



Southwestern Ontario
Student Transportation Services

ANNUAL REPORT TO STAKEHOLDERS

2019-2020 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 2019-2020 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.

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic known as COVID-19. School purpose vehicles operated for the last time on the Friday before March Break, when the Ministry of Education announced a two-week school closure. After the initial two-week closure, multiple closure announcements resulted in schools remaining closed for the rest of the year. Buses remained on stand-by, should the need to return students to school have arisen.

By the late spring of 2020, STS was focused on assessing the potential impacts of COVID-19 on student transportation to be prepared for the fall 2020 in the face of great uncertainty.

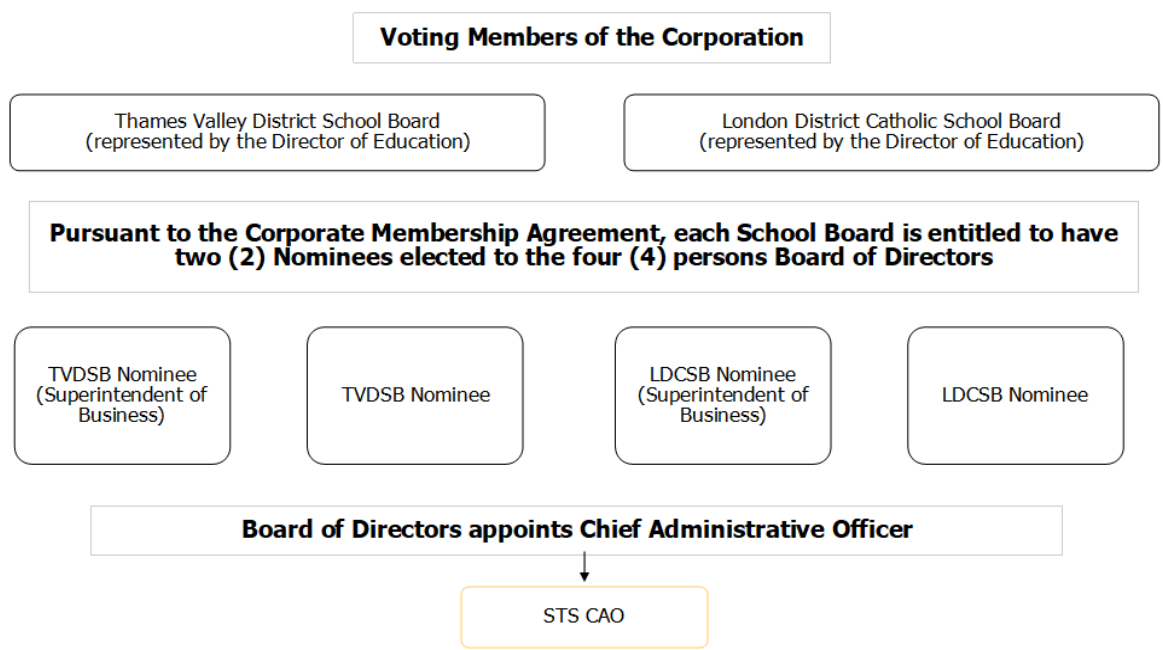


Maureen Cosyn Heath, M.P.A
Chief Administrative Officer
May 30, 2021

Governance Structure

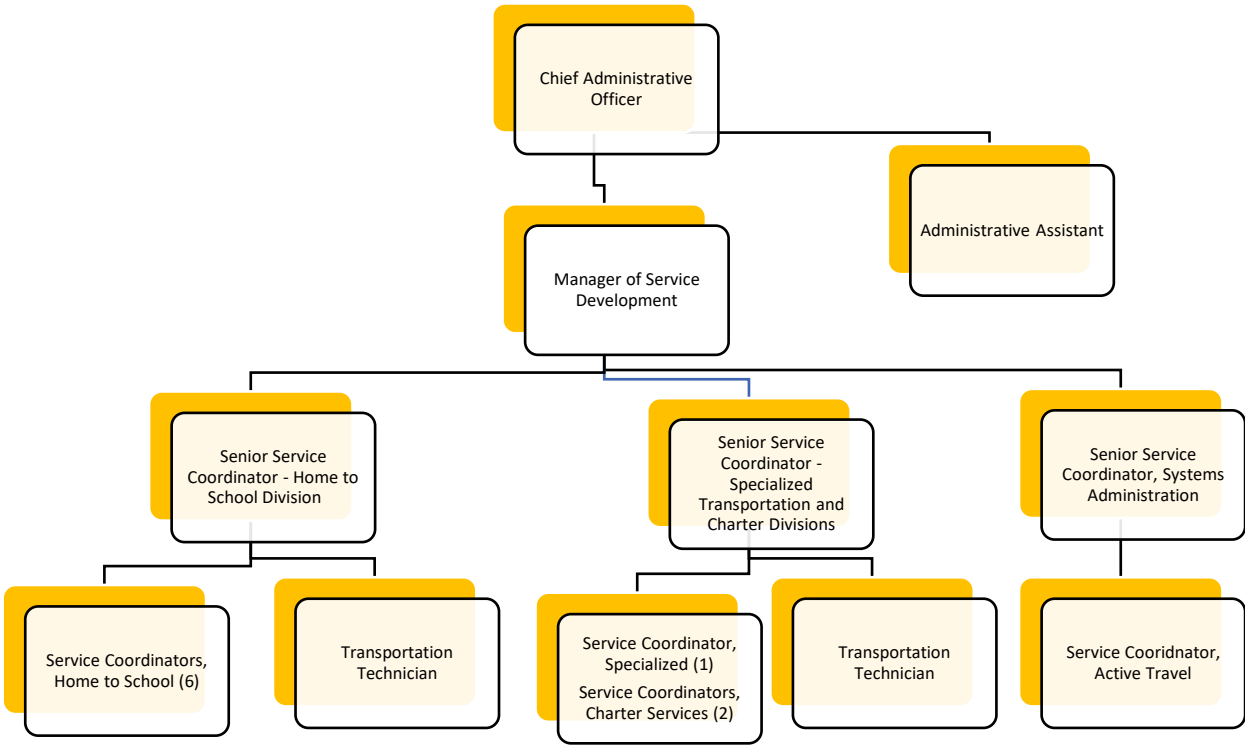
Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services (STS) is the jointly held transportation consortium acting on behalf of its member school boards, the London District Catholic and Thames Valley District School Boards. Established in 2008 because of a mandate from the Ministry of Education, STS is 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:



