

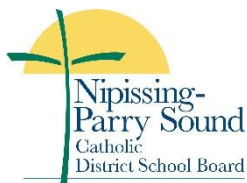
2019-2020 Annual Report



Nipissing - Parry Sound



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Chuck Seguin

NPSSTS

January 12th, 2021

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the NPSSTS Staff, Board of Directors, Transportation Operators, Member School Board, Schools, Parents and Students, and the Community for working with us through a most difficult year.

A special note of thanks to Dawn Wilson who after more than 20 years of dedicated service to student transportation, and a founding member of the NPSSTS, has reached that special point in life called retirement. Your pioneering spirit and commitment to the organization and its success is a legacy that is deserving of acknowledgement.

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Message from the Executive Director

The 2019-2020 school was without a doubt the most challenging we have seen in our time. The world is living in unprecedented times. We may feel small in the vastness of the problem. Nevertheless, we have seen where doing the simplest of things in response to the challenge we are still facing can make such a difference on the lives of so many.

As we look back, it is important to reflect on the work that has been done to ensure a safe and reliable return to as close to a normal state as possible. I am proud to say that the staff of the NPSSTS, with the support of the Board of Directors, has risen to the many challenges that were put in front of them. The confidence shown by the members of the Board of Directors is evidence of the outstanding past performance of our personnel. It has been an opportunity to move forward on a number of fronts like emergency preparedness and business continuity.


The report outlines progress in a number of areas despite the obstacles and course changes that were required. If anything, it is proof that we the team and the community can move forward in the most trying of circumstances. Students, parents, school staff and administrators, and bus operators have all worked with NPSSTS staff with understanding and compassion to ensure that service delivery could continue, perhaps not exactly the same way, but maybe even better. Your continued support and team spirit is appreciated.

As we move through another school year, we will take the lessons learned and apply them to our future direction, along with the spirit of community and concern for each other that has been shown through these trying times.

Yours truly,



R.C.J. (Chuck) Seguin
Executive Director



***“THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS GETTING SOMEWHERE
IS TO DECIDE THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO STAY
WHERE YOU ARE.”***

Key Performance Indicators

NPSSTS vs Provincial Data

Every fall, each of the 34 student transportation consortia in the Province completes the Provincial Transportation Report for the preceding school year. The Ministry of Education makes data from the report available later in the school year. For the purposes of our Annual Report, we will use the most recent available data, which is from the 2018-2019 school year. Some of the data is a snapshot of the status of business on October 31st of that year. It is important to note that each of 33 consortia deals with a variety of variables in their service delivery. These include overall population and population density, geographic area, number of member boards and their respective enrolment levels, as well as road and weather conditions.

Some useful comparisons can be made to identify whether our service delivery model is efficient, effective and economical as well as identify areas that should be reviewed for the potential of further measures that may improve service delivery. The NPSSTS transported 10,126 students over 41,964 km daily. This was a reduction of more than 1,200 students from the previous year. However, daily distance travelled increased by 423 km. The following table shows how these figures compare provincially:

2018-2019	Provincial Median	NPSSTS
Students Transported	20,409	10,126
Daily km travelled	41,587	41,964

What we then see is that we travel more daily kilometers for almost half as many students. This translates to a rate of 4.14 km per student for the NPSSTS versus a provincial median of 2.57 km. This becomes evident in our average ride time 29.5 minutes one-way wherein the provincial median is 21.67 minutes. Moreover, we have 11.64% of our students spending more than 60 minutes one-way daily versus a provincial median of 2.66%. Much of this lengthy travel includes transfers. Of the students transported, 2,642 required transfers, in comparison to the provincial median of 226. This network ensures that students from far and wide are transported within the maximum ride time of 70 minutes established in Guideline SL-002 with very few exceptions.

From a cost perspective, the NPSSTS has transportation expenditures that are slightly lower than the median, with an average route cost in lower third. Although the cost per student is in the upper third, the overall transportation costs are \$1,657,544 below the median mark. This can only be achieved through careful routing, the use of transfers and minimizing the total number of routes required. As transportation costs are built on the number of vehicles contracted and the distances they travel, only one part of that equation can be controlled through routing. Students' homes and school locations are static.

Another comparison that makes this case is to look at consortia with similar daily kilometers. The table below depicts the NPSSTS and eight other consortia with similar daily kilometers, four above and four below. We see that the number of students transported for each is greater than our own. The number of routes used by the NPSSTS is in the middle of the pack. Total expenditures are the third lowest of the group. The number of students per route is the lowest and the cost per student is the highest. However, the cost per route is the third lowest. We can therefore conclude that the cost of the distances needed for fewer students is economical. In this case, the cost per student may not be the best performance indicator.

