

Annual Report to Stakeholders



2020-2021 FISCAL YEAR

The summary of service and related
activities of Southwestern Ontario
Student Transportation Services

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To Our Stakeholders

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation is pleased to present its annual report for the 2020-2021 year.

Since 2008, STS has continually sought to deliver a safe and efficient transportation service to support the educational goals of the students within our service area. This report represents an ongoing commitment to improve communications and information sharing with key stakeholders.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has impacted almost every aspect of our daily lives including how educational services are delivered to our students. It has had a significant impact on our operations as our member School Boards have had to adapt from traditional in-person learning to online learning strategies throughout the ongoing Provincial shutdowns. The safety of students, staff and bus drivers remained the top priority of STS throughout the 2020-21 school year.

STS worked closely with our member School Boards, Middlesex-London Health Unit, Southwest Public Health, Bus Operators, and the Ministry of Education to mitigate health risks associated with COVID-19.

Some key steps taken by STS include:

- Implementation of a mandatory school bus registration system for eligible riders to assist with more accurate route planning.
- Reduced capacity on all school vehicles wherever possible to increase physical distancing between students.
- Ensuring all vehicles have a seating plan with siblings or classroom cohorts sitting together.
- Leaving the seat behind the driver empty to increase physical distancing between the driver and students.
- All drivers were required to wear medical grade face masks while driving.
- Additional PPE such as gloves, gowns, face shields were available to drivers and bus attendants.

- All vehicles were deep cleaned twice a day, once after the morning route and again after the afternoon routes.
- STS worked closely with Middlesex-London Health Unit and Southwest Public Health to review, identify and provide close contact information for COVID-19 related exposures on school vehicles.

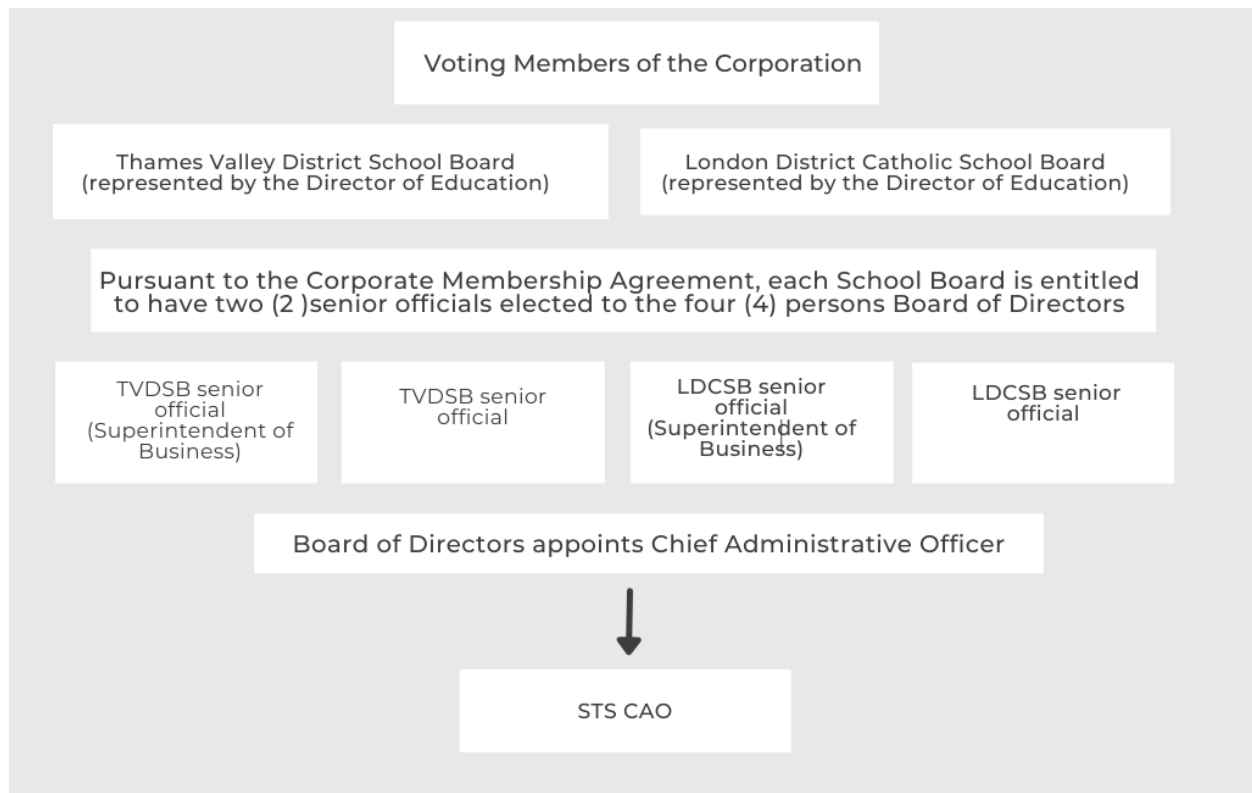
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Readings". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Ryan Readings
Chief Administrative Officer
January 28, 2022

Governance Structure

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services (STS) is the jointly held transportation consortium acting on behalf of its member school boards, the London District Catholic and Thames Valley District School Boards. Established in 2008, STS is a separate legal entity which operates at an arm's length from the member boards. STS was incorporated under the *Incorporations Act* on September 29, 2008.

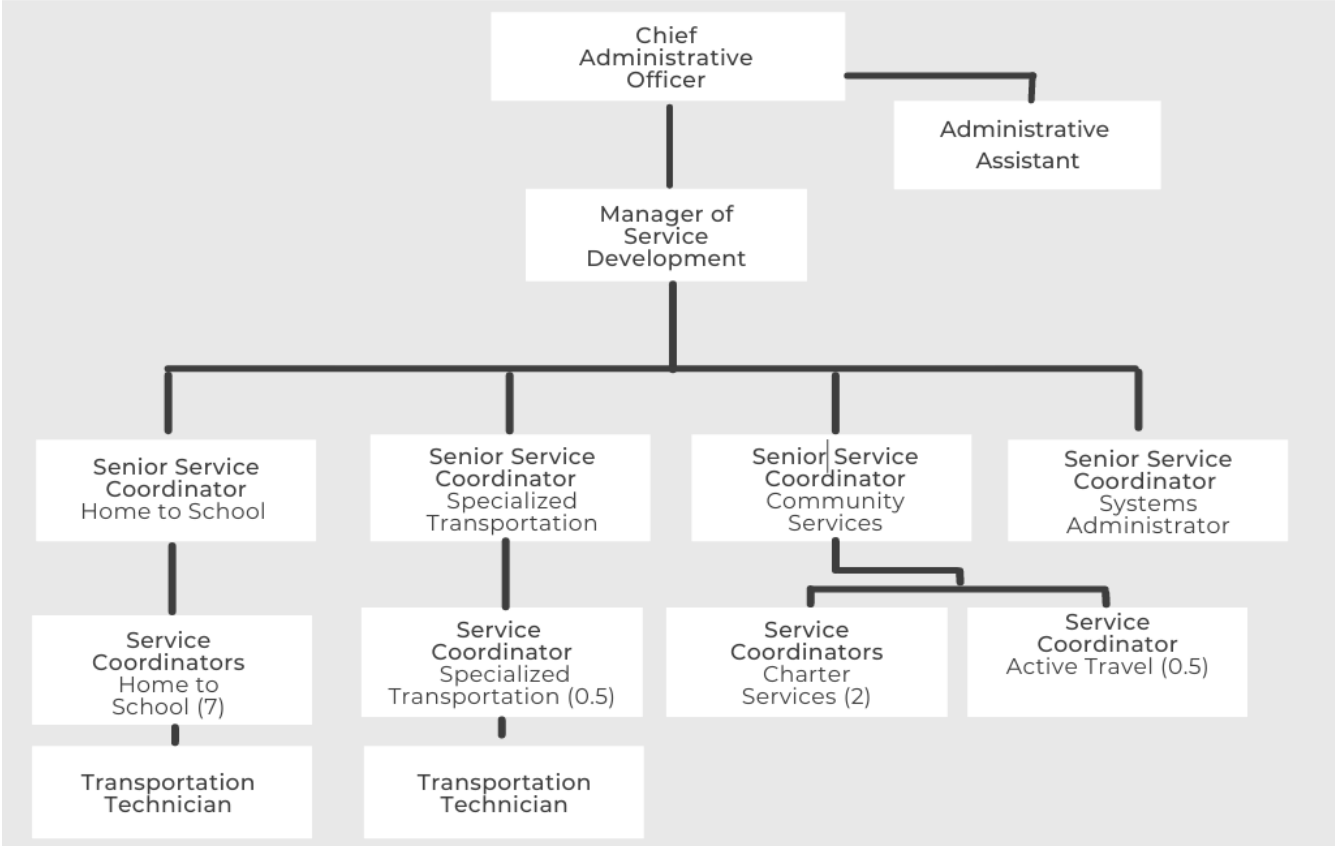
Each of its member boards set distance and program-based eligibility policy through the Board of Trustees. STS is governed by a four-person Board of Directors comprised of two senior officials from each member school board. The Board of Directors provide governance oversight, approve the policies of STS and provide strategic direction to the corporation.