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 2019-2020, STS undertook the following activities to support the HR plan:

- Attended the annual Fall Safety Conference, focused exclusively on student transportation.
- Recertified employees in First Aid to support Health and Safety in the workplace.
- Continued the work of the Wellness Committee to promote employee well-being.
- Senior Service Coordinator assumed the role as Lead for the OASBO Transportation Committee Best Practice Group.
- Increased staff membership in OASBO and the Transportation Leading Practices Committee.
- Service Coordinator, Active Travel joined the OASBO Active Routes Leading Practices Group.
- Served on the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM) working group to create school bus safety videos and a universal crossing signal as funded by the Ministry of Education and continued to participate on the safety committee for program refresh.
- Offered a facilitated session from Allyson Lee, “Choosing Above the Line in a Below the Line World” for all staff members.

Service Area Profile

Schools Serviced

STS coordinated home to school transportation services for 211 schools during the 2019-2020 school year, unchanged from the prior year.

Description	LDCSB 2019-2020	TVDSB 2019-2020
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.

- City of London
- Elgin County
- Middlesex County
- Oxford County



Home to School Bus Contract

The most significant activity undertaken by STS in 2019-2020 was the on boarding of the new contract resulting from the arbitration process in summer of 2019. The arbitration award set the duration of the contract at 5 years, expiring June of 2024, and the rates for the contractors. The terms establish a base rate, fuel rate, time rate and kilometer rate for each vehicle in use.

Route Familiarization

The new 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.

Alternate Addresses

Students who are eligible for transportation may have service based on one additional alternate address, 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 an alternate address within the same travel day, however the schedule must remain consistent Monday through Friday. Under normal circumstances, alternate 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

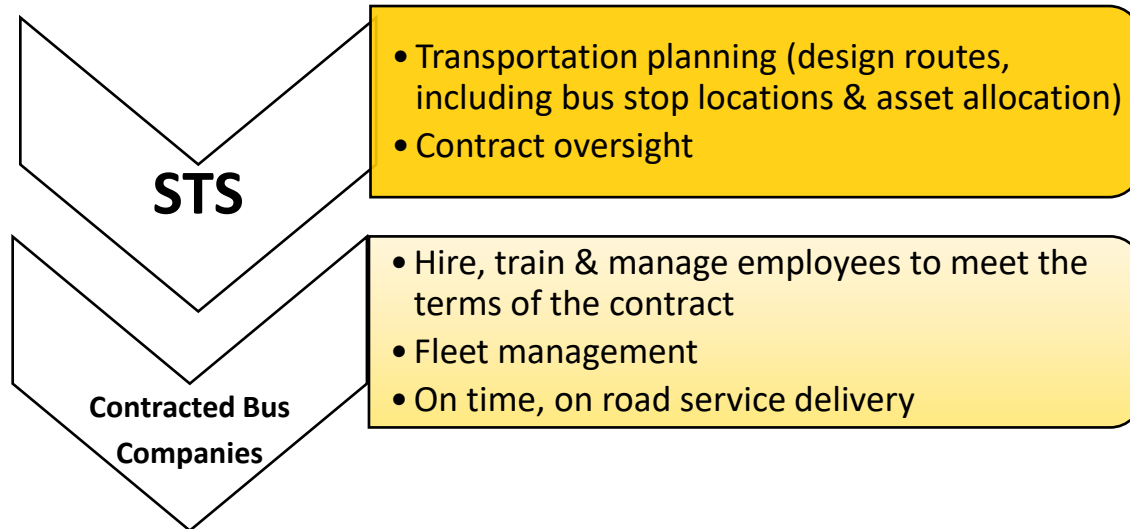
Transportation may be provided to elementary age students who are not eligible for transportation but who attend a daycare facility or home daycare where the daycare address is eligible for transportation.

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 2019-2020 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 2019-2020, a total of 1,136 school bus routes operated throughout the service area.

	Regular Bus Routes	Specialized Bus Routes	Total
2018-2019	816	337	1,153
Elgin County	183	54	237
Middlesex County	205	45	250
Oxford County	168	73	214
City of London	258	150	408

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 high 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 based on student distribution and weather events which result in service cancellations.

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 2019-2020 figures also illustrate the changes in the vehicle mix throughout the school year to meet student needs. March statistics are provided as service was suspended at that time for the duration of the school year due to COVID 19.

Vehicle Type	2018-2019 June	2019- 2020 September	2019-2020 March
Full Size Passenger Bus	641	638	642
Mid Size Passenger Bus	58	56	56
Mini Size Passenger Bus	115	108	108
Mini Size Passenger Bus – Accessible	108	106	104
Minivan	232	217	226