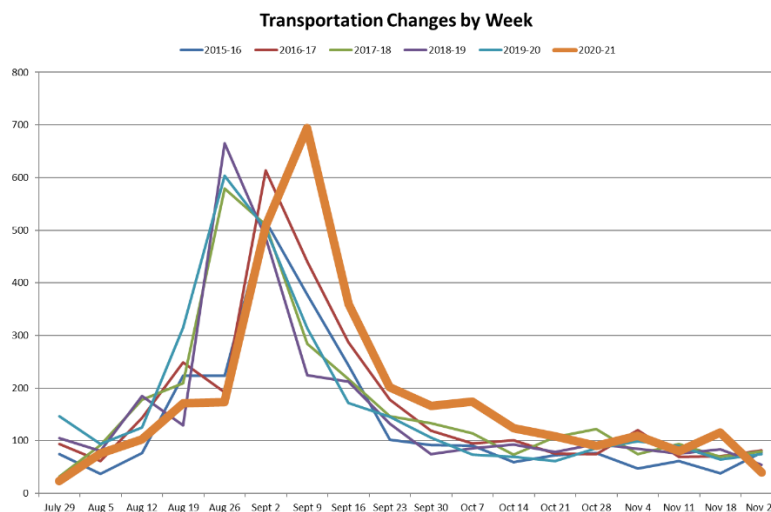
	Daily km	Students Transpoted	Routes	Students per Route	Expenditures	Cost per Student	Cost per Route
A	37,875	16,162	322	50.19	\$17,304,116	\$ 1,070.67	\$53,739.49
B	39,943	12,782	340	37.59	\$15,666,087	\$ 1,225.64	\$46,076.73
C	40,980	29,200	392	74.49	\$19,590,941	\$ 670.92	\$49,976.89
D	41,587	31,082	435	71.45	\$19,953,104	\$ 641.95	\$45,869.20
NPSSTS	41,964	10,126	391	25.90	\$17,933,387	\$ 1,771.02	\$45,865.44
E	44,599	17,946	309	58.08	\$18,460,469	\$ 1,028.67	\$59,742.62
F	45,436	28,469	573	49.68	\$25,391,714	\$ 891.91	\$44,313.64
G	46,242	19,929	397	50.20	\$25,720,883	\$ 1,290.63	\$64,788.12
H	49,482	20,409	489	41.74	\$25,450,339	\$ 1,247.02	\$52,045.68

Inclement Weather

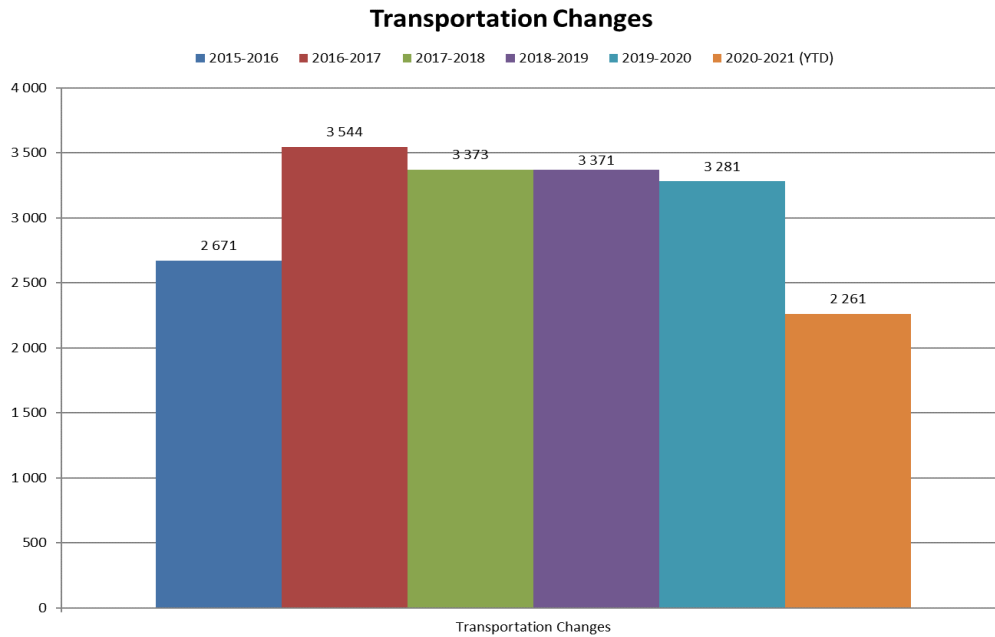
Data for last year is limited with respect to the impact of weather and road conditions on student transportation. The school year was interrupted in mid-March, which precluded any further cancellations over the typical season, which usually extends to the end of April, or mid-May in some exceptional years. We can report that there were 12 disruptions to various areas of the Districts versus 23 in the previous year for the same period. Mother Nature appears to have been kinder in 2019-2020 than the year before, at least through to the March break.

Start up Workload

The spike in workload annually in the weeks prior to and just following the opening of schools is an area that we would like to address as outlined in the Business Plan. The impact of the pandemic, that being the timing and nature of parent responses to Board Surveys as mandated by the Ministry is evident in the chart below. The spike occurred about 2 weeks later than in some of the previous years and peaked at a higher level and later than usual. Notwithstanding, the downward slope reached a near normal level by September 23rd, only 4 weeks later. Periodic smaller spikes are seen and expected as high schools move through their scheduling cycles.

