



TRANSPORTATION MONITORING REPORT

Presented to the Board of Trustees by Bevan Daverne, Superintendent of Schools

Resource Persons:

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February 27, 2018

REPORTING PERIOD: September 2, 2015 – August 31, 2016 and September 1, 2016 to current

OVERVIEW: Alberta Education provides funding to school boards to operate or contract transportation systems for K to Grade 12 students.

Annually, administration provides a Transportation Services Monitoring Report for information.

This report provides opportunity to consider the impact of Transportation Policy on the education of students in the jurisdiction.

SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS:

- Safety is paramount and Golden Hills has made this a priority with success.
- Future Initiatives – Continue to increase efficiency with increased flexibility to support Golden Hills' program initiatives while keeping costs within funding limits.
- Currently (2017/2018) Golden Hills operates 96% and contractors operate 4% of the bus route, which is the same as last years numbers, with the exception of 6 fewer routes.

70 Board Operated
3 Contracted

What's
new?

- Route information on our website
- New software – Bus Planner
- Formalized Evaluations with Drivers
- WIFI/GPS on all buses
- Field Trips continues to increase
- Choice Ridership continues to increase

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees receives the Transportation Monitoring Report for information and the record.

Safety - #1 Priority

Golden Hills transports over 3,500 students, 177 days a year over an area of 8,400 square kilometers for a total of 2,400,000 km a year. Safety of transporting students is the number one priority and continues to be successful.

Golden Hills monitors bus routes in a variety of ways which include driver and parent consultation. Golden Hills works with the busing industry to develop a standardized route risk assessment checklist to ensure that all areas of the province are consistently applying best practices concerning the safety of routes and any modifications required due to adverse conditions such as weather and geographical challenges. This government program formalizes the procedures and standardizes the assessments for all routes in Alberta.

Safe Driving Program

For the past few years Golden Hills has formalized a training and evaluation program for all our professional school bus operators. The purpose of this program is to ensure the safety of passengers on Golden Hills buses and that Golden Hills operators are equipped with the skills they need to safely operate a school bus and manage the passengers. We want to elevate the perception of school bus operators with parents and the community. School bus operators are professionals who participate in ongoing training to safely transport extremely precious cargo.

New Operator Training

Dexterity Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ A series of physical tests to ensure that the driver is physically able to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Execute a full pre-trip inspection- Flexibility to move in the seat to minimize blind spots- Maneuver the bus safely- Evacuate the bus in an emergency situation.
Skills Circuit Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ A series of activities and demonstrations which get the driver really familiar with the bus, how it maneuvers in tight spaces, how to correctly adjust and use the mirrors, and to raise awareness of the blind zones around the bus before they head out on the road.✓ The purpose of the skills circuit training is to make the driver aware of the bus and to get them comfortable with the bus in a controlled environment. Serpentine and Tail Swing Demonstration Videos
Classroom Training	<p>There is a lot for new school bus operators to learn, classroom training allows us to cover and prepare operators for situations which they will only encounter when they have passengers on their bus. Classroom training covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Health & Safety✓ Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)✓ School Bus Inspections and Maintenance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Loading, Unloading, Transporting Passengers and Passenger Management ✓ Bus Manoeuvres and Defensive Driving ✓ Emergencies, Bus Evacuations, First Aid, Emergency Equipment and Mechanical Breakdowns ✓ Passengers with Disabilities, Mobility Aids and Child Safety Seats
On Road Training	<p>This covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Pre-trip Inspection ✓ Yard Procedures ✓ Backing Procedures ✓ General Driving ✓ Highway Driving ✓ City Driving and Procedures ✓ Town Driving and Procedures ✓ Country Driving and Procedures ✓ Student Pick-Ups and Drop-Offs ✓ Rail Road Crossings ✓ “Turn Around” and various bus maneuvers ✓ Advanced Driving Techniques and the SMITH System(5 Keys): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aim High In Steering 2. Get The Big Picture 3. Keep Your Eyes Moving 4. Leave Yourself An Out 5. Make Sure They See You ✓ The Post Trip Inspection