Public Transit

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

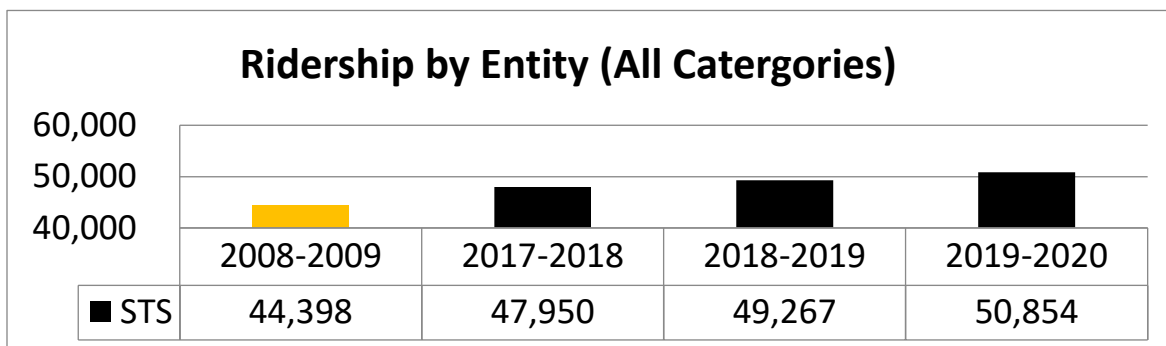
Transported Students

Students who are eligible for transportation under policy are assigned to a seat on a vehicle in the morning and afternoon. The majority of students are eligible to their board-designated schools based on distance. Under limited circumstances, bus service may be provided based on “hazard” conditions. 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)
Eligible (Distance)		
• Regular Track	37,531	38,672
• French Immersion	6,554	6,615
• Specialized Education	1,803	3,700
Eligible (Distance Based Exemption)		
• Elementary Panel	3,157	3,219
• Secondary Panel	491	481

Ridership Growth

Ridership growth has remained consistent, with an overall 14.5% increase since 2008-2009. The increase in ridership is 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.



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
Alternate Address	1,887	1,895
Joint Custody - Elementary	265	252
Joint Custody - Secondary	303	311
Vacant Seat	425	412
Choice of School	673	632
Out of District	71	74
Total Transported Students Using Additional Services	3,614	3,576

Did you know?

Based on the number of transported students, **STS is the 5th largest consortia** in Ontario, behind Peel Region, Ottawa, Toronto and York Region.

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	2017 -2018	2018 -2019	2019-2020
Elgin County	100 m	100 m	120 m
Middlesex County	90 m	90 m	110 m
Oxford County	120 m	120 m	120 m
City of London	180 m	180 m	190m

	Secondary Panel		
Geographic Area	2017 -2018	2018 -2019	2019-2020
Elgin County	200 m	210 m	230 m
Middlesex County	290 m	270 m	280 m
Oxford County	260 m	300 m	290 m
City of London	410 m	400 m	420 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.

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 the 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

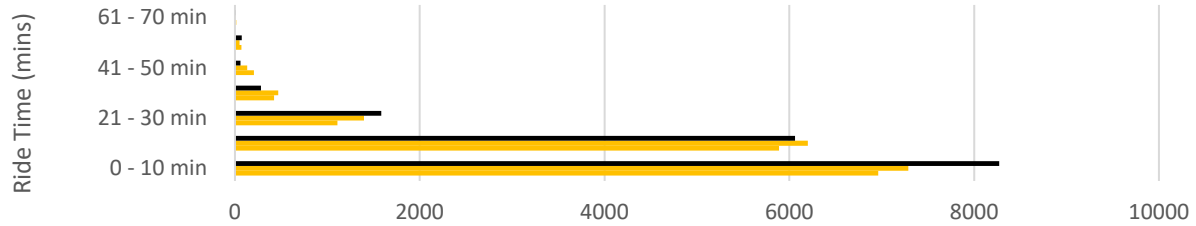
Students may spend a maximum of 70 minutes one way on the bus. Under certain limited circumstances, based on geography or program choice, this travel time may be exceeded.

Factors that influence ride time include:

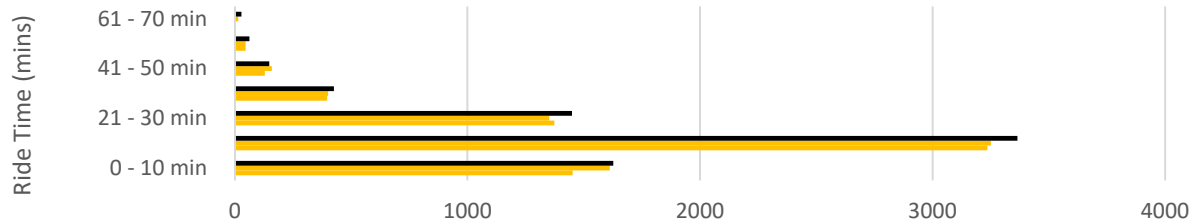
- Geographical location of school
- School boundary
- Student-selected specialty program offerings
- Student location related to geographic location of school
- Number of students assigned to the bus run
- Number of bus stops assigned to the bus run
- Traffic conditions, congestion, and construction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

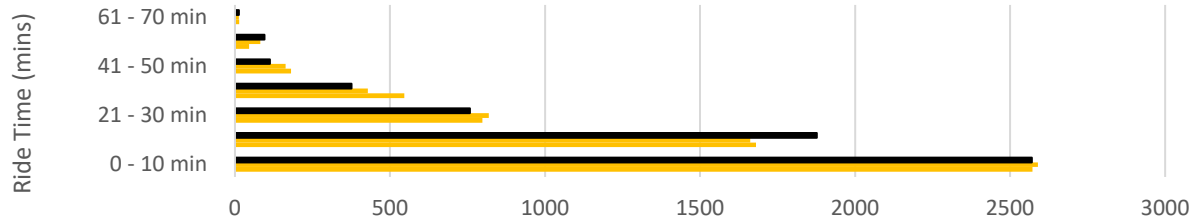
City of London - Elementary Students



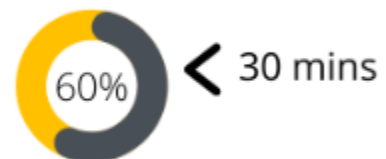
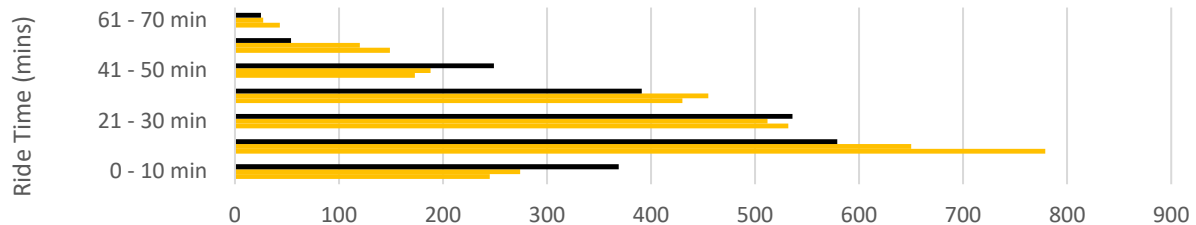
City of London - Secondary Students



