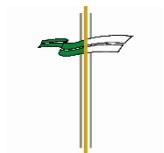


2020-2021 Annual Report



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Nipissing - Parry Sound

Chuck Seguin

NPSSTS

January 12th, 2022

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Message from the Executive Director

The mission of the Nipissing – Parry Sound Student Transportation Services (herein referred to as NPSSTS) is to safely transport students to and from school in a manner that is conducive to a positive learning experience at school that day. In order to do so, we rely on our partners in transportation: the operators, drivers, monitors, commissionaires, school administration and teaching staff, parents, and students. We are thankful for all involved parties and their demonstrated patience, understanding and cooperation needed in the midst of the pandemic. The contributions and sacrifices made by everyone are appreciated.

Notwithstanding the many challenges and changes, service continued with minimum disruption to service. The NPSSTS adopted strategies that emphasized and favored delays rather than cancellations, and worked collaboratively and effectively with the operators in dealing with driver shortage issues when they occurred.

Though not at the pace set prior to the pandemic, the NPSSTS continues to move forward in achieving the goals and objectives set out in the Business Plan **2020-2022**. We require an in-depth review of the Plan and timelines stated within. While this work is in progress, new initiatives from the Ministry of Education require our attention. We have provided the Ministry with another data set regarding home to school distance in 2021. We are actively participating in the Ministry's ongoing Funding Formula Review. These new priorities require extensive review and sharing of data with our Member Boards to ensure that those involved in discussions at all levels have the best information available. Priorities shift but remain as works in progress.

Four staff members continue to pursue the Guelph University/OASBO diploma program, with two having completed the Certificate in Pupil Transportation portion. Two other staff are entering the diploma program at this time. Professional development remains a key to the future.

In closing, I would like to thank the NPSSTS Board of Directors for their support. With two members retiring in 2021 and new Superintendents coming onboard, we will have an opportunity to draw from their experience and fresh views.



R.C.J. (Chuck) Seguin

Executive Director

Response to COVID-19

Preparing for students to return to in-class learning has required the implementation of procedures involving all disciplines of the organization including administrative, safety, and operational perspectives. Following the initial school closure in March of 2020 and a work-from-home period, staff returned to the office environment in July of that year, under strict protocols to complete preparations for the upcoming academic year. We were mainly able to maintain staff working in the office throughout the 2020-2021 school year with a couple of short periods of work-from-home.

Challenges we faced in the process included the implementation of Opt-Out processes, Virtual Schools, continued coordination of the supply of PPE to bus operators. The Transportation Plan was reviewed and amended in consultation with public health to include mandatory masking of all students and mandatory seating plans on student transportation vehicles. Compliance with provincial and local directives was maintained and, in some circumstances, exceeded. Dialogue with the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit provided an opportunity to develop a procedure for expeditiously sharing information to assist in contact tracing in the event that a student using transportation services tested positive. NPSSTS student data combined with seating plans have become a useful tool in promptly addressing contact tracing. As the pandemic has evolved, so has our response. We continue to work with stakeholders to improve communication and information sharing to meet the needs of all our partners.

Key Performance Indicators

NPSSTS and Provincial Data

As an annual practice in the fall, Ontario transportation consortia individually complete the Provincial Transportation Report for the preceding school year. The Ministry of Education computes data from the information provided in each report, which is 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 2019-2020 school year. As a snapshot of the status of business on October 31st of that year, it predates any influence from the pandemic and provides a reliable source for some comparisons. The exception to this would be financial data used in the Financial Report of this document that reflects the financial year-end of August 31st 2021.

