Deloitte.

Ministry of Education Effectiveness & Efficiency Review

Niagara Student Transportation Services

E&E Phase 3 Review

February 2010

Final Report

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The English version is the official version of this report. In the situation where there are differences between the English and French versions of this report, the English version prevails.

À noter que la version anglaise est la version officielle du présent rapport. En cas de divergences entre les versions anglaise et française du rapport, la version anglaise l’emporte.

Executive Summary

This report details the findings and recommendations of an Effectiveness and Efficiency Review ("E&E Review") of the Niagara Student Transportation Services Corporation (hereafter "NSTS" or "the Consortium") conducted by a review team selected by the Ministry of Education (hereafter the "Ministry"). The E&E Review evaluates four areas of performance – Consortium Management, Policies and Practices, Routing and Technology use and Contracting practices – to determine if current practices are reasonable and appropriate; to identify whether any best practices have been implemented; and to provide recommendations on areas of improvement. The evaluation of each area is then used to determine an overall rating for the Consortium that will be used by the Ministry to determine any in-year funding adjustments that may be provided.

The review of Consortium Management finds that the Consortium has exceptionally strong governance, risk management, planning, HR and financial management practices. Indeed, a number of the managerial practices deployed by the Consortium, particularly the close integration of managerial policy and practice, constitute new best practices that can be drawn upon by the sector.

The review of Policies and Practices notes that considerable effort and care has been expended in the development and documentation of policies and procedures for the Consortium. In particular, the Consortium's Bell Time Management policy and active community involvement speak to the effectiveness of the Consortium's data use, planning and safety promotion activities. The noteworthy improvements that have occurred since the inception of the Consortium have been made possible through the collaborative work of the Member Boards and NSTS. This continued collaboration, which is a significant factor influencing the overall ability of NSTS to achieve its strong rating, will help ensure ongoing clarity of service expectations (as expressed in policy statements). This clarity will allow for continued realization of efficiencies in operations through the ongoing assessment of practices and procedures. The primary area for improvement is the full implementation of policies and procedures that were either recently adopted or were in draft form at the time of the review.

NSTS has done an excellent job of establishing its route planning software as both a tactical and strategic planning tool. In particular, the review of the Consortium's Routing and Technology notes that the Consortium's current system reporting and data analysis program is a model that can be drawn upon by the sector. Given that the Consortium's current bell time structure influences the use of alternative routing strategies, the

primary area for improvement should be the targeted use of bell time management procedures to improve both seating capacity use and asset utilization.

The Consortium has complete contracts with all transportation service providers and has highly effective contract management policies, frameworks and processes in place. Key areas for improvement with respect to Contracts include a modification to the bus operator contract to bring it in line with current practices, and the development of an implementation plan for the competitive procurement of operator services. The implementation of a competitive procurement process will not only expose the business opportunity to a competitive environment, it will also bring the Consortium in line with its own procurement policies.

NSTS has distinguished itself as one of the leading Consortia in the Province. Since the capacity building exercise conducted with the Consortium, NSTS has made significant improvements to all aspects of Consortium Management, Policies and Practices, Routing and Technology and Contracting practices. The results and success achieved by NSTS demonstrate the significant achievements and growth that are possible with strong leadership, coordinated teamwork and genuine cooperation between Member boards and Consortia. The E&E Review Team congratulates NSTS and it's Member Boards on their outstanding accomplishments and encourages NSTS to remain motivated and innovative while making the incremental recommendations outlined in this report.

As a result of this review of current performance, the Consortium has been rated **Moderate-High**. Based on this evaluation, the Ministry will provide additional transportation funding to narrow the 2009-2010 transportation funding gap for the District School Board of Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board as determined by the formula in Table 1. The detailed calculations of disbursements are outlined in section seven of this report and summarized below.

District School Board of Niagara	$177,888
Niagara Catholic District School Board	$1,348,523

(Numbers will be finalized once regulatory approval has been obtained.)

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Funding for student transportation in Ontario

The Ministry provides funding to Ontario's 72 School Boards for student transportation. Under Section 190 of the *Education Act* (Act), School Boards "may" provide transportation for pupils. If a School Board decides to provide transportation for pupils, the Ministry will provide funding to enable the School Boards to deliver the service. Although the Act does not require School Boards to provide transportation service, all School Boards in Ontario provide service to eligible elementary students and most provide service to eligible secondary students. It is a School Board's responsibility to develop and maintain its own transportation policies, including safety provisions.

In 1998-1999, a new education funding model was introduced in the Province of Ontario outlining a comprehensive approach to funding School Boards. However, a decision was made to hold funding for student transportation steady, on an interim basis, while the Ministry worked to develop and implement a new approach. From 1998-1999 to 2008-2009, an increase of over $247 million in funding has been provided to address increasing costs for student transportation, such as fuel price increases, despite a general decline in student enrolment.

1.1.2 Transportation reform

In 2006-07, the government began implementing reforms for student transportation. The objectives of the reforms are to build capacity to deliver safe, effective, and efficient student transportation services, achieve an equitable approach to funding, and reduce the administrative burden of delivering transportation, thus allowing School Boards to focus on student learning and achievement.

The reforms include a requirement for consortium delivery of student transportation services, effectiveness and efficiency reviews of transportation consortia, and a study of the benchmark cost for a school bus incorporating standards for safe vehicles and trained drivers.

1.1.3 The formation of school transportation consortia

Ontario's 72 School Boards operate within four independent systems:

- English public;

- English separate;
- French public; and
- French separate.

As a result, a geographic area of the province can have as many as four coterminous School Boards (i.e. Boards that have overlapping geographic areas) operating schools and their respective transportation systems. Opportunities exist for coterminous School Boards to form a consortium and therefore deliver transportation for two or more coterminous School Boards in a given region. The Ministry believes in the benefits of consortia as a viable business model to realize efficiencies. This belief was endorsed by the Education Improvement Commission in 2000 and has been proven by established consortium sites in the province. Currently, the majority of School Boards cooperate to some degree in delivering transportation services. Cooperation between School Boards occurs in various ways, including:

- One School Board purchasing transportation service from another in all or part of its jurisdiction;
- Two or more coterminous School Boards sharing transportation services on some or all of their routes; and
- Creation of a consortium to plan and deliver transportation service to students of all partner School Boards.

Approximately 99% of student transportation service in Ontario is provided through contracts between School Boards or transportation consortia and private transportation operators. The remaining 1% of service is provided using Board-owned vehicles to complement services acquired through contracted private transportation operators.

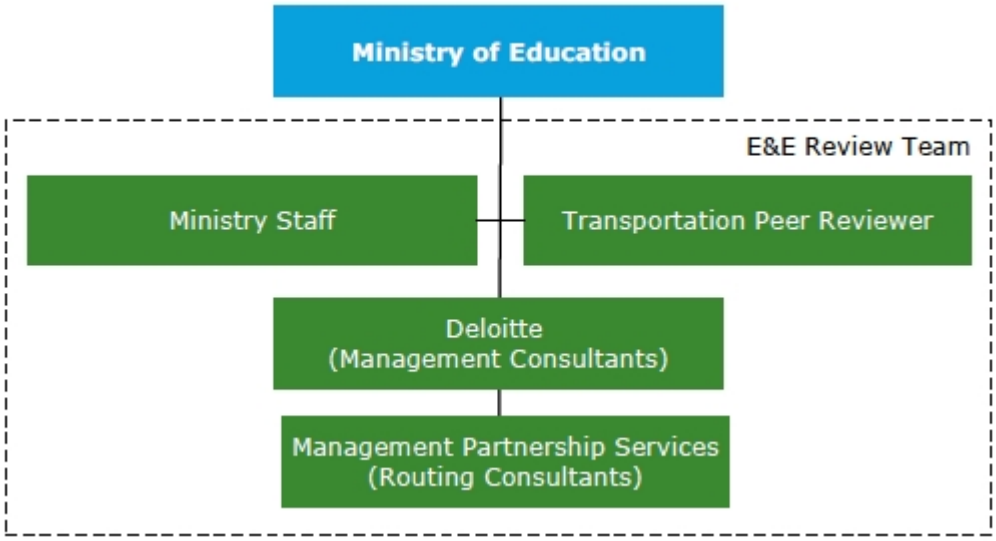
1.1.4 Effectiveness and Efficiency Review

According to the Ministry consortium guidelines, once a consortium has met the requirements outlined in memorandum SB: 13, dated July 11, 2006, it will be eligible for an E&E review. This review will be conducted by the E&E Review Team who will assist the Ministry in evaluating Consortium Management; Policies and Practices; Routing and Technology; and Contracts. These reviews will identify best practices and opportunities for improvement and will provide valuable information that can be used to inform future funding decisions. The Ministry has established a multi-phase approach to review the performance of consortia (collectively the “E&E Reviews”) across the province.

1.1.5 The E&E Review Team

To ensure that these reviews are conducted in an objective manner, the Ministry has formed a review team (see Figure 1) to perform the E&E Reviews. The E&E Review Team was designed to leverage the expertise of industry professionals and management consultants to evaluate specific aspects of each consortium site. Management consultants were engaged to complete assessments on Consortium Management and Contracts. Routing consultants were engaged to focus specifically on the acquisition, implementation, and use of routing software and related technologies and on policies and practices.

Figure 1: E&E Review Team



1.2 Scope of Deloitte Engagement

Deloitte was engaged to lead the Team and serve as the management consultants on the E&E Review Team. Deloitte's overall role is as follows:

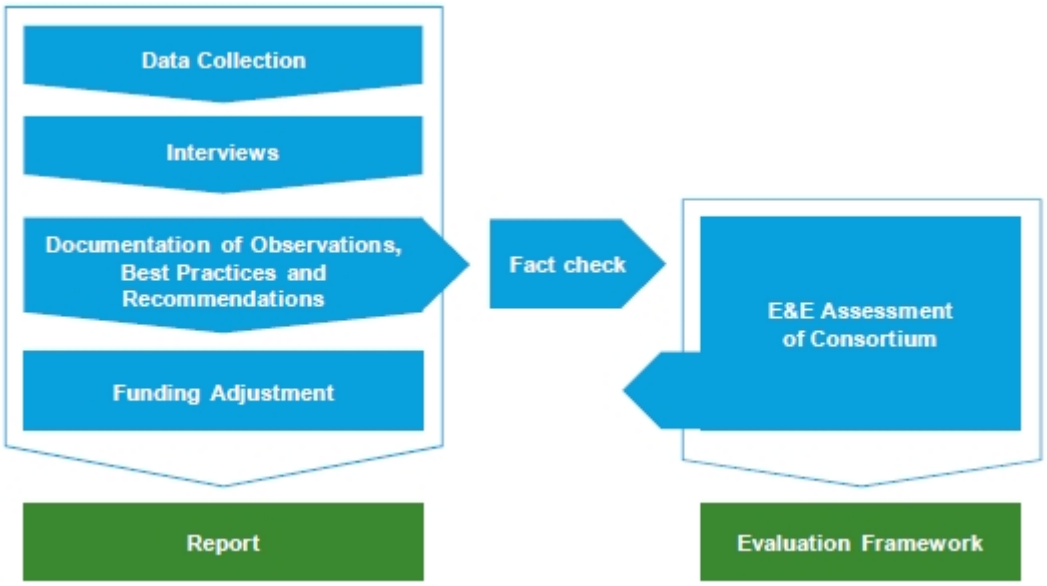
- Lead the planning and execution of E&E Reviews for each of the 18 transportation consortia to be reviewed in Phases Three and Four (currently in phase 3C);
- At the beginning of each E&E Review, convene and moderate E&E Review Team planning meetings to determine data required and availability prior to the review;
- Review consortium arrangement, governance structures and contracting procedures;

- Incorporate the results of the routing and technology and policies and practices reviews completed by MPS into the final report; and
- Prepare a report for each consortium that has been subject to an E&E Review in Phases three and four. The target audience for the report will be the Ministry, the consortium, and it's Member School Boards. Once finalized, each report will be released to the consortium and its Member School Boards.