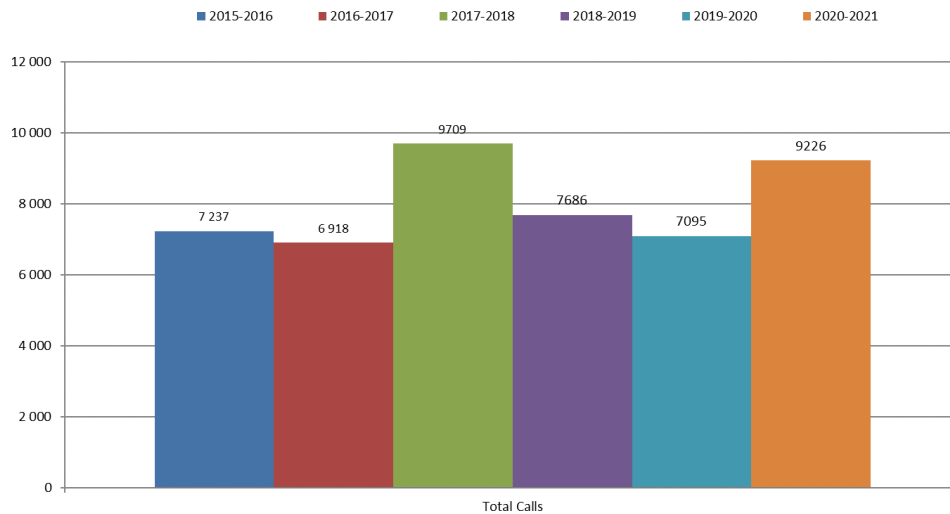


The five-year average for transportation changes is 3,248. Over the three months of this school year, staff have dealt with 2,261 such requests, approximately 70% of the previous years' average.

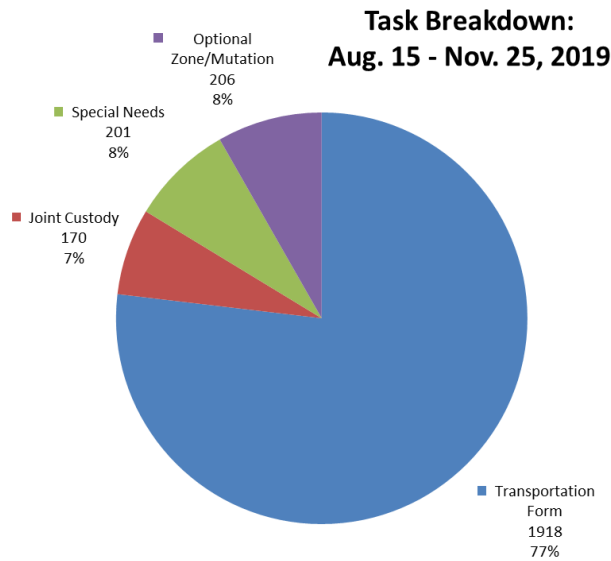


In addition to written requests received electronically, staff are also kept busy with incoming telephone inquiries. It should be noted that over the summer months, full-time staff dealt with outgoing calls to JK and SK households that are typically assigned to summer students. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this program was suspended in 2020. Full-time staff did an admirable job in dealing with additional workload throughout the summer months and the start up period.

Phone Traffic Aug. 15 - Nov. 25

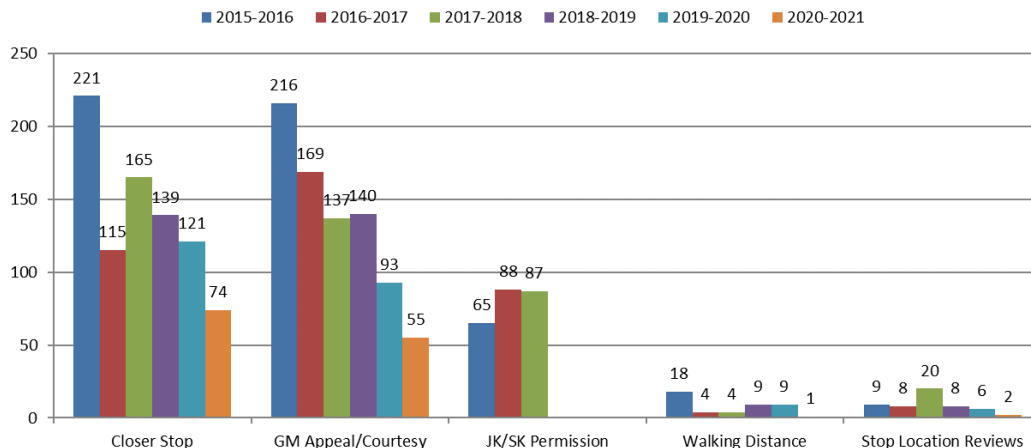


The start up period requests are assigned to route planners as tasks and are divided into the categories seen below. What is not included was the added work involved in reviewing and changing the status of students who opted out of transportation. These totalled 2,430 on August 31st 2020 requiring data inputting changes.



