



OSTA

Ottawa Student
Transportation
Authority

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Tom D'Amico, OCSB Director of Education
Camille Williams-Taylor, OCDSB Director of Education

FROM: Vicky Kyriaco, General Manager/Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: September 14, 2020

RE: **School Start Up 2020-2021**

Students

There are 36,500 students planned on yellow bus transportation and approximately 3000 students planned on vans and wheelchair buses.

Route Planning

	2020- 21	2019- 20	2018- 19	2017- 18	2016- 17	2015- 16	2014- 15
Large Vehicle Routes	613*	627	631	620	607	606	677
Small Vehicle Routes	n/a	1237	1305	1148	2116	1055	988
Presto Passes	9000**	11266	10485	9234	9099	9601	8385
WSB Routes/Leaders	14	8/12	13/18	12/15	12/16	8/10	6/7

* *planned and changing daily*

***assigned but up to 30% not using*

Routes were given to operators for distribution to drivers on August 28, 2020, almost one month later than usual, due to the numerous scheduling changes that took place throughout August. On September 4 the Parent Portal was opened.

By Tuesday September 8, it became apparent that operators would not have enough drivers to cover all yellow bus routes. OSTA began re-configuring routes and working with OC Transpo to transition some students to public transit. Cancelled routes were posted and announced on September 11, 2020.

Rolling Start-Up Sept 8 2020

Due to numerous changes in scheduling throughout August, OSTA and Operators required time to re-design routes and distribute them to drivers. Yellow bus service was consequently delayed to Monday September 14, 2020.

Van and wheelchair bus service was able to start on a rolling basis. As routes were finalized and assigned to drivers, drivers called families and confirmed their child's first pick up date and timings.

Yellow Bus Start-up Sept 14

On Friday September 11, OSTA announced that 30 routes would be cancelled due to driver shortage. An additional 7 routes were subsequently cancelled over the weekend and on Monday morning as drivers continued to call in and advise their employers they would not be returning to work. A total of 37 routes did not run on Monday September 14. In some cases only morning or only afternoon portions were cancelled, or both.

OSTA's first priority is student safety within the system. For this reason, it is important to let the system stabilize before making any other changes. Once the driver pool is confirmed, OSTA will focus on making changes in rural areas where internet is known to be spotty and for high needs school communities, as identified by the school boards. As drivers become available, service will be reinstated in other areas.

Driver Shortage

OSTA's Operators report a driver shortage of more than 100 drivers as of September 10, 2020. The prevalent reasons drivers have mentioned for not returning to work are concerns for their health due to COVID, and concern for their family's health. Many drivers are retired seniors in the 60+ vulnerable age/health range.

Some drivers are waiting to see how the start-up goes and may return in October if they feel confident the risk is being managed to their satisfaction. Others are requesting changes to their routes to address their concerns. OSTA is collaborating with operators to make changes where possible to address drivers' concerns.

Communication

OSTA has implemented an internal call centre set up, much like last year. The call centre was open as of September 8, 2020.

Parents can access transportation information for their children via OSTA's web-based Parent Portal. We actively encouraged subscription of email notification of delays, and other messages, and we currently have **59,562** email subscribers (an 11% increase over last year), although only 26.4K have children in the system. @OTTBus has **29,800** Twitter followers.

Schools can access OSTA via the emergency school lines or OSTA staff direct lines. They also have access to OSTA's web-based school portal.

Transportation Contracts

All Transportation contracts have been signed for large and small vehicles. The Presto agreement has been signed with OC Transpo. The contract with Ottawa Safety Council for Walking School Bus and the contract with EnviroCentre for School Active Transportation planning have been signed.

Operators have requested a revision of contract compensation due to additional cleaning requirements and extended runs. Also to be addressed is the impact of the driver shortage on service.

School Bus and Pedestrian Safety Day

School Bus and Pedestrian Safety Day was cancelled this year, due to concerns with group gatherings. Safety materials and videos were distributed to schools and through OSTA's channels to prepare first-time riders for their bus riding experience.

A new video for young riders has been produced and distributed which addresses hand and respiratory hygiene, social distancing, assigned seating and other new aspects of school bus safety.

Health, Safety and Seat Assignments

OSTA created child-friendly graphics for training and reinforcement purposes addressing respiratory and hand hygiene. Graphics are located in classrooms and buses to remind students to wear their mask, cough/sneeze in elbows, stay in assigned seats, etc.

Seating plans are being prepared by schools that group siblings together or classroom cohorts together. Students are assigned a seat number which are clearly marked within the bus. The seating plan is given to the bus driver to enforce. Ottawa Public Health will use the seating plans to conduct contact tracing in the event a COVID case is identified.

Public Transit Training

A new video for first time transit riders has been created that covers health and safety elements on public buses and trains. A new flyer was also designed to hand out with Presto cards outlining health and safety protocols when using public transit. Items like riders must wear masks, hand sanitizing and enhanced cleaning are described.

School Zone Safety

OSTA anticipated many parents would choose to drive their children to school rather than using transportation services, leading to greater traffic and safety concerns around the school site. In partnership with EnviroCentre, a Walk-a-Block map was created for every elementary school that shows parents how far 400m or 800m walk might be to encourage them to park away from the school and walk partway.

In collaboration with Algonquin College, OSTA also created Walk and Roll Meet Up Maps for every elementary school. These maps show stop locations where students can gether (yet stay apart) to walk to school together. Safety in numbers is the key to getting students to walk, and their parents to let them walk all the way to school.

OSTA also communicated with the City of Ottawa to discuss risk mitigation strategies, which were approved by City Council and/or various departments. Budget for additional adult crossing guards, additional By-Law and Police Traffic enforcement, communication and education, etc, was put in place and campaigns are ongoing.

Regards,

Vicky Kyriaco
General Manager/Chief Administrative Officer