The daily activities of the corporation are under the direction of the Chief Administrative Officer, who reports to the Board of Directors.

The organizational structure at STS is set out below:

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Human Resources

Human Resources Plan

STS created its Human Resources Plan in 2012. The framework for the plan sets out the five key items:

- Effective People-Management Strategy
- Leadership and Mentorship
- Performance Feedback Framework
- Learning-Focused Organization
- Flexible and Motivating Work Environment

During the 2020-2021, STS undertook the following activities to support the HR plan:

- Members of Ontario Association of School Business Officials (OASBO)
- Staff virtually attended the annual OASBO Fall Safety Conference, focused exclusively on student transportation.
- Senior Service Coordinator performed the role as Lead for the OASBO Transportation Leading Practices Committee.
- Increased staff membership in OASBO and the Transportation Leading Practices Committee.
- Service Coordinator, Active Travel joined the OASBO Active Routes Leading Practices Group.
- Staff participated in the following online courses:
 - Project Management offered by Career Concepts
 - Coaching, Supervising, and Mentoring offered by Career Concepts
 - Fixed Route Planning offered through Sharlene Mitchell & Associates
- Senior Staff virtually attended Bus World Conference June 2021

Service Area Profile

Schools Serviced

STS coordinated home to school transportation services for 211 schools during the 2020-2021 school year.

Description	LDCSB 2020-2021	TVDSB 2020-2021
Elementary Schools	43	132
Secondary Schools	9	27

Service Area

The service area is expansive, covering a mix of both urban and rural environments. The area covers more than 7,000 square kilometers, making STS one of the largest service areas in southern Ontario. The service area includes the City of London as well as Middlesex, Oxford, and Elgin Counties.



Home to School Bus Contract

The 2020-21 school year marked the second year of our five year home to school contract with the school bus contractors in our region. Pandemic related school closures were not contemplated in the contract. Contractors were required to be on stand-by for a potential return to service when schools reopened. Like other consortia province-wide, STS entered into amending agreements with contractors to continue payments during the shutdowns with downward price adjustments to reflect costs not incurred. Ministry funding for transportation was marginally reduced during these timeframes to address fuel savings.

Route Familiarization

The contract provides for a designated route familiarization process to be carried out by the permanent driver assigned to the route, both in the morning and afternoon at bus times in advance of the new school year. Drivers are required to provide feedback on the route through their employer and to STS prior to the routes going into service. This allows an opportunity to collect on the ground insight and for the driver to become familiar with times, bus stop locations and overall operation of the route before students are on board.

Home to School Transportation Service Design

STS is responsible for designing school transportation service which is in keeping with policy to ensure that students receive similar service throughout the area regardless of school board affiliation. Transportation eligibility is established by policy. The first governing policy is distance-based as established at the school boards. The remaining policies are established at STS as approved by its Board of Directors.

Transportation Eligibility

Distance-based eligibility is established by policy at the school boards. Under the *Education Act*, school boards are not required to provide transportation to students but have elected to do so. Based on the decision to provide transportation, the boards established a distance-based criterion to establish qualification for school bus service. The distance to qualify for transportation is harmonized, or the same, at both school boards. This is a critical component of equitable and efficient transportation planning.

The distance-based policy applies to all families and students enrolled in a school belonging to the member school boards. Students attending their board-designated school are eligible for transportation based on the following distances:

- Elementary aged students that reside greater than 1.6 kms from the school site
- Secondary aged students that reside greater than 3.2 kms from the school site

While there is no provincial standard for distance-based transportation eligibility, the above distances are consistent with the normative distance across the province.

Determination of Transportation Eligibility

The technical determination of whether an address is eligible for transportation is made by STS and is based on a distance computation done by a planning software system to ensure consistency throughout the district. The software uses Geographic Information System (GIS) data provided by the municipalities, including the road and walkway network. The computation determines if an address is eligible based on the location of

the perimeter property edges of the address relative to the school address using the shortest travel route.

If a residence does not qualify for transportation based on distance as solely determined by STS, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to determine how the student will arrive at and depart from school.

Primary Address of Student

STS will coordinate home to school transportation based on the student's primary address to their board-designated school based on the address registered with the school board. A student can only have one primary address.

Transportation eligibility is determined based on the primary address of the student as registered in the school board's Student Information System. This data is securely transferred electronically to STS through the agreed-upon transfer process and confidentiality protections.

Secondary Address for Caregiving Purposes

Students who are eligible for transportation may have one (1) additional secondary address for caregiving reasons, typically used for the purpose of receiving childcare/babysitting at the elementary panel. Secondary panel requests are less common but are approved in keeping with the policy.

Both the primary address and the alternate address must be within the transportation boundary. A student can have a bus stop based on the primary address and another based on a secondary address within the same travel day, however the schedule must remain consistent Monday through Friday. Under normal circumstances, secondary address transportation must be accommodated on existing bus runs and bus stops.

Joint Custody Transportation

Transportation may be provided to a secondary address based on joint custody arrangements. Because of the safety issues with varying bus schedules, particularly at the elementary level, the policies governing this type of transportation are different based on the student's grade.

Use of a Vacant Seat

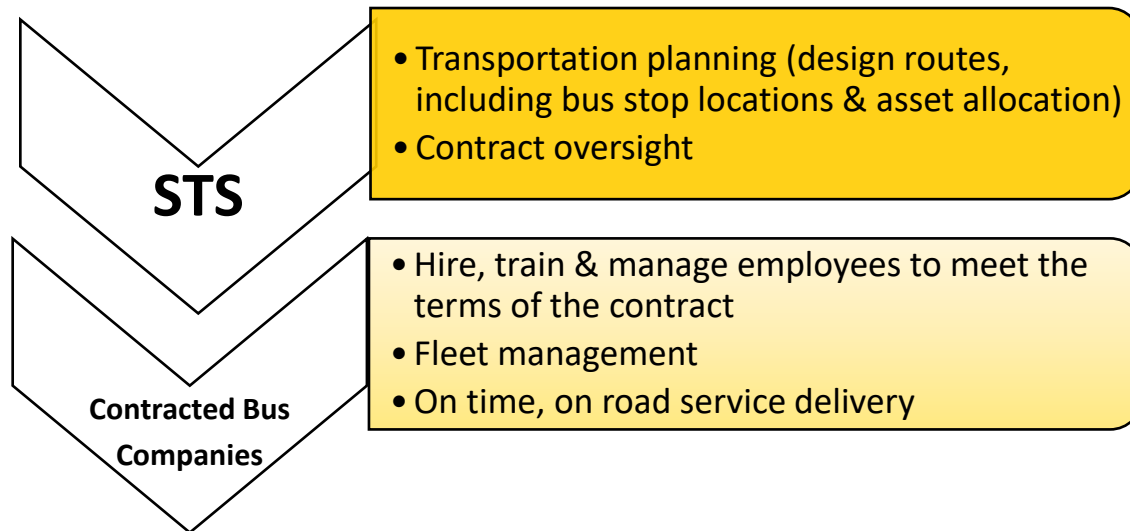
Transportation may be provided to elementary aged students who are ineligible for transportation but who attend a daycare facility or home daycare where the daycare address is eligible for transportation.

Choice of School

Students who choose to attend a school other than their board-designated may apply for choice of school transportation. This type of transportation is approved on an exception basis and is not guaranteed; it requires an annual application and there must be an available seat on an existing bus run. Additionally, the student must attend the closest existing bus stop, irrespective of distance from the residence. The service can be revoked from the choice of school student if a student eligible under policy requires the seat. These seats are approved only after all other eligible students have been assigned.

Service Delivery Roles

The on-road service delivered to students is planned by STS and delivered daily by contracted school bus companies.



Student Transportation Services

Student Transportation Services manages the contracts with the bus companies who are responsible for delivering the daily service which encompasses all operational matters including employee and fleet management.

Contracted Bus Companies

For the 2020-2021 school year, a total of seven (7) bus companies provided service under the home to school contracts with STS.

- Badder Bus Lines
- First Student Canada
- Langs Bus Lines
- Murphy Bus Lines
- Sharp Bus Lines
- STC o/a Elgie Bus Lines
- Transdev o/a Voyago

School Bus Routes

In 2020-2021, a total of 1,128 school bus routes operated throughout the service area.