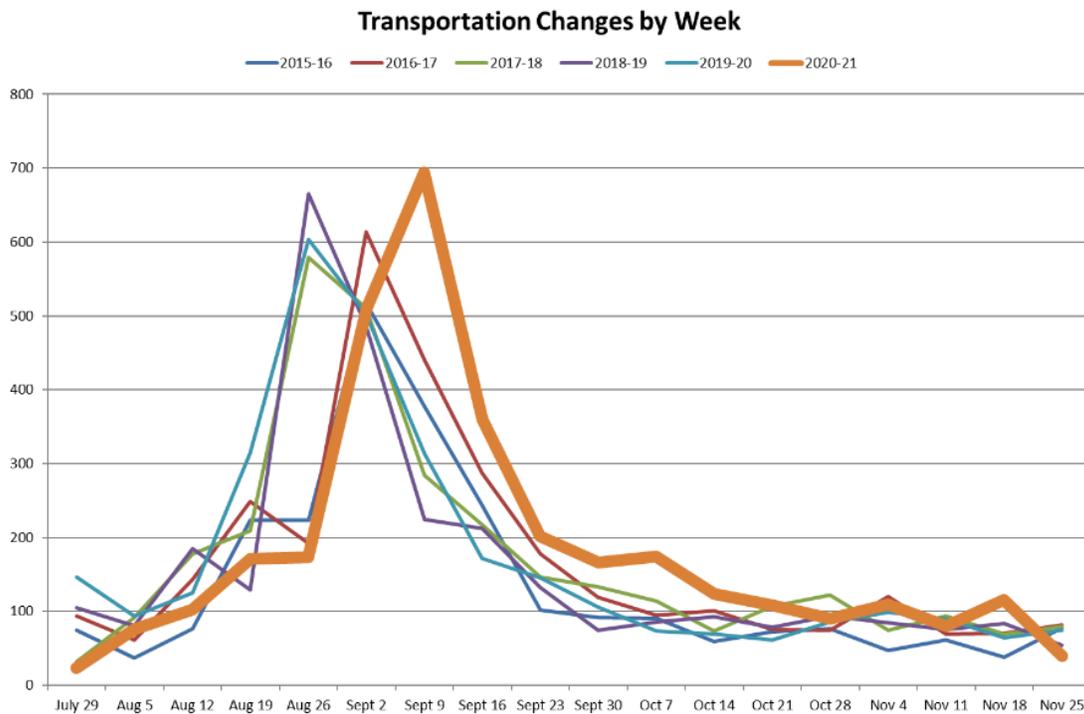
Compiling data in such a way creates an opportunity to assess the efficiency, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness of our service delivery model is. In July of 2020 at the request of the Ministry of Education, consortia compiled their data into a report that discussed data pertaining to student Distance from Home to School Attended. This data will be used in conjunction with other performance indicators to better analyze our systems.

In 2020-2021, the NPSSTS transported 11,519 students, compared to 10,126 students in the previous year. Daily kilometres travelled increased to 43,238 from 41,964 kilometres in the previous year. The number of routes increased to 397 from 391 in the same period. Changes to overall enrollment amongst the member boards was negligible with an overall reduction of only 34 students. The major contributing factor to increased ridership was accommodation changes. Boards opening schools or school consolidations, whether temporary to accommodate construction or permanently, increased the number of students eligible for transportation.

References to other data from the 2019-2020 will be made in dealing with specific issues and performance indicators throughout this report.

Start-Up Workload

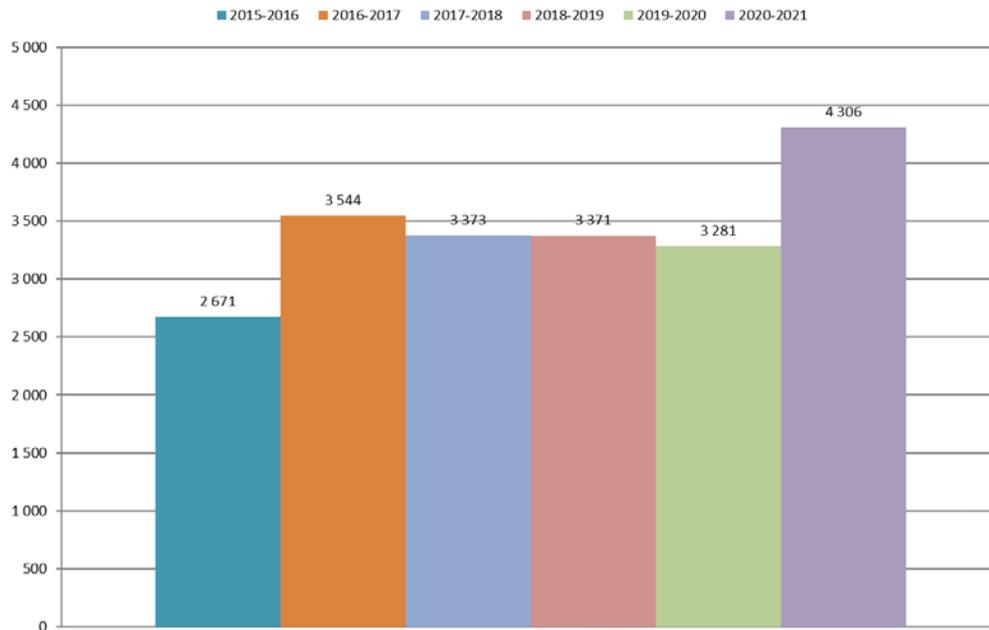
The annual spike in workload in the weeks prior to and immediately following the opening of schools is an area that we will address as outlined in the Business Plan. From the first week of August until the end of October, task numbers are elevated.