The NPSSTS developed a Transportation Plan in consultation with Public Health to ensure that all restrictions and safety precautions necessary to ensuring student safety were being taken. In addition, courtesy transportation reviews were completed with these in mind. The most common requests are seen in chart below. With the exception of parents requesting permission for an alternate responsible person meet JK/SK students at their stops, all categories saw a decline during start up 2020-2021.

Common Service Requests

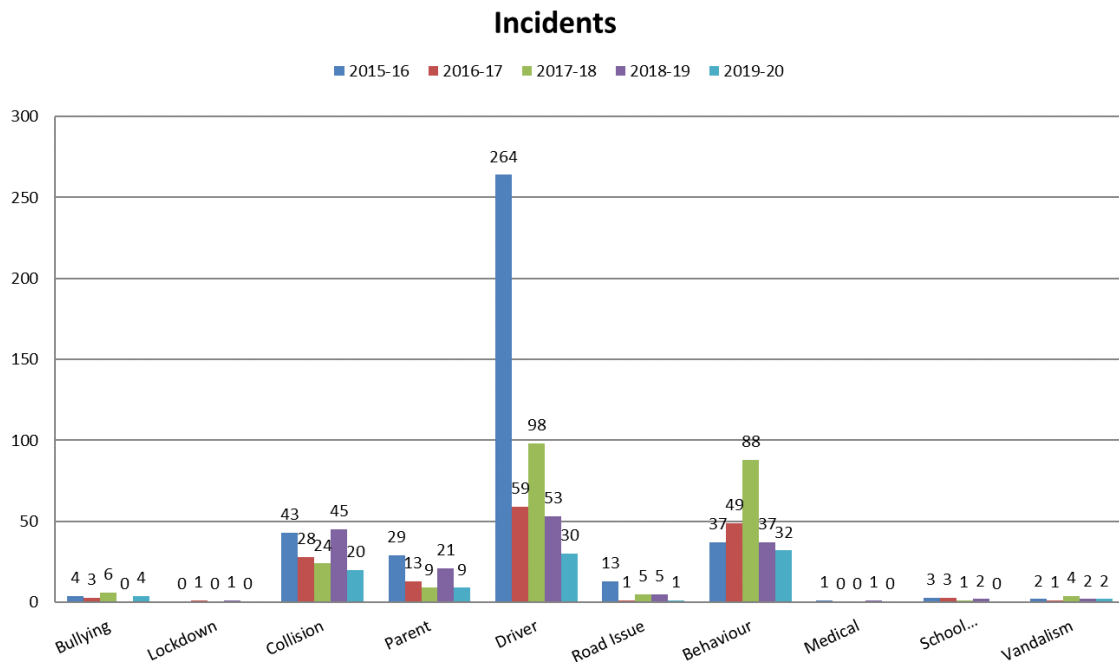


Operator Audit

The 2019-2020 Operator Audit was conducted in December of 2019. The audit consisted of a site visit to each bus company and a thorough review of their respective operations. The audit itself mirrors the Transportation Agreement, in that (5) areas of the company's operation are reviewed and analyzed in light of the company's contractual obligations to the NPSSTS. These areas are: Operational Management, Communication, Training, Document Control and Safety. All (13) of the operators under contract with the NPSSTS met the requirements outlined in the Transportation Agreement with very few (and minor) cited deficiencies. In general, the operators under contract with the NPSSTS are aware of and in compliance with the transportation agreement. All operators have developed safety and training programs that meet the above requirements.

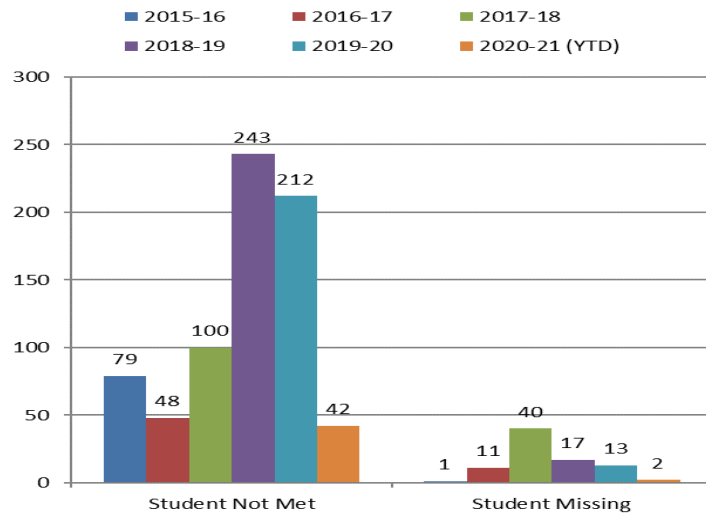
Safety and Other Incidents

For comparison purposes, it must be noted that 2019-2020 data is incomplete due to the school closures in the spring. They are presented for information purposes only at this time. It is clear that most are on a declining trend but no conclusions should be drawn with respect to levels for the past year.



