



## Transportation Strategy Engagement Workshop

### Thomas B. Riley School

April 12, 2016

**23 Participants**

Interests	# of Participants
My child takes transportation arranged by the Calgary Board of Education to get to school (yellow school bus, handybus etc.)	3
My child gets to school in another way (walks, private vehicle, public transit etc.)	7
My child attends an alternative program (language, Montessori, science, TLC) or complex needs program	12
I currently have no children in the Calgary Board of Education system	1



## Thomas B. Riley School Flip Chart Summary

### Travel Distance

#### Preserve

- Amalgamated stops are a practical solution – if it is a safe distance and route for children to walk and communicated to parents in a timely way
- NOTE: travel does not equal walking distance

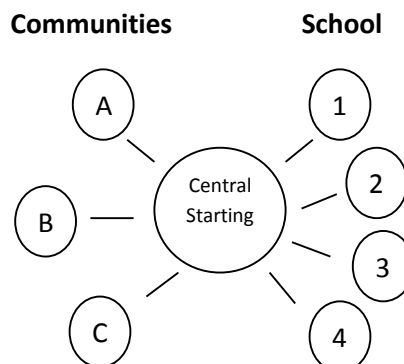
#### Flexibility

- Current set distance seems a bit ridiculous for programs of choice, ie. Immersion / Montessori
- Could school boards work together
- Could the City be contracted by both boards
- A potential concern – not just location but business of stop locations and impact on traffic
- Engage parents in area prior to Sept to create a “Common Sense” stop
- Increase number of stops in an area to cover an area of 500m MAX
- Collaborate with other city school boards to collect all kids for the same areas to schools in close proximity
- Travel distance for bus stops should be equal to the walk distance to school with the walk zone
- Walking school bus” older children take on leadership role and walk younger children to school
- Same travel distance to walk to bus stop for regular and Alternate Programs
- Have a reliable way to contact parents if bus is not on time and increasing walk distance to bus stops
- Incentive or deterrents for bus companies when late, don’t pick-up, etc

#### Observations (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Make bus riders walk the same distance as a walker would to the school (eg. 16km K-6)

Collect kids in surrounding community





## **Bus Ride Time**

### **Preserve**

- Consistency – if there is, we should preserve it. Should be a goal to have arrival and departure accurate
- Opinion on max ride times: 40min? 1 hr?
  - The varies depending upon community program or program of choice
- Keep younger kids on the yellow buses
- Current bus time expectation should be flexible dependant on school (ie. Child getting longer ride to a specialty school is acceptable)
- Current enrollment standards should be kept for programs of choice, people able to go city ride
- Preserve junior high ridership on yellow buses

### **Flexibility**

- Create achievable and consistent schedules
- Transparency – display # of rides and route plan
- Use Calgary's Transit expertise to schedule routes (agree, agree)
- Shift Junior High from yellow buses to Calgary transit
- Special needs programs should be classed differently than programs of choice ie. Children with physical or learning disabilities as to kids in bilingual program

### **Observations** (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Make expected ride times clear and encourage parents to use that to evaluate whether or not to bus



### Eligibility for Ridership

#### Preserve

- Continue to provide transportation to all users (K-9)
- Transportation to regular schools and French schools (Canada's 2<sup>nd</sup> language) to continue

#### Flexibility

- Increase walk distance within the walk zone to school therefore allowing for less stops
- Everyone is eligible but you need to pay for that eligibility
- My son lives in Tuscany but goes to Silver Star because when we lived here Tuscany School was full / we were out of the walk zone. He can't take the bus because it's not an alternative program, but there are half-empty buses going from our neighbourhood to W.O. Mitchell – could he not be eligible for ridership thereby increasing your user fee income?
- Make those that choose alternative programs (other than French or English) no longer eligible for subsidized ridership
- Match size of bus provided to # of students riding. If only 8 students riding to alternative program – use small bus

#### Observations (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Students grade 7 and up not transported by CBE (use Calgary Transit)



## **Bell Times**

### **Preserve**

- Staggered start / end times
- Community schools need to be coordinated eg. K-4 + 5-9

### **Flexibility**

- Our community, VR, has multiple buses with low ridership. If 3 Bowness (sp?) Schools, Belvedere, Bowcroft and TB Riley had staggered bell times children attending all 3 schools could be on one bus.
- New schools don't know bell times yet so no plans can be made in your neighbourhood.
- Who dictates bell times? CBE or transportation companies?
- Never know bell times until buses are sorted now ... not good
- Support earlier bus times to have earlier starts: 8am – K-6 9am 6-12 vs. younger kids
- Earliest start K-6 8am, latest dismissal K-6 – 3:30pm

### **Observations** (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Coordinate bell times w/schools in areas to consolidate ridership amongst schools to fill buses