	Regular Bus Routes	Specialized Bus Routes	Total
2019-2020	814	322	1,136
Elgin County	175	55	230
Middlesex County	195	50	245
Oxford County	170	64	234
City of London	264	155	419

For greater clarity, a school bus run is the loop picking up students for a school (noting more than one school may be served on the same run). A school bus route is the total number of school bus runs serviced by a vehicle. Typically, the first bus run serves a secondary school and the second bus run serves the elementary school. These two runs combined (both morning and afternoon) equal the total route serviced by one vehicle. STS uses single, double and triple runs where practical to do so.



Kilometers Travelled

A key component of transportation planning is the distance that each bus travels as kilometers are a significant part of route planning and budget forecasting. Bus contracts are paid based on a formula which includes a per kilometer component.

Transportation has two key types of kilometers: planned and actual. Actual kilometers can vary widely from planned kilometers due to service cancellations such as inclement weather events or school closures.

School Purpose Vehicles

Types of Vehicles Used

STS uses a variety of vehicle types to provide effective and efficient student transport while recognizing unique transportation solutions for students with special needs. Vehicle mix can vary from one year to the next based on geographic distribution of students and student needs.

The 2020-2021 figures also illustrate the changes in the vehicle mix throughout the school year to meet student needs. March 2020 statistics are provided as service was suspended at that time for the duration of the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID 19.

Vehicle Type	2019- 2020 September	2019-2020 March	2020-2021 September	2020-2021 June
Full Size Passenger Bus	638	642	659	660
Mid Size Passenger Bus	56	56	30	29
Mini Size Passenger Bus	108	108	112	113
Mini Size Passenger Bus – Accessible	106	104	93	101
Minivan	217	226	214	225

Public Transit

Public transit tickets may be provided to students. The use of public transit tickets is largely restricted to special programs.

Transported Students

Students who are eligible for transportation under policy are assigned to a seat on a vehicle in the morning and/or afternoon based on the student's registration request. The majority of students are eligible to their board-designated schools based on distance. Under limited circumstances, bus service may be provided based on Distance Based Exemptions. In 2014, STS began a periodic review of all legacy hazard designations in the service area, many of which predate the formation of STS. This review has been completed at the secondary level and the elementary level is in progress.

Transportation Eligibility Type	2018-2019 (end of June)	2019-2020 (Oct 31, 2020)	2020-2021 (end of June)
Eligible (Distance)			
• Regular Track	37,531	38,672	30,433
• French Immersion	6,554	6,615	5,195
• Specialized Education	1,803	3,700	1,378
Eligible (Distance Based Exemption)			
• Elementary Panel	3,157	3,219	1,835
• Secondary Panel	491	481	324

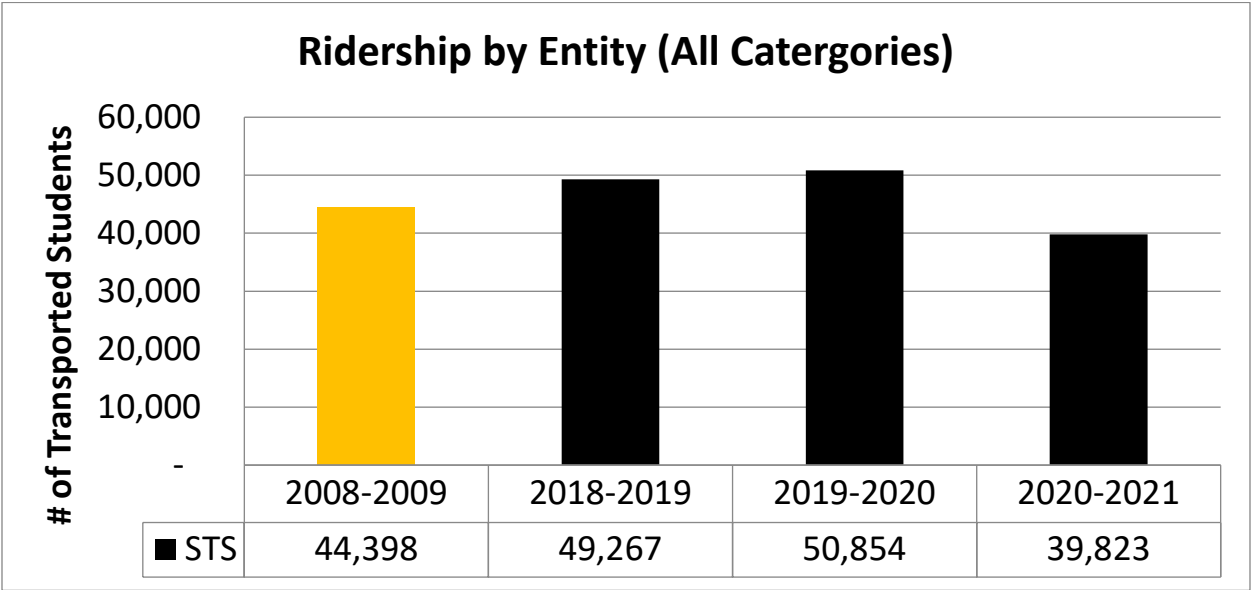
Ridership

Ridership growth had remained consistent, with an overall 14.5% increase from 2008-2009 to 2019-2020. The increase in ridership was a result of the harmonization of distance-based eligibility criteria in the early 2000's, addition of program offerings, school boundary changes as new schools are added and, significantly, geographical growth district-wide.

However, the introduction of a mandatory school bus registration system by STS and remote learning by the School Boards for the 2020-21 school year had a significant impact on ridership. As a result, overall ridership dropped by 22% during the 2020-21 school year compared to the 2019-2020 school year. These were key factors in ensuring

buses had reduced capacity, where possible, in adherence with Ministry of Education guidelines.

The 2020-2021 school year marked the introduction of a mandatory school bus registration system for eligible families to assist with more accurate route planning given some of the complexities associated with COVID-19. This was an intentional shift from the prior approach, which was dependent upon a voluntary opt-out. Without question, the mandatory opt in is a more thorough approach ascertaining true ridership as it requires action on the part of those who want the service.



Some transported students require additional service to/from additional addresses or access a vacant seat for childcare purposes. The figures below represent transported students who benefit from the additional services offered by STS.

Additional Services	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Alternate Address	1,887	1,895	1,027
Joint Custody - Elementary	265	252	232
Joint Custody - Secondary	303	311	326
Vacant Seat	425	412	194
Choice of School	673	632	479
Out of District	71	74	46
Total Transported Students Using Additional Services	3,614	3,576	2,304

Travelling to the Bus Stop

Parents/guardians are responsible for their student's safety to, from and at the school bus stop location. This practice is consistent with parent/guardian responsibility for student safety to and from school sites for those who do not qualify for transportation.

Students are required to meet transportation at community-based bus stop locations. The travel distances are up to 800 meters (0.8 kilometers) for elementary students and up to 1600 meters (1.6 kilometers) for secondary students. The travel distances represent half of the distance travelled by students who do not qualify for transportation.

Community bus stop locations are designed to be accessible for multiple students. Typically located at community mailboxes, greenspaces and corners, these stops often remain in the same location year after year. However, bus stops are reviewed annually and may be relocated based on routing changes and student locations.

While the permissible policy distance provides for much greater travel to stop distances, the figures below illustrate the average distance students travel to meet transportation.

	Elementary Panel		
Geographic Area	2018 -2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Elgin County	100 m	120 m	130 m
Middlesex County	90 m	110 m	110 m
Oxford County	120 m	120 m	130 m
City of London	180 m	190m	190 m

	Secondary Panel		
Geographic Area	2018 -2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Elgin County	210 m	230 m	230 m
Middlesex County	270 m	280 m	290 m
Oxford County	300 m	290 m	340 m
City of London	400 m	420 m	430 m

Kindergarten Students and School Bus Stops

JK/SK students must be accompanied to and met at a bus stop location by a responsible person. JK/SK students not met at the bus stop in the afternoons will be returned to the school by the bus driver at the end of the route.

Active Travel and School Bus Stops

Students who ride the bus lose the opportunity for crucial daily physical exercise compared to their peers who actively travel (walk, bike, scooter) to and from school. School bus service is a fixed-route, shared ride mode of transport and is not designed as a door-to-door service model. By using community stops centrally located for multiple students and by placing stops on collector and secondary roads and off local streets, we encourage daily physical activity for bus riders as they travel to and from their bus stop locations consistent with STS Service Design Standards.

Walking to a bus stop is an important way to promote active travel for students who receive bus transportation to complete their journey to school. In addition to the many known health benefits of physical activity before heading into the classroom, walking to a community bus stop decreases the length of ride time on the bus for the student.