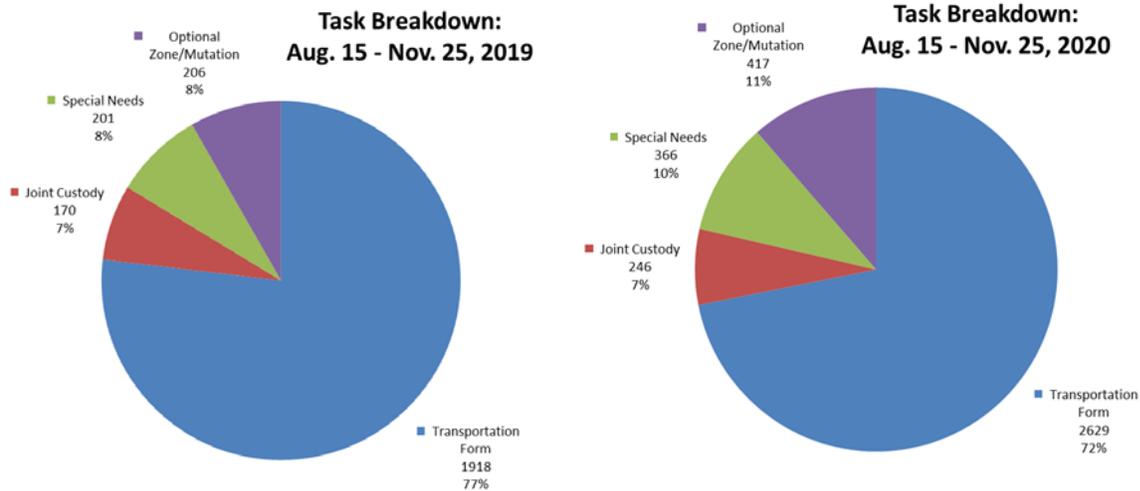
With respect to this school year, staff have dealt with 3,227 requests during this period. This statistic is slightly lower than last year at 3,255, and approximately 8.7% more than the previous years' average of 2,969. Rectifying this pattern remains a target for dramatic operational changes with respect to our business cycle.

The total number of Transportation Changes for 2020-2021 increased by 1,025 requests. This increase is likely attributable to students opting in and out of transportation as school delivery fluctuated from in-person to virtual learning. This increase represents a 31.2% increase in annual workload. The spike shown above represents 17 weeks where 75.6% of the annual transportation changes are received and processed.

Transportation Changes



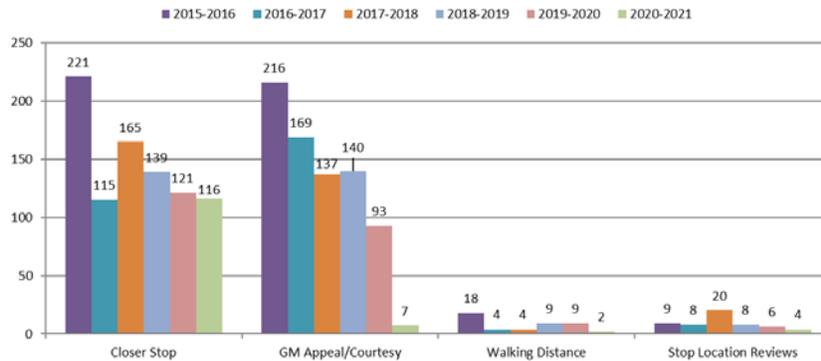
All requests assigned to route planners as tasks are divided into a variety of categories. Of interest is the change in some of the busier sub category of tasks over a one-year period.



There is an increase in volume in the number of requests along with a shift in the subcategory of requests, by percentage. Special Needs and Optional Zone requests increased in volume and comprised a greater percentage of the overall demand for service in 2020-2021.