School Bus Operator Evaluations

Golden Hills performs three types of operator evaluations in addition to dexterity testing:

Scheduled Evaluation	<p>Evaluations are scheduled for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probationary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operators must complete a satisfactory on-road evaluation within three months of employment • Scheduled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operators aged under 47: Every 5 years - Operators aged 47-67: Every 2 years - Operators aged over 67: Annually • Remedial, for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preventable Collision - Parent Complaint - Unsatisfactory Observation
On-Road Observation	<p>From time to time Golden Hills randomly follows our drivers to observe their driving habits and monitor their student management.</p>
School Representative* and Parent Evaluation *An administrator or delegate responsible for monitoring the buses at the school	<p>Golden Hills contacts the school representative and randomly contacts the parents who have children on the route to assess and identify potential issues. This is not a formalized survey, but we may consider surveys in the future.</p>

Golden Hills has conducted ___ evaluations this year, with the bulk being done during our S-Ednorsement Renewal Course running on March 2, 2018. An evaluation (unless remedial) consists of the School Bus Operator/ Evaluator riding along on the route and assessing communication with passengers and passenger management as well as the operators’ driving skills and abilities.

As part of Golden Hills Safety Procedures we do Safety/Training meetings, shown in the chart below, every 3 months as well as a mandatory Professional Development day for all our Bus Operators.

	2016/2017		2015/2016		
Month	Safety Meetings	Organizational/PD Day	Month	Safety Meetings	Organizational/PD Day
August		2	September	4	
October	5		October	1	
December	5		November	2	
February		1 - South	December	3	
March		1 - North	February		1
May	5		April	5	1
			May	5	

Route Risk Assessments

Route Risk Assessments are conducted at Golden Hills. These assessments are filled out by every driver in the division and then returned to the Transportation Department. Approximately **37%** of the forms returned had no issues. The other **63%** were returned with concerns such as weather conditions, sight distances and traffic volumes. As drivers are learning more about the risk assessment process, they are better able to assess and prepare for potential risks.

In these situations Golden Hills suggested possible solutions to the bus drivers as follows:

Issue	Analysis	Recommendation
Weather	Snow drifts, sleet, fog, rain, etc.	Encourage drivers to follow Inclement Weather procedure. Use the Smith Keys to identify and avoid potential problems. Attend the Winter Driving training session offered at staff/safety meeting.
Sight Distance	Visit location and review area	Possible options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May change from gate service to yard service or vice versa; or • Installation of signs; or • Route reconfigured to change direction of travel for the bus; or • Re-locate stop to different location. • Encourage home owners to prune trees, shrubs, etc. to improve line of sight. • Communicate with counties to have trees/bushes on public property pruned. • Use SMITH System to improve skills (Big Picture etc.)
Traffic Volume	Picking up/dropping off on busy highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warning lights on earlier and for longer periods of time. • Instruct students on safety and danger zones.
Left-Handed Stops	Review safety implications of left handed stops	Made changes for high traffic routes as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain permission from parents to have bus pick up student in yard, if possible. • Re-route bus route to change from left handed to right handed.
School Bus Loops	Review safety practices in bus loop	Work with school administration to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase parent safety awareness • Work with town of Strathmore and By-Law Enforcement to make drivers aware of parking zones • Increase supervision in bus loop

The bus driver route assessment is an excellent process for all drivers to reassess their route each year. One of the many benefits of this process also facilitates collaboration with the Counties. An example of this would be the request for signage (School Bus Stop Ahead Signs).

Bus Route Inclement Weather

In January 2015, Golden Hills implemented an updated Inclement Weather Administrative Procedure. This Administrative Procedure introduced some significant changes to how stakeholders (parents, staff, managers, administrators and senior administration) are notified of school closures and a new procedure for the decision making process.

Three levels of school closures were introduced:

Levels	Description
Green Closure	Due to weather and travel conditions, some buses are not running. School is open and regular classes will be offered.
Yellow Closure	Due to severe weather and travel conditions, no buses are running. School is open but regular classes are not being offered. We encourage parents and students to stay home and avoid the risks of travel.
Red Closure	Due to the severe weather and travel conditions school is closed. Do not send students to school. Due to the severe weather we are unable to ensure the school doors will be unlocked, or any staff will be in the building.

