

**Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA)
Meeting of the Board of Directors**

**Held on
Monday, November 4, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.
Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA)
1547 Merivale Road, Suite 300, Ottawa (Nepean)
Virtual Meeting**

REGULAR SESSION MINUTES

ATTENDANCE

President/Chairperson: Matthew Lee

Directors: Joanne MacEwan
Pino Buffone
Tom D'Amico
Lisa Schimmens
Randall Gerrior
Cindy Simpson
Lyra Evans

Alternate Director: None

Absent: None

General Manager/CAO: Cindy Owens

Guests: Philippe Renaud, Partner, Marcil Lavallée
Jeff Redmond, Controller, OSTA
Shannon Gutoskie, Communications Coordinator, OSTA

Recording Secretary: Laurie Frid, Customer Service and Executive Support Coordinator

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. with Matthew Lee in the Chair.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Ottawa Student Transportation Authority respectfully acknowledges that we are located on the ancestral, traditional and unceded Indigenous territory of the Anishnaabeg Algonquin Peoples, on whose territory we learn, play and work.

3. Introductions

OSTA Board Members were introduced, and elected officials, and parents were welcomed.

4. Delegations

The Board heard presentations from three delegations. OSTA Staff will follow up with all those who registered and those who presented at the meeting.

5. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

None.

6. Approval of the Regular Session Agenda

**Moved by Joanne MacEwan
Seconded by Cindy Simpson**

THAT the Regular Session agenda be approved. Motion Carried.

Regular Session Action Items

7. a) Confirmation of the Regular Session Minutes, September 23, 2024

**Moved by Lyra Evans
Seconded by Pino Buffone**

THAT the Regular Session minutes of September 23, 2024 be approved. Motion Carried.

(b) Business Arising from the Regular Session Minutes, September 23, 2024

None.

8. 2023-2024 Draft Audited Financial Statements

Philippe Renaud joined the meeting (5:48 p.m.).

Philippe Renaud, a partner with Marcil Lavallée, was welcomed to the Board meeting. Philippe presented the annual audit/management reports and acknowledged that they were able to carry out the audit as planned and in accordance with the accounting standards for the public sector. The audit report for the year ending August 31, 2024, was clean, with no issues reported, no recommendations and no unusual transactions.

Some highlights on the draft audited financial statements included:

- Total revenue for the year was approximately \$80 million. This is recovered by both Member School Boards.
- The expenses, approximately \$80 million, also covered by both Member School Boards. Approximately 94% of the expenses, \$75 million, was paid to the Operators and OC Transpo.

- Salaries is another large expense, making up about 2% of the total expenses. Other expenses include the office and various IT and communication components.

Moved by Lyra Evans
Seconded by Lisa Schimmens

THAT the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority Financial Statements for the year ended August 31, 2024 as audited and reported upon by Marcil Lavalleé, Chartered Professional Accountants, be approved. Motion Carried.

Philippe Renaud adjourned the meeting (5:53 p.m.).

9. Draft Revised Budget 2024-2025

The OSTA Board approved a draft budget for 2024-2025 in April 2024. Since that time, there has been significant change to the Ministry of Education's funding framework for transportation affecting Member Board revenues. A proposed new budget was brought forward with these changes, in addition to other budget proposed budget adjustments.

Jeff Redmond presented the amendments which included:

- Ministry revenues, approximately \$4.9 million, have been adjusted to align with the Ministry of Education's funding release and current forecasts (related to small vehicle transportation).
- Youth in care funding has been updated based on the 2023-2024 actual expenditures, an adjustment of \$246 thousand.
- The value of the recently negotiated operator contracts has been included in the revised draft budget. The initial budget forecasted the number of routes at 521, now decreased to 503. The estimated savings due to the driver shortage and routing, originally budgeted at \$2 million, is now estimated at \$300 thousand.
- Fuel escalation has been adjusted to reflect the new Ministry base rate of \$1.50/litre in all renegotiated operator contracts.
- Transit services were increased with the OCSB by \$325 thousand due to boundary and enrollment changes.
- Salaries, wages and benefits have been adjusted to account for staffing changes, including the addition of 1 FTE.

Questions were answered accordingly.

Moved by Pino Buffone
Seconded by Lyra Evans

THAT the OSTA amended budget for the 2024/2025 year as presented, be approved. Motion Carried.