## **Number and Location of Pick-Up Stops**

### **Preserve**

- Stops within a reasonable distance
- Maintaining safe distance!!
- Preserve location that are not currently congregated
- Consider safe routes to stops
- Different distances for different ages
- Allow conditional riders
- Congregated stops in own neighbourhood (Observation: disagree – kids in walk zone have to ensure safe crossing with pedestrian lights etc)

### **Flexibility**

- Increase transparency ie. #of kids / neigh.
  - To enable parents to find alternative solutions ie. Car pooling
- Would it make a difference to find a different / CDN bus company to provide service
- Engagement with parents on routes prior to Sept rollout
- Standardize for all Alberta
- Ensure stops do not force children to cross major intersection or roadway
- Share services with the Catholic school. eg. High school and elementary
- Walk maximum distance of 500m for students K-6 or 7
- Creating walking schools buses for bus stops that are congregated
- Willing to pay more for less distance to bus stops for alternative programs
- Go more towards congregated stops with setting clear maximums for distance to drive from home to bus stops



## Access to Waivers

### Preserve

- The ability to obtain a waiver
- Continue that conditional riders are not eligible
- Some conditional riders are special needs (autism); low income – may need waivers

### Flexibility

- Offer a percentage discount (sliding scale) based on affordability
- Special school / Alternate schools should be considered conditional riders and not eligible for waivers
- Everyone pays what they can pay – creates value

### Observations (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Although this is a choice, ability to access Alternate Programs must be open even for low income families. Waivers should still be available.



## User Fees

### Preserve

- Same fee regardless of program
- Waivers (access to)
- Keep user fees, it doesn't make sense to discontinue them
- Charging a fee is reasonable
- If user fees get too high parents will opt out of program
- Pricing will become a deterrent

### Flexibility

- Yes to fees, but should be a limit – can't continually be increased
- Family max reinstated
- Charge more to bus alternate program
- Do not include French Immersion in Alternate program (national language)
- Have all students gr 6-12 ride Calgary transit
- Student 7-12 should be on Calgary Transit
- Riders should shoulder the cost of their choice and the cost of making the choice to attend that alternate program
- Keep the \$\$\$ in the classroom
- Timely communication of changes of plans
- By registration (spring) we should know if there are any adjustments to user fees so you know if you want your student to attend an alternate program
- Don't take money out of our classroom to fund Alternate Programs
- Should not penalize parents of special need by charging them more
- Allow schools to manage individual fees, i.e school has 700 kids, school gets 700 x fee and plans their own routes
- If you are forced to take bus, should be no fee
- Set up a panel to appeal bus fees for individual, particular situations
- Fund raising as option





**Observations** (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Late registration needs a higher fee
- If all other grades have subsidized busing so should 10-12. In Tuscany all high school students will be bused
- Not waiting until Aug. 30 to get info to parents
- Have it ready before end of school year so parents can plan properly
- For alternate program increased costs make sense but not extreme – Do not penalize people who support some of the great programs
- Please keep our money / fees in our classrooms / schools
- Agree with the above
- Agree with “Should not penalize parents of special needs by charging them more” above



## Low Ridership Routes

### **Preserve**

- User fees
- No to increase # of students in class.
- Improve the level of education

### **Flexibility**

- Small buses to be provide by Calgary Transit
- Make kindergarten a full day program (3 days / wk)
- Look for additional contractors.
- Join ridership with Catholic School Board
- Private contractors (Associated Cabs)
- Taxis, small buses etc, mix and match
- Add Gr 7-9 kids to Calgary Transit (not equal to yellow buses)
- Mini bus to increase efficiency
- Consolidate kids to schools from different programs ex. Bowcraft language + Thomas Riley TLC program (geographic)

### **Observations** (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Add alternative ½ programs in each quadrant of the city to fill older schools with low enrollment and reduce small numbers trickling in from all quadrants to one program
- If a bus is not fully being utilized then can we look into a more cost effective method? Ie. 13 kids on a bus could they be on a taxi instead?
- Communicate changes to routes well in advance of implementation
- Have a registered car pool list to transport students to alternative programs when there is low ridership



## Two- or Three-Year Implementation Plan for Changes

### Preserve

- Allow children entering gr.8 next year (7 this year) to finish jr. high before changes made. Children who may not be able to continue at that school if no bus service may finish program
- French Immersion should not be considered as an alternate program as it is our country's official language. I don't agree to pay more for my constitutional rights.