Other more common service request categories are shown in the chart below. All categories saw a decline during start up 2020-2021. The dramatic decrease in GM Appeal/Courtesy is likely due to the proactive messaging advising parents and guardians that these requests would be strictly scrutinized and limited in number to enhance physical distancing as part of our COVID-19 Transportation Plan.

Common Service Requests

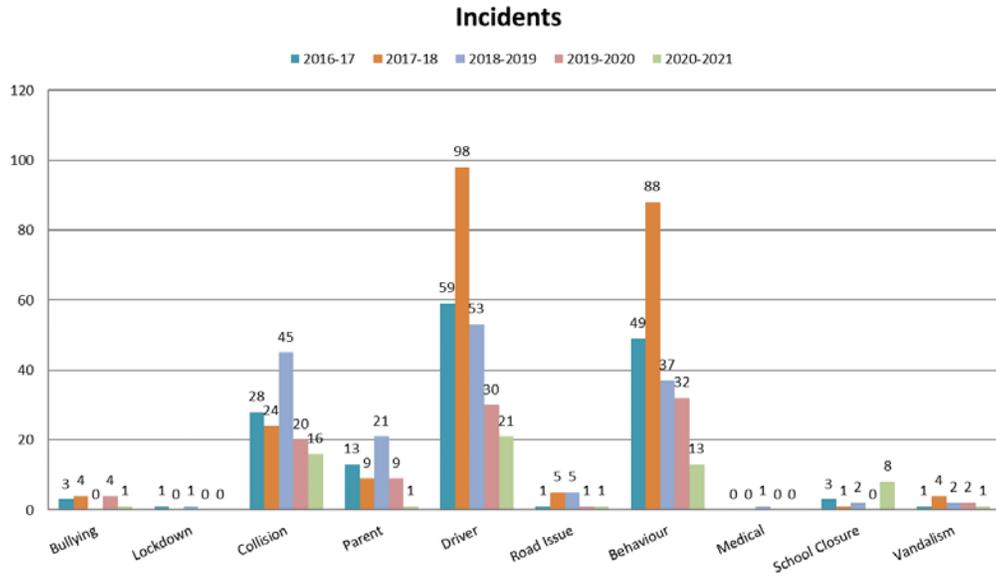


Operator Audit

The 2020-2021 Operator Audit was conducted with two focuses: compliance with the Transportation Agreement, and compliance with the Pandemic Addendum to the contract. The audit consisted of a site visit to each bus company where needed and a thorough review of their respective operations and documentation. The audit 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. Areas for audit 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. With respect to the Addendum, all operators were in compliance including the allocation of special payments for pandemic response.

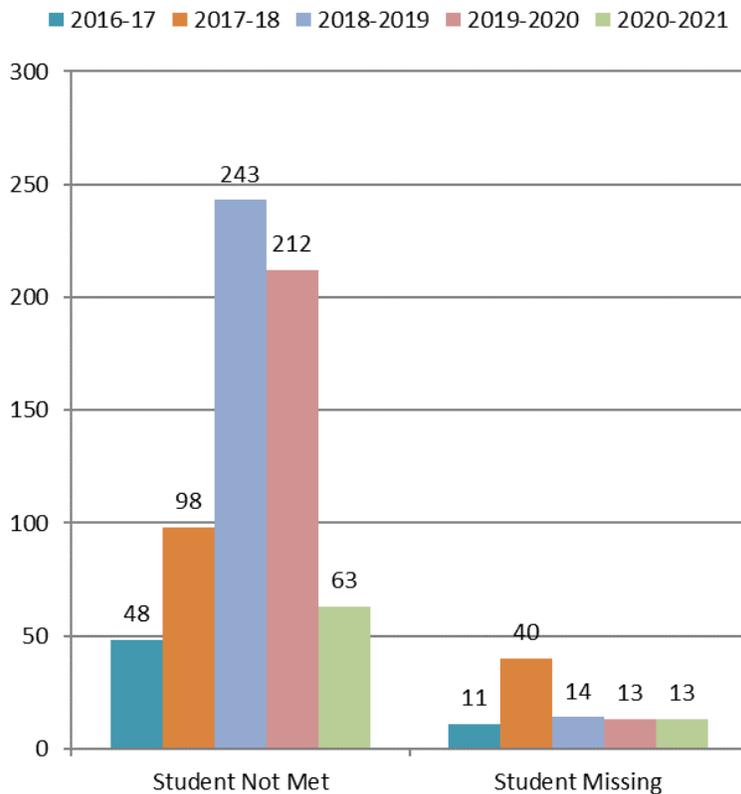
Safety and Other Incidents

For comparison purposes, of notable mention is that 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 data is incomplete due to the school closures in the spring. The data is presented for information purposes only at this time. The illustrations below suggest a trend of declination but no conclusions should be drawn with respect to levels for the past year.