1.3 Methodology Used to Complete E&E Review

The methodology for the E&E Review is based on the six step approach presented in Figure 2 and elaborated below:

Figure 2: E&E Review Methodology



A site review report that documents the observations, assessments and recommendations is produced at the end of a site review. The Evaluation Framework has been developed to provide consistency and details on how the Assessment Guide was applied to reach an Overall Rating of each site.

1.3.1 Step 1 – Data collection

Each consortium under review is provided with the E&E Guide from the Ministry of Education. This guide provides details on the information and data the E&E Review Team requires the consortium to collect, organize and provide.

Data is collected in four main areas:

1. Consortium Management;
2. Policies and Practices;
3. Routing and Technology; and
4. Contracts.

1.3.2 Step 2 – Interviews

The E&E Review Team identifies key consortium staff, outside stakeholders and key policy makers with whom interviews are conducted to further understand the operations and key issues impacting a consortium's delivery of effective and efficient student transportation services.

1.3.3 Step 3 – Documentation of observations, Best Practices and Recommendations

Based on data collected and interviews conducted, the E&E Review Team documents their findings under three key areas:

- Observations that involve fact based findings of the review, including current practices and policies;
- Best Practices used by the consortium under each area; and
- Recommendations for improvements based on the Assessment Guide. A summary of the key criteria used in the Assessment Guide to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of each consortium is as under:-

Consortium management

- Distinct entity focused on providing student transportation services for member boards
- Well defined governance and organizational structure with clear roles and responsibilities
- Oversight body exists with the mandate to provide strategic directions to Consortium management on the provision of safe, effective and efficient transportation service to support student learning

- Management has communicated clear goals and objectives of the Consortium and these are reflected in the operational plan
- The Consortium takes a comprehensive approach to managing human resources
- Well established accountability framework reflected in the set up and operation of the Consortium including documentation of terms in a Consortium Agreement
- Operations are regularly monitored and performance continually improved
- Financial processes ensure accountability and transparency to member boards
- A budgeting process is in place ensuring timely preparation and monitoring of expenses
- All of the Consortium's key business relationships are defined and documented in contracts
- Governance committee focuses only on high level decisions
- Organizational structure is efficient and utilizes staff appropriately
- Streamlined financial and business processes
- Cost sharing mechanism is well defined and implemented
- The Consortium has appropriate, documented procedures and confidentiality agreements in place governing the use of student data and ensuring compliance with Freedom of Information and Privacy legislation

Policies and Practices

- Safety programs are established for all students using age appropriate training tools
- Development of policies is based on well defined parameters dictated by the strategic goals of the governance structure and Consortium Management operating plans
- A mechanism is defined to allow for regular review and consideration of policy and practice changes to address environmental changes

- Established procedures allow for regular feedback on the impact that current and proposed policy and procedural changes would have on costs, safety and service levels
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of policy expectations is conducted to ensure their continued relevancy and service impacts
- Enforcement procedures are well defined and regularly executed with timely follow–up
- Harmonized transportation policies incorporate safety, operational and cost considerations
- Position-appropriate delegation of decisions to ensure the efficiency of decision making
- Operational alternatives to traditional practices are considered and implemented where reasonable and appropriate
- Service levels are well defined, considerate of local conditions, and understood by all participating stakeholders
- Policy and practice modifications for students with special needs are considered in terms of both the exceptionality and its service and cost impacts

Routing and Technology

- Transportation management software has been implemented and integrated into the operational environment
- Key underlying data sets (e.g., student and map data) are regularly updated:
- Responsibility and accountability for the updates is clearly defined and performance is regularly reviewed
- Coding structures are established to facilitate scenario modeling and operational analysis of designated subgroups of students, runs, schools, etc.
- Procedures are in place to use software functionality to regularly evaluate operational performance and model alternatives to traditional practices
- Disaster recovery plans and back up procedures are established, performed regularly, and tested

- Operational performance is regularly monitored through KPI and reporting tools are used to distribute results to appropriate parties
- Technology tools are used to reduce or eliminate manual production and distribution activities where possible in order to increase productivity
- Training programs are established in order to increase proficiency with existing tools
- Route planning activities utilize system functionality within the defined plan established by Consortium management

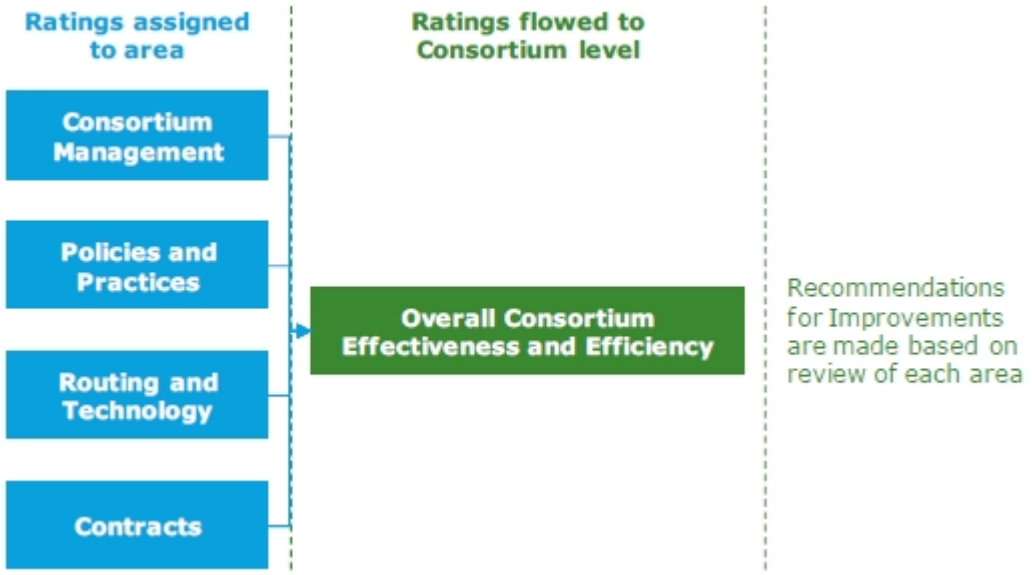
Contracts

- Contracts exist for all service providers, including taxi, boat and/or municipal transit services and parent drivers
- Contracts are structured to ensure accountability and transparency between contracted parties
- All operator contracts are complete with respect to recommended clauses
- Compensation formulae are clear
- Operator contracts are in place prior to the start of the school year
- Procurement processes are conducted in line with the Consortium's procurement policies and procurement calendar
- The Consortium has laid the groundwork for, or is actively using, competitive procurement processes
- Proactive efforts are made to ensure operator contract compliance and legal compliance
- The Consortium collects and verifies information required from operators in contracts
- The Consortium actively monitors and follows up on operator on-the road performance using random, documented route audits or their equivalent
- The Consortium avoids using School Board owned vehicles

1.3.4 Step 4 and 5 – E&E assessment of consortium and site report

The Assessment Guide was developed to enable the E&E Review Team to provide each consortium that undergoes an E&E Review with a consistent, fair, and transparent method of assessment. The Assessment Guide is broken down along the four main components of review (i.e. Consortium Management, Policies and Practices, Routing and Technology, and Contracts) and, for each, illustrates what constitutes a specific level of effectiveness and efficiency (refer to Figure 3 for diagram of process).

Figure 3: Assessment of consortia - Ratings Analysis and Assignment



The Evaluation Framework provides details on how the Assessment Guide is to be applied, including the use of the Evaluation Work Sheets, to arrive at the final Overall Rating. The E&E Review Team then compiles all findings and recommendations into an E&E Review Report (i.e. this document).

1.3.5 Funding adjustment

The Ministry will use the results of the E&E Reviews and the cost benchmark study to inform any future funding adjustments. Only School Boards that have undergone E&E Reviews are eligible for a funding adjustment. Table 1 below illustrates how the Overall Rating will affect a Board's transportation expenditure-allocation gap.

Table 1: Funding Adjustment Formula

Overall Rating	Effect on deficit Boards[1]	Effect on surplus Boards
High	Reduce the gap by 100% (i.e. eliminate the gap)	No in-year funding impact; out-year changes are to be determined
Moderate-High	Reduce the gap by 90%	Same as above
Moderate	Reduce the gap by 60%	Same as above
Moderate-Low	Reduce the gap by 30%	Same as above
Low	Reduce the gap by 0%	Same as above

The Ministry has announced, through memorandum 2009:B2 dated March 27, 2009, that effective from the 2009-2010 school year, in addition to the funding adjustments made based on the overall E&E rating, for any consortium not achieving a high rating in Routing and Technology, a negative adjustment of one percent to a Board's transportation allocation will be made to recognize potential efficiencies through ongoing routing optimization and technology use. To acknowledge sites whose systems are already operating in an efficient manner, the adjustment will only apply to School Boards that have not achieved a "high" rating in Routing and Technology from the Effectiveness and Efficiency reviews. School Boards that achieve a "high" rating in the Routing and Technology area in future reviews will be exempt from the reduction in the subsequent year.

1.3.6 Purpose of report

This Report serves as the deliverable for the E&E Review conducted on the Consortium by the E&E Review Team during the week of January 25, 2010.

1.3.7 Material relied upon

Refer to Appendix 3 for a list of documents that the E&E Review Team relied upon for their review. These documents were used in conjunction with interviews with key Consortium staff, outside stakeholders, and key policy makers to arrive at the assessment and rating of the Consortium.

[1] 1 This refers to Boards that have a deficit/surplus on student transportation (see Section 7 – Funding Adjustments)

1.3.8 Limitations on the use of this report

The purpose of this Report is to document the results of the E&E Review of the consortium. The E&E Review is not of the nature or scope so as to constitute an audit made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Therefore, as part of this E&E Review, Deloitte has not expressed an opinion on any financial statements, elements, or accounts to be referred to when reporting any findings to the Ministry. Additionally, procedures used by the E&E Review Team are not intended to disclose defalcations, system deficiencies, or other irregularities.

2 Consortium Overview

2.1 Consortium Overview

The Niagara Student Transportation Services Corporation ("NSTS" or "the Consortium") provides transportation services for the District School Board of Niagara ("DSBN") and the Niagara Catholic District School Board ("NCDSB"). The Consortium provides transportation services to approximately 31,800 elementary and secondary students using 900 vehicles covering over 52,495 kilometres each day. The service area covers1,868 square kilometres, and includes 180 elementary and secondary schools. These transportation services are provided through a combination of bus operators, taxis, parent drivers and public transit.

The Consortium was created in November, 2006 upon submission of a Consortium Plan to the Ministry and the execution of an inter-board transportation Consortium Agreement. The Consortium incorporated as a separate legal entity in March, 2007 and is currently operating in Thorold, ON from an office that is physically separate from those of its Member Boards.

The geographic area covered by the Consortium is a combination of urban and rural areas. The service area stretches from Lake Ontario in the north to Lake Erie in the south, and from Grimsby in the west to the US Border in the east.