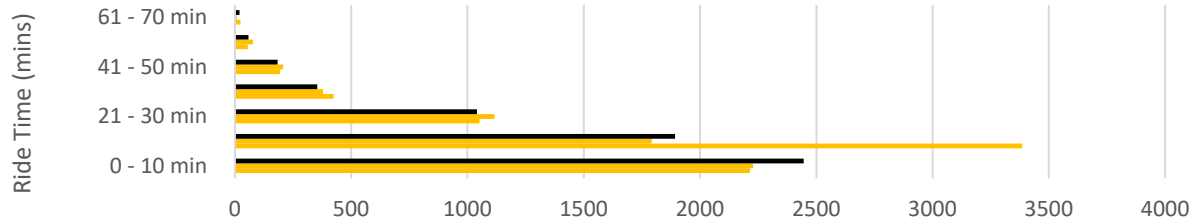
Elgin County - Elementary Students



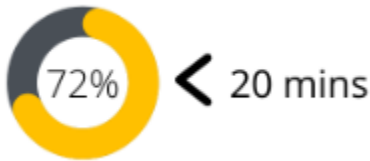
Elgin County - Secondary Students



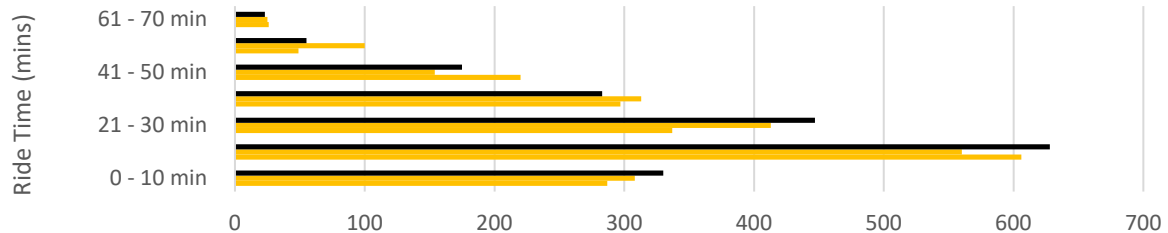
Oxford County - Elementary Students



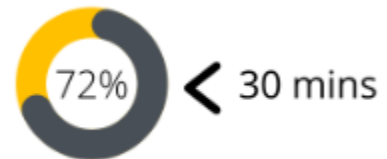
	0 - 10 min	11 - 20 min	21 - 30 min	31 - 40 min	41 - 50 min	51 - 60 min	61 - 70 min
2019-20 School Year	2445	1893	1041	354	183	58	20
2018-19 School Year	2228	1792	1117	379	207	78	7
2017-18 School Year	2214	3385	1051	424	195	55	24



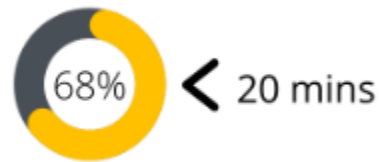
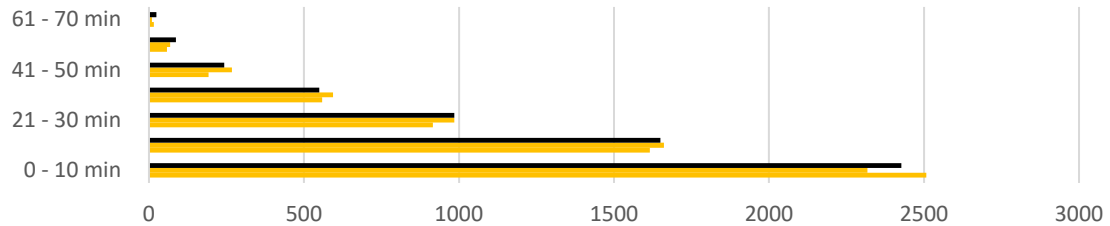
Oxford County - Secondary Students



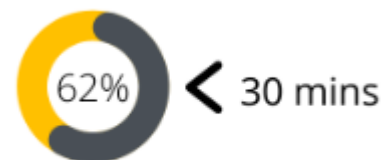
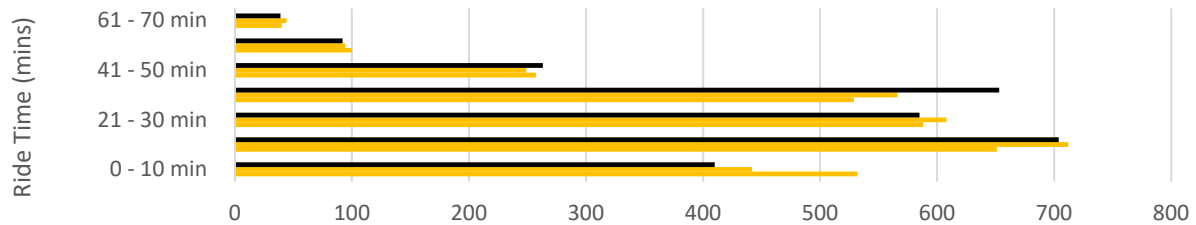
	0 - 10 min	11 - 20 min	21 - 30 min	31 - 40 min	41 - 50 min	51 - 60 min	61 - 70 min
2019-20 School Year	330	628	447	283	175	55	23
2018-19 School Year	308	560	413	313	154	100	25
2017-18 School Year	287	606	337	297	220	49	26