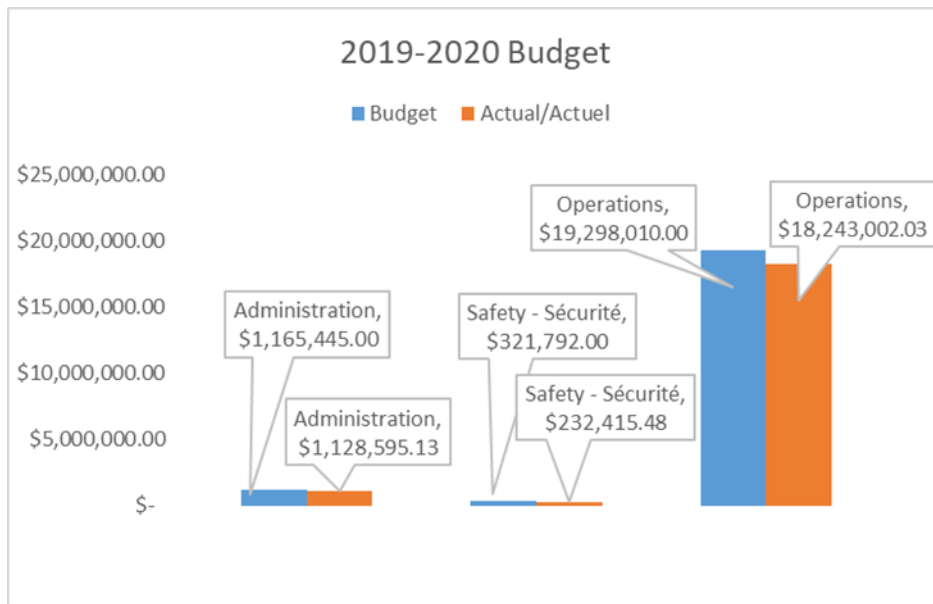
Special care is always given to the most vulnerable students. Guideline and contractual changes beginning in 2018-2019 with respect to vulnerable students being met at the stop and the Tag the Bag program the following year have proven effective in raising the diligence on the part of drivers and school staff in the loading of these students at the end of the day and the drop off of the student. Early data following these initiatives identify appropriate spikes and declines in both these types of incidents following the implementation of the changes.

JK/SK Incidents

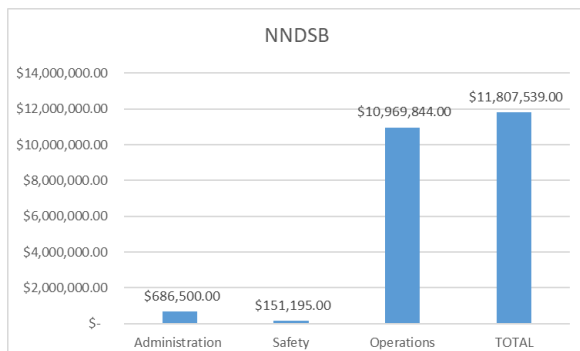


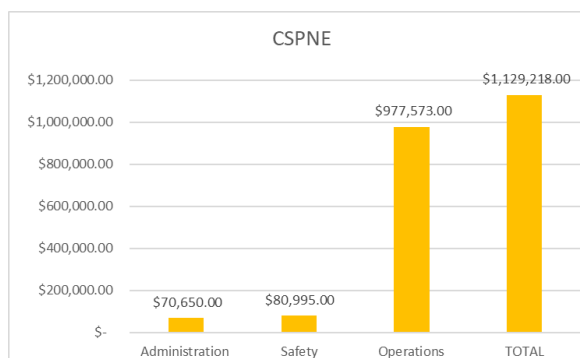
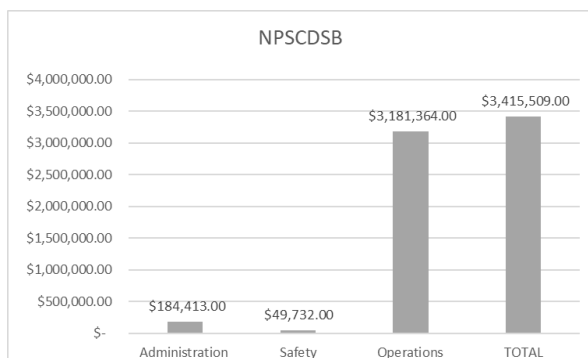
Financial Report

The NPSSTS budget is comprised of three distinct areas: Administration, Safety, and Operations. The first contains salaries, benefits and all other necessary expenditures required to make the office function. This includes annual and capital purchases of equipment and services. Safety includes some administrative expenses but is based primarily on expenses linked to commissionaires at transfer sites and bus monitors. The bulk of the budget is Operations which includes all transportation costs paid to 13 operators in the Nipissing-Parry Sound Districts. The chart below provides the breakdown of expenditures in each category.