### Flexibility

- If following the Edmonton yellow bus fee structure for alternative programs, suggest increase fees to ex. \$550 (and not have a reduced monthly fee) ... BUT ... be able to "exchange" additional fees for tax deductions (ex. Art & Sport credit) (Observation: Calgary girls school is \$900 / yr)
- "Grandfathering" is not a viable solution as those who have already started in a program should not have to abandon programming because of lack of affordability
- Can you find efficiencies in transportation costs for complex learning needs? They make up 2% of the student population, yet use 1/3 of the transportation budget

### Observations (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- I have a child at Dr. Oakley and find this bus is as efficient as it could be.
- Have more programs throughout Calgary is my only thought, which might cost more or be less effective



## Other

### Preserve

- Put a family maximum limit for family with more than one kid

### Flexibility

- Move schools per area ridership ex: Brentwood Community is older community with no kids go to Brentwood TLC from their (?) community. Most kids come from Royal Oak / Rocky Ridge. Can CBE move TLC to them communities
- New William D Pratt opening up – many kids inside and outside of walk zones need to cross Rocky Ridge Road a very busy street – pedestrian walk lights need to be installed for their safety (Royal Oak Way + Rocky Ridge Road) and possibility other intersections
- Have ability for older kids to be in school earlier to work on homework clubs, etc. My daughter Gr 8 could be dropped off when we go to work or if bell would be 8ish but don't know bell time til summer sometime
- Understand the number of buses / schools that students attend in a community. We live in Rocky Ridge and back onto Rocky Ridge Blvd. The number of buses b/w 7&8 is crazy – estimate about 20+ - why so many? Too many options for parents? Any way to have fewer buses + have central location for multiple communities to swap (?) students to go to various schools?

### Observations (Post-It Notes from Optional Session)

- Increase transparency of decisions
- Increase communication (and make it early)
- Fix the funding inequity from the province for a long-term solution



## Public and Parents Engagement Evaluation – Thomas B. Riley School

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements:

**P1) I was encouraged to share my thoughts and/or feedback during this engagement.**

16 Agree      2 Somewhat Agree      0 Somewhat Disagree      0 Disagree      0 Not Applicable

**P2) I was able to ask questions and learn about the opportunity for input/feedback prior to my participation in this engagement.**

8 Agree      7 Somewhat Agree      1 Somewhat Disagree      1 Disagree      0 Not Applicable

**P3) I had the information I needed to participate in a meaningful way.**

6 Agree      10 Somewhat Agree      1 Somewhat Disagree      1 Disagree      0 Not Applicable

**P4) I was able to provide input on the best way for me to share my thoughts and ideas.**

11 Agree      6 Somewhat Agree      1 Somewhat Disagree      0 Disagree      0 Not Applicable

**P5) I clearly understand all of the factors being considered in the decision making process and which of these factors I can and cannot influence.**

9 Agree      4 Somewhat Agree      4 Somewhat Disagree      1 Disagree      0 Not Applicable

**P6) My input was documented as part of the engagement process.**

17 Agree      1 Somewhat Agree      0 Somewhat Disagree      0 Disagree      0 Not Applicable



**P7) What did you like most about this engagement?**

- That it happened
  - Discussions in small groups with other engaged parents. Having the opportunity to be part of the discussion.
  - The other parents. Great group – really productive conversations. I like the gratitude and closing remarks.
  - Hearing about their challenges from different parents.
  - Open to community input.
  - More information available because trustee and CBE transit employees here to answer questions.
  - Being encouraged to have a lively discussion in a respectful manner – OK to disagree.
  - Informed people who could answer questions for us.
  - The group discussions at the tables.
- 
- The discussion questions helped to keep us focused.
  - Chance to hear other views.
  - I found the format very effective in promoting discussion and brainstorming.
  - Organized.
  - Having CBE reps at hand to answer questions.
  - Hearing other concerns & people being reasonable with thoughts / requests / comments.

**P8) What did you like least about this engagement?**

- People interrupting / changing topics at tables.
- Alternative programs – language TLC – parent choice should be separate from learning / physical disability programs lumped as one, ie. Not parent choice. Would have liked to have more open discussions amongst the entire group and not just small groups.
- Information package not detailed enough. Many of us found the column headings “Preserve” and “Flexibility” confusing. Would’ve preferred a simple “like” and “Dislike” even though I understand those headings may be too black & white / leading. But would have been clearer.
- Not the easiest to express own pinion when other’s were strongly different.
- The advanced communications was at too high a level.
- The swack of papers in the middle - found it difficult to find what was needed, but ultimately it was there.
- Not enough time.



- Not enough time to visit all stations.
- Still don't believe CBE is listening to us or being transparent in their decisions about funding and fees.
- Limits on options / solutions
- The amount of talk / points covered in the 1<sup>st</sup> 30 mins of the evening. It seemed excessive. You could say for coming and immediately launch into the "3 things ... and how you want us to discuss. Too much talk. However the facilitator was fabulous!
- The engagement at the beginning from the CBE was lacking and led to some dissent from participants.
- The smelly permanent markers.
- The engagement was very thin in some regards – it is nice to be involved but it is hard to know if it will be a truly considered and viable part of the ultimate decisions being made. Did it enjoy it – thanks