Table 2 and Table 3 below provide a summary of key statistics and financial data of each Member Board:

Table 2: 2008-2009 Transportation Survey Data[2]

Items	DSBN	NCDSB	Total Consortium
Number of schools served	119	61	180
Total general transported students	11,885	12,498	24,383
Total special needs[3] transported students	595	119	714

[2] Data reported in this section of the report may be inconsistent with data presented in other sections due to the different timing of data collection. Data reported in this section of the report includes noon-hour transportation.

[3] Includes students requiring special transportation such as congregated and integrated special education students who require dedicated routes and/or vehicles; students who must ride alone; students who require an attendant on the vehicle

Items	DSBN	NCDSB	Total Consortium
Total wheelchair accessible transportation	104	73	177
Total specialized program[4] transportation	1,740	-	1,740
Total courtesy riders	238	-	238
Total hazard riders	2,155	1,317	3,472
Total students transported daily	16,717	14,007	30,724
Total public transit riders	1,618	-	1,618
Total students transported including transit riders	18,355	14,007	32,342
Total contracted full and mid-sized buses[5]	417	334	751
Total contracted mini buses	8	9	17
Total contracted school purpose vehicles[6]	3	3	6
Total contracted PDPV	1	1	2
Total contracted taxis	101	13	114
Total number of contracted vehicles	530	360	890

[4] Includes students transported to French Immersion, magnet and gifted programs, students with special needs who are transported to specialized programs are captured as special needs transported students.
[5] Includes full-sized buses, mid-sized buses, full-sized buses adapted for wheelchair use and mid-sized buses adapted for wheelchair use; all vehicle counts are rounded to the nearest whole number.
[6] Includes school-purposed vans, mini-vans, and sedans.

Table 3: 2008-2009 Financial Data

Terms	DSBN	NCDSB
Allocation	$15,711,958	$9,666,443
Net expenditures	$15,909,611	$11,164,802
Transportation surplus (deficit)	$(197,653)	$(1,498,359)
Percentage of transportation expenses allocated to the Consortium	100%	100%

3 Consortium Management

3.1 Introduction

Consortium Management encompasses the management of the entire organization providing student transportation services. The analysis stems from a review of the four key components of Consortium Management:

- Governance;
- Organizational Structure;
- Consortium Management; and
- Financial Management.

Each component has been analyzed based on information provided by the Consortium and from information collected during interviews. The analysis included an assessment of areas requiring improvement that were informed by a set of known best practices identified during previous E&E Reviews. These results are then used to develop an E&E assessment for each component. The E&E assessment of Consortium Management for the Consortium is as follows:

Consortium Management – E&E Rating: High

3.2 Governance

Governance refers to the way in which an organization is directed and controlled. Establishing administrative structures and processes that facilitate, monitor, measure and improve effective business management are primary responsibilities of a governance structure. Three key principles for an effective governance structure are: accountability, transparency, and the recognition of stakeholders. In order to respect these three principles, it is important that the governance body of the organization be independent of the team responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization.

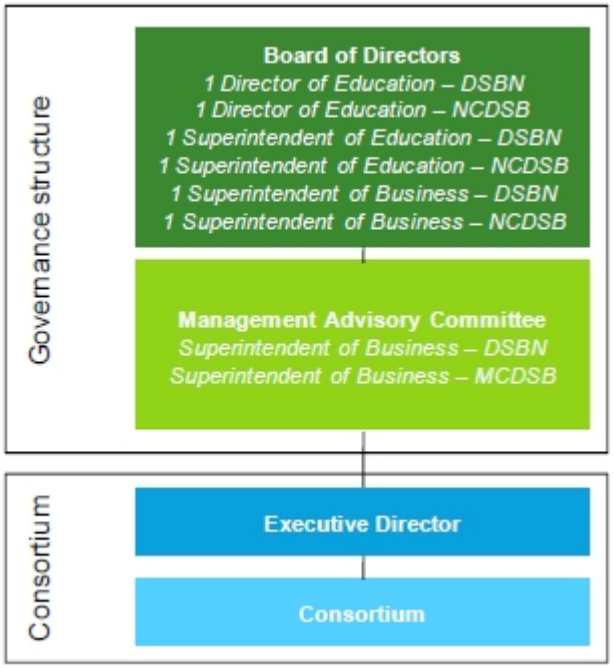
3.2.1 Observations

Governance structure

Governance for the Consortium is provided by two structures – the Board of Directors and the Management Advisory Committee (“MAC”; collectively the “governance structures”), both of which are established in the Student Transportation Agreement

("Consortium Agreement"). The Consortium's governance structures are illustrated below:

Figure 4: Consortium governance structures



The roles and responsibilities of both structures are documented in the Student Transportation Agreement ("Consortium Agreement") with additional procedural aspects included in By-Law No. 1 relating generally to the transaction of the affairs of the NSTS ("Bylaws").

The Board of Directors is primarily responsible for approving budgets, receiving reports from the MAC and the Executive Director, making decisions related to policy, and approving proposals brought forward by the MAC or Consortium (through the Executive Director) that impact funding. The Board of Directors is also responsible for appointing the Executive Director, conducting the Executive Director's performance review, approving amendments to the Consortium Agreement, and approving reports to Member Boards. The position of Board of Directors President rotates among members on an annual basis.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the MAC is primarily responsible for providing regular oversight of the Consortium's operations. As per the Consortium Agreement, the MAC is responsible for reviewing and providing advice to Consortium management on planning, financial, contractual and personnel issues. The position of MAC Chair rotates among the Superintendents of Business on an annual basis.

The Consortium Agreement mandates that the Board of Directors is required to meet at least once per year while the MAC is required to meet at least once every month, although discussions with members of both the Board of Directors and the MAC members indicate that meetings have taken place on a much more regular basis to support the development of the Consortium. Agendas for Board of Directors and MAC meetings are developed in advance by the Executive Director; meeting minutes are taken, ratified and signed.

Discussions with members of the Consortium's governance structures indicated that the MAC was developed primarily to provide regular oversight and to create a dedicated channel for frequent communication between the Consortium and its Member Boards. Discussions with members of the Consortium's governance structures as well as Consortium management indicated that Consortium governance is not involved with the day-to-day aspects of the Consortium's operations.

A process for eligibility appeals is outlined in the Consortium Agreement. This states that appeals will first be managed by the relevant Transportation Coordinator and then escalated to the Transportation Manager, Executive Director, the relevant Member Board superintendent and then, where required, to the relevant Member Board's governance structures.

A clause related to the confidentiality of information is included in the Consortium Agreement.

Board level governance and arbitration clause

A Member Board level arbitration clause is provided in the Consortium's Agreement. This states that disputes will first be escalated to a mutually agreed upon mediator and, failing agreement, will then be escalated to arbitration pursuant to the *Ontario Arbitration Act*.

3.2.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Structure of Consortium governance

The Board of Directors and MAC, which are charged with oversight responsibilities for the Consortium, have equal representation from each Member Board in terms of membership. Equal representation promotes fairness and equal participation in decision making and ensures that the rights of each Member Board are considered equally.

Definition of the role of Consortium governance

Roles and responsibilities for the Board of Directors and MAC are clearly articulated in the Consortium Agreement and reflect a clear delineation between the Consortium's oversight and operational functions. This ensures that there is no ambiguity in their function. It also allows for effective and efficient decision making as both levels of Consortium governance can refer to their defined roles and responsibilities when faced with issues. This is a key element in effective and efficient governance and management.

Meetings of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors meets at least once a year while the MAC meets at least once per month. Both governance structures require a formal agenda and minutes in a public forum, making the Consortium accountable and transparent to its stakeholders.

Dispute resolution

A Member Board level dispute resolution policy is in place. The policy is an effective mechanism to protect the rights of both Member Boards. It ensures that the decisions made represent the best interests of both Member Boards.

3.3 Organizational structure

An optimized organizational structure can promote effective communication and coordination which will enable operations to run more efficiently. The roles and responsibilities within the organization should be well defined. This will lead to operational efficiencies by ensuring tasks are not being duplicated and issues raised can be addressed effectively by Consortium management. Ideally, the organization is divided functionally (by department and/or area); all core business functions are identified; and there is an appropriate allocation of general management and operational responsibility.

3.3.1 Observations

Entity status

The Consortium was incorporated as a separate legal entity (non-share capital corporation) in March, 2007 with the primary objective of providing cost effective transportation to students in the Niagara Region by means of contracts with public or private transit carriers.

The Letters Patent, Consortium Agreement, and Consortium Bylaws form the Consortium's foundational documents. Each of these documents is described in the following section.

Consortium formation and agreement

Letters Patent

The Letters Patent, submitted to the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, establish the Consortium's status as a non-share capital corporation. The document describes the objectives of the organization and outlines specific provisions related to the Consortium's ability to accept gifts and donations, and to invest surplus funds.

Consortium Agreement

The Consortium Agreement (first signed in November, 2006 then revised and executed in September 2009) establishes the relationship between the two Member Boards and some aspects of the Consortium's operations. It speaks to, among other things:

- The purpose of the Consortium: to provide home to school, school to school and special needs transportation to its Member Boards;
- Consortium governance structures: the membership; roles and responsibilities of the Consortium's governance structures are clearly defined;
- The organizational structure of the Consortium, clarification with respect to the employment status of Consortium staff, and the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Director;
- Cost sharing arrangements between the Member Boards;
- The Consortium's responsibilities with respect to student databases and the implementation of transportation policies,
- Other items related to the rights of Members, mandated insurance requirements, the term of the agreement, confidentiality, dispute resolution, termination, and severability.

Consortium Bylaws

The Consortium Bylaws provide additional detail with respect to the structure and operation of the Consortium. It outlines, among other things:

- Additional detail related to the structure and operational processes of the Board of Directors;
- Additional detail related to the roles of individual positions within the Consortium's governance structures; and
- Other terms related to notices; execution of documents; banking arrangements; and borrowing.

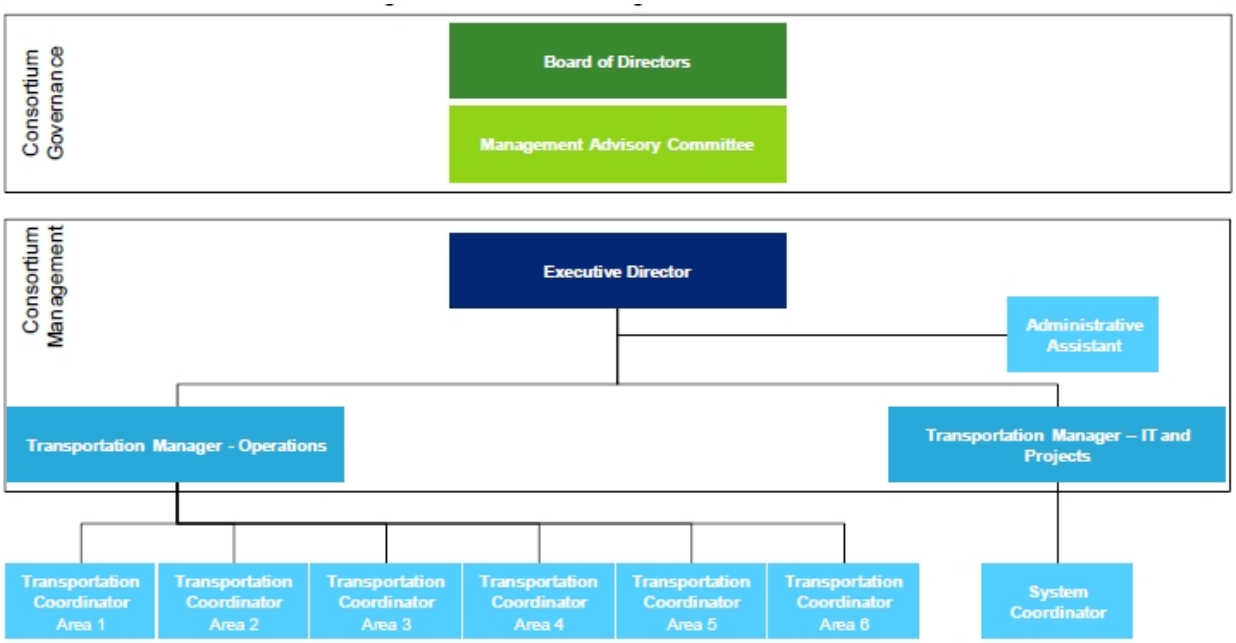
Organization of entity

The Consortium Agreement states all Consortium staff except for the Executive Director are currently seconded to the Consortium from their respective Member Boards and that seconded staff shall maintain all rights and privileges outlined in their respective collective agreements. This requirement is also included in the Service Level Agreements between the Consortium and its Member Boards. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that, prior to moving to the Consortium, staff received a letter from each Member Board acknowledging that they were being seconded to the Consortium and that they would report to the Executive Director.