Administrative costs are divided amongst the member Boards based on the ridership percentage of each Board and is established on October 31st of each school year. Some safety expenditures are specific to individual Boards while others are shared, again based on ridership of a specific bus or use of a transfer site. The transportation expenses are at times Board specific or are shared based on the ridership on any specific route. The following charts provide a breakdown by Member Board.





With respect to expenditures versus funding, each Board receives a specific grant for transportation. Deficits and surpluses, as the case may be, are then combined into the individual overall School Board budget. The past year was different from any other. With school closures taking effect in mid March, operators were paid at a reduced rate while on standby for a return to school and remaining available for other duties such as the delivery of materials from schools to students. There was also a slight reduction in funding from the Ministry for the months of May and June equivalent to the estimated fuel costs for those months. The table below provides year-end figures with respect to expenditures versus Ministry Funding, including HST.

	NNDSB	CSCFN	NPSCDSB	CSPNE
Ministry Funding per Section 9 - December 2019	\$12,103,634	\$3,828,875	\$3,664,346	\$904,680
Ministry reduction as of June 19 2020	\$290,487	\$91,048	\$87,944	\$22,665
Revised Funding Total	\$11,813,147	\$3,737,827	\$3,576,402	\$882,015
Total Transportation (including HST)	\$11,888,509	\$3,614,429	\$3,435,273	\$1,069,637
Surplus / deficit	-\$75,362	\$123,398	\$141,129	-\$187,622
% Difference from Revenues	-0.64%	3.30%	3.95%	-21.27%

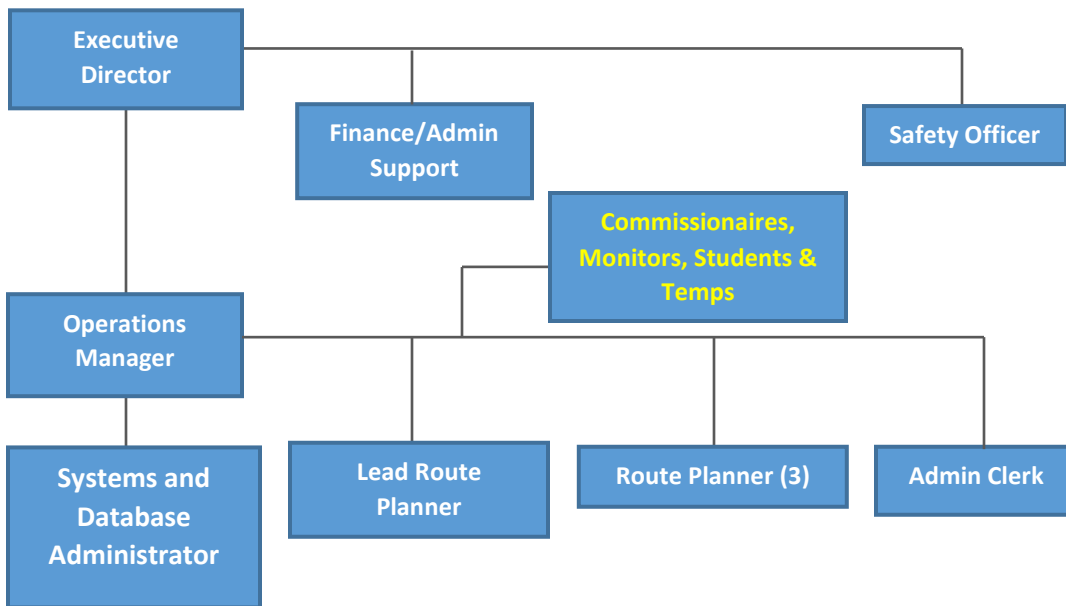
It should be noted that the Ministry is actively working on a review of the funding formula including analysis of student home to school distances. This factor is an important one as stated earlier in this report. The NPSSTS and its Member Boards provide services to a population base that is spread out over a large geographic area. Population density and distance travelled are key elements in our overall costs and should be considered in the funding formula.

We will forgo any comparisons to previous years. The pandemic related closures and other disruptions over the year are not conducive to that type of analysis. 2019-2020 data will carry a star beside it for some time.

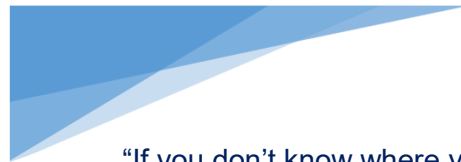
Progress Report – Business Plan

The 2020-2022 Business Plan is the roadmap to some key areas in our service delivery. The following will outline the progress made in each of those areas. Needless to say, the pandemic did impede our work in many of these areas and they remain works in progress. However, many steps have been taken in advancing toward completing the objectives.

The organizational chart below is presented to demonstrate some minor changes in the reporting structure of the organization, compare to what is in the Business Plan. Notably are changes to the Finance and Admin Support and Safety Office who are now reporting directly to Executive Director in order to streamline workflow and the assignment of tasks.



The next section will provide updates and responses to the specific Goals and Objectives outlined in the Business Plan 2020-2022.



“If you don’t know where you are going,
you’ll end up someplace else”

Yogi Berra

Goal: To continue to identify further efficiencies.