Ride Time on the Vehicle

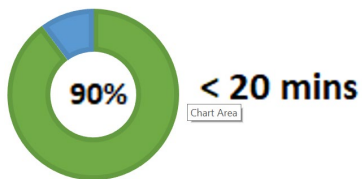
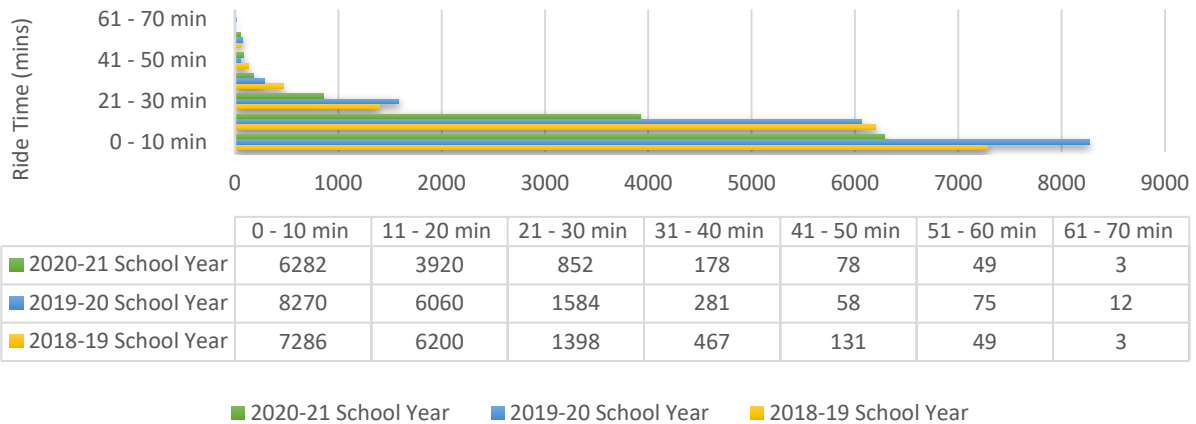
Students may spend a maximum of 70 minutes one way on the bus. Under certain limited circumstances, based on geography or program choice, this travel time may be exceeded.

Factors that influence ride time include:

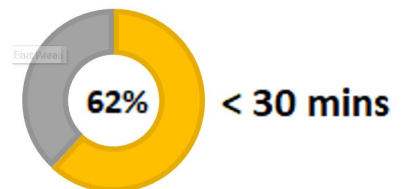
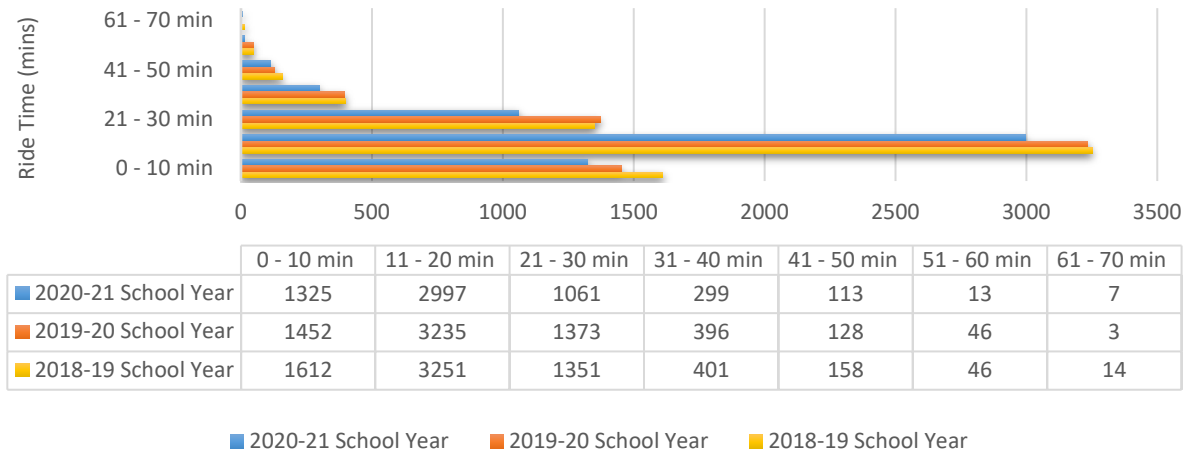
- Geographical location of school
- School boundary
- Student-selected specialty program offerings
- Student location related to geographic location of school
- Number of students assigned to the bus run
- Number of bus stops assigned to the bus run
- Traffic conditions, congestion, and construction
- Distance between the house and bus stop location the student is assigned to.

Ride times are reviewed annually as part of the planning cycle and periodically throughout the year. Ride times are also addressed, where possible, in response to inquiries.

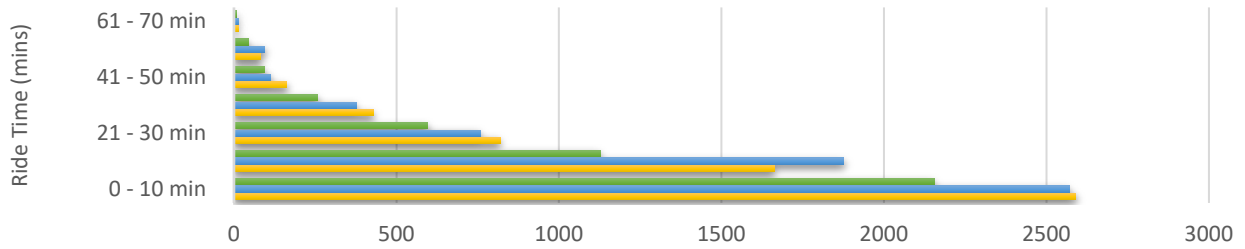
City of London - Elementary Students



City of London - Secondary Students

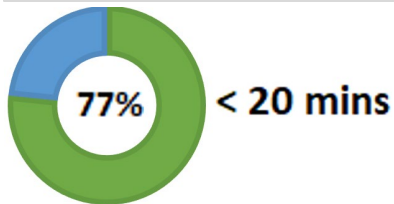


Elgin County - Elementary Students

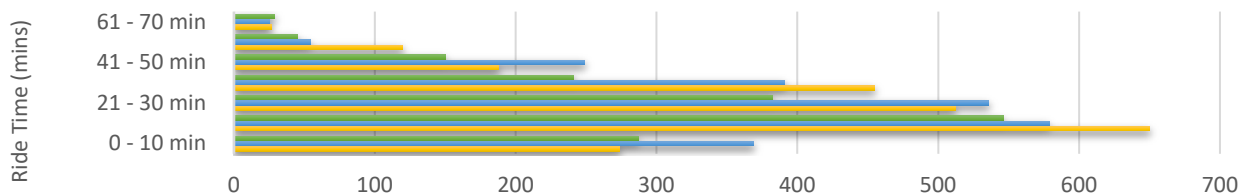


	0 - 10 min	11 - 20 min	21 - 30 min	31 - 40 min	41 - 50 min	51 - 60 min	61 - 70 min
2020-21 School Year	2155	1127	596	258	93	44	9
2019-20 School Year	2570	1877	758	376	113	95	13
2018-19 School Year	2590	1662	819	429	163	82	13

2020-21 School Year 2019-20 School Year 2018-19 School Year

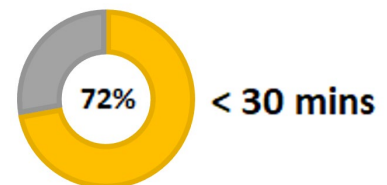


Elgin County - Secondary Students

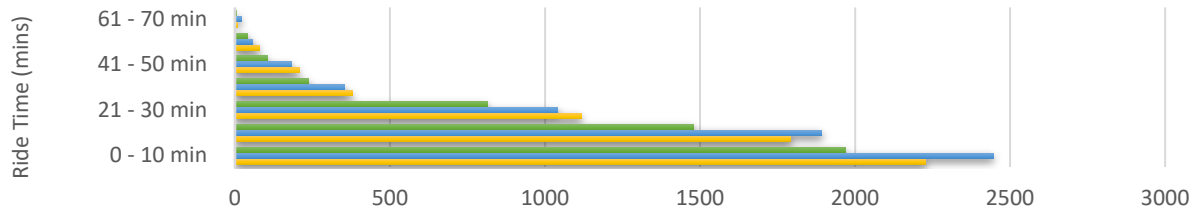


	0 - 10 min	11 - 20 min	21 - 30 min	31 - 40 min	41 - 50 min	51 - 60 min	61 - 70 min
2020-21 School Year	287	546	382	241	150	45	29
2019-20 School Year	369	579	536	391	249	54	25
2018-19 School Year	274	650	512	455	188	120	27

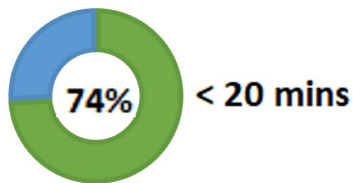
2020-21 School Year 2019-20 School Year 2018-19 School Year