Consortium staff are currently members of their respective Member Boards' collective bargaining units in line with the status of their employment. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that they are planning a review of the Consortium's HR practices commencing in March 2010. Items to be evaluated as part of the HR practices review include, among other things, the Consortium's size, organizational structure, collective bargaining arrangements, employment structures, succession planning arrangements and compensation.

The Consortium restructured its organization in February 2008 in order to match its organizational structure with the Consortium's strategic needs. The current structure is organized both functionally and geographically. The organizational structure defined in the Consortium Agreement is illustrated below:

Figure 5: Consortium organizational structure



Job descriptions that outline each position's specific responsibilities; decision making authorities; required qualifications; skills and reporting/delegation authority are currently available. The creation of job descriptions within particular pay-bands and the management of the Consortium's various operational responsibilities is currently under the purview of the Executive Director.

In addition to the job description, the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Director are also defined in the Consortium Agreement. In particular, it states that the Executive Director is to endeavour to seek new revenue sources for the Consortium. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that this item refers to the provision of student transportation to private schools in the region and other services within the Consortium's abilities that may be provided on a fee-for-service basis. Discussions with the Executive Director further indicated that the Consortium has not focused on this item as yet since the Consortium has been in the process of identifying and developing its core competencies. However, the Consortium does intend to follow through with this item in the future.

3.3.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Separate legal entity

The Consortium is incorporated as a non-profit, non-share capital corporation and is located in a different building from its Member Boards. This structure provides the Consortium with independence in terms of managing its daily operations; ensures that the structure and mandate of the Consortium remain consistent despite potential changes at Member Board level (i.e. changes in trustees, Board of Directors members, etc.); and also provides contractual benefits to the Consortium. As a separate legal entity, the Consortium can enter into binding legal contracts, including contracts for bus operator services, and as such is limiting liability to the Consortium and in turn limiting liability to Member Boards.

Consortium Agreement clauses

The Consortium Agreement in place between the Member Boards contains sufficient detail on key provisions such as cost sharing, dispute resolution, oversight, and role of the Consortium. This is important in that it clearly defines the relationship between the Member Boards in the delivery of safe, effective and efficient student transportation services. Since the Member Boards have signed the Agreement, it acts as the legal document governing the Consortium.

Organization of entity

The organizational structure reflects clear lines of reporting and the organization is divided both functionally (by department) and geographically (by area). This structure allows for increased specialization and encourages ownership of assigned tasks, thus increasing effectiveness and helping to create an appropriate system by which issues can be escalated to Consortium management.

Job descriptions

Clear, detailed and updated job descriptions are defined for all positions within the Consortium. The availability of job descriptions helps to ensure that staff can efficiently execute on their daily duties and helps to ensure a smooth transition in the event of staff turnover. Job descriptions make reference to actual operational responsibilities and support an appropriate segregation of duties.

3.4 Consortium Management

Consortium Management focuses on the operational aspects of the organization. This includes ensuring accountability of staff, focusing on continual improvement through operational planning, and risk management by having appropriate contracts and agreements in place to clearly define business relationships.

3.4.1 Observations

Cost sharing

A cost sharing agreement for the Consortium is outlined in the Consortium Agreement as well as in a governance-approved Consortium policy on financial management practices.

The Consortium's operating costs for shared routes and trips are split based on weighted student load. Monthly administration charges are split using the ratio of audited total annual transportation expenditures reported by each Member Board during the previous year. Costs are reported to the MAC on a monthly basis and, once noted, the total administrative cost sharing amount is forwarded to the appropriate Member Board for invoicing.

Individual policy decisions made by Member Boards that create additional transportation costs are allocated directly to them.

Transportation service agreements

The Consortium has executed Service Level Agreements ("transportation service agreements") outlining its service level relationship with its Member Boards. These are valid for one year starting in September 2009.

Included in the contract are the expectations of Member Boards with respect to service quality including, among other things, the implementation of appropriate Member Board policies and guidelines with respect to transportation, the demonstration of financial responsibility, and the provision of safe, effective and efficient transportation services. Payment schedules and other additional terms refer back to the Consortium Agreement.

Purchase of service agreements/support services

The Consortium purchases services from the DSBN and NCDSB, and purchases software from Trapeze Software, Inc. The Consortium also rents its premises from a property management company.

DSBN and NCDSB

The Consortium receives HR, payroll, financial, purchasing and IT services from both of its Member Boards.

While both Member Boards provide the Consortium with some IT and purchasing services, the Consortium purchases additional services from the DSBN in both of these areas. With respect to IT, the DSBN provides the Consortium with server capacity and technical support to host and operate MapNet Web, in addition to providing general

support for projects that may be undertaken by the Consortium. With respect to purchasing, the Consortium receives internal purchasing services for routine purchases in addition to general support for projects that may be undertaken by the Consortium. The Consortium also receives printing and facilities services from the DSBN.

The Consortium compensates Member Boards for these services using a fixed annual fee or a per-project charge. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that the value of the fees were determined based on the expected cost of hiring dedicated personnel to provide these services.

The purchase of service agreements are valid for one year starting September, 2009. Additional clauses relating to dispute resolution; confidentiality; and ownership of data are included using references to the Consortium Agreement. A payment schedule is also included in the contract.

Trapeze Software, Inc

The Consortium has executed a standard software licensing agreement with Trapeze.

Property

The Consortium rents its property from an Ontario-based property management company and this relationship is documented in a standard lease agreement. The rental value, size, address and the rationale for rental are also included as part of the Consortium Agreement.

Procurement policies

The Consortium has a governance approved policy on procurement. This policy articulates the Consortium's objectives with respect to procurement and, in line with its purchase of service agreements, states that the Consortium will follow the procurement policies of the Member Board providing it with purchasing services at the time. The Consortium has retained the ability to contract either Member Board in the event that it chooses to implement additional projects related to procurement on a fee for service basis.

Consortium management has acknowledged that the Consortium is currently not compliant with its Member Boards purchasing policies as it does not utilize a competitive process to procure bus operator services. Additional information about the Consortium's operator procurement processes can be found in the *Contracts* section of this report.

Insurance

The Consortium has purchased insurance through the Ontario School Boards' Insurance Exchange (OSBIE). This insurance is valid for one year expiring on January 1, 2011 and includes coverage for general liabilities; property; crime, and third party liability.

MAC meeting minutes indicate that the Consortium's insurance needs are reviewed in consultation with legal counsel. The Consortium also has a governance approved policy that requires the Consortium to review its insurance needs on an annual basis.

Staff performance evaluation, training and management

The Consortium's performance evaluation and training practices are documented in governance approved policies on HR and staff training. The Consortium has also developed an integrated 'Individual Performance and Development Plan' ("IPDP").

The Consortium's HR policy documents the leadership role of the Executive Director; the nature and employment status of Consortium staff; the role of Member Boards in providing HR and payroll services (as per the Purchase of Service Agreements); and the Consortium's principles with respect to training and development along with associated accountability measures.

The Consortium's policy on staff training requirements follows from the HR policy and articulates the procedure to be used to on-board new employees; the Consortium's approach to cross-training; and the Consortium's approach to individual and team development.

The IPDP presents a detailed framework and process to be used by employees when identifying their training and development objectives for the coming school year. The timelines associated with the development and evaluation of training plans are clearly identified – goals and training objectives are to be set by all employees in December of each year with an update taking place in May, and evaluations are to take place in November of each year. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that while performance and development plans for all Consortium staff have been completed in line with the IDPD for the current calendar year, the evaluations have not yet been completed since this is the first year in which this more detailed plan has been in place. In past years, performance objectives were defined and evaluations were conducted using a different process.

Training provided to staff is tracked by Consortium management and all staff are currently cross-trained. Board of Directors and MAC meeting minutes also indicate that staff development initiatives are presented to the Consortium's governance structures.

Performance reviews are to be conducted by each staff member's immediate superior and reviews for the Executive Director are to be conducted by the Board of Directors. Discussions with members of the Consortium's governance structures indicated that a performance review of the Executive Director was conducted in 2009.

Organizational goals and objectives are communicated to Consortium staff using two means: by posting the Consortium annual strategic planning document on a common staff communications board, and through monthly staff meetings. Minutes of staff meetings are recorded, posted on the communications board and are available through the intranet site.

Succession planning

The foundation for the Consortium's succession planning initiatives is established in the HR policy. The Consortium also has an integrated succession planning document that presents a detailed framework and process to be used by Consortium staff. The document establishes a three-step process (each with its own sub-steps) to be used by Consortium management in order to build capacity for effective succession planning. Included in this process is the identification of candidate individuals and positions for each successive layer in the organization. This first step in the Consortium's succession planning process is currently complete.

The Consortium has also developed a short-term substitution schedule for each position to ensure positions are covered in the event of vacations or employee illnesses.

Long term and short term planning

The Consortium has an annual strategic and operational plan in place on which follow up is conducted on a regular basis. The process used to develop and report on these plans is documented in a governance approved policy on business planning and reporting.

The Consortium's annual strategic and operational planning process follows the Integrated Business Planning Cycle (IBPC) identified in the policy on business planning and reporting. This cycle begins in October upon completion of the annual start-up processes in October. The planning process incorporates input from all Consortium staff, governance and external stakeholders and the compiled plan is then submitted to the MAC and Board of Directors for approval. The process for developing the Consortium's strategic objectives is completed by January of each year. The policy mandates that updates on progress made by the Consortium with respect to its annual objectives be presented to the MAC at each meeting.

The Consortium's strategic goals for 2009-10 include the establishment of a strong organizational identity for NSTS and the provision of high quality services through the achievement of routing and operational efficiencies. The strategic plan also identifies a number of tasks that are considered critical to the achievement of the Consortium's goals with a timeline associated with each task. Responsibility for the achievement of these tasks is then delegated to individual Consortium staff members and documented in a work process chart.

Included in the Consortium's objectives for 2009-10 is the creation of a five-year strategic plan to replace the multi-year plan approved by governance in January 2008.

The Consortium has a governance approved strategy for evaluating the future impact of decreasing budget allocations resulting from declining student enrolment. The Consortium manages transportation costs within its annual budget allocations and routing efficiencies are evaluated each year. The Consortium is also involved in accommodation reviews and programming processes taking place at the Member Board-level and provides input into the reviews by highlighting the impact of potential decisions on transportation costs.

Key performance (service) indicators (KPIs)

The Consortium has a documented, governance approved policy on the use of KPIs to assess its own operational performance. The Consortium also regularly reports these KPIs to Consortium governance.

