

STSCO Annual Report – 2019/20

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 Catholique MonAvenir (CSD).

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. The STSCO staff complement includes twelve employees. The organization's office is located at 885 Clonsilla Avenue in the City of Peterborough.

During 2019/20, over 27,630 elementary and secondary school students, attending over 119 school locations within the jurisdiction, were daily transported to and from school throughout the year. Service was provided using 15 different bus and taxi companies operating over 690 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 71,880 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 collective expectations for the safe and effective transportation of students. During 2019/20, all companies met STSCO's goals and performed very 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 2019/20 was \$32,839,989.03.

As part of its commitment to effective communication and service, STSCO offers a number of online services. Families served by STSCO can check their bussing information, apply for changes, and, where needed, apply for bussing from an alternate address, such as a babysitter. Over the course of the school year, they can also check for bus delays and cancellations on the website. This year, over 1,623,000 total visits were made to the website in 2019/20 and this indicates online services were well used.

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 about 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 year. Prior to the beginning of school in September, "First Rider" sessions were held at various locations throughout the jurisdiction and 405 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 area bus companies, school bus safety and evacuation training was offered to all students at 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 2019/20, within each of STSCO's three main regions served (Peterborough, Northumberland and Clarington), there were four system cancellation days due to weather. Decisions regarding inclement weather cancellations were made in consultation with area bus

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

As March Break approached, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in closure of area schools and cancellation of transportation service. STSCO staff continued to work on planning for the 2020/21 school year through the ensuing months and concentrated effort on following health authority guidance relative to loading of buses, planned use of personal protective equipment and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of vehicles. The challenges associated with the pandemic led to an unprecedented end to the school year but, with the support of member school boards and local transportation companies, STSCO ensured readiness for school reopening.

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