

Media Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 25, 2018

RE: RVS parents to provide feedback into bus efficiencies and/or transfer of dollars to address \$1 million transportation deficit

Rocky View Schools' (RVS) Board of Trustees will reach out to its communities from January 25 to April 12 to provide feedback on cost saving measures to address a \$1 million budget shortfall in the jurisdiction's transportation portfolio.

"Ten years of insufficient provincial transportation grant increases, coupled with the carbon levy, and shortfalls in the government's new fee replacement grant, will see us enter our 2018/19 budget process already facing a \$1 million deficit in transportation," said Board Chair Todd Brand. "Over the past three years, our Board chose to use our \$1.8 million transportation reserve to address this ongoing revenue shortfall. With the reserve now at zero, we have no other alternative, but to modify our service levels, find further efficiencies, and/or transfer monies out of instruction."

According to Associate Superintendent of Business and Operations Darrell Couture, since 2008 transportation costs have risen by 17.83 percent, while grant revenues rose by only 1.27 percent over the same time period. This shortfall in funding is further compounded by a \$360,000 levy for carbon, as well as a new Transportation Fee Replacement Grant that penalizes growing boards like RVS because it is based on 2015/16 fees and student counts.

Couture said the Board's Transportation Committee has had its nose to the grindstone to identify cost-saving efficiencies and has come up with seven options the jurisdiction is hoping parents will help prioritize for implementation in the fall 2018.

"Cost saving options range from introducing longer bus ride times to accommodating more students on each bus with fewer routes, to double and triple runs, where bus drivers pick-up and drop-off students two or three times each morning and afternoon. Also up for consideration is to transfer monies from instruction to transportation to offset the budget shortfall, which many boards in the province already do," Couture said.

To guide 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.

The consultation process will kick off January 25 with a letter home to parents asking them to learn about RVS' deficit position and then complete an online survey to provide feedback on proposed cost-saving measures and/or transfer funds from instruction. The survey will be followed by public meetings to be held in mid-February and a second survey in March, asking parents to select their desired transportation efficiency bundle. The Board is set to deliberate on its direction April 12.

Full details on RVS' Student Transportation Consultation Process and its anticipated \$1 million shortfall can be found on the jurisdiction's website at: www.rockyview.ab.ca/costsaving.

For more information, contact: Lily Habberfield, Manager of Communications 403.945.4144