The policy on KPIs identifies the KPIs that are to be monitored by Consortium management and also identifies the frequency with which they are to be reported. Listed below are the KPIs identified in the policy.

Table 4: Sample of KPIs tracked by the Consortium

Key Performance Indicator	Frequency of reporting	Reported to Staff/Governance
Change, add, deletes from student download	Daily	Staff
Routes with minimum kilometers	Monthly	Staff
Routes with layover time	Monthly	Staff
Student ride times by 10 minute windows	Monthly	Staff
Student ride times by 20 minute	Annually	Governance

Key Performance Indicator	Frequency of reporting	Reported to Staff/Governance
windows		
Budget control schedule	Monthly	Both
Number of students transported	Annually	Both
Cost of transportation per student	Annually	Both
School bell times spread per 15 minute interval	Annually	Staff
Number of shared trips	Annually	Both
Number of shared routes	Annually	Both
Number of routes per trip	Annually	Staff
Transportation exceptions	Annually	Staff
Number of single routes	Annually	Governance
Number of double tiered routes	Annually	Governance
Number of triple tiered routes	Annually	Governance

Discussions with Consortium management and a review of MAC and Board of Directors meeting minutes indicate that a sample of KPIs are presented to the MAC on a monthly basis and to the Board of Directors on an annual basis.

Discussions with Consortium staff indicated that the review of KPIs is institutionalized within the Consortium. In order to facilitate this review, the Consortium has developed a webpage on their intranet that allows Consortium staff to review data.

Information management

The Consortium has developed governance approved policies and confidentiality agreements in order to ensure the confidentiality of all information. The Consortium has also, through its Member Boards' student information collection forms, received authorization to collect student information indirectly through its Member Boards.

The Consortium has developed two policies that govern the use and management of its information. The first policy, on the confidentiality of personal information, acknowledges the confidentiality of all information obtained by the Consortium, agrees to comply with all legislation related to the use, disclosure and destruction of personal information, and lays the foundation for the execution of confidentiality agreements with all Consortium

staff. The second policy, on the management of data, states that NSTS owns and operates its own, proprietary student database; agrees to comply with all Freedom of Information legislation; and outlines the conditions under which information and back up data are stored (for example: that NSTS MapNet Web is hosted on the DSBN Transportation Server). Both policies mandate the Consortium to review and reflect upon the implications and requirements of Freedom of Information regulation on an annual basis.

Discussions with Consortium management indicated that the Consortium has consulted with legal counsel regarding compliance with Freedom of Information legislation.

3.4.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Documented cost sharing agreement

The Consortium Agreement outlines the cost sharing mechanism for NSTS. A documented methodology for cost sharing is a best practice to ensure accountability over costs and appropriate operational cash flow for the financial obligations of the Consortium.

Transportation service agreements

The Consortium has formalized contracts in place with Member Boards that specify the transportation services that are to be provided by the Consortium to the Member Boards. The scope of services to be provided, fees, and quality of service and other terms have also been clearly articulated and agreed upon prior to the delivery of service.

Purchase of service agreement/support services

There are purchase of services agreements in place between the Consortium and all of its service providers which outline the scope of the services to be provided and the manner in which the suppliers are to be compensated for these services. Clear contracts ensure required services are satisfactorily provided to the Consortium and decrease the chances of misunderstandings.

Staff performance evaluation, training, and management

Staff performance evaluations are conducted on a regular basis with a clear, easily understood framework that is specific to the Consortium and its needs. The metrics which are used are supportive of the goals and objectives of the Consortium. In

addition, staff training is provided on a regular basis and is tracked internally; training goals are aligned with the overall consortium strategy and objectives which is important to ensure alignment between efforts and goals.

Succession planning documents

The Consortium has implemented an exceptional policy, framework and process to be used for future staff development and succession. The development of such a formal succession plan ensures the operational continuity of the Consortium should staff members depart or be absent from the Consortium.

Staff meeting minutes

Consortium management communicates its goals and objectives to staff at scheduled monthly staff meetings. Minutes of these staff meetings are kept and ratified, thus helping to clarify delegated responsibilities, enhancing performance measurement and communication with the Consortium's governance structures, and promoting a culture of teamwork and cohesion.

Insurance

The Consortium has obtained insurance coverage and coverage needs are periodically reviewed. In addition, each Member Board carries its own insurance. Insurance coverage is essential to ensure the Consortium and Member Boards each are suitably protected from potential liabilities.

Long term and short term planning

The strategic planning process is repeated on an annual basis, outlines the strategic initiatives of the Consortium for the upcoming year, and is regularly reported to the Consortium's stakeholders. This drives continuous improvement within Consortium operations and gives the staff a broader view of the organization's contributions to stakeholders. It also contributes to a corporate culture of continuous self- assessment and improvement. The Consortium's planning process allows it to remain focused on goal- oriented initiatives aimed at improving service levels, operational procedures and accountability frameworks.

Strategy for declining enrolment

The Consortium has developed a governance approved strategy and process to assess the budgetary impact of declining student enrolment. This strategy identifies the expected budget shortfall and short term and long term strategies that will be used to address it. It also requires the Consortium to communicate regularly with Consortium governance regarding the impact and risks associated with the reduction in funding and

student enrolment. The availability of such a plan not only provides the Consortium with a framework that will help it address the issue of funding, but it also signals a positive, proactive approach to dealing with issues before they arise – a key element of effective long-term Consortium management.

Key Performance Indicators

The Consortium makes extensive use of available data in both the course of the annual transportation planning process as well as a tool for operational efficiency assessments. Formally monitoring a relevant portfolio of KPIs allows the Consortium to quantify its performance over time and generate realistic business improvement plans.

Procurement policies

Notwithstanding the recommendation below regarding the implementation of these policies, the Consortium has clear procurement policies which state that it has adopted the procurement policies of its Member Boards. The availability of such a policy ensures standardization in the procurement methods of the Consortium.

Information management

The Consortium has developed governance approved policies related to the use of confidential information and has confidentiality agreements in place that help to ensure the confidentiality of all information. In addition, these policies also require Consortium governance to review and reflect on freedom of information and privacy legislation requirements on a regular basis.

3.4.3 Recommendations

Make all efforts necessary to comply with the procurement policies

The Consortium's procurement policies state that the Consortium is to follow the procurement policies of its Member Boards. Discussions with Consortium management and members of the Board of Directors indicated that, since the Consortium does not use a competitive process to procure bus operator services, it is currently violation of its (and its Member Boards') procurement policies. It is therefore recommended that the Consortium make all efforts necessary to ensure that it is in compliance with its own procurement policies.

3.5 Financial Management

Sound financial management ensures the optimal use of public funds and also ensures the integrity and accuracy of financial information. This includes appropriate internal controls and a robust budgeting process that has a clearly defined planning and review calendar that promotes accountability and sound decision making.

Financial management policies capture roles and responsibilities, authorization levels, and reporting requirements to ensure that a proper internal financial control system is in place for the Consortium. These policies should also clearly define the financial processes of the Consortium in a way that ensures appropriate oversight without impinging on efficiency.

3.5.1 Observations

The Consortium has developed a governance approved policy on financial management. This policy outlines the policies, practices and authorizations with respect to, among other things, cost sharing, cost reconciliation, employee expenses and overtime, accounts payable, payment authorizations, financial reporting and budget development.

Budget planning and monitoring

The policy on financial management delegates authority for the development of administrative and operational budgets to the Consortium. It mandates the timelines over which the budget is to be developed: the budget is to be presented to the MAC in March, then presented to the respective Member Boards for approval, with confirmation of this approval to be received by June. The budget is to then be revised and presented to the MAC in November based on reconciled student and operational information submitted by operators on the October 31st reporting deadline. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that operational projections are based on enrolment figures provided by each Member Board and MAC approved assumptions regarding proposed transportation efficiencies and planned initiatives. Administrative costs are projected based on planned initiatives by the Consortium and based on administrative costs reported by the each Member Board in the previous year.

As per the financial management policy, budget to actual reconciliations are conducted on a monthly basis. Discussions with Consortium management and a review of MAC meeting minutes indicate that the results of these reconciliations are presented to MAC members during each meeting. This budget reconciliation is also made available to staff, in line with the requirements set out in the policy.

Accounting practices and management

The Consortium purchases accounts payable and accounts receivable services from both of its Member Boards. The process to be used for the management of accounts payable is documented in the financial management policy.

The percentage allocation of operational transportation costs for each Member Board are first calculated by the Consortium and provided to the operators on a monthly basis. Using these percentages, the operators calculate the total amount that is to be invoiced to each Member Board and forward the invoices to the Consortium. Consortium staff then verify the amounts, code the invoices, and submit a cheque requisition to the appropriate Member Board for payment. As mandated by the financial management policy, the Consortium retains a copy of all cheque requisitions and tracks the payment of invoices through the Member Boards' accounting systems. Administration costs are verified and approved by the Consortium and then submitted to the relevant Member Board for payment. Administration costs are then reported to the MAC on a monthly basis and, following approval, an invoice is generated and distributed to each Member Board for reconciling payments. This reconciliation is also prepared on a monthly basis.

The financial management policy mandates that administrative and operational costs be reconciled on a monthly basis and presented to the MAC. Upon completion of the final year-end reconciliation, the Consortium's financial statements are prepared and submitted to the Board of Directors for approval along with the Consortium's annual strategic plan.

All expenses, cheque requisitions, overtime payments and reimbursements must be approved by the Executive Director prior to being forwarded to the appropriate Member Board for payment. In turn, authority for approving the Executive Director's expenses rests with members of the MAC.

Audit

Each of the Consortium's Member Boards are audited on an annual basis. The Consortium does not contract its own external auditor.

3.5.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Internal controls

The Consortium has established policies and internal controls for the accounting of its revenues and expenses. The accounting function is performed at the Member Board

level, however there is a first review and approval (including coding of accounts) at the NSTS level. NSTS is not able to disburse funds and, therefore, the second level of reviews occurs at the Member Board level prior to disbursements. This protects the Consortium and Member Boards against fraud and/or errors in accounting. The Executive Director also conducts routine reviews and approves reconciliations to ensure proper control and prevent accounting errors. Budget-to-actual variations are also documented on a regular basis.

Financial management

The financial management system implemented by the Consortium demonstrates elements of internal control and timely reporting. The account recording and reconciliation processes and the variance analyses allow the Consortium and the Member Boards to identify problems in a timely manner; and the Consortium's budgeting process is robust in its documentation and approval requirements. The policy has been approved by Board of Directors and is up to date.

3.6 Results of E&E Review

This Consortium has been assessed as **High.** The Consortium has exceptionally strong governance, risk management, planning, HR and financial management practices. Indeed, a number of the managerial practices deployed by the Consortium, particularly the close integration of managerial policy and practice, constitute new best practices that can be drawn upon by the rest of the sector. The Consortium is therefore encouraged to seek new, innovative managerial techniques and practices in order to allow it to set additional benchmarks against which Consortium Management across the sector can be compared.

4 Policies and Practices

4.1 Introduction

Policies and practices examine and evaluate the established policies, operational procedures, and the documented daily practices that determine the standards of student transportation services. The analysis for this area focused on the following three key areas:

- General Transportation Policies & Practices;
- Special Needs and Specialized Programs; and
- Safety and Training Programs.

