

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2018

RE: RVS Student Transportation

Rocky View Schools' (RVS) Board of Trustees set the wheels in motion to balance the jurisdiction's \$1 million transportation deficit, April 12, by directing administration to proceed with three cost-saving measures.

With insight from its communities and staff, the Board supported the Sept. 1, 2018, implementation of:

1. Picking up urban students to fill rural buses (Cost-saving \$150 K)
2. Refraining from entering rural cul-de-sacs unless the length exceeds 800 m (Cost-saving \$150 K)
3. Adjusting school bell times to accommodate more double runs in all urban communities, while maintaining early dismissal Fridays. (Cost-saving \$750 K)

"The cost-saving measures to be employed reflect our communities' preferences with one operational caveat," said Board Chair Todd Brand. "To save \$750 K by employing double runs and maintaining early dismissal Fridays, school bell times in all urban centres will be directed centrally, rather than at the school level."

As has been the practice in some urban areas, Brand explained that to employ double runs, school bell times must be at least 40 minutes between schools to allow urban buses to pick up and drop off two different groups of students to different schools in both the am and pm. While in the past school administrators set their bell times in cooperation with RVS' student transportation department, to save \$750 K, bell times will have to be carefully mapped out for each community and directed by the system.

In relation to extending the length of rural cul-de-sacs from 400 to 800 m, this spring RVS' student transportation department will work with its contractors to review pick-up and drop-off locations to ensure students continue to be safe.

"We believe we've made the best of a difficult situation, selecting cost-saving measures that reflect our three planning principles and having the least amount of impact on services," said Brand. "Moving forward our Board will still need to debate any fee increases as defined by Policy 24: School Fees. This will take place later this spring"

According to Brand, the Board's April 12 decision effectively concludes a consultation process kicked off on January 25. The 10-week process saw public meetings held in the City of Airdrie, Town of Cochrane, and City of Chestermere, presentations made by Trustees at school council meetings, and parents and staff asked to complete two online surveys. Guiding its decision-making, the Board established three planning principles: ensure services continue to be safe for students; share the responsibility for balancing the transportation deficit among communities; and maintain current educational program offerings. Brand said the Board thanks the many individuals who took part in this consultation.

RVS parents and staff will receive a letter home outlining the Board's decision, with information on school bell times and the individual impact to transportation families communicated by June 30.

-30-

Further information contact:

Lily Habberfield, Manager of Communications, 403.945.4144



Student Transportation Consultation Backgrounder

From January 25 to March 30, 2018, Rocky View Schools (RVS) Board of Trustees engaged its school communities in a public consultation to address an anticipated revenue shortfall of \$1 million in its student transportation portfolio. Planning principles established by the Board to guide the process were:

- Transportation services will continue to be safe for students.
- All communities will share the responsibility for balancing the transportation deficit.
- No educational program offerings will be affected.

Phase I - To build awareness of RVS' budget and operational challenges related to student transportation, Phase I of the consultation saw public meetings held in the City of Airdrie, Town of Cochrane, and City of Chestermere, presentations made by Trustees at school council meetings, and parents and staff asked to prioritize seven cost saving options and a proposal to transfer up to \$1 million from RVS' instructional budget, as outlined in a four-page communique and an online survey. The survey also provided participants an opportunity to include feedback on the issue through an open-ended comment section. Results of the survey can be found online at: <https://www.rockyview.ab.ca/cost-savings/transportation-bundles>.

Phase II – Phase II of the consultation saw the Board receive public delegations at its March 1 Board meeting and employ a second survey from March 12 to 29, outlining 'transportation bundles', along with the results of its first survey and a Q & A.