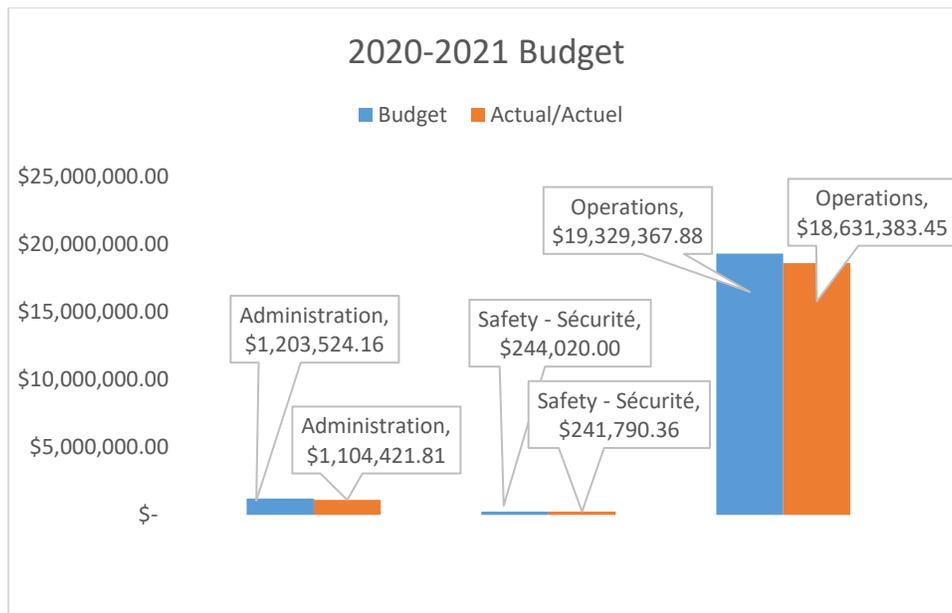
Special care is always given to the most vulnerable students. Guideline and contractual changes beginning in 2018-2019 with respect to vulnerable students being met at the stop and the Tag the Bag program the following year have proven effective in raising the diligence on the part of drivers and school staff.

JK/SK Incidents

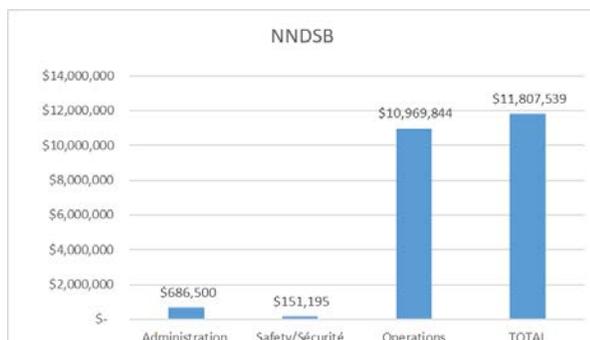


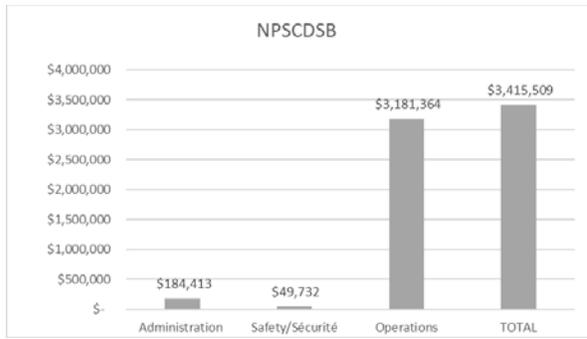
Financial Report

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. The past year was again subject to school closures taking effect in the spring. Operators were paid at a reduced rate while on standby for a return to school, and remained available for other duties including transportation for students with special needs. There was also a reduction in funding from the Ministry for the period of closures 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.