Objectives	Qualitative/Quantitative Measure	Performance Indicators
Maintain Ride Times to within Guideline specifications	Ride times do not exceed prescribed limits as outlined in Guideline SL-002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of routes where ride times exceed prescribed limits • Average ride time per route
Identify and implement alternate transportation strategies	Identification and implementation of alternate transportation strategies that improve efficiency and effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of strategies identified and implemented • Efficiencies gained through their implementation
Increase the Run/Route ratio	Run/Route ratio is increased to improve the use of resources and develop economies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run/Route Ratio

Accountability: Executive Director – Annual Report at AGM

RESPONSE:

The Performance Indicator “number of routes where ride times exceed prescribed limits” should be interpreted in relation to Guideline SL-002 that being 60 minutes for students from JK to Gr 6, and 70 minutes for those from Gr 7 to 12. Based on 2019-2020 data, only two students exceeded the 60 limit and one was over 70 minutes. This must be put into perspective however with respect to home to school distance. Currently, there are eight students who reside more than 100 km from their school and they in turn exceed the target numbers. It would be impossible to meet that target time with those distances that need to be travelled.

The NPSSTS continues to see one of the highest average ride times in the Province. As stated earlier in the report, this is directly related to our geography and distance per student. The NPSSTS average ride time in 2018/2019 increased slightly over the previous year from 29.33 minutes to 29.50. However, the average for all consortia over the same period increased from 20.86 to 21.71.

The Run/Route ratio is one area we are monitoring with a view of increasing the number. This is an indicator of addition “B” runs that can drive costs downward. The table outlines the last school year along with some previous years’ data. It is believed that the major contributor to making improvements in this area is a further bell time study. We will look at initiating this as soon for possible implementation in the next school year.

	Total # of Routes	Total # of Daily Runs	Run/Route Ratio
2013-2014	424	842	1.99
2014-2015	403	871	2.16
2015-2016	381	828	2.17
2016-2017	386	829	2.15
2017-2018	386	854	2.21
2018-2019	391	872	2.23

The number of schools where this can be effective is limited. They are primarily in urban centres where the school zone and programming is limited. Schools that are serviced with buses that have transfers, large catchment areas and special programs typically have shared bussing, which present other challenges.

Goal: To work with all stakeholders in dealing with pupil management in transportation and reduce the demand for monitors on busses.

Objectives	Qualitative/Quantitative Measure	Performance Indicators
Develop a unified plan and resources to deal student discipline issues	The development of a unified strategy and resource for all stakeholders that is consistent with legislative requirements and helps students succeed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide for stakeholders completed and distributed • Education and communication resources for parents and students completed and distributed
Reduce the need for monitors on busses	The number of monitors and duration of assignment to particular routes is reduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of monitors assigned to routes • Length of time required on the route before being removed

Accountability: Executive Director – Annual Report at AGM

RESPONSE:

The OASBO (Ontario Association of School Board Officials) Transportation Committee in conjunction with the Ministry of Education has developed a resource guide from which individual consortia can draw in the preparation of its own customized guide. Work on this project began in early 2020. The Principal’s Advisory Committee along with representatives from our Bus Operators and our Safety Officer conducted an initial review of the material. However, the work has been interrupted by the pandemic but will continue in 2021.

Likewise, any comparison with respect to the use of monitors on routes over the past school year to previous years is difficult. Any statistical data in future reports will have to reflect impact of COVID-19.

Goal: To adjust the NPSSTS business cycle in order to deliver route information to the consumer earlier and improve operational readiness.

Objectives	Qualitative/Quantitative Measure	Performance Indicators
Deliver route information to consumers prior to June 30 in any given year	Development and implementation of a plan involving all stakeholders to adjust business practices that allow for earlier release of route information to parents and the adoption of a new business cycle and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a plan involving all stakeholders • Implementation of action items contained in the plan • Route information released to consumers on or before June 30th

Accountability: Executive Director – Annual Report at AGM

RESPONSE:

This project involves numerous stakeholders. Notwithstanding the impact of the pandemic, NPSSTS staff are reminded of this goal regularly. A first draft of an implementation plan has been developed. As we progress through 2021 and stakeholder COVID-19 workload eases, we can proceed to involving them in its further development. This includes three key groups from the school community: the Principal’s Advisory Committee, Data Quality Committee and Joint Communications Committee.

Goal: To enhance the use of technology by the NPSSTS for internal and external purposes.

Objectives	Qualitative/Quantitative Measure	Performance Indicators
Expand the use of technology for operational and administrative uses	Make greater use of the current platforms and additions along with training of staff and stakeholders in their use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of enhancements• Number of training opportunities for staff and stakeholders
Enhance the use of technology in communicating with stakeholders	Increase the use of technology in communicating with all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of enhancements• Number stakeholders being reached

Accountability: Executive Director – Annual Report at AGM

RESPONSE:

Once again, the response to COVID-19 has been the priority since the spring of 2020. The expansion of technology within the NPSSTS has been centered on work from home, remote access to office systems and video conferencing capabilities. As noted later in this report, Business Continuity was a critical business process for us and all other businesses and agencies required to ensure continuous service delivery throughout the past several months.