Middlesex County - Elementary Students

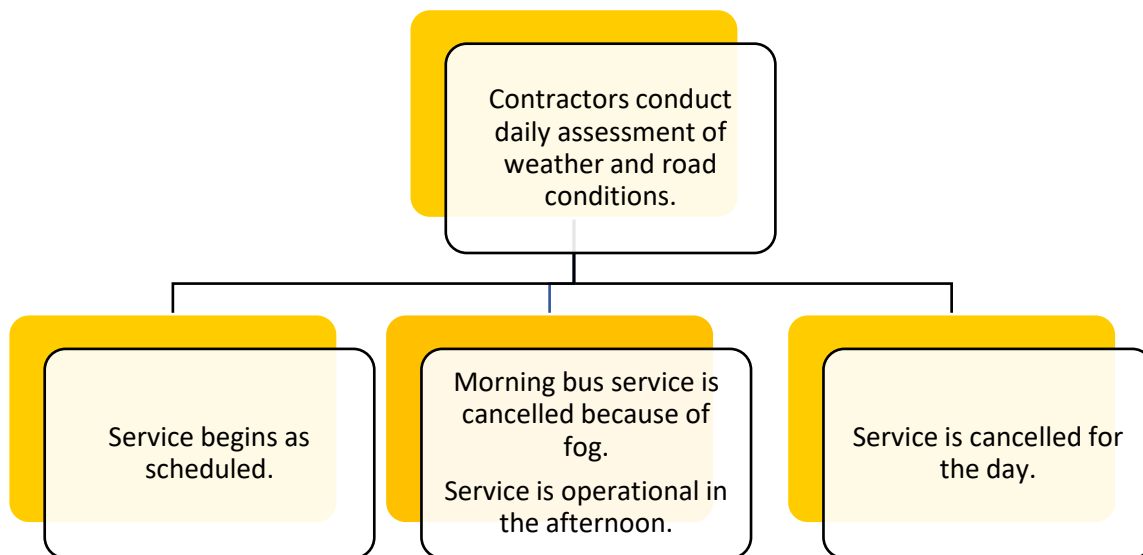


Middlesex County - Secondary Students



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 and runs are planned to avoid unnecessary disruptions whenever possible but given the size of the service area and location of programs, bus routes travel many kilometers each day. 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 2019-2020.

Date	Affected Areas	Reason	MORNING CANCEL	FULL DAY CANCEL
19-Nov-19	Middlesex, Oxford	Fog	CANCEL AM	
27-Feb-20	Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin, Red Zone	Blowing, drifting snow		CANCEL DAY
28-Feb-20	Medway, Centennial, Oxbow, Wilberforce, St Patrick's Lucan	Localized Road Closure, blowing snow		CANCEL DAY
3-Mar-20	Middlesex, Oxford, Red Zone	Fog	CANCEL AM	

The 2019-2020 year had no system-wide cancellations, compared to 3 in the prior year. There was a total of 4 partial cancellation events in 2019-2020, down from 11 the prior year.

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.

STS is proud to collect school supply donations for “Best First Day” at First Rider Day and has supported this since the inaugural First Rider Day held in 2010.

There was no First Rider event held in August of 2020 in advance of the new school year due to COVID-19. STS is currently reimagining the program delivery to ensure its return for August of 2021, either online or in-person.

Kindergarten Bus Tag Program

STS introduced 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. While STS normally mailed bus tags and a welcome letter to families in late August to all registered kindergarten students, this year, tags were distributed at the school.

In-School Safety Programs

STS provides annual school bus safety training programs in each elementary school through a contract with Intertrain Inc. The specially-designed training, developed and delivered by Intertrain Inc., is specifically designed to support student learning through engaging, modern technology and in an interactive environment.

The programs offer both a primary program for students in kindergarten through grade 3 and an intermediate program for students in grade 4 through 8. Most people are familiar with the memorable “Buster the Bus”, the beloved bus who talks and interacts with students through the session. Intertrain is responsible for refreshing program content annually so students never tire of the program.

While in-school safety presentations for the 2019-2020 year were completed before the shutdown as at March Break, STS was proud to serve as a committee member who developed an on-line version of school safety presentations so that every elementary student could still receive their critical bus safety program during the 2020-2021 year. This same committee is working collectively to ensure that the program can be offered in class or virtually in September of 2021, depending on the level of restrictions in place at that time.

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 Bus 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, in the late spring, 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.

The change to a registration format was supported by a dedicated phone line for registration inquiries and translation of parent communications into 9 core languages for distribution through the school.

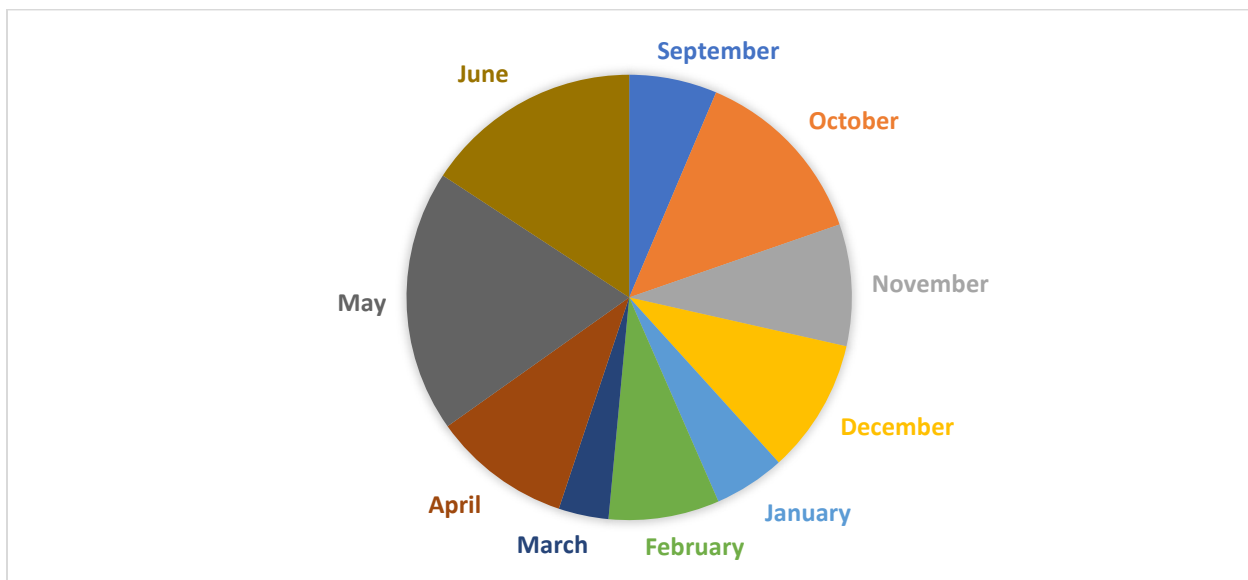
Communication Tools

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.

