
Response to Concerns Regarding Transportation Fees

From Julia Fraser <Julia.Fraser@sd23.bc.ca>

Date Mon 2025-09-29 1:44 PM

To Lise Bradshaw <Lise.Bradshaw@sd23.bc.ca>; All Trustees <All-Trustees@sd23.bc.ca>; Jon Rever <Jon.Rever@sd23.bc.ca>; Delta Carmichael <Delta.Carmichael@sd23.bc.ca>; Mona Essler <Mona.Essler@sd23.bc.ca>; jnice@shaw.ca <jnice@shaw.ca>; Transportation <Transportation@sd23.bc.ca>

Dear Ms. Nice,

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your concerns regarding student transportation. I want to acknowledge the challenges you have outlined and assure you that the Board takes parent feedback seriously as we continue to review and improve the services we provide.

You are correct that transportation is ultimately a parental responsibility under provincial legislation. That said, our Board has made the commitment to continue offering school bus service because we recognize how essential it is for many families. In order to provide this service, the school district subsidizes student transportation by more than \$3 million annually. Without this subsidy, those funds could otherwise go directly into classrooms to support student learning.

The fees charged to families help offset only a portion of the total cost. Even with recent increases, our rates remain lower than the cost of public transit in Kelowna, where a student bus pass totals \$550 per year. The Board makes every effort to ensure our fees remain below that benchmark so that families continue to have a more affordable option through the district.

I recognize your concern regarding the reliability of service and the impact last-minute cancellations have on working families. We know these disruptions are very difficult, and staff are continuing to explore ways to minimize cancellations and strengthen consistency for students.

We also continue to review subsidy and support programs to ensure that the most vulnerable families are not disproportionately affected by rising costs. At the same time, we recognize that middle-income families are also feeling pressure in the current economic climate, and that is an important part of our ongoing discussions.

Your feedback is valued and will be shared with the Board and district staff as we move forward with transportation planning. You are also welcome to attend the Finance and Planning Committee meetings to

address your concerns directly with Trustees, the Superintendent, the Secretary Treasurer, and the Director of Operations.

Sincerely,

Julia Fraser

Board Chair

Board of Education

Warmest Regards,

Julia Fraser

Board Chair & Ex-Officio of All Committees,

Central Okanagan Board of Education

Resolutions Committee Chair,

BCSTA Thompson-Okanagan Branch

Cell: 250-681-0269

Email: Julia.Fraser@sd23.bc.ca

I respectfully acknowledge that I live, work & play on the ancestral, traditional and unceded territory of the Okanagan People.

From: Lise Bradshaw <Lise.Bradshaw@sd23.bc.ca>

Sent: Monday, September 29, 2025 1:11 PM

To: All Trustees <All-Trustees@sd23.bc.ca>; Jon Rever <Jon.Rever@sd23.bc.ca>; Delta Carmichael <Delta.Carmichael@sd23.bc.ca>; Mona Essler <Mona.Essler@sd23.bc.ca>

Subject: Fw: Concern Regarding Rising Costs and Reliability of Student Transportation

Please see email cc'd to the Board of Education.

Thanks.

From: Janice Nice <jnice@shaw.ca>

Sent: Monday, September 29, 2025 12:39 PM

To: Transportation <Transportation@sd23.bc.ca>

Cc: Board of Education <Boardof.Education@sd23.bc.ca>

Subject: Concern Regarding Rising Costs and Reliability of Student Transportation

Dear Transportation Department,

I am writing as a parent to express serious concern about the cost and reliability of school bus transportation in our district.

When my oldest daughter Sophie started high school in 2021, the annual bus fee was \$300. By 2023–2024 it had risen to \$400, then to \$450 in 2024–2025, and now in 2025–2026 my younger daughter Olivia's fee is \$525. This represents a 75% increase since 2021 and a 16.7% increase in just one year.

I understand the district's position that transportation is ultimately a parental responsibility. However, for families where both parents work full time to pay bills and put food on the table, driving children to and from school daily is simply not realistic. Public transit is not always a solution either, since a monthly student bus pass costs \$55, adding up to \$550 per year, which is even more than the district's transportation fee.

On top of these steep increases, families have also faced the ongoing issue of last-minute bus cancellations across many routes. These cancellations leave parents scrambling to arrange transportation and often put working families in an impossible position. Many parents pay for a school bus seat precisely because they have no other way to get their children to school, yet when routes are canceled last minute, many students simply end up missing school because their parents are at work and cannot drop everything to drive them. To make matters worse, there is no compensation for families when service is not provided.

In addition to my own experience, I have seen many other parents in the community expressing the same concern. I've read a few social media posts with numerous parents responding with similar frustrations, saying this sharp price increase will be very difficult for them to afford. Families are already stretched thin, yet the district continues to raise fees while higher-level administrators maintain their raises. It feels as though costs are being shifted onto parents who are already struggling.

I recognize that subsidies are available for low-income families, and that support is important. However, it is not only low-income families who are struggling. Under

the current economic climate, many middle-income families are also finding these costs extremely difficult to manage, yet they do not qualify for assistance at the school level. The burden of these increases is being felt across the board.

Parents are paying more than ever, yet we are receiving a service that is both costly and unreliable. I urge the district to reconsider the larger financial burden being placed on families, to address the issue of frequent cancellations, and to review the fairness of charging parents higher and higher fees without providing consistent service.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Janice Nice