The observations, findings, and recommendations found in this section of the report are based on onsite interviews with the Superintendent of Business and Area Transportation Officers, and on an analysis of presented documents, extracted data, and information available on the Consortium's website. Best practices, as established by the E&E process, provided the source of comparison for each of these key areas. The resul ts were used to develop an E&E assessment for each of the key components and to determine the overall effectiveness of the Consortium's Policies and Practices as shown below:

Policies and Practices – E&E Rating: Moderate-High

4.2 Transportation Policies & Practices

The goal of any transportation operation is to provide safe, effective and efficient services. For transportation consortia, it is equally important that service to each of the Member Boards is provided in a fair and equitable manner. To support this goal, it is essential that well defined policies, procedures, and daily practices are documented and supported. Well defined policies ensure that the levels of services to be provided are clearly established while documented procedures and consistent practices determine how services will actually be delivered within the constraints of each policy. To the degree that policies are harmonized along with the consistent application of all policies, procedures, and practices ensures that service will be delivered safely and equitably to each of the Member Boards. This section examines and evaluates the policies, operational procedures, daily practices, and their impact on the delivery of effective and efficient transportation services.

4.2.1 Observations

General policy guidelines

Under the agreement between the DSBN and the NCDSB, a "uniform" *Student Transportation Policy* was developed to be implemented and administered by NSTS. Based on this direction from the Member Boards and the array of existing documented policies, administrative procedures, and guidelines, the NSTS has established a policy and procedure manual for use by Consortium staff. Examples of these guidelines and procedures includes eligibility guidelines which establish home to school distances, courtesy and other exception based transportation, and guidelines for the transportation of students with special needs. Guidelines that directly impact the Consortium's ability to deliver both effective and efficient student transportation services includes a well conceived bell time management procedure, parameters that determine the level of services to be delivered such as ride time goals and limitations, route planning strategies, and an established annual planning process. Equally important are procedures or guidelines that help to ensure the safe transportation of all students served. Examples of these guidelines include considerations for hazard conditions, bus stop placement, defining and describing the responsibilities of students, parents, school communities, drivers/operators, and Consortium staff, disciplinary action, appeal processes, and inclement weather procedures.

Furthermore, the Consortium was (at the time of the review) in the process of documenting additional procedures to further define levels of service and support effective and efficient operations. Examples of these include the use of video cameras, joint custody guidelines, car and booster seat guidelines, and student behaviour standards.

Eligibility and walking distances

The determination of student eligibility is a key and fundamental planning parameter that must be first established and then consistently applied to ensure effective, efficient, and equitable service. Eligibility criteria have been harmonized and are consistently applied to the students of each of the Member Boards. The criteria are shown in the table below:

Table 5: Eligibility Criteria based on home to school distances

Grade Level of Students	Kilometres
Grades JK-SK	Greater that 0.8 km
Grades 1-8	Greater than 1.6 km

Grade Level of Students	Kilometres
Grades 9 - 12	Greater than 2.5 km

The establishment of walk to stop distances is also important to support both equitable service and safety. By policy, home to stop distances are not to exceed the transportation eligibility distances as illustrated above. By practice, a guideline for walk to stop distances has been established by grade level. The desired distance for students Grades 1 to 8 is 800 metres and 1,000 metres for secondary students.

Table 6: Walk to stop distances

Grade Level of Students	Kilometres
Grades JK-SK	Policy: Not to exceed 0.8 km
Grades JK-SK	Practice: Not to exceed 800m
Grades 1-8	Policy: Not to exceed 1.6 km
Grades 1-8	Practice: Not to exceed 800m
Grades 9 - 12	Policy: Not to exceed 2.5 km
Grades 9 - 12	Practice: Not to exceed 1,000m

The procedure also clarifies that students living in rural areas may be required to walk from 50 metres to 1,000 metres when necessitated by conditions or routing efficiency.

Equally important to determining eligibility based on walk to school distances are clear criteria for providing transportation to otherwise non-eligible students. These must also be developed to ensure that any exceptions to the basic criteria for transportation are documented and consistently applied. These exceptions include students with daycare arrangements, joint custody, students with special needs, and students that are ineligible for safety reasons and hazard conditions.

Alternate addresses

The Consortium has established a procedure for the granting of transportation to designated child care centres that are within the school attendance boundary and also within walking distance guidelines. For daycare centres out of the school attendance boundaries, exceptions may be made provided there is space on existing buses and that there is no impact to trip or route times.

In practice, the Consortium provides transportation for students with dual custody arrangements provided that both parent addresses are within the school's attendance boundary. A procedure on how to handle this issue has been developed and is currently pending approval. This procedure holds the incumbent school principal responsible for the determination as to the student's ability to manage an alternating transportation schedule and that the principal and staff are responsible to ensure that students board the correct vehicle.

The procedure states that a consistent alternating schedule is required and that the parent or guardian is required to submit this request to the school in advance transportation arrangements being made. As the Consortium further develops its procedures and guidelines, it should consider clearly defining how much variability will be allowed for an alternating schedule (i.e. week by week, every other day, or combinations of days within the each week). A greater understanding of the alternate schedules to be considered will help to reduce the management complexity of dual address arrangements and the possibility of students boarding an incorrect vehicle.

Courtesy transportation

Courtesy transportation is generally not offered by either of the Member Boards. The established procedure states that the NSTS will track the actual numbers of students riding on each bus and will adjust routes and vehicle size to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible. Exceptions may be made by an authorized agent of the Member Board to extend transportation to a student or group of students. Interviews indicate that while exceptions may be made, they are rarely approved and only after any additional costs are analyzed and considered. An example of a student group that appropriately receives courtesy transportation are those students in the care of Family and Children Services.

Each of the Member Boards review exceptions in March to consider if courtesy transportation will continue into the next school year. The Consortium is responsible for the notification of parents. This is an appropriate process that not only promotes cost effectiveness but also allows each Member Board to make those exceptions that it deems appropriate with the best interest of the student in mind. The Consortium uses the rider coding system available within *MapNet* that enables the tracking of each student, the reason for the exception, and under whose approval it was granted.

Special needs eligibility

The Consortium, in consultation with the school and the Student Support Services Department of each of the Member Boards, collaboratively determines if a student is eligible for special needs transportation and what each student's specific transportation

needs are. This is an appropriate component of the annual planning process that helps to ensure that the needs of this group of students are understood and met.

Planning is not constrained by any limiting policy or practice. Interviews with Consortium staff indicate that a high level of flexibility exists for the integration of both regular and special needs students on either type of route or vehicle assigned.

To support the extraction of data and reporting, the Consortium has developed a comprehensive coding structure that identifies the ride type, operator, program, and special equipment required. While the identification of ride type for any student or group of students is important, it is especially important for students receiving transportation for special needs to ensure that any required safety equipment, medical information, and any specific required training is understood and provided to the operator (drivers in particular).

The Consortium receives medical information from the Member Boards, but this information was not printed on route lists at the time of the review. The Consortium is in the process of establishing a software solution to support the provision of pertinent medical information to the drivers to ensure they have accurate information to support the safe transportation of students.

Bell time management

The strategic management of bell times is a key and paramount component of effective and efficient route planning. The ability to adjust school start times presents opportunities for route planners to better utilize fleet assets while maintaining important service parameters such as acceptable ride times and desired arrival and departure windows. As the Consortium serves multiple Member Boards and provides service to both regular and special needs students, an effective bell time management process can support route planning strategies that may reduce the number of vehicles required including multiple tiers, combination routes, and the integration of the vehicles between students of each Member Board and also between regular and special needs students.

In support of effective bell time management, the Consortium has developed a process for requesting a change by either the Consortium or a local school principal which clearly supports both trip and route sharing. The process states that NSTS will review all school hours annually to make recommendations that are based on the specific strategy to be used, the desired arrival and departure times, and the projected savings. A request for a change at the school level is first sent to NSTS which is responsible for the completion of an impact study. In the event that the school and NSTS are not in agreement, an appeal process has been established that first refers the issue to the Management Advisory Committee and Area Superintendents with the next step being the Board of Directors. The Consortium’s process for requesting changes is based on

cost and impact studies, the appeal process, and the support of the Member Boards. These are all excellent practices as they proactively support effective planning and the most efficient use of the fleet.

Student Ride Times

Student ride times provide an important indication of the overall level of service provided by a transportation operation. While distance and time constraints cannot be fully mitigated, effective route planning can reduce the amount of time (to the lowest amount possible) that is required for each student. The Consortium's eligibility policy states that every effort will be made to limit rides times to one hour or less. Based on the analysis of individual student rides, rides time average 22 minutes and the median ride time is 19 minutes with 97 percent of all student ride times at 60 minutes or less. This is an indication that services are being planned to provide a very acceptable level of service in support of the educational program. Additional ride time and performance measures will be discussed in the *Routing and Technology Section*.

Planning schedules

Planning is guided by a Consortium-developed Integrated Business Planning Cycle calendar. Quarterly activities are documented with a focus on goal setting, communications, and performance measurement. Examples of important activities include:

- The reconciliation of rider data to support budget revisions;
- Goals for improvement for the next school year;
- Staff evaluations and development plans;
- Preparation and approval of new routing efficiencies;
- Completion of transportation agreements;
- Communications to stakeholders; and
- Next school year preparations.

Month-by-month activities are described which includes a description of the task, required completion date, staff member(s) or position responsible, and current status. While this document provides a high level of guidance for planning, additional clarification on the number of staff hours required for each task would provide additional data for determining both permanent and seasonal staff requirements.

Route planning strategies

Routing procedures describe strategies that may include one-bus-one-road or the use of tiered trips, depending on school locations, time and distance constraints. Interviews indicate that each staff member is cognizant of various strategies for the planning of routes in each of their areas. A particular focus is on the importance of planning for the tiering of trips (supported by managed bell times). A high level of flexibility in planning allows for the integration of both special needs and regular education students on either type of route.

Interviews also indicate there is an appropriate level of understanding of contractual elements (e.g. cost per vehicle size and minimum kilometres per day) and consider these factors as trips and routes are planned. The use of multiple route planning strategies and their impact on effective and efficient route planning will be discussed in further detail in the *Routing and Technology* section.

Hazard transportation criteria

Providing transportation for otherwise ineligible students to mitigate localized safety concerns (hazard transportation) is an important service that helps to promote and ensure the safe arrival of otherwise ineligible students. Similar to the need for defining the criteria for general eligibility, hazard transportation should be based on clear and concise parameters that support student safety and ensure consistent application across the service area.

The Consortium has established the criteria under which hazard/safety transportation will be granted. This includes:

- Traffic volume based on traffic counts within a five minute period and the number of resulting gaps in traffic which allow for safe crossing;
- The number of traffic lanes;
- Posted speed limits;
- The availability of signalized intersections, and
- Safe walking paths which may or may not include the presence of sidewalks.

Although students receiving hazard transportation based on short-term exceptions are coded within *MapNet*, not all long-term areas considered hazardous are currently posted within the digital map. Student records are also not specifically coded, which indicates they are being transported for reasons other than eligibility based on policy. Currently, hazard areas are documented using a spreadsheet. The Consortium reported

that limitations within the software have prevented the full posting of hazard boundaries. It was expected that this would be corrected with a release of a new software update in March, 2010. While interviews with Consortium staff indicated an understanding of why a hazard area may have been established, the posting of boundaries and the corresponding coding of this specific ride type based on hazard conditions is necessary to support the ready extraction and analysis of data.

Bus stop placement

The location of bus stops is an important consideration to ensure the safety of students. The criteria for the placement of bus stops should be consistent and documented to ensure safety and equity across the service area. The Transportation Coordinators are responsible for the determination of stop locations with input considered from the operators/drivers. Criteria for placement includes the determination of which stops require right side pick-ups (with consideration for grade levels), line of sight visibility, traffic volume, and the number of traffic lanes. The Transportation Manager is responsible for the determination of road segments that are deemed unsafe for stop locations.