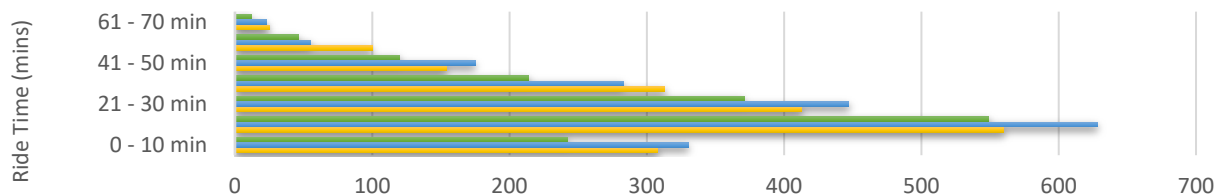
Oxford County - Elementary Students



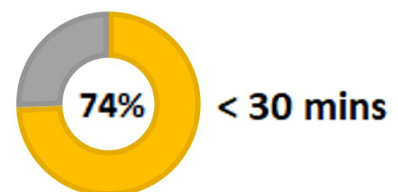
2020-21 School Year 2019-20 School Year 2018-19 School Year



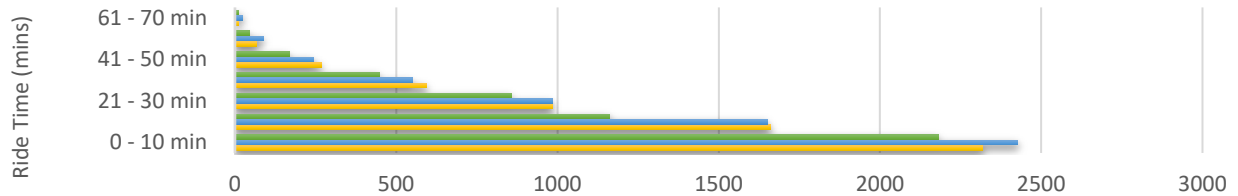
Oxford County - Secondary Students



2020-21 School Year 2019-20 School Year 2018-19 School Year

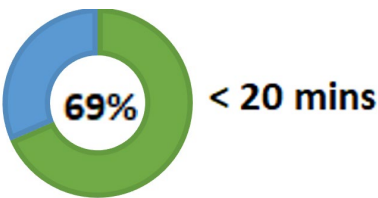


Middlesex County - Elementary Students

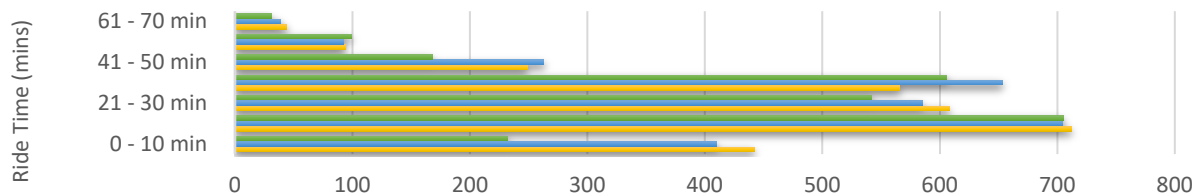


	0 - 10 min	11 - 20 min	21 - 30 min	31 - 40 min	41 - 50 min	51 - 60 min	61 - 70 min
2020-21 School Year	2180	1162	858	448	168	44	11
2019-20 School Year	2427	1650	985	549	243	87	24
2018-19 School Year	2318	1661	985	594	268	68	10

2020-21 School Year 2019-20 School Year 2018-19 School Year

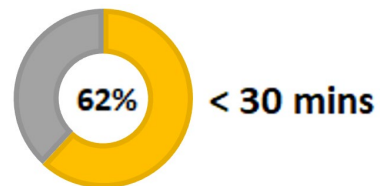


Middlesex County - Secondary Students



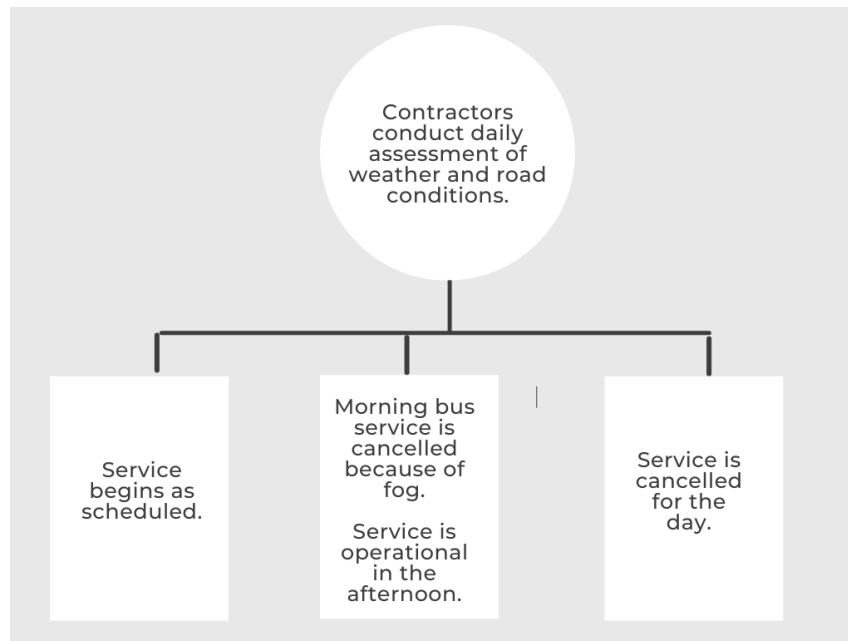
	0 - 10 min	11 - 20 min	21 - 30 min	31 - 40 min	41 - 50 min	51 - 60 min	61 - 70 min
2020-21 School Year	232	705	542	606	168	99	31
2019-20 School Year	410	704	585	653	263	92	39
2018-19 School Year	442	712	608	566	249	94	44

2020-21 School Year 2019-20 School Year 2018-19 School Year



Inclement Weather

During inclement weather, the bus companies determine whether school purpose vehicles operate. When area-wide inclement weather events occur, the following processes occur:



Inclement weather is a disruptive part of the business and has significant impact on family routines. School bus routes are planned to avoid unnecessary disruptions whenever possible. Given the size of the service area and the distance some routes travel for program locations some may be impacted by cancellations. While the bus companies are responsible for determining if the service operates, during times of inclement weather, parents/guardians are ultimately responsible for deciding if their student will use the service.



The following chart illustrates the inclement weather cancellation events during 2020-2021.

Date	Affected Areas	Reason	CANCEL (AM Only)	CANCEL (All Day)
1-Dec-20	Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin, Red Zone	Snow		CANCEL (All Day)
5-Feb-21	Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin, Red Zone	Blowing, drifting snow		CANCEL (All Day)
16-Feb-21	All Vehicles	Blowing, drifting snow		CANCEL (All Day)
22-Feb-21	Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin, Red Zone	Blowing, drifting snow		CANCEL (All Day)

The 2020-2021 school year had one system-wide cancellation day, compared to zero in 2019-20 and 3 in the 2018-19. There was a total of 3 partial cancellation events in 2020-2021, down from 4 the in 2019-20 and 11 in 2018-19.

Inclement weather cancellations are posted publicly on the website by 6:30 AM on the morning of the weather event. There are multiple channels used to notify stakeholders of cancellations resulting from inclement weather:

- STS's website, mybigyellowbus.ca is updated by 6:30 AM at the latest;
- Notification posted to Twitter account;

- Notification posted to Facebook page;
- Notifications issued via email to subscribers;
- Notifications pushed to BusPlanner Delays app for subscribers.

The BusPlanner Delays app was introduced in 2017 and is free to use. More information can be found on the website in the policy document entitled “Public Notification of School Bus Delays and Cancellations or by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.mybigyellowbus.ca/uploads/delaysandcancellations.pdf>

Inclement weather cancellations can create significant challenges for families. Parents/guardians are encouraged to have plans in place in the event of service cancellations caused by inclement weather.

STS created a video to explain the behind-the-scenes look at the decision-making process to help guide stakeholders understand the complexity of the task. The video remains featured on the website and is the core tool for informing and educating the public on the process. The video can be viewed using the following link:

<http://bit.ly/BusCancellations>



Safety Programs

STS is pleased to offer a variety of safety programs to students, their families and schools.

First Rider Day (August)

STS typically hosts a First Rider Day at five locations each year in August, with two London locations and a location in each of the three counties. Approximately 1,000 students and their families attend this event each year at no cost to attendees. Both full sized yellow and wheelchair accessible vehicles are on site to ensure inclusivity and promote integrated accessibility.

Students and their parents receive a safety lesson, learn how to properly board and de-board and evacuate the bus and be a safe school bus rider. The program session lasts approximately 30 minutes.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this program was revamped and completely moved to an online format. Parents can watch our “Buzzy the Bee” safety video with their children, there is an Activity Booklet, and Safety Certificate that parents can download and review and share with their children. STS hopes to return to our full “First Rider Day” program in the future so parents and their children can once again experience firsthand riding on a school bus together and learning all of the school bus safety rules.