10. Empty Seat Program

In May 2024, the Board approved the suspension of the empty seat program for the start of the 2024-2025 school year and committed to revisiting this decision at this meeting for a potential reinstatement in January 2025.

The General Manager/Chief Administrative Officer presented a report that outlined OSTA's recommendation to continue to suspend the program for the remainder of the year. OSTA continues to experience instability in its transportation services, and we expect to lose drivers again after the holiday break. OSTA staff continuously reevaluate routes and consolidate runs for efficiency. It was noted that once seats are filled with ineligible students, OSTA staff will lose the ability to reevaluate and consolidate as needed. The Board was informed that OSTA has been addressing compassionate requests on a case-by-case basis.

The Board discussed the program at great length, and an amended motion to reinstate it in March 2024 was brought forward. The amended motion was discussed further and, when presented, presented with no seconder; therefore, it did not move forward.

Questions were answered accordingly.

**Moved by Randall Gerrior
Seconded by Lisa Schimmens**

THAT the OSTA Board of Directors approve the continued suspension of the empty seat program for the remainder of the 2024-2025 school year. Motion Carried.

11. OSTA Initiatives

In the 2024-2025 budget, OSTA designated \$300 thousand for transportation Initiatives we may choose to implement. Several schools in the downtown core deal with significant issues with students walking to school. The General Manager/Chief Administrative Officer spoke about the Walking School Bus Program, initiated in 2017, in which OSTA partnered with the Ottawa Safety Council, which had a ready-built workforce. This program was successful but was suspended due to the new funding formula. OSTA recommended that the funds for transportation initiatives be utilized to reinstate the Walking School Bus Program.

Questions were answered accordingly.

**Moved by Lyra Evans
Seconded by Tom D'Amico**

THAT the OSTA Board of Directors approved the reinstatement of the Walking School Bus Program for the 2024-2025 school year. Motion Carried.

12. Health and Safety Policies

Annually, the OSTA reviews, and approves or re-approves the following Health and Safety policies, in accordance with relevant legislation:

- H13 Occupational Health and Safety
- H14 Respectful Workplace
- H16 Workplace Harassment
- H17 Health and Safety – Violence in the Workplace

No changes were made, and there were no incidents or legislation changes to prompt a policy change.

**Moved by Joanne MacEwan
Seconded by Pino Buffone**

THAT the OSTA Board of Directors re-approve the Human Resource policies referenced in this Memorandum, as presented. Motion Carried.

Regular Session Information Items

13. Operational Update

The General Manager/Chief Administrative Officer presented an Operational Update, including information on OSTA's new progressive web app. This new app allows parents/guardians to receive automatic notifications (delays and cancellations) on their phones (yellow bus transportation). All weather-related communication (e.g., snow days) will be sent through the new app, rather than by email.

OSTA celebrated School Bus Safety Week and Driver Appreciation this year, October 21 - 25, 2024. This event was communicated widely to schools, parents/guardians, and operators. OSTA developed a Driver Recognition Form, asking the community to show appreciation for their driver(s). We are pleased to inform the board that we received over 1,200 notes of appreciation. We will conduct monthly draws and communicate these special notes over the school year.

Questions were answered accordingly.

14. Long Range Agenda

- Annual General Meeting will occur in December
- Annual Report and Appointment of Auditors

15. New Business, Regular Session

Randall Gerrior informed the board that he had discussed the Walking School Bus program with the Ministry of Education. He brought forward a motion requesting a letter be written to the Ministry for additional funding and support of this program.

**Moved by Randall Gerrior
Seconded by Joanne MacEwan**

THAT the OSTA Board of Directors write a letter to the Ministry of Education regarding the positive benefits of the Walking School Bus program and request for funding. Motion Carried.

16. Board Meeting Schedule: 5:30 p.m. start time:

Future Board Meeting Dates:
December 2, 2024 – AGM
January 27, 2025*
February 24, 2025
March 31, 2025
April 28, 2025 – Public Meeting
May 26, 2025

June 25, 2025*
August 18, 2025

* indicates optional meeting dates, dependant on agenda requirements.

17. Adjournment of the Regular Session

The President/Chairperson thanked the community for joining us today, to see the work that OSTA is doing.

**Moved by Lyra Evans
Seconded by Pino Buffone**

THAT the Regular Session meeting adjourn at 6:37 p.m. Motion Carried.

Signature

Title

Signature

Title