The NPSSTS has therefore acquired hardware and software to enable each member of the staff to access internal systems remotely in a secure environment. The ongoing work of preparing for the next school year was suspended for only a few weeks while hardware and software were being purchased, prepared and distributed. The return to an office environment did not occur until the summer months once safety protocols had been established, reviewed and approved by representatives of management and staff, in consultation with Public Health. Video conferencing software was included in this initiative to maintain staff interaction, collaboration, as well as reaching out to external stakeholders.

The other items listed above will be addressed as we move into 2021 and beyond and will be subject to updates in future reports.

ONGOING STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Notwithstanding the above, there are a number of Ongoing Strategic Directions that are works in progress or ongoing programs. These include items like:

- **First Rider Program where the delivery of the program increased in the number communities in which it was made available;**
 - Plans were in place to broaden our outreach to include the community of Mattawa in addition to the ongoing delivery in North Bay, Parry Sound, West Nipissing, and Sundridge. However, due to the pandemic, the program saw a transition to an online delivery for 2020 with instructions provided to all schools with respect to accessing the program.
- **School Bus Safety Week and safety education;**
 - Radio messaging reaching West Nipissing, North Bay, Parry Sound their outlying areas was used to highlight the week as well as provide driver recruitment.
- **Active School Transportation and Walking School Bus;**
 - This remains an open but dormant program at this time. However, these resources and principles were used in school start up activities to promote alternate transportation in order to promote social distancing on buses.
- **Student Bus Patroller Program;**
 - This initiative has yet to be re-introduced to the Principal Advisory Committee. COVID-19 did not allow for any progress in this area.
- **Updating and enhancing the Annual Communications Plan;**
 - An initial review of the plan was completed by the current staff member responsible for this function. However, a new employee has stepped into this role as a result of a retirement. This will provide a fresh look at this area as we continue with this work.
- **Review and update of existing Guidelines;**
 - Of the thirty-nine Guidelines located on the NPSSTS website, eight have been updated and are awaiting review and approval, one is in development and there are eleven new Guidelines awaiting review and approval.
- **Identifying gaps in Guidelines and developing appropriate Guidelines;**
 - Thirty-five internal Guidelines have been prepared and are awaiting review and approval. Six more are in development. These include human resource management matters, administrative processes like business and finance, as well as organizational governance.
- **Review and update of Human Resource Management processes like Pay Equity and the Performance Review system;**
 - Through the Collective Bargaining Process in 2019, an agreement was reached with the Union to form a Joint Labour Relations Committee to deal with some of those issues. Due to the pandemic, this initiative has not progressed but remains a priority and there is ongoing dialogue between the parties confirm their intent to proceed in early 2021.
 - HR Management forms the bulk of the new guidelines mentioned above including performance review processes.

- Professional Development and Succession Planning;



- In 2018-2019, one member of management was enrolled in the OASBO – Guelph University Diploma program in school board administration. Three members of the staff were enrolled in the Certificate in Pupil Transportation. Since then, these three members of the staff have enrolled in the diploma program. There is also interest by two other members of the team to pursue one or both of these programs in the near future.

Emergency Management			OASBO/Guelph University Diploma In School Board Administration		Task Specific	Other related training
IMS	Pandemic Awareness	First Aid	Enrolled	Courses in 2019-2020	Seminars/Webinars	
10	10	7	4 staff	4	18	1

- Delivery of Training to Stakeholders with respect to transportation software use;



- This area is a victim of the pandemic and remains a work in progress

- Business Continuity and Emergency Planning.



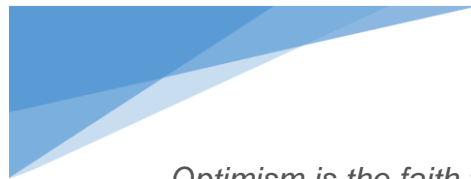
- This area came about as a necessity and not a planning exercise. A number of steps were required to work through the shutdown including the purchase of computer hardware and software and the development of four operational plans taking the organization from a work at home back to a safe return to the office environment. Some documentation remains outstanding from a general perspective to complete the overall business continuity plan.

Accountability: Executive Director – Annual Report at AGM

Conclusion

The past year has been full of challenges and opportunities. Despite the pandemic, our organization has seen growth in a number of areas and our service delivery has been adaptable. Credit must be given to every one of our stakeholders, old and new, who have provided feedback on so many issues to ensure that student transportation continued to be available despite the restrictions and changes.

As we move forward toward a resolution of the COVID-19 crisis, we will take with us the knowledge, skills and abilities that we have developed along with the spirit of cooperation that has permitted us to succeed and apply them to our goal of continuous improvement. The return to normal will be synonymous with new and improved.



Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

HELEN KELLER

Yours truly,

R.C.J. (Chuck) Seguin
Executive Director
Nipissing-Parry Sound Student Transportation Services