PHASE II RESULTS

The second survey yielded 3,522 respondents. Results of the survey revealed:

Bundle 1

OPTION	ACTION	NET SAVINGS	AFFECT ON FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES	SURVEY 2
1	Pick up urban students to fill rural buses	\$150,000	Longer bus ride times (approx. 15 min) for rural students from north of Cochrane and from rural Airdrie and Chestermere.	42%
2	Refrain from entering rural cul-de-sacs unless the length exceeds 800 m (currently 400 m)	\$150,000	Students living in rural cul-de-sacs, predominantly in Springbank and Bearspaw, will walk further to their bus stop.	
3	Adjust school bell times to accommodate more double runs in all urban communities (schools start and end within a one-hour window of each other, e.g., 8 – 9 am)	\$500,000	Changes in school start/finish times may cause families to modify their routines.	
5	Create consistent finish times from Monday to Friday by eliminating early dismissal Fridays	\$250,000	Changes in school start/finish times may cause families to modify their routines.	
COST SAVING: \$1.05 million				

Bundle 2

OPTION	ACTION	NET SAVINGS	AFFECT ON FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES	SURVEY 2
2	Refrain from entering rural cul-de-sacs unless the length exceeds 800 m (currently 400 m)	\$150,000	Students living in rural cul-de-sacs, predominantly in Springbank and Bearspaw, will walk further to their bus stop.	24%
3	Adjust school bell times to accommodate more double runs in all urban communities (schools start and end within a one-hour window of each other, e.g., 8 – 9 am)	\$500,000	Changes in school start/finish times may cause families to modify their routines.	
6	Increase walk distance to 2.4 km for all urban students (currently 1.5 km for K-8 and 2 km for 9-12 students)	\$320,000	Increases the traffic congestion at schools, coupled with increases in safety concerns for students.	
NEW	Increase transportation fees by 5 percent for families currently charged bus fees.	\$50,000	Some families will pay more.	
COST SAVING: \$1.02 million				

Bundle 3

OPTION	ACTION	NET SAVINGS	AFFECT ON FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES	SURVEY 2
2	Refrain from entering rural cul-de-sacs unless the length exceeds 800 m (currently 400 m)	\$150,000	Students living in rural cul-de-sacs, predominantly in Springbank and Bearspaw, will walk further to their bus stop.	9%
3	Adjust school bell times to accommodate more double runs in all urban communities (schools start and end within a one-hour window of each other, e.g., 8 – 9 am)	\$500,000	Changes in school start/finish times may cause families to modify their routines.	
5	Create consistent finish times from Monday to Friday by eliminating early dismissal Fridays	\$250,000	Changes in school start/finish times may cause families to modify their routines.	
NEW	Increase transportation fees by 10 percent* for families charged bus fees.	\$100,000	Some families will pay more.	
COST SAVING: \$1.0 million				

* Subject to ministerial approval

Bundle 4

OPTION	ACTION	NET SAVINGS	AFFECT ON FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES	SURVEY 2
2	Refrain from entering rural cul-de-sacs unless the length exceeds 800 m (currently 400 m)	\$150,000	Students living in rural cul-de-sacs, predominantly in Springbank and Bearspaw, will walk further to their bus stop.	25%
3	Adjust school bell times to accommodate more double runs in all urban communities (schools start and end within a one-hour window of each other, e.g., 8 – 9 am)	\$500,000	Changes in school start/finish times may cause families to modify their routines.	
4	Adjust and extend school bell times to accommodate triple runs in urban communities (schools start and end within a one-hour, 20 min. window of each other, e.g., 8 – 9:20 am)	\$400,000	Changes in school start/finish times may cause families to modify their routines.	
COST SAVING: \$1.05 million				

Major themes outlined by stakeholders in response to the survey's open-ended question, "Is there other feedback you would like to provide the Board of Trustees relative to student transportation?":

- Unfairness of who pays / does not pay fees currently
- All riders should pay fees
- Frustration with Bill 1
- Concern about having younger student walk further than they currently do
- Improve utilization of buses
- Concerns about potential changes to start/end times impacting people's childcare and routines
- Mixed support for early close Fridays
- Reduce administrative spending