The Consortium has implemented a process for the location of stops at or near intersections that provide good lines of sight and can serve as many students as possible. These stops are designed to be used from year-to-year to promote routing efficiency and consistency. A Bus Stop Placement/Assessment Form was developed to assist Consortium staff in determining stop safety based on an inquiry by the school, parent, Member Board, or operator. To further determine the safety of a stop, the Consortium consults with the safety officer from the operator and also requires dry runs when necessary. While on- site inspections have been conducted by the managers, and with the implementation of new office procedures, the responsibility for the on-site inspection of stops will transition to the Transportation Coordinators.

Responsibilities

The importance of clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder ensures that each party understands how their actions help promote safety in transportation and also supports the effective delivery of services. Responsibilities of parents, drivers, operators, principals, and the Consortium are documented under the *Eligibility Policy and Procedures* with additional student expectations stated in a draft behaviour policy.

Parental responsibilities include discussing and reinforcing behaviour expectations, providing supervision to and from the stop location, and ensuring that students are at the stop at least five minutes before the scheduled pick-up time. Parents are also

responsible for the notification of any changes to pick-up or drop-off locations and to provide any medical information that is pertinent to the safe transportation of their child.

Students are expected to follow general safety rules including following the direction of the drivers and school bus patrollers. To further reinforce acceptable student behaviour, the Consortium has drafted an additional *Student Behaviour* policy that states the school vehicle is an extension of the classroom and that acceptable school behaviour is expected both at the bus stop and while riding in a school vehicle.

School principals are responsible for enforcing bus safety rules and administering disciplinary action when warranted. Principals are also responsible for ensuring supervisory presence at the loading/unloading zone of a school, and responding to and investigating accidents and incidents.

Drivers are responsible for following all laws and Consortium rules and regulations including ensuring that no child is left on the vehicle at the conclusion of the route, and that they maintain consistent stop locations. No changes are to be made without the consent of NSTS.

Operator responsibilities include maintaining vehicles according to the contract and legislative requirements, following accident and incident reporting requirements, and supporting and participating in Consortium training initiatives such as the bus evacuation training and the First Rider program.

Specific policy statements have been established to detail the responsibilities of NSTS. In addition to previously mentioned responsibilities, the procedure specifically identifies route planning, providing safety awareness training and reinforcing behaviour expectations. In addition to the documented policy statements, the Consortium's website provides a summary of responsibilities for parents, students, and drivers and a FAQ section that further describes and clarifies expectations for bus riders.

Disciplinary action

In conjunction with clearly defining responsibilities, a clear and consistently applied disciplinary policy should also be established that works to deter unacceptable student behaviour. While the policy seeks to clarify what behaviours are acceptable, it does not clearly define the consequences for different levels of improper behaviour. Clarifying these consequences may help to discourage unacceptable behaviour and in the event that discipline is applied, clearly defined consequences help to communicate both why discipline was administered and that discipline is applied consistently regardless of the student's school of attendance.

Decision appeal process

NSTS and its Member Boards have established an appeal process for all transportation concerns. The process clearly defines the process and requires the Superintendent of Business to notify the Executive Director of NSTS of any resolution that results in increased costs. While the policy does not explicitly define response timelines, Consortium procedures require a response within 24 hours or the enlistment of the Transportation Manager - Operations for support. Follow -up information indicates that during the course of an appeal, the Consortium provides background information including the rationale for the decision, the supporting policy, and any cost or service implications should the decision be reversed. The Consortium reports a high level of support from the Directors of Education and the Member Boards.

Inclement weather procedures

The *Inclement Weather* procedure describes the decision making process required to cancel transportation and the resulting communication activities to local media. NSTS management is responsible for making the decision (by 5:15 am), based on observations and recommendations from the operators. The Executive Director is to be notified by 5:30 am. A communication chart and a prepared message have been developed to support effective and consistent communication. The Consortium's website explains inclement weather procedures and includes a listing of local media.

Accident and Incident procedures

The *Emergency Student Transportation/Accident* or *Incident Response* procedure describes the process to be followed in the event of an accident or incident. The procedure includes the roles and responsibilities of the drivers, operators, schools and NSTS. A similar *Emergency Medical Response* procedure has also been developed which also describes communication and documentation requirements. Each of the procedures requires a review of the accident or incident to be examined and to determine if there are actions or processes that might be implemented to prevent future occurrences.

4.2.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Policy development and harmonization

Well defined and documented guiding policies, procedures, and practices are essential elements of a high performing transportation operation. NSTS and its Member Boards

have developed an array of documented and harmonized policies, practices and guidelines which support effective, efficient, and equitable service to all students served by the Consortium.

Bell time management

The management of bell times is a key component of effective transportation planning as shifting school start times allows for the greater use of fleet assets while providing service within established service parameters.

NSTS and its Member Boards recognize the importance of the strategic setting of bell times as evidenced by its bell time management procedures. Although the request for a change may originate at the local school level or the Consortium, any request for change includes a cost and service analysis as a key factor in the decision making process. The procedure also includes a process for a review by the Management Committee in the event that agreement cannot be reached between the Consortium and the impacted schools.

The integration of students

The integration of students at both the trip and route level is an excellent strategy that helps to promote the effective use of the buses and to provide efficient service. The integration of students is supported in multiple policy statements with interviews indicating that staff are cognizant of the benefits of employing integration as a routing strategy when possible.

Route planning strategies

Transportation Coordinators express an appropriate level of understanding on the importance of routing strategies that support both effective and efficient services. Examples include bell time management to support the multiple uses of the bus (tiering), combination runs, integration, and the understanding and use of vehicle assignments to manage vehicle costs based on vehicle size and minimum kilometres to be paid.

4.2.3 Recommendations

Refine the student coding and boundary posting for hazard transportation

While interviews with Consortium staff indicate that there is appropriate understanding of why an area is considered to be a hazard, the refinement of the coding structure (for long-term hazard conditions) will help to facilitate data analysis and reporting.

Review the appeal process

Although an appeal process has been developed, it does not include specific timelines that must be followed by either the originator of the appeal or the parties charged with reviewing and responding to the original concern. While the Consortium has indicated that it has self imposed its own timeline in support of good customer service, establishing clear timelines for each step of the process will help to ensure that each appeal is considered in a similar manner and that each party fully understands their responsibilities.

Review dual custody procedures

As the Consortium continues to review and refine its policies and procedures, it should consider the level of variability in a student's pick-up and drop-off schedule that will be allowed. This will help to support both safety and continued efficient planning.

4.3 Special Needs Transportation

4.3.1 Observations

Planning transportation for special needs students can present additional challenges as one must consider not only time and distant constraints, but also the physical, and emotional needs of each individual student. Additional factors to consider include equipment needs such as wheelchair lifts, special restraints or harnesses and medically fragile students who require assistance or medical intervention. Policies specific to the transportation of special needs students are essential to ensure that transportation meets each individual student's needs and is provided in the safest manner possible.

Each of the Transportation Coordinators is responsible for the planning of both regular and special needs transportation within each of their respective areas. While this type of arrangement can limit the identification of opportunities for students traveling between areas, interviews indicate that the geographical division of the areas and attendance boundaries are generally nearby which reduces the number of students traveling outside of their area of attendance. The assignment of both regular education and special education students to a single Transportation Coordinator can promote the integration of students and routing efficiencies as a single planner is responsible of all students within their area of responsibility.

Interviews indicate that there is a high level of cooperation and communication between the Consortium, Student Support Services, and the schools. The Consortium is included in discussions for both program location and the type and size of vehicle needed.

Special needs policies

The *Eligibility Policy* establishes the provision of special needs transportation based on each student's specific needs. Each Member Board's Student Support Services department is required to consult with the student's school of attendance and NSTS to determine transportation eligibility and to define specific equipment and type of vehicle needed. While not approved at the time of onsite interviews, the Consortium has drafted additional policies related to the transportation of service animals and for the provision and use of car and booster seats.

Special needs planning guidelines

Based on the information and recommendations from each Member Board's Student Support Services Department, Transportation Coordinators are responsible for designing the best mode of transportation for each student. Interviews with Transportation Coordinators indicate a high level of support for the integration of special needs students on regular education routes when feasible. The *Routing Design* procedure states that priority will be given to the integration of special needs students on regular education routes when this mode of transportation meets the student's specific needs. As program location often has a direct impact on transportation costs, the Consortium is consulted and cost and service impact studies are performed.

Driver Training

Driver responsibilities are described in both the general eligibility policy and the contract between the operators and the Consortium. Driver training requirements specific to the transportation of special needs students are also described in the contract. Examples of required training includes First Aid, the use of an EpiPen, CPR, wheelchair loading and unloading procedures, and awareness of sensitivity for special needs students. While the contractual agreement between the Consortium and the operators speaks to providing awareness training for special needs students, it does not fully describe what training may be required such as autistic spectrum awareness and specific behaviour management techniques for special needs students.

4.3.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Integration of special needs students

The integration of special needs students, within a student's specific transportation needs, can be an excellent strategy that promotes the effective use of the fleet assets

and helps to control costs. The Consortium's policy statements clearly establish and support integration as a planning technique to be used whenever possible.

Inclusion of NSTS in the discussion on program location

The inclusion of NSTS in discussions on program location is an excellent practice that supports the Consortium's planning function and its ability to operate as effectively as possible. The use of data to perform cost and service impact studies helps promote an understanding of the transportation planning process and the importance of the inclusion of NSTS.

4.3.3 Recommendations

Clarify and document all special needs parameters and training requirements

The Consortium should work with operators to establish a training curriculum for the most common and most challenging exceptions that must be planned for. This document would provide all stakeholders with a single point of reference on how special needs services will be planned, expectations regarding service delivery, and the knowledge and skills that will be transferred to bus drivers to effectively manage the transportation challenges for these students.

4.4 Safety policy

4.4.1 Observation

Ensuring student safety is the foremost goal of any transportation organization. In support of providing safe transportation, it is imperative that clear and concise policies, procedures, and contractual agreements are developed, documented, monitored, and enforced to ensure that safety standards are understood and followed without exception. The bus operators are contractually required to provide safety related training to its drivers and are also mandated to provide programs to the schools including the First Rider Program, vehicle evacuation drills, and bus patroller. The Consortium participates with local agencies providing safety related programs including safety patrollers and the Safety Village. The Consortium's website provides safety related information and links to Ministry of Transportation bus safety information sites.

Student training

Emergency evacuation drills are to be performed annually for all elementary students per the operator's contract. These drills are to be scheduled either through the school principal or the Consortium with confirmation of completion due before December of

each school year. The First Rider program is offered to students two weeks before the start of school utilizing local malls as training sites.

Driver training

Contractually required training includes basic first aid, vehicle evacuation, and EpiPen administration. Additional training is to be provided to drivers of wheelchair buses including lift bus loading and unloading procedures, the use of ramps, and the proper use of securing devices. The safety section of the contract describes additional required training programs including an understanding of the particular requirements of special needs students, student management, defensive driving, customer service, and other direct skills or safety training.

Community involvement

The Executive Director is a member of the recently established Safe Student Travel Committee (October 2009). This committee along with other community-based programs such as the Safety Patrollers, Safety Village, Street Proofing Your Child and Think and Drive, are all excellent examples of how these programs can help to communicate and educate the general community on their role in supporting the safe transportation of students.