Charter Services Division

STS began supporting charter bookings in 2016-2017, which included developing a software platform to manage bookings and serving as a conduit between the contractors who provide the service and the schools who request it. The availability of school buses during peak home to school operations remains a challenge for schools who wish to travel during the same time as home to school run operations.

Since 2016, approximately 12,000 charter bookings were processed annually. The graph below illustrates the normal distribution of charters throughout the year:



April – June is typically the busiest time in charter bus bookings and accounted for 43% of all annual trips in 2018-2019. By contrast, charters were completely cancelled in mid-March 2020 due to the school closures. Charter bookings had already begun to slow as early as late January as concerns about COVID 19 increased. As prime season approached, a total of 800 trips were cancelled during in April – June that had been prebooked, but the bulk of lost trips during that timeframe were never requested.

During the 2019-2020 school year, 6,000 charter trips were completed, or 50% of normal volume.

Active Travel Division

STS is a member of the St Thomas, Elgin, London, Middlesex and Oxford Safe and Active and Safe Routes to School (ASRTS) 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.

During the 2019-20 school year STS initiated school travel planning at one elementary school site for each School Board - Westmount Public School and Jean Vanier Catholic Elementary School. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing Provincial shutdowns starting in the Spring of 2020 STS was unable to initiate school travel planning at any other school site for the remainder of the school year.

In addition to supporting school communities in developing an active travel program, STS's involvement in active travel has strengthened its community relations with other municipal stakeholders throughout the district.

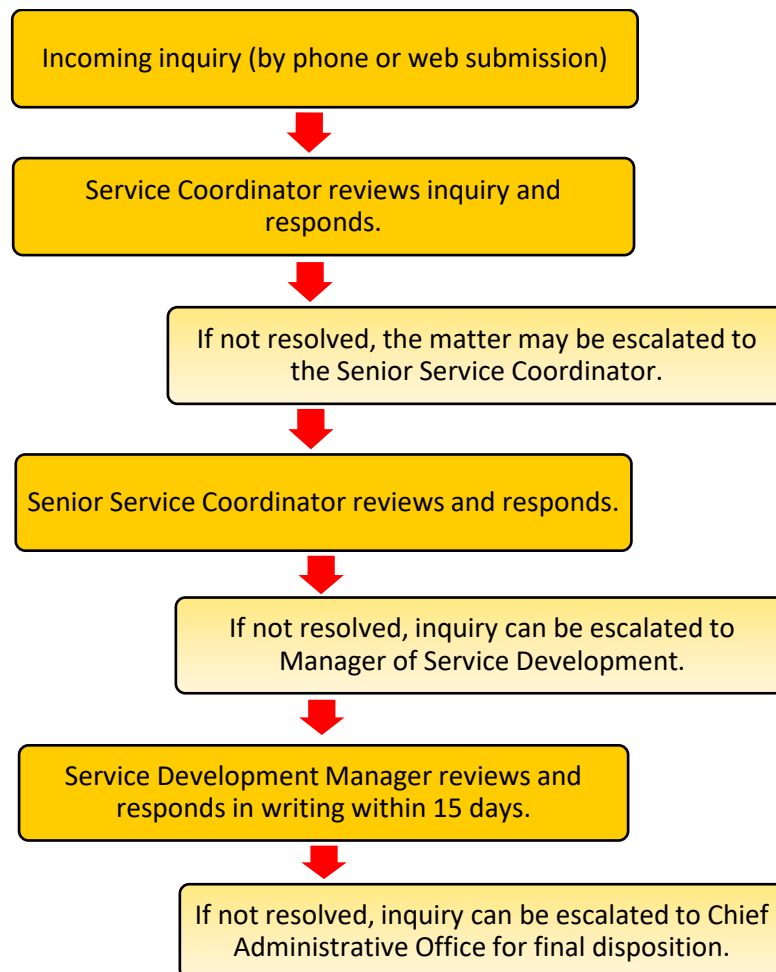
Active Travel is supported by STS through policy, participation, and education.

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.



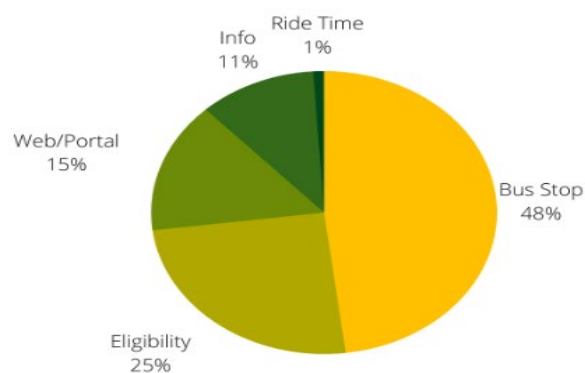
STS uses a tracking system to log contacts received either by telephone or web submission. Generally, most inquiries fall into five broad categories. The most common inquiry received surrounds bus stop locations as most contacts would prefer a closer bus

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.