	NPSCDSB	CSCFN	CSPNE	NNDSB
Ministry Funding per Section 9 - December 2020	\$ 3,666,923.00	\$ 3,793,648.00	\$ 969,964.00	\$ 11,863,867.00
2020: B13 & B14 Funding	\$ 158,955.00	\$ 165,789.00	\$ 42,103.37	\$ 522,346.00
2021: B01 Funding	\$ 17,427.00	\$ 18,042.00	\$ 4,728.64	\$ 57,563.00
Total Funding	\$ 3,843,305.00	\$ 3,977,479.00	\$ 1,016,796.01	\$ 12,443,776.00
Estimated Funding Reduction (12% / day of closures)	\$ 127,067.71	\$ 131,459.03	\$ 33,611.59	\$ 411,111.54
Estimated Net Funding	\$ 3,716,237.29	\$ 3,846,019.97	\$ 983,184.42	\$ 12,032,664.46
Surplus / deficit from Funding	\$ 307,846.06	\$ 92,768.28	-\$ 143,711.30	-\$ 592,380.41
% Difference from Funding	8%	2%	-15%	-5%

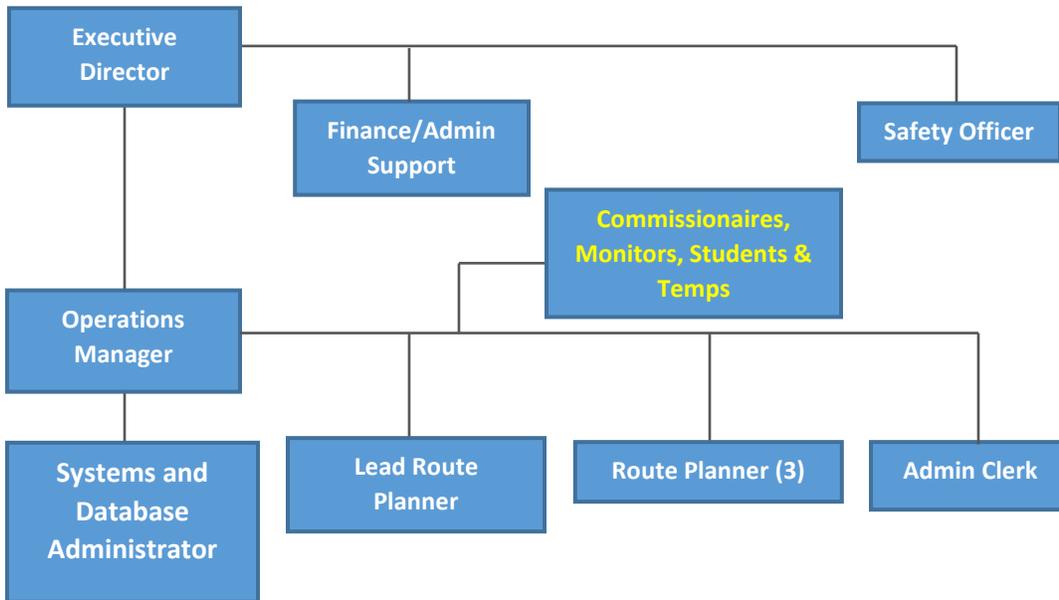
As noted earlier in this report, the Ministry is actively working on a review of the funding formula including analysis of student home to school distances. This factor in funding is important as stated earlier in this report. The NPSSTS and its Member Boards provide services to a student population that is dispersed 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 as the pandemic related closures and other disruptions over the year are not conducive to that type of analysis. Due to the unique nature of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, data that comes from this period will likely be treated as an outlier for years to come.

Progress Report – Business Plan

The 2020-2022 Business Plan is the roadmap to some key areas in our service delivery. The following section of the report will outline the progress made in each of those areas. The pandemic has impeded our work in many of these areas and they remain works in progress. However, we continue to take steps toward completing the objectives.

The organizational chart presented below demonstrates the reporting structure of the organization. We continue to review our staffing from numerous perspectives including succession planning at all levels. Over the past 12 months, we have experienced another retirement of a tenured route planner and therefore three personnel assuming new responsibilities in their first year in new positions.



Someone's sitting in the shade today
because someone planted a tree a long
time ago.