Kindergarten Bus Tag Program

STS continues to use a bus tag program to assist school staff and bus drivers with the management of kindergarten students. The bus tag is a visual cue for school staff who load the buses at dismissal time and for the bus driver to be on the lookout for a responsible person to meet the student at the bus stop.

The tags are brightly colored for visibility and match the bus number sign in the side of the vehicle. The tags are distributed to the schools by STS who then provide them to the registered kindergarten students.

Online Safety Programs

During the 2020-21 school year, 204 online school bus rider safety training sessions were offered at all of our member School Board's elementary schools. These 30 minute programs are funded by the Ministry of Education and are designed to provide Primary (JK-Grade 3) and Junior/Intermediate (Grade 4-Grade 8) students with training on how to be safe in and around the school bus. This training is designed to actively promote and support appropriate behaviour on the bus which also contributes to a positive school climate.

School Bus Safety Week

School Bus Safety Week is held annually during the third week of October. Supported by news releases and social media campaigns, Wednesday of School Bus Safety Week is School Bus Driver Appreciation Day. Parents and schools alike are encouraged to recognize the valuable contributions of school bus drivers and bus monitors on this day.

Transportation consortia across the province use a series of coordinated messages and social media graphics to promote School Bus Safety Week. STS was the lead participant on the Ontario Association of School Business Officials task force that created harmonized materials for province-wide use.

School Bus Registration Form

In response to COVID 19 and to meet Ministry of Education recommendations for a safe return to school, STS developed a school bus registration form. When launched, STS required all students eligible for transportation who wished to ride the bus complete a registration form indicating service requirements. Students could register for morning and afternoon transportation or both and specify which days of the week they required transportation. STS understood that every student's usage may vary.

The information collected on the registration form is recorded on the manifest for the bus driver and the school. This creates accurate bus lists for school loading procedures, seating plan development, and helps the driver know when to expect each student on board.

Communication Tools

To promote safety messaging and on-going information for stakeholders, STS has an active presence on social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Additionally, STS News Updates are published on the website on an as-needed basis.

Community Services Division

In the Spring of 2021 STS established the Community Services Division. This division combined our previous Charter Services and Active Travel Divisions.

Charter Services

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic the member School Boards made the difficult decision to put a hold on all charter trips for the entire 2020-21 school year. Charter staff were redeployed within the organization and assisted with Home to School Transportation.

Active Travel

STS is a member of the Elgin, London, Middlesex and Oxford Active and Safe Routes to Schools (ELMO ASRTS) Steering Committee. ASRTS is an established partnership model with local school boards, police, health units, municipalities, and research agencies who encourage parents/guardians and children to choose active travel as a preferred mode choice to and from school.

Walk Zone Maps

To encourage active travel and help families find alternative drop off locations, STS undertook a project to create Walk Zone Maps for all residentially located elementary and secondary schools. Depending upon the school's surrounding infrastructure, one of the following map types was developed; Drive-to-Five and Walk-a-Block.

Drive-to-Five maps identify designated spaces on public, or private where approved, property located within a five minute 200-to-300-meter walk distance from the school. Locations were selected based on availability of parking spaces while also considering surrounding residential properties and owners. For schools where a parking lot site was not available or within a five-minute walking distance to the school, a Walk-a-Block map was created. These maps use rings to identify streets around the school at 300- and 500-meters distance, approximately five to seven minutes walk. For rural schools with no surrounding street network, STS was unable to produce a map resource. STS has

provided dedicated website space to house all Walk Zone Maps, allowing both families and schools public access.

Most school sites were not designed and built to handle the amount of vehicular traffic they experience daily. The Walk Zone Maps were a successful initiative providing families with alternative pickup and drop off locations aimed at reducing school site traffic congestion.

School Travel Planning (STP)

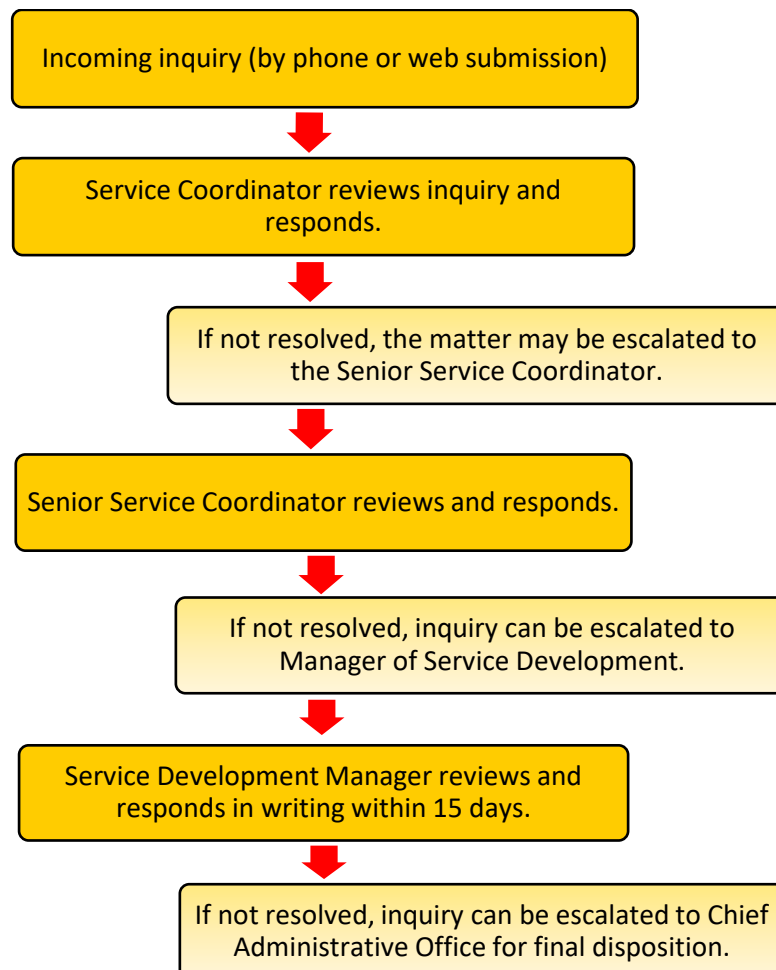
During the 2020-21 school year, STS assisted St. Rose of Lima Catholic Elementary School (formerly known as Jean Vanier Catholic Elementary) and Westmount Public schools with the implementation of the School Travel Plan (STP) program. As in-person meetings and visitors at schools were suspended, all support was conducted virtually. In Spring 2021, both schools successfully finalized their individualized Action Plans. The parent and school Champions will lead the carry out of the Action Plan Task List while STS will proceed in a supportive role.

Active Travel has many benefits: academic, environmental, health, safety and community-building.



Problem Resolution

STS has a robust process for addressing inquiries. Parents/guardians can contact STS by phone or by completing an online form on the website. STS response times are typically within 2 business days. During start-up (mid-August to the end of September) responses are provided within 5 business days due to the volume of inquiries.

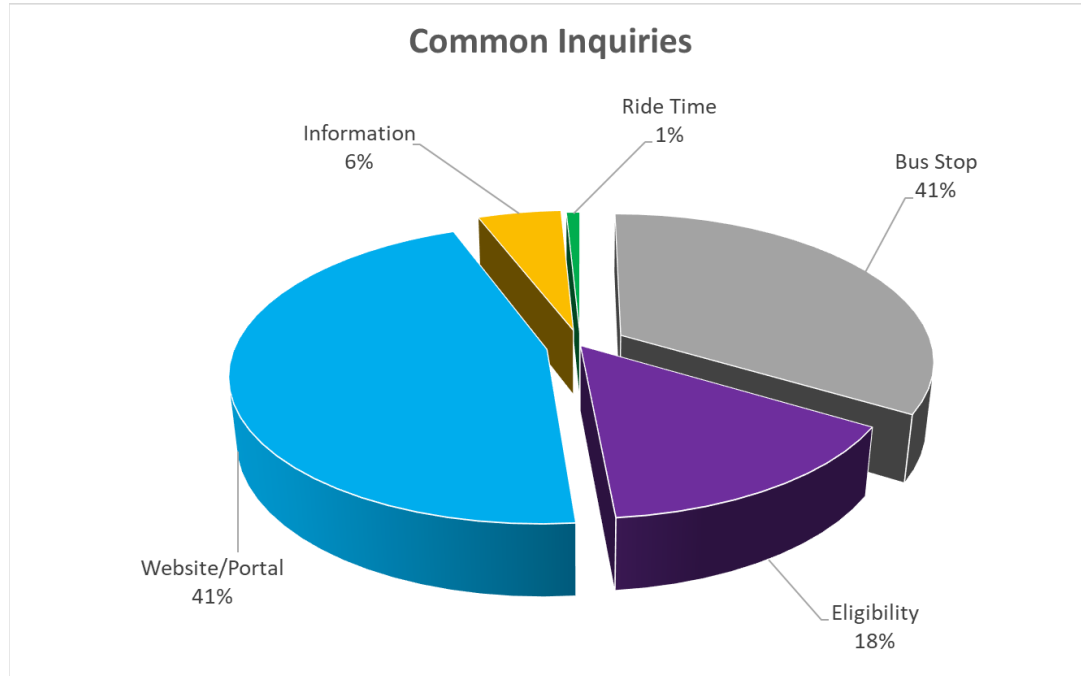


STS uses a tracking system to log contacts received either by telephone or web submission. Generally, most inquiries fall into five broad categories. The most common inquiry received surrounds bus stop locations as most contacts would prefer a closer bus

stop as a matter of preference. Other typical inquiries relate to eligibility, use of the online parent portal, address inquiries (alternate address, moving) and ride time.

