aulds/Jingle Pot/Island ConnectEd - PLV	40	45	76	65	62%	69%
2 - Run 1	Country Hills - Cedar Sec	48	38	76	52	92%	73%
2 - Run 2 PM only	Barsby - Cedar Area (Indigenous)		6	76	52		8%
3	North Jingle Pot - Mountain View	51		84	65	78%	
3 Run 1 PM only	MTVW - North Jinglepot		42	84	65		50%
3 Run 2 PM only	MTVW - Westwood Lake, College Heights		60	84	65		71%
4 - Run 1	Gabriola Ferry - NDSS - Gab Ferry	52	40	76	52	100%	
4 - Run 2	College Heights - Mountain View -College Hghts		47	76	60		78%
5- Run 1	Lantzville -Seaview	45	59	76	60	75%	98%
6 - Run 1	Lantzville - Dover/Alternate Progam Woodlands	33	45	76	52	63%	87%
7 - Run 1	Cedar By the Sea - Cedar Elem/Cedar Sec	37	55	76	60	62%	92%
8 - Run 1	Cassidy - Ladysmith Secondary/North Oyster/ Diverse Abilities	45	44	76	60	75%	73%
9 - Run 1	Nanaimo Lakes/River - Chase River	35	36	76	60	58%	60%
9 - Run 2	Cinnabar catchment - Cedar Secondary	40	42	76	52	77%	81%
11 - Run 1	Cassidy/Chemainus -Ladysmith P/Int/Sec	33	60	84	60	55%	100%
11 - Run 2	Davis Rd/Ladysmith - North Oyster French Immersion	12	14	84	60	20%	23%
11 -Run 3	Learning Alt. - Woodlands	8	8	84	56	14%	14%
12 Run 1	Kulleet Bay/Brenton Page Rd - Laydysmith P/Int/Sec	45	50	84	60	75%	83%
12 Run 2	Ladysmith - North Oyster French Immersion	35	37	84	65	54%	57%
13 - Run 1	Gabriola Island - Ferry (NDSS)	8	18	76	52	15%	35%
13 - Run 2	Gabriola Island - Gabriola	22	17	76	65	34%	26%
14 - Run 1	Yellow Point Rd - North Oyster Cedar Schools						
15 - Run 1	Yellow Point Rd - Ladysmith Secondary	12		76	52	23%	
15 - Run 2	Kulleet Bay - North Oyster	13		76	65	20%	
15 - PM	NORY, LADI, LADP - Kulleet Bay		38	76	65		58%
16 - Run 1	Mountainview area - NDSS	10	16	76	52	19%	31%
16 - Run 2	North Hammond Bay - Frank J Ney - Diverse Abilities	12	10	76	65	15%	15%
17 - Run 1	Nanaimo Lakes/River & Extension - John Barsby	31	35	76	52	60%	67%
17 - Run 2 AM only	South Wellington area - Cedar Elem/Sec	30		76	60	50%	
17 -Run 3 PM only	NDSS - Gabriola Ferry		36	76	52		69%
18 - Run 1 AM only	Gabriola Ferry - NDSS	36		76	52	69%	
19 - Run 1 AM only	Gabriola Ferry - NDSS	30		76	52	58%	
QQS	Nanaimo area - QQS/ Learning Alt	33	35	76	65	51%	54%
20	Diverse Abilies	10	12	24	18	56%	67%
21	Diverse Abilities	9	11	24	18	50%	61%
22	Diverse Abilies	11	11	24	18	61%	61%
23	Diverse Abilities	15	7	24	18	83%	39%
24	Diverse Abilities	10	10	24	18	56%	56%

### Routes Below 50% Utilization

The annual route review assesses bus routes with less than 50% utilization to determine if any adjustments or staff recommendations should be considered. This year no routes have been identified for possible reduction.

For the 2025/26 school year, an analysis of individual runs reveals that two routes are consistently underutilized across all runs. They are:

1. Route 13, which serves the Gabriola Island community. Both runs operate at less than 50% capacity.
  - Run 1: Transports secondary students to the ferry for NDSS.
  - Run 2: Transports elementary students to Gabriola Elementary.
  
2. Route 16, which serves the Mountainview catchment area to NDSS and the Glenoaks/Golden Oaks area to Frank J. Ney (due to the opening of Rutherford). Both runs operate at less than 50% capacity.
  - Run 1 Transports high school students to NDSS (this portion was not changed from 2024-25)
  - Run 2 Transports elementary students to Frank J. Ney.

Several other routes have specific runs with lower utilization, but at least one run on each route remains well-utilized.

Reasons for allowing underutilization on some runs can include:

- Being linked to another run that exceeds 50% capacity.
- Serving a First Nations supported route through BCTEA funding.
- 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 runs due to busses reaching capacity.

### BCTEA Tripartite Agreement

Joint First Nation Student Transportation plans were developed collaboratively between participating First Nations and the school District and submitted to BCTEA in June 2025. These plans were approved, and funding was awarded.

### Electrification - Yellow Fleet Challenges and Considerations

The EV transition has reduced the bus sizes in our fleet from 84 passenger buses to 72-76 passenger buses. 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.

The District purchased three Blue Bird Type A electric school busses, one in 2022 and two in 2024. Since their acquisition, safety concerns have emerged related to the heating and transmission systems. While the heating concerns have now been resolved, the transmission issues remain ongoing due to the complexity of the system. During this time, the dealership has supplied three gasoline-powered replacement busses while the manufacturer continues its efforts to determine and implement a solution.

### Route Operating Pressures

Over the past several years, student ridership growth in the Extension area to Cedar Secondary and the Jingle Pot/College Heights area to Mountain View has created operating pressures that can no longer be managed within our currently approved routes. To create a sustainable operating environment, the District will consider alternative approaches to service delivery. One option under review is restoring Routes #2 and #4 to their original Gabriola to NDSS function operated once again by mechanics now that shop staffing has stabilized and developing separate, purpose-built routes to serve the sustained increased ridership to Mountain View and Cedar Secondary.

### **Conclusion**

For the remainder of 2025-26 and the 2026-27 school year staff plan to:

- Continue to work closely with the Indigenous Communities to provide the best possible service to students and continue the annual funding requests to BCTEA as needed.
- Analyze and determine solutions to address the smaller bus size and overflow area concerns.
- Continue to work with Blue Bird and its dealership to come to a resolution regarding the safe operation of the EV Type A buses.

### **Reference:**

Appendix A: Summary of Route Review Recommendations

Appendix B: Administrative Procedure 301- Transportation to and from School