Common Inquiries

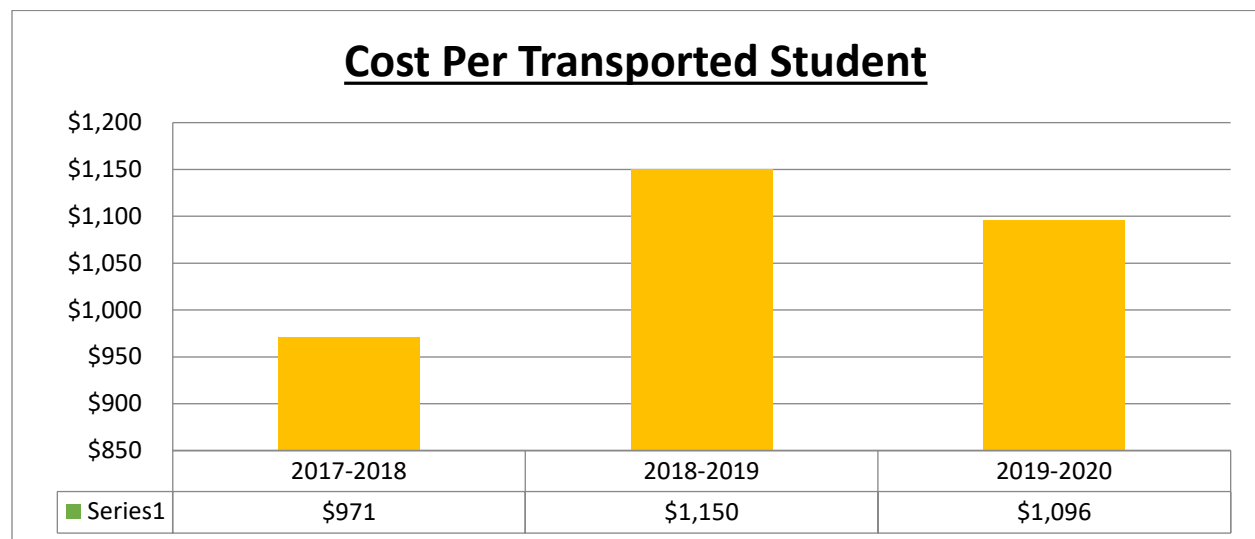


Financial Performance

Cost Per Transported Student

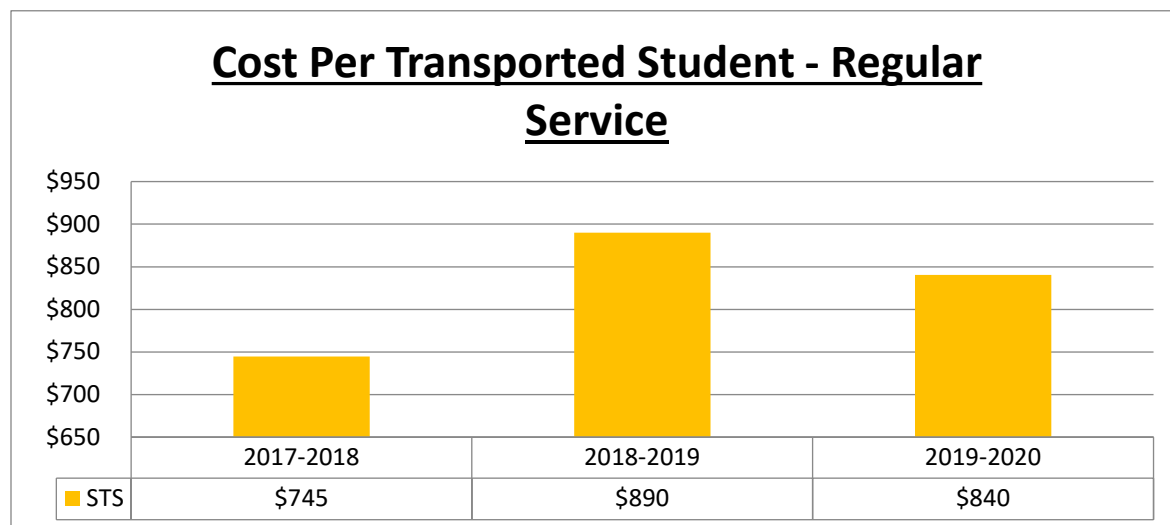
The main measurement of financial performance for STS is cost per transported student. STS has continued to stay below the original cost per transported student from its first operational year in 2008-2009, the baseline year, while accommodating ridership growth and contractual rate increases up until the end of the 2017-2018 school year. 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. This represents a 13% increase from the 2008-2009 base year.

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



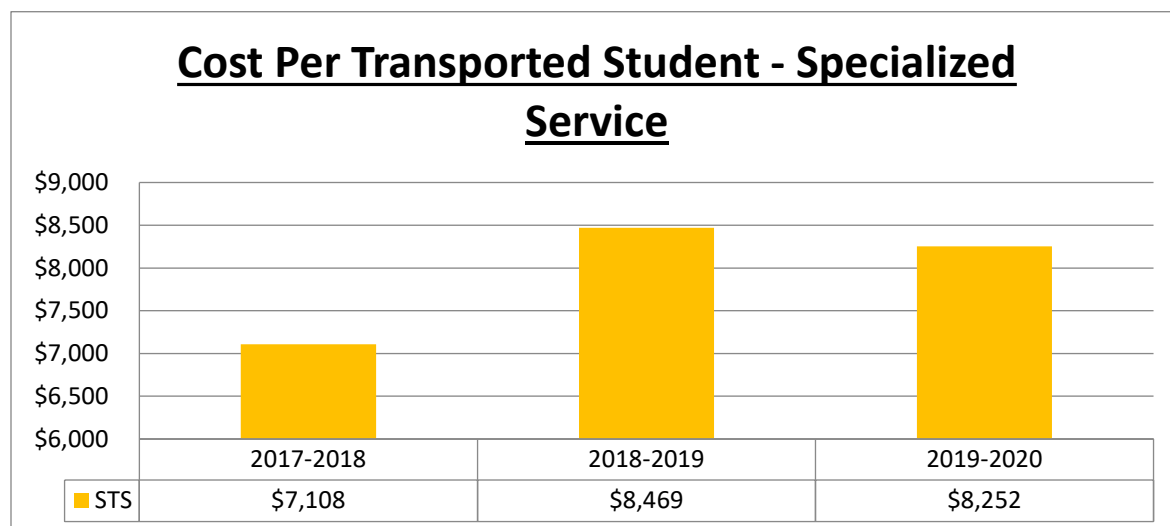
Cost Per Transported Student – Regular Service

Regular service reflects students who are transported on chrome yellow bus service of any size. The 2018-2019 year was the first year where overall cost per transported student exceeded the benchmark year of 2008-2009 by 10 percent.