Bus drivers continue to play a primary role in the decision making process as they are the first to evaluate weather conditions and decide if it is safe to transport students. If conditions are deemed to be unsafe, one driver acting on behalf of all the drivers in the area affected will call the administrator(s) of the school(s) to inform them of the decision not to run the buses. Administrators will then evaluate road conditions and weather trends and make the decision on the level of closure for their school.

If the decision is to declare either a yellow or red closure level, the administrator will call the Superintendent for approval. A green level of closure (when only some buses are not running) does not require approval.

In order to assure that the messaging to students, parents, and staff is distributed in a timely manner, we try to make the decision prior to 6:30 am.

Significant changes were made, a couple years ago, in how information regarding school closure is communicated to all stakeholders. Messaging consistent with the level of closure (and with the travel recommendations) will be distributed by voicemail, text or email using Synrevoice to staff and parents. The message will also be posted to the social media (school/division websites, Twitter, and Facebook pages). Notice of school closure will NO LONGER be distributed by radio or television stations.

Each school will begin the process of informing parents of the change and to direct them to check social media in the event of inclement weather.

Golden Hills continues the practice of running an afternoon bus (when the weather conditions have improved significantly and it is safe to do so) if the morning bus was cancelled due to weather conditions. This has been successful since its implementation in January 2013. The majority of buses that could not run in the morning due to inclement weather ran in the afternoon. Since this is a new approach and fortunately inclement weather does not happen on a regular basis it will take some time

for parents to adjust to the afternoon bus running. As a result the afternoon buses continue to have minimal numbers of students on them. However, we anticipate this to increase over time.

	AM Bus Cancellations		Bus Ran in PM		Run Cancelled PM	
	2016/2017	2015/2016	2016/2017	2015/2016	2016/2017	2015/2016
Total	59	8	33	3	26	5
Weather	47					
Mechanical	9					
Other	3					

No Child Left Behind

“No Child Left Behind” is a system that forces the driver to go to the back of the bus before it can be shut off. This prevents students from being left on a bus after a run. Currently all of our route buses have this system. We have 3 buses that do not have this system, our “Hockey Bus” and 2 of our spare buses which are primarily used for sporting events and field trips.

A two part “post-trip” inspection has been introduced which drivers perform shortly after drop-off at their last stop and then again when the bus is parked at the park-out to ensure that no students or belongings are left on the bus.

Budget / Financial Implications

The Chart below shows the Projected Revenue and Expenses for the Transportation Department for 2016/2017 and provides the 2015/2016 Audited Financial Statements.

Description	Budget 2017/2018	% of Budget	AFS 2016/2017	% of Budget
Revenue				
Grants	3,728,495	98%	3,668,614	98%
Fees/Other sales & Services	70,000	2%	76,061	2%
Total Revenue	3,798,495		3,744,675	
Expenses				
Salaries and Benefits	1,860,610	46%	2,027,231	47%
Supplies and Services	1,394,203	34%	1,401,198	33%
Amortization	789,874	20%	839,930	20%
Total Expenses	4,044,687		4,268,359	
Net Deficit	- 246,192		- 523,684	

Challenges to our Budget

- Carbon Tax
- Fuel funded at \$0.60 per litre; (cost can be as much as double)
- Sparsely populated Rural areas impact efficiency.

Fee Structure

Golden Hills eliminated all transportation fees as of the 2012/13 school year. We believe this has positively impacted our enrolment.

Fleet

Pursuant Administrative Procedure 555, *Bus Replacement*, it is desirable to replace buses on a timely basis for the safety and efficiency of the operation. Urban buses are replaced within 14 years and rural buses are replaced within 12 years. Golden Hills continues to ensure buses are replaced within the appropriate time periods while taking budget constraints into consideration.

