



NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BUSINESS COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING

INFORMATION SHEET

DATE: Wednesday March 3, 2021
TO: Business Committee
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer
Pete Sabo, Executive Director Planning and Operations
David Prevost, Manager of Transportation
SUBJECT: 2020/2021 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.

Currently, the Facilities Department operates 20 routes with 27 buses in the fleet. An average of 1,226 students are serviced daily. Of this number, approximately 49% of school bus riders are outside of the 'walk limits' of 4.0 km for Kindergarten to Grade 3 and 4.8 km for Grades 4 to 12, approximately 40% are riders within the 'walk limits', but face safety issues associated with the route of school and 11% are purely courtesy riders, (E.g. students who are not entitled to bus service as they reside within the prescribed 'walk limits' from their school, or attend a school outside of their catchment area).

It should also be noted that two buses between Ladysmith and North Oyster provide service for approximately 80 students. The District does not 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 has dropped consistently each 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 per load.
- Presently, bus routes 11 & 12 transport 26 to 34 students per load.

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

Further, bus service for students from the former Rutherford catchment to Frank J Ney is provided. Note that 33 students from the Frank J. Ney catchment attend McGirr.

As per the following Board Motion, this service was scheduled for one year. It was made subject to the guidelines of the Transportations AP and therefore part of the annual route review process. This bus route currently serves 59 students.

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.

Being that all students on this bus route reside well within the prescribed walk limits, all students would be considered as courtesy or ineligible riders.

Student Bus Registration Numbers:

The following information provides student registration numbers for the 2019/20 school year and for the 2020/21 school year. As mentioned above, ridership is down 29% from 2019/20 to 2020/21.

Route #	2019/20 # Of Registered Eligible Riders	2019/20 # of Registered Ineligible Riders (Courtesy)	2020/21# of Registered Eligible Riders	2020/21 # of Registered Ineligible Riders (Courtesy)	
1	0	59	0	36	
2	52	0	54	0	
3	15	78	17	63	
4	44	0	44	0	
6	154	31	49	46	
7	51	28	12	47	
8	62	0	53	10	
9	84	0	77	0	
11	12	64	26	34	
12	56	46	28	41	
13	72	0	49	0	
14	43	9	17	21	
15	53	0	36	0	
16	0	79	0	59	
17	123	20	58	0	
QQS	67	0	53	0	
Totals:	888	414	573	357	
	2019/20 Total: 1,302		2020/21 Totals: 930		

Discussion:

Ineligible/Courtesy Rider Information:

Due to board motions and safety reasons etc., our bussing system provides service to many riders that are technically ineligible/courtesy.

A decline of ridership, such as what we are experiencing, could result in a recommendation for the removal and or amalgamation of routes. Of the current 19 regular bus routes (not including special needs bus routes), it is estimated that NLPS could operate with up to 4 less bus routes and reduce others by eliminating or drastically reducing service to ineligible/courtesy riders.

Due to the effects of COVID-19, we are recommending that NLPS maintain the current level of service, with one exception, and review the routes for trends again in the fall of the 2021-22 school year. If the trend continues, recommendations for changes to routes to increase utilization would be presented.

Transportation Budget

Staff have been reviewing our department budgets to try to determine future budgetary requests to the Board. Transportation is an area that has been consistently over budget with exception of a strike related closure (14-15) and COVID related closure (19-20). We have covered these deficits through internal reallocations (e.g. a surplus in utilities reallocated to transportation).

<u>Transportation Department Summary</u>				
	Budget	Expense	Surplus/ Deficit	Budget FTE
2014-2015	2,435,460	2,237,143	198,317	25.36
2015-2016	2,307,692	2,344,269	-36,577	22.95
2016-2017	2,223,912	2,263,037	-39,125	21.96
2017-2018	2,052,183	2,339,765	-287,582	20.22
2018-2019	2,128,054	2,393,533	-265,479	20.72
2019-2020	2,226,680	2,204,337	22,343	20.72

Facilities also faces challenges in its supply budgets and the transportation deficit needs to be addressed. We can address it in one of four ways:

1. Reallocate resources by moving resources from one area or department to another. This option would have an impact on services;
2. Have the Board increase the budget to transportation. Additional resources, if any, are unlikely to be prioritized to transportation giving the significant issues in the areas related to COVID (e.g. cleanliness and/or learning loss);
3. Increase revenue by charging a fee for bussing. There has traditionally been insufficient support for such an option and there is likely insufficient time to properly consult if the Board were interested in such an option; and/or
4. Service reduction.

Recommendation for route elimination:

With respect to Route 16 (service from Rutherford to Frank J. Ney) staff are recommending that the service not be provided in the 21/22 school year. This recommendation is based on the determining factors of safety to students provided by the following: sidewalks, crosswalks, relatively short walk distance (2.9 KM), street lights, available Regional District of Nanaimo Transit (along Hammond Bay Road), no highway and no more than 2 lane road crossings. These features provide safety that other routes do not. Staff estimate the yearly savings for the elimination of the route to be \$50,000. (\$18,000 bus operating costs & \$32,000 for wages/benefits).

Unless otherwise directed, following the Business Committee meeting the Transportation department will begin the process of engaging with the potentially impacted families.

Electric Bus/Seat Belt Pilot Update:

Electrical charging infrastructure for busses is near completion. Electric busses are expected to arrive during the week of March 15, 2021. A Seatbelt Pilot Project is expected to begin when the busses are put into service and will continue for one year.

Additional Temporary Routes

We note that the Pleasant Valley and Cilaire seismic projects will both involve the provision of bussing. These routes will be directly funded from the seismic funding envelope.

Staffing:

Finally, NLPS is anticipating several bus driver retirements between now and June 30, 2021 which may impact our ability to provide service. We are currently working with NLPS Human Resources well in advance of any service disruption to address the issue. However, in the extreme case of not recruiting enough bus driving staff, we will have to adjust service to ensure consistent and available service to our eligible students. Currently there are no recommended changes.

Appendix A: Previous Route Review Recommendations

Appendix B: Bus Routes and Maps