Warren Buffet

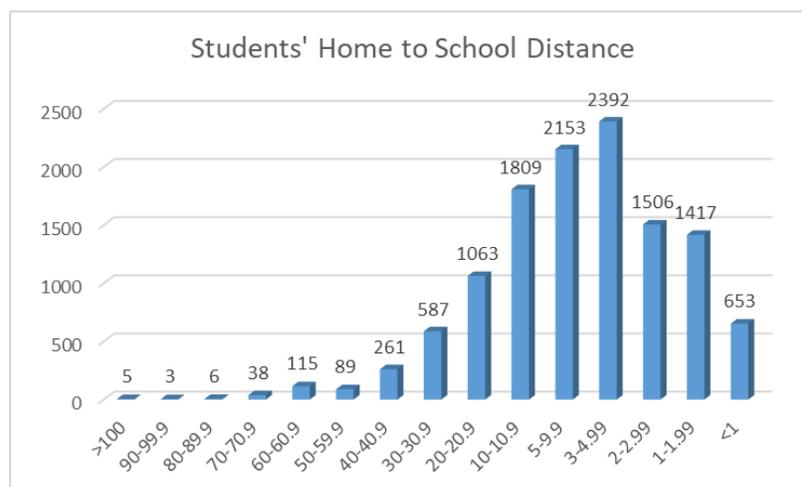
Goal: To continue to identify further efficiencies.

Objectives	Qualitative/Quantitative Measure	Performance Indicators
Maintain Ride Times 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 average ride time for an NPSSTS student is 28.5 minutes versus the Provincial average of 21.6. In reviewing data reported to and hence from the Ministry, the KPI appears to be the “number of students who ride more than 60 minutes one way. Data for 2019-2020 puts that number at 1,097 of 11,519 students transported, or 9.52%. The average for the five consortia in the North East Region is 6.58% and 6.4% for those in the North West. This must be put into perspective however with respect to home to school distance. Based on home to school data from the 2020-2021 school year, 9.13% of transported students reside 30 or more kilometres from their home school. Those who live 40 kilometres or more comprise 4.27% of the ridership.



Run/Route ratio is an area of our focus. Through the implementation of additional “B” runs, transportation costs will be driven downward. A factor which limits the potential for “b” runs is the 15 minute window allotted at schools for pick-up and drop-off. Added to this is the network of shared buses and transfers that make our transportation system possible with the least number of routes. 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 by buses that have transfers, large catchment areas and special programs typically have shared bussing, which present other challenges.

	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
2019-2020	397	885	2.23

In the spring of 2021, a review of potential bell time changes was conducted. The findings did not yield any current further opportunities. These reviews are conducted annually in light of program and accommodation changes that may occur and could provide some opportunities to create efficiencies.

Goal: Greater collaboration 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:

This remains a work in progress. With a second year of COVID-19 protocols in place on buses and the use of mandatory seating plans, there is some indication that including these measures as a permanent strategy to deal with pupil management issues may have merit. Further analysis of the limited data is needed before proceeding. Requests for monitors to deal with student conduct issues are rare at this time.

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 therefore 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 draft implementation plan has been developed. Consultation with a neighbouring consortium who transitioned to this model is ongoing. The transfer of data from Board SIS databases to the NPSSTS BusPlanner system has presented some obstacles that appear to have been ameliorated.

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:

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 2022 and beyond and will be subject to updates in future reports.

Conclusion

There have been three main focusses in 2020-2021:

1. Maintaining service delivery in the midst of the pandemic;
2. Preparing to move forward in transitioning to a more timely business cycle; and
3. Analysis and evaluation of our transportation model in relation to potential changes to the Ministry funding formula.

With respect to the latter issue, the NPSSTS has taken an active part in working with other consortia and the Ministry on the funding model review. It is imperative that we have a clear picture of our operational systems, demographics, and service delivery model in order to provide the best guidance possible. We will continue this important work and share the information with our Member Boards to assist in their discussions with the Ministry on this issue. This includes the collection and collaborative analysis of 2021-2022 enrolment and ridership data in order to identify any emerging trends that would influence this issue.

NPSSTS staff and its many stakeholders and partners have consistently adapted to the evolving pandemic. We are committed to continuing this work and pursuing other targeted changes to achieve the most effective service delivery today and moving forward.

Yours truly,



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



The future depends on what we do in the
present.

Mahatma Gandhi