Age of Bus	2017/2018		2016/2017		2015/2016	
	# of Buses	% of Fleet	# of Buses	% of Fleet	# of Buses	% of Fleet
0-2 years	20	20%	63	59%	48	53%
3-5 years	42	41%	17	16%	27	30%
6-10 years	30	29%	17	16%	10	11%
11-17 years	7	7%	9	8%	5	6%
18+ years	3	3%				
Total	102		106		90	

Currently Golden Hills operates 70 routes; however spare buses (25%) are needed for the fleet to operate efficiently while maintaining the current levels of service. Some of the challenges are:

1. Allowing for optimal amount of wheelchair buses;
2. Having buses available for field trips that overlap regular routes; and
3. Golden Hills is a large geographical area and we need to ensure there are spare buses distributed throughout the division to ensure they are quickly available when needed.

Field Trips

Golden Hills Transportation supports all schools in the division with busing for students on field trips and extra-curricular events. The following table shows how many field trips occurred.

2016/2017						2015/2016		
Total Field Trips	In Town Field Trips	Out of Town Field Trips	Non School Field Trips	International	Alumni Bus Trips	Total Field Trips	In Town Field Trips	Out of Town Field Trips
721	196 (27%)	443 (61%)	10 (1%)	108 (15%)	82 (11%)	536	180 (34%)	356 (66%)

We supply both operators and buses for school field trips.

*Break down of the Non-GHSD Rentals:

- 24 trips for U of C Geology Field Studies
- 2 trips for the Salvation Army Youth Camp
- 1 trip for the Trochu AG Society
- 1 trip GHSD Social Club – Christmas Party
- 3 trips for Girl Guides of Canada
- 1 trip for Colonies Schools to Aggie Days

We adjusted the per kilometre rate in the fall of 2016. As we are currently running a deficit in transportation this will help cover more of the expenses associated with buses supporting field trips. Approximatley \$5,400.00 last year was attributed to external contracted work.

Bus Size

A common public misconception is cost savings associated with bus size. Contract routes are paid by the weighted load which means Golden Hills pays the contractor for number of students versus the size of bus. Contractors and Divisions often choose to purchase a bigger bus to maximize their flexibility (change buses from one area to another) and efficiency (schools can hire one bus for a field trip vs. two) and effectiveness (in an emergency evacuation for either a community or school).

The major cost associated with bus routes is the labour. Differential fuel, tire and insurance costs for a small or larger bus is minimal. The benefit of a larger bus is the flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness.

Board and Contracted Route Information

Costs

- Cost per kilometer is less for Board than Contracted routes (15%+) over the years.

Number of Routes

- 2016/2017 - Three contracted routes were changed to Board Operated by Golden Hills School Division. Each year an analysis is prepared to determine the costs and efficiencies for operating a contracted route versus Board Operated Route.
- Table below shows how Board owned routes have increased to reduce costs and increase flexibility.

History of Routes

Year	Total Routes	Board Operated	% Board Operated	Contracted	% Contracted
2017/2018	73	70	96%	3	4%
2016/2017	79	76	96%	3	4%
2015/2016	81	75	93%	6	7%
2014/2015	81	75	93%	6	7%
2013/2014	79	65	82%	14	18%
2012/2013	77	43	56%	34	44%

Staffing

Table below shows the staffing levels (total full time equivalent) in the transportation department.

	2017/2018	2016/2017	2015/2016
Administration/Bus Evaluator	3	3	2.6
Trades	2.6	3.6	3.6
Bus Drivers	70	76	75
Shop Helper	1	1	1
Total	76.6	83.6	82.2

Golden Hills has maintenance shops located in Strathmore and Trochu.

The purpose of the transportation shops are to provide mechanical services to the board owned buses. Regular maintenance continues to be a priority to ensure safety. As per the Commercial Vehicle Program requirements, inspections are performed at a minimum of twice a year. Oil changes are performed every 5,000 km or 10,000 km depending on the type of engine. Currently the newer V8 and V6 cylinder engines require oil changes every 10,000 km, however any bus older than the year 2000 requires oil changes every 5,000 km (currently have 3).

Ridership Information

Currently (2017/2018) Golden Hills is transporting 3,200 students which represents 50% of our regular funded student enrolment. Alberta has approximately 600,000 students and about 50% of those students ride the bus on a daily basis.