Most contacts are informational in nature. To provide faster service, the website has been designed to provide answers to the most common inquiries. A tool is available on the website to determine if the address qualifies for bus service. A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section addresses the other most common topics.

Topic	Inquiry
Bus Stop	Location, time, request a different stop, request a new stop, homeowner concerns.
Eligibility	Expects bus service based on distance or program.
Website/Portal	Technical problems logging on, unknown Student ID.
Information	Inclement weather inquiries, bus tag program, moving/change of address.
Ride Time	Bus ride time is longer than preferable.



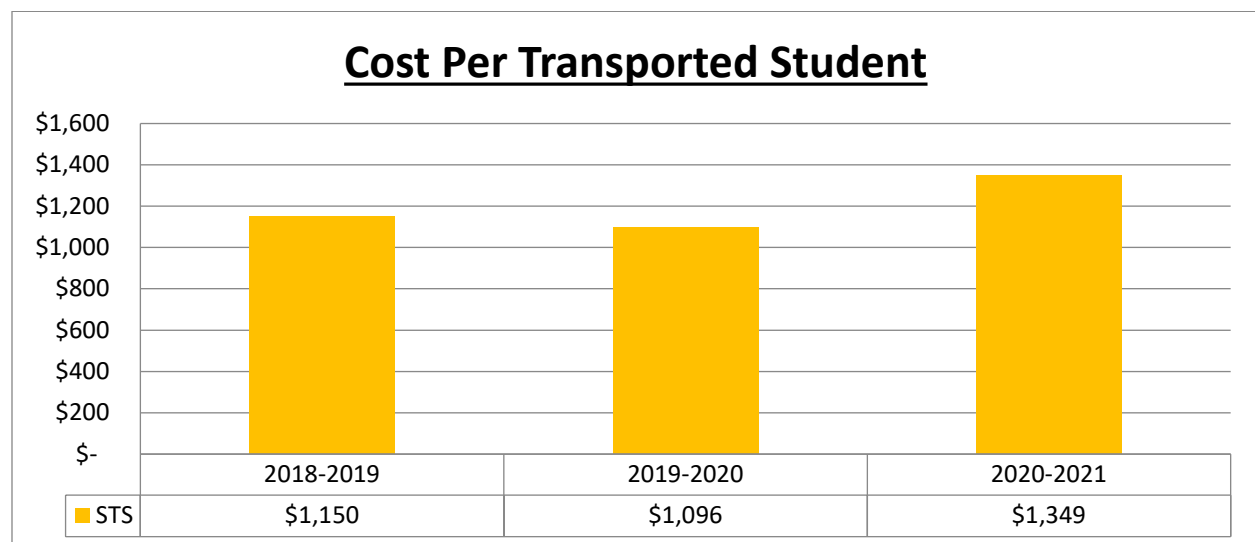
Financial Performance

Cost Per Transported Student

The main measurement of financial performance for STS is cost per transported student. A rate increase was awarded to the contractors as a result of an arbitrated settlement in the 2018-2019 year which accounts for the increase over prior years.

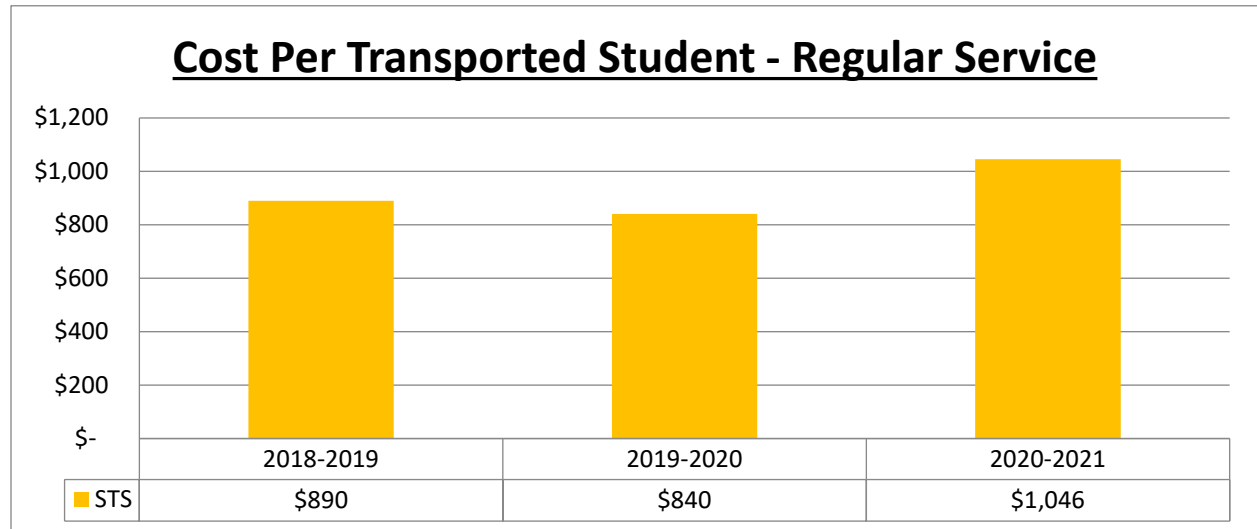
Between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 there was a 19% increase in the cost per transported student. This increase can be directly attributed to the complexities surrounding providing school bus transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic combined with contract increases. Although there were fewer students transported during the 2020-21 school year it was necessary to adapt social distancing measures to assist on the school bus to assist in combating the spread of COVID-19 which resulted in roughly the same number of vehicles required.

Cost per transported student is calculated based on actual payments and reflects all transported students on any classification of vehicle.



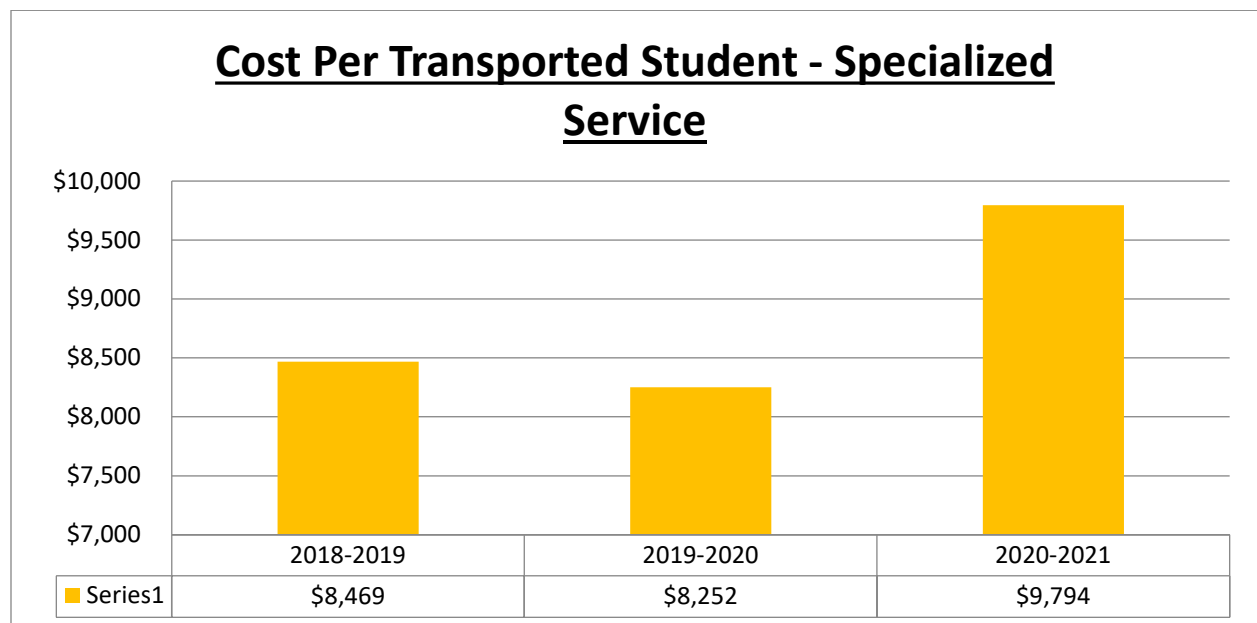
Cost Per Transported Student – Regular Service

Regular service reflects students who are transported on chrome yellow bus service of any size.