Cost Per Transported Student – Specialized Service

Specialized service reflects service provided to students on chrome yellow wheelchair equipped vehicles or white minivan service. Since the 2008-09 benchmark year, the increase in cost per transported student on specialized service is 3%.



Financial Statements

Attached are the audited Financial Statements for the 2019-2020 school year as prepared by PriceWaterhouseCoopers. These were approved by the Board of Directors of STS in November 2020 and presented to the Directors of Education as voting members of the corporation in January of 2021.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

**Financial Statements
August 31, 2020**



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 Company) as at August 31, 2020 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 Company's financial statements comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at August 31, 2020;
- 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 a summary of significant accounting policies.

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 Company 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 Company'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 Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Company'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 Company'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 Company'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 Company 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 25, 2020



Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Statement of Financial Position

As at August 31, 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Assets		
Current assets		
Petty cash	1,000	1,000
Due from related parties (note 3)	109,310	6,910,939
Accounts receivable	-	101,886
	110,310	7,013,825
Non-financial assets		
Prepaid expenses	7,833	7,833
Tangible capital assets (note 4)	38,040	74,503
	156,183	7,096,161
Liabilities		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable (note 5)	116,881	6,978,394
Deferred revenue (note 6)	1,262	43,264
Deferred capital contributions (note 7)	38,040	74,503
	156,183	7,096,161
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, 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Revenue		
Thames Valley District School Board	42,911,296	45,097,526
London District Catholic School Board	16,078,022	15,533,473
Province of Ontario	48,752	80,428
Amortization of deferred capital contributions (note 7)	36,463	66,214
	<u>59,074,533</u>	<u>60,777,641</u>
Expenses		
Transportation services	56,930,098	58,031,970
Administrative		
Salaries and benefits	1,620,868	1,535,887
Professional fee (note 8)	26,076	479,314
Contract services	148,886	302,328
Software fees and licenses	132,973	125,895
Occupancy costs (note 8)	77,841	70,092
Office supplies and services	19,067	58,164
Telephone	11,991	31,687
Safety program materials	22,944	31,176
Furniture and equipment	27,850	23,901
Printing	9,407	10,957
Travel and meetings	3,531	5,299
Professional development	6,538	4,757
Amortization	36,463	66,214
	<u>59,074,533</u>	<u>60,777,641</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, 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Cash provided by (used in)		
Operating activities		
Annual surplus	-	-
Non-cash items		
Amortization expense of tangible capital assets	36,463	66,214
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	(36,463)	(66,214)
Changes in non-cash working capital components		
Decrease (increase) in due from related parties	6,801,629	(6,158,375)
Decrease (increase) in accounts receivable	101,887	(95,321)
Increase in prepaid expenses	-	(7,833)
Increase in deferred revenue- operating	(42,003)	(5,927)
Decrease in due to related parties	-	(11,426)
(Decrease) increase in accounts payable	(6,861,513)	6,278,882
Cash flows from capital activities		
Tangible capital assets additions	-	(44,753)
Increase in deferred capital contributions	-	44,753
	-	-
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, 2020

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

The 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 are 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, 2020

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 contribution. 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 that 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.

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Due from related parties		
Thames Valley District School Board	175,213	5,725,521
London District Catholic School Board	-	1,185,418
	<u>175,213</u>	<u>6,910,939</u>
Due to related parties		
London District Catholic School Board	<u>(65,903)</u>	-

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2020

4 Tangible capital assets

	Balance at August 31, 2019 \$	Additions \$	Disposals \$	Transfers \$	Cost Balance at August 31, 2020 \$
Computer software	319,880	-	-	-	319,880
Leasehold Improvements	44,753	-	-	-	44,753
	<u>364,633</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>364,633</u>

	Balance at August 31, 2019 \$	Amortization \$	Accumulated amortization Disposals, write offs and adjustments \$	Balance at August 31, 2020 \$
Computer software	287,892	31,988	-	319,880
Leasehold Improvements	2,238	4,475	-	6,713
	<u>290,130</u>	<u>36,463</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>326,593</u>

	August 31, 2020 \$	Net book value August 31, 2019 \$
Computer software	-	31,988
Leasehold Improvements	38,040	42,515
	<u>38,040</u>	<u>74,503</u>

5 Government remittances payable

In respect of government remittances payable, \$18,350 (2019 – \$8,906) is included within accounts payable and accrued liabilities.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2020

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 consolidated statement of financial position.

Deferred revenue set aside for specific purposes by legislations, regulation or agreement as at August 31, 2020 is comprised of:

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Opening balance	43,264	49,192
Deferred revenue contributions	6,750	74,500
Revenue recognized in the period	(48,752)	(80,428)
Closing balance	1,262	43,264

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:

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Opening balance	74,503	95,964
Deferred capital contributions	-	44,753
Revenue recognized in the period	(36,463)	(66,214)
Closing balance	38,040	74,503

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Notes to Financial Statements

August 31, 2020

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 \$364,760 is payable with respect to property lease during the next five years.

	2020 \$
2020 – 21	72,952
2021 – 22	72,952
2022 – 23	72,952
2023 – 24	72,952
2024 – 25	72,952
Thereafter	255,335

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 Significant event

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic known as COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 on the general economy is expected to be significant and far-reaching. On March 23, 2020, the Ministry of Education announced the closure of all schools across Ontario. Schools did not re-open until the fall of 2020. This resulted in no bussing services being provided to the London school boards for the spring of 2020. An addendum to the original bussing agreements was signed by the bus operators and The Company to cover the period of April to June 2020. It reduced the payments made to bus operators to approximately 88% of normal operating amounts. In order to keep bus operators on stand-by, payments to the bus operators continued through the spring of 2020.

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