Year	Students that ride the bus	% of Total
2017/2018	3,200	50%
2016/2017	3,471	52%
2015/2016	3,055	50%
2014/2015	2,793	47%

Routes – reduced 6 routes

Urban and Rural

Table below shows the distribution percentage of urban and rural funded students transported by bus for two years. (These numbers do not include Siksika and International students)

Year	Totals	Urban	Rural
2017/2018	3,200	920 (29%)	2,280 (71%)
2016/2017	3,471	1,187 (34%)	2,284 (66%)
2015/2016	3,055	844 (28%)	2,211 (72%)

Courtesy and Choice

Courtesy Rider - someone who lives less than 2.4 km from their designated school and is meeting an existing route.

The Table below shows the percentage of courtesy riders who are urban and rural.

Courtesy Ridership	2017/2018	Percentage	2016/2017	Percentage	2015/2016	Percentage
Urban	427/920	47%	769/1184	65%	373/844	44%
Rural	281/2280	13%	323/2284	14%	269/2,211	12%
International	113/217	52%	63/111	57%	12/170	7%

Courtesy Ridership decreased for rural and urban. Please note that included in Courtesy Ridership may be choice ridership as they do not meet the 2.4 km criteria to their designated school, however we would not receive any funding to transport to their school of choice even if it was greater than 2.4 km.

Choice Ridership - someone who is meeting an existing route and is attending a school other than their designated school.

The Table below shows the percentage of choice riders who are urban and rural.

Choice Ridership	2017/2018	Percentage	2016/2017	Percentage	2015/2016	Percentage
Urban	318/920	35%	342/1187	29%	241/844	29%
Rural	287/2280	13%	283/2284	12%	328/2,211	15%

Choice ridership has increased for both urban and rural. More students are choosing our transportation system and more students are attending a school of choice.

In summary, there is additional demand to transport students who we do not receive any funding.

Special Needs Students

Currently Golden Hills provides transportation for 76 special needs students who are designated to programs unavailable in their attendance area. The following table breaks down the type of transportation provided. Golden Hills incurs the costs and receives the funding.

Type of Transportation	Number of Students		
	2017/2018	2016/2017	2015/2016
Regular School Bus	141	141	114
Taxi or Handicap Bus	11	7	5
Parent Provided	5	3	2
Totals	157	151	121

Riders in Other Districts

Golden Hills School Division has entered into agreements with other school jurisdictions to allow students to attend a school of another school authority and to allow students who in other school jurisdictions to be enrolled in Golden Hills Schools.

School District	# of Students Attending GHSD from other Districts		# of GHSD students going to other District that we have information on *	
	2016/2017	2015/2016	2016/2017	2015/2016
Grasslands RD#6	0	0	22	20
Palliser RD #26	6	5	0	0
Prairie Land RD #25	10	13	8	6
Chinook's Edge RD #73	18	19	17	17
Totals	34	37	47	43

*Only have student information from other divisions if there is an agreement. There may be other students leaving the division that we do not have any information on.

Affect

Transportation Agreements allows Golden Hills to claim grant money for the students. Transportation grants may not cover all of the expenses, however, the offset is the claim of the education grants and stability for the students attending their school of choice. At the end of the day parents and students are choosing Golden Hills.

Ride Times

Ride times have decreased over the last couple of years as per the table below:

One Way Minutes	2017/2018	2016/2017	2015/2016
75+ Minutes	0%	0%	1%
61-75 Minutes	3%	4%	6%
46-60 Minutes	39%	37%	10%
0-45 Minutes	49%	59%	83%

Decreased ride times are a result of:

- More students have moved from rural areas to urban areas; and
- More board owned runs; increased flexibility within system.

Communication and Culture

Communication and “customer service” are two areas of importance within the Transportation Department. Areas of concerns are communication with parents and students, school administration and staff, and division office staff.

With the goal of creating a cohesive and collaborative relationship between all stakeholders, improvements/enhancements are being made and will be ongoing.

