

STSCO Annual Report – 2011/12

Student Transportation Services of Central Ontario (STSCO) is the consortium responsible for planning and overseeing student transportation service for the Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB (KPRDSB), the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic DSB (PVNCCDSB), and Conseil Scolaire De District Catholique Centre-Sud.

STSCO is committed to ensuring the safe, effective and efficient transport of students in order to support their educational success. The consortium is headed by a Governance Committee comprised of senior representatives from each School Board. STSCO staff complement includes eleven employees. The organization's office is located at 885 Clonsilla Avenue in the City of Peterborough.

During 2011/12, over 27,500 elementary and secondary school students, attending one of 126 schools within the jurisdiction, were transported to and from school daily throughout the year. Service was provided using 27 different bus and taxi companies operating over 673 vehicles of various sizes, including large and small buses. Each company hires and trains its own bus drivers. Together, area bus routes covered more than 67,000 kilometres per day.

To support STSCO's commitment to safety, the consortium maintains an Operator Performance Monitoring System which tracks the operations of all bus and service providers. Over the years, the system has assisted bus and taxi companies to increase their operational competency while also providing STSCO and the School Boards with assurance that providers are meeting our collective expectations for the safe and effective transportation of students. Companies met expectations during 2011/12 and performed well.

In terms of total budget, each School Board allots funds for the transportation of its students and the aggregate amount expended by the three member Boards on school busing and its provision in 2011/12 was \$26,719,500.

As part of its commitment to effective communication and service, STSCO implemented several changes to its website (www.stsco.ca), including adding online forms and functions to enable families to check their busing information, to apply for changes, or to applying for busing from an alternate address, such as a babysitter. Judging the over 7,300 related visits to the website, it is apparent that these new offerings were well received.

Also, throughout the year, STSCO issued newsletters and notices to schools for purposes of sending home with students. Topics covered at strategic points in the school year included reminders about winter weather procedures, information on the online busing look-up and application processes, and an annual, end of year memo to families to remind them of matters related to the following September's busing arrangements.

In keeping with STSCO's mandate, which is to provide safe transportation to students, a number of safety related events and initiatives were offered during the school year. Prior to the beginning of school in September, "First Rider" sessions were held in various locations throughout the jurisdiction and over 270 new kindergarten students were offered training on how to have a safe and enjoyable school bus experience. In addition, during the school year and with the help of our bus companies, school bus safety and evacuation training was offered to all students at all elementary schools.

Given our winter climate, from time to time during the year, there is possibility of service disruption due to inclement weather. On average in 2011/12, within each of STSCO's three main regions served (Peterborough, Northumberland and Clarington), there were two system cancellations due to weather. Decisions regarding inclement weather delays and cancellations were made in consultation with area

bus companies and were communicated to the public via STSCO's website and local radio stations.

In planning the student transportation system each year, STSCO staff review possible service improvements and efficiencies which may be implemented for the following September and beyond. For 2011/12, in order to achieve system efficiencies, STSCO proposed bell time adjustments at four schools (Spring Valley Public School, James Strath Public School, Prince of Wales Public School, and Queen Mary Public School). Together, these proposed changes were intended to remove approximately \$189,000 in annual cost from transportation system. After consultation with school officials and school councils, changes proceeded for James Strath, Prince of Wales, and Queen Mary Schools. Realized annual savings are estimated at \$78,100.

In terms of internal efficiencies, STSCO is committed to continuous improvement and regularly reviews its operations and communication strategies to ensure all transportation system stakeholders are best served. As part of its annual assessment of resources, STSCO downsized its staff complement from 12 to 11 employees to achieve further efficiency in that area while ensuring there would be no impact on service.

As the year progressed, STSCO and the School Boards increasingly devoted efforts to planning the transportation system for 2012/13 and commenced with the annual cycle of preparing for system improvements and efficiencies, continuing to evolve effective communication and information provision to stakeholders, and ensuring all would be in a state of readiness for the new school year.

Joel Sloggett,
Chief Administrative Officer
Student Transportation Services of Central Ontario