Cost Per Transported Student – Specialized Service

Specialized service reflects service provided to students on chrome yellow wheelchair equipped vehicles or white minivan service.



Financial Statements

Attached are the audited Financial Statements for the 2020-2021 school year as prepared by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. These were approved by the Board of Directors of STS in November 2021 and presented to the Directors of Education as voting members of the corporation in January of 2022.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Financial Statements
August 31, 2021



Independent auditor's report

To the Board of Directors of Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Our opinion

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services (the Consortium) as at August 31, 2021 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public accounting standards.

What we have audited

The Consortium's financial statements comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at August 31, 2021;
- the statement of operations for the year then ended;
- the statement of cash flows for the year then ended; and
- the notes to the financial statements, which include significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of our report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Independence

We are independent of the Consortium in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada. We have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements.

Responsibilities of management and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
465 Richmond Street, Suite 400, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5P4
T: +1 519 640 8000, F: +1 519 640 8015

"PwC" refers to PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, an Ontario limited liability partnership.



In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Consortium's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Consortium or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Consortium's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Consortium's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Consortium's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Consortium to cease to continue as a going concern.



- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP

Chartered Professional Accountants, Licensed Public Accountants

London, Ontario
November 11, 2021

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Statement of Financial Position

As at August 31, 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Assets		
Current assets		
Petty cash	1,000	1,000
Due from related parties (note 3)	86,336	109,310
	87,336	110,310
Non-financial assets		
Prepaid expenses	7,833	7,833
Tangible capital assets (note 4)	33,565	38,040
	128,734	156,183
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable (note 5)	95,169	116,881
Deferred revenue (note 6)	-	1,262
Deferred capital contributions (note 7)	33,565	38,040
	128,734	156,183
Contractual obligations and contingencies (note 8)		
Contractual rights (note 9)		

Approved by the Board of Directors

 Director  Director

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Statement of Operations

For the year ended August 31, 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Revenue		
Thames Valley District School Board	42,738,530	42,911,296
London District Catholic School Board	16,233,034	16,078,022
Province of Ontario	11,262	48,752
Amortization of deferred capital contributions (note 7)	4,475	36,463
	<u>58,987,301</u>	<u>59,074,533</u>
Expenses		
Transportation services	55,487,130	56,930,098
Administrative		
Salaries and benefits	1,698,010	1,620,868
Professional fee	11,826	26,076
Contract services	144,387	148,886
Software fees and licences	129,014	132,973
Occupancy costs (note 8)	80,751	77,841
Office supplies and services	50,362	19,067
Telephone	12,429	11,991
Safety program materials	16,676	22,944
Furniture and equipment	8,066	27,850
Printing	16,307	9,407
Travel and meetings	80	3,531
Professional development	8,782	6,538
Amortization	4,475	36,463
Cleaning – COVID-19 expenses	1,319,006	-
	<u>58,987,301</u>	<u>59,074,533</u>
Annual surplus	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended August 31, 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Cash provided by (used in)		
Operating activities		
Annual surplus	-	-
Non-cash items		
Amortization expense of tangible capital assets	4,475	36,463
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(4,475)	(36,463)
Changes in non-cash working capital components		
Decrease in due from related parties	22,974	6,801,629
Decrease in accounts receivable	-	101,887
Increase in deferred revenue- operating	(1,262)	(42,003)
Decrease in accounts payable	(21,712)	(6,861,513)
Net change in cash	-	-
Cash – Beginning of year	1,000	1,000
Cash – End of year	1,000	1,000

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2021

1 Significant accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared by management in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards, and reflect the following policies:

Reporting entity

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services (the Consortium) is an incorporated not-for-profit organization established in 2008 by London and area school boards to provide transportation services.

The current member school boards are Thames Valley District School Board and London District Catholic School Board. Under the formal agreement, decisions related to the financial and operating activities are shared. No board is in a position to exercise unilateral control.

Basis of accounting

Revenues and expenditures are reported on an accrual basis of accounting. The accrual basis of accounting recognizes revenues when transportation services have been provided in accordance with the cost sharing agreement and when collection is reasonably assured; expenditures are the cost of goods and services acquired in the period whether or not payment has been made or invoices received.

Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian public sector accounting standards requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements, and the reported amounts of revenues and expenditures during the year. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

Tangible capital assets

Tangible capital assets are recorded at cost, less accumulated amortization. During the current and previous years, purchases of furniture and equipment were considered immaterial and have not been capitalized. Amortization is provided on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the assets as follows:

Computer software	5 years
Leasehold Improvements	10 years

Amortization is charged at half the annual rate in the year of acquisition.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2021

Deferred capital contributions

Contributions received or receivable for the purpose of acquiring or developing a depreciable tangible capital asset for use in providing services, or any contributions in the form of depreciable tangible assets received, or receivable for use in providing services, shall be recognized as deferred capital contributions. These amounts are recognized as revenue at the same rate as the related tangible capital asset is amortized.

Deferred revenue

Certain revenue amounts are received pursuant to legislation, regulation or agreement and may only be used in the conduct of certain programs or in the delivery of specific services and transactions. These amounts are recognized as revenue in the fiscal year in which the related expenditures are incurred or services performed.

2 Economic dependence

The Consortium's operations consist exclusively of supplying services to school boards located in the same geographic area.

3 Due from related parties

The amounts are due from members of the Consortium. They are non-interest bearing and will be repaid within the year.

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Due from related parties		
Thames Valley District School Board	157,526	175,213
London District Catholic School Board	-	-
	<hr/> 157,526	<hr/> 175,213
Due to related parties		
London District Catholic School Board	(71,190)	(65,903)
	<hr/> (71,190)	<hr/> (65,903)

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2021

4 Tangible capital assets

	Balance at August 31, 2020 \$	Additions \$	Disposals \$	Transfers \$	Cost Balance at August 31, 2021 \$
Computer software	319,880	-	-	-	319,880
Leasehold Improvements	44,753	-	-	-	44,753
	364,633	-	-	-	364,633

	Balance at August 31, 2020 \$	Amortization \$	Disposals, Write-offs and adjustments \$	Accumulated amortization Balance at August 31, 2021 \$
Computer software	319,880	-	-	319,880
Leasehold Improvements	6,713	4,475	-	11,188
	326,593	4,475	-	331,068

	August 31, 2021 \$	August 31, 2020 \$
Computer software	-	-
Leasehold Improvements	33,565	38,040
	33,565	38,040

5 Government remittances payable

In respect of government remittances payable, \$18,001 (2020 – \$18,350) is included within accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2021

6 Deferred revenue

Revenues received (Ont. Active School) that have been set aside for specific purposes by legislation, regulation or agreement are included in deferred revenue and reported in the statement of financial position.

Deferred revenue set aside for specific purposes by legislations, regulation or agreement as at August 31, 2021 is comprised of:

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Opening balance	1,262	43,264
Deferred revenue contributions	10,000	6,750
Revenue recognized in the period	(11,262)	(48,752)
Closing balance	-	1,262

7 Deferred capital contributions

Deferred capital contributions represent the unamortized amount of contributions received for the purchase of tangible capital assets. The amortization of capital contributions is recorded as revenue in the statement of operations. The changes in the balance of deferred capital contribution are as follows:

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Opening balance	38,040	74,503
Deferred capital contributions	-	-
Revenue recognized in the period	(4,475)	(36,463)
Closing balance	33,565	38,040

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2021

8 Contractual obligations and contingencies

The Consortium leases its head office under a new operating lease, which runs from March 1, 2019 to February 28, 2029.

The sum of \$378,425 is payable with respect to property lease during the next five years.

	2021 \$
2021 – 22	75,685
2022 – 23	75,685
2023 – 24	75,685
2024 – 25	75,685
2025 – 26	75,685
Thereafter	189,212

9 Contractual rights

The Consortium current membership agreement is from September 2019 to August 2022. The agreement determines amounts receivable from each board based on a cost sharing formula. Transportation expenditures vary from year to year and therefore no estimated future receivables have been disclosed, as they are unknown at this time.

10 COVID-19

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic due to the outbreak of a novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The impact of COVID-19 on Canadian society has been significant. In 2020, the Ministry of Education announced the closure of all schools across Ontario. Schools reopened in the fall of 2020, but were subsequently closed again in April 2021 due to a stay-at-home order issued in Ontario. The stay-at-home order was extended and schools remained virtual until the end of the school year in June 2021. This resulted in no bussing services being provided to the London school boards for April to June 2021. As in the previous year, payments to bus operators were reduced to approximately 88% of normal operating amounts during the school closures.

Management continues to assess the impact of COVID-19 and government responses to it on the Consortium, including but not limited to impacts to bussing costs.