Transportation Department Initiatives			
Date	Issue/Project	Action/Resolution	Date Complete
Sept 2017	Bus Route Notification Subscription Service	Parents may now subscribe to receive email notification when busses are not running or delayed.	Ongoing
March 2017	“Fred” Customer Service	Initiated customer service training and recognition for those supplying outstanding customer service and support to all stakeholders.	Ongoing
Jan 2017	Bus Route Notification	Online information available to public using GHSD 75 and school websites.	Ongoing
July 2016	Student Information	Purchase of new department software (Busplanner) to allow for increased productivity and parent web access.	Ongoing
June 2016	Transportation Web Page	Improvements to department web page to allow parents access to online information.	Ongoing
May 2016	Student Registration	Introduction of online registration form.	Ongoing
Dec 2015	Accident/Incident Procedure	Introduction of procedure which involves drivers being able to have multiple contact people (within Transportation Dept and Division office) in the event of an incident.	Ongoing
Sept 2015	Bus Operator Skills Training	Instruct/Review in skills circuit.	Ongoing
Sept 2015	Develop Best Practice Kindergarten/GR 1 Student Drop Off	Drivers now contact parents of K/GR 1 students to determine who will meet child at bus stop.	Ongoing
Sept 2015	Communication between transportation dept. and bus drivers	Introduction of Remind (communication software) to alert drivers, administrators and dept staff of road conditions, weather alerts, route/school cancellations, etc.	Ongoing
Sept 2015	WIFI/GPS	Installed WIFI on all GHSD buses, used to monitor location and speed of buses to improve student safety.	Ongoing
July 15	Plus 55 Games Strathmore	Drivers provided transportation services for games.	July 15
May 2015 -	WIFI /GPS Pilot	Piloted WIFI/GPS on two buses with premise being that GPS would assist in	Ongoing

Transportation Department Initiatives			
Date	Issue/Project	Action/Resolution	Date Complete
ongoing		location and monitoring of buses, eventual remote diagnosis of bus mechanical issues and lastly providing WIFI for students.	
Jan 2015	Inclement Weather	Creation of new Inclement Weather Administrative Procedure and procedures in various areas of Golden Hills School Division – communicated to drivers at staff meetings.	Jan/Feb 2015

Stakeholder Issues

Issue	Summary	Resolution
Child Care Transportation	Transportation from caregivers place of residence is supplied for parents when there is capacity on the bus.	Adjust bus routes to provide transportation for these students
Red Light Violations	Parents concerned with increasing number of drivers passing busses when red lights are flashing.	Working with Bylaw, Sherriff, County Peace Officers and RCMP to alert them of areas where violations are occurring . Encouraging drivers to gather information and report violations
School Start Up	Parent concerns regarding the lack of communication regarding bus pick up times and locations.	Bus Planner Web will publish stop location and time for parents to access. Dept staff will advise parents to subscribe as students are added to passenger lists. Operators will be encouraged to text/call parents prior to first day of school. Schools will be encouraged to update student information prior to the end of school year.
Bus Run Times in excess of 1 hr	Concerns with students (especially K – 1) being on the bus for long periods.	Review routes and whenever possible (when not affected by geography of area) make changes.
Bus Operator Communication	Operators not communicating with parents.	Drivers now use group text messages and Remind to contact

		parents. Fan out Lists are also used. Operators advised that they must call parents to inform them about stop times and locations etc.
Unsafe Driving Practices	Concerns regarding operators driving too fast for road conditions, using cell phones, etc.	Performed evaluations, delivered letters of direction, set up driver training, created development plan for operators, advised operators of new changes to distracted driving law, implementing “no cell phones” during bus run. GPS on the bus allows us to monitor buses
Bus Climate	Concerns with driver attitude and student interaction.	Ongoing professional development regarding student management, explaining behavior expectations and creating positive climate on the bus.

Summary

- Improved overall level of information and customer service
- Reduced overall ride times
- Reduced costs in our control
- No fees charged to parents and this has contributed to the increased enrolments

Proposed Areas for Advocacy

1. Choice – funding to follow choice principle
2. Equitable Funding Model – funding for rural areas
3. Carbon Tax – rebate to GHSD