Auditing procedures

The Standards of Performance schedule of the contract describes the auditing process and areas that will be evaluated. Areas to be evaluated include safety items such as verification of driver CPR and First Aid training and that medical or other special student information is made available to the drivers. Operational areas include a review of MTO reports and pre-trip inspection reports. A review of driver training includes driver performance evaluations, the process for providing training, and training records. The auditing procedure is supported by a recently updated and approved Consortium procedure and also as a scheduled task in the Planning Calendar.

Use of cameras

The Consortium has drafted a *Video Camera on Vehicle* policy which describes the circumstances under which cameras may be installed and how the video data will be used. The policy clearly establishes responsibilities, communication protocols, and data handling and retention requirements. The approval of this policy will ensure that privacy standards are met and that data is reviewed and stored per Consortium guidelines.

Accident and incident procedures

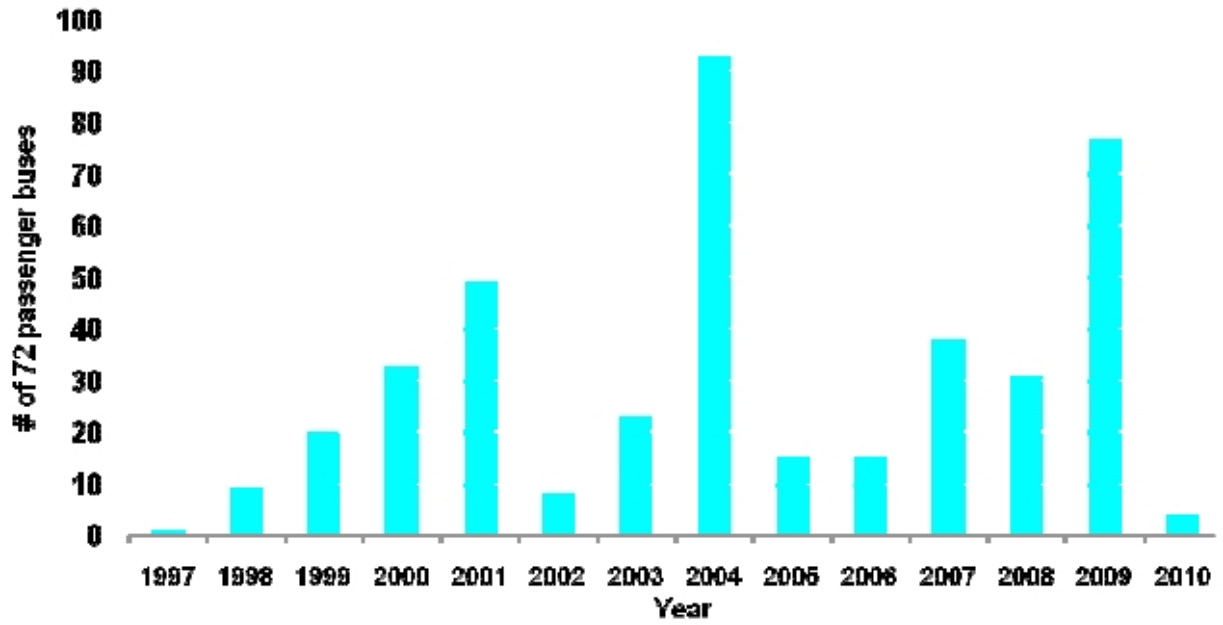
Emergency Student Transportation/Accident or *Incident Response* describes the process to be followed in the event of an accident or incident. The procedure includes the roles and responsibilities of the drivers, operators, schools and NSTS. This process also describes communication and documentation requirements. A similar *Emergency Medical Response* procedure has also been developed.

Maximum age of vehicles

Vehicle age is established by the bus operator contact which sets the maximum age of mid-to-full-size buses at 12 years of age with a fleet average of 7 years. Mini or mid size vehicles with a van chassis are limited to 10 years with a 6 year average while cars and minivans are allowed a maximum age of 8 years with a 5 year average. A contractual provision allows for older vehicles to be used provided that the use is considered temporary and that a request is submitted in writing and approved by the Consortium. Limiting a vehicle's age is an important requirement as newer buses are typically more fuel efficient, mechanically reliable, emissions compliant, and, of upmost importance, have newer comfort and safety features.

An analysis of vehicle information finds that 415 out of 416 active 72 passenger route buses are within the contractual limits with the remaining bus being 13 years old. The chart below displays the distribution of vehicle model years for 72 passenger vehicles.

Figure 6: Model Year distribution of 72 passenger buses



Exceptions can be made to temporarily retain an older bus. The Consortium has presented an example of a written request by a bus operator stating the reason for the vehicle to exceed the limit on a temporary basis.

While the fleet is well within age requirements, one area of concern is the number of buses that are model years 2004 and 2009. As these buses age and become due for replacement at the same time, careful monitoring of vehicle age will be necessary to ensure that operators remain contractually compliant.

4.4.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Community involvement

The Consortium's active involvement in community safety programs and with the Safe Student Travel Committee is a best practice helping to ensure that the student transportation concerns are communicated and that members of the community understand their role in the safe transportation of students.

4.4.3 Recommendations

Finalize and approve the draft camera policy

The Consortium has developed an excellent video camera use policy that (at the time of the review) was in draft form. The approval of this policy (and the other pending drafts) will help to ensure full clarity and understanding of how cameras are to be used and how the video data is to be managed.

Continue to monitor fleet age

While the analysis of fleet data indicates compliance to contractual agreements pertaining to the age of the fleet; the high number of 2004 and 2009 model year buses will require careful future monitoring to ensure that an aging fleet does not present future contractual, safety, or reliability issues.

4.5 Results of E&E Review

Policies and Practices development and implementation has been rated as **Moderate-High**. It is evident that considerable effort and care has been expended in the development and documentation of policies and procedures for NSTS. The Consortium's *Bell Time Management* policy provides an excellent example of a detailed

policy and how the use of data can be used to support strategic changes in planning. The Consortium's active involvement in community safety initiatives is commendable and helps to support the safe transportation of its students. The primary requirements for the Consortium to receive a high rating will be the full implementation of policies and procedures that were either recently adopted or were in draft form at the time of the review.

5 Routing and Technology

5.1 Introduction

Routing and Technology encompasses the management, administration, and use of technology for the purpose of student transportation management. The following analysis stems from a review of the four key components of:

- Software and Technology Setup and Use;
- Digital Map and Student Database Management;
- System Reporting; and
- Regular and Special Needs Transportation Planning and Routing.

Each component has been analysed based on observations from fact (including interviews) together with an assessment of best practices leading to a set of recommendations. These results are then used to develop an E&E assessment for each component, which is then summarized to determine an E&E assessment of Routing and Technical efficiency as shown below:

Routing and Technology – E&E Rating: Moderate-High

5.2 Software and technology setup and use

Any large and complex transportation organization requires the use of a modern routing and student data management system to support effective and efficient route planning. Effective route planning not only ensures that services are delivered within established parameters but also helps to predict and control operational costs. Modern software systems have the ability to integrate and synchronize with student accounting, communications, and productivity software. The integration of these software systems allow for more effective use of staff time and supports timely communications, data analysis and reporting. Web-based communication tools in particular can provide stakeholders with real time and current information regarding their student's transportation including service or weather delays, the cancellation of transportation, or school closings. To derive the greatest benefit from these systems, it is imperative that the implementation includes an examination of the desired expectations and outputs of the system to support comprehensive analysis and reporting. This section of the evaluation evaluates the acquisition, setup, installation, and management of transportation related software.

5.2.1 Observations

Routing & related technologies

The Consortium is a user of *MapNet* routing software from Trapeze Software, Inc. NSTS has also implemented the *MapNet Web* module which provides parents with electronic access to their individual student's information or, in the case of schools and operators, information that is pertinent to the school location or bus operation via the Internet. While each Member Board uses a different student information system (Trillium and Maplewood), the Consortium has implemented a software solution that allows for the transfer of student information data directly from each student information system into *MapNet*.

The Consortium's website is dedicated to providing transportation specific information. Coupled with *MapNet Web,* this solution fully supports effective communication by providing current general information, FAQs, policy and safety information, a portal to check eligibility, and links to local media for weather-related information. The addition of a module for the real-time reporting of delays and weather- related cancellations would further enhance the site's ability to provide stakeholders with alerts and other real-time information.

Maintenance and service agreements

Annual support for *MapNet* includes standard phone and email assistance, software upgrades, and updates to user guides. NSTS contracts its technology support services from DSBN which includes server capacity and back-up, and *MapNet Web* technical support. The agreement with DSBN also provides for additional service for project related work on a fee for service basis.

System backup and disaster recovery

A detailed *Management of Data* procedure has been developed which includes the protocol for the incremental, daily, and weekly backup of routing data. The Systems Coordinator is charged with the responsibility for the management and backing up of data per the established procedure. In the absence of the Systems Coordinator, a Transportation Coordinator that has been trained and authorized to perform back-up processes will provide the appropriate redundancy. Data is backed-up daily to a tape which is rotated on a weekly basis with redundant back-ups to a local server and file zipped to a server at the DSBN. This process has been tested since a restoration of data has been performed successfully using the archived information. These procedures provide for the necessary protection of data and staff redundancy in the event of an emergency or technological failure.

Staff training

To support the most effective use of any complex routing and software applications, each staff member should receive training that is appropriate to their responsibilities in the organization and their current level of skills and proficiency. Cross training and sufficient redundancy in skills are equally important to ensure a seamless transition as changes in duties, responsibilities, or staffing occur. To monitor completed training and to plan for additional training needs, the Consortium has developed a comprehensive matrix that tracks both completed training programs and opportunities for training that are scheduled to be completed in the future. Recorded examples include training that is specific to the route planning process, which includes the use of *MapNet* and routing optimization and cost benefit analysis. The Consortium also takes advantage of attendance at conferences and the *MapNet* user's group. Other programs include autism awareness, student safety, and First Aid.

MapNet skills are supported by the development of both beginner and advanced users manuals. These indexed manuals provide all coordinators, especially new staff members, with ready access to detailed step by step procedures for the use of the software. Examples include a review of definitions, student lists, viewing of a route, and other basic user activities. The *Advanced Manual* provides additional guidance such as the creation of stops, activities, distance measurements, and the creation of stops and routes. The combination of the completed and planned programs and the detail and documentation of how various procedures are to be completed help to ensure consistency in planning and service delivery.

5.2.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Data management and backup procedures

The establishment of multiple backup procedures, off-site storage, and documented support agreements are excellent examples of well-designed procedures that ensure the uninterrupted delivery of transportation services in the event of a catastrophic occurrence.

Procedure documentation and training

The Consortium's comprehensive documentation of operational processes and the identification of staff training needs are an excellent practice that helps not only to ensure that services are delivered consistently across the entire service area but also provides a high level of staff support.

5.2.3 Recommendations

Enhance the website's live information abilities

While the Consortium benefits from its own unique website and the use of *MapNet Web*, the Consortium recognizes that the addition of a module that supports alerts and the dissemination of new or changed information is necessary. The Consortium's planned implementation in early 2010 should be evaluated and, if feasible, followed through upon.

5.3 Digital map and student database management

An accurate digital map is paramount to support effective route planning and also the effectiveness of the staff and the efficient use of the fleet. This aspect of the E&E Review was designed to evaluate the processes and procedures in place to update and maintain the map and student data that forms the foundation of any student transportation routing system.

5.3.1 Observations

Digital map

One digital map is used for the entire service area and the maintenance of the map is primarily the responsibility of a single Transportation Coordinator (Mapping Coordinator). The Consortium has developed strong relationships with local municipalities and, in conjunction, the operators use the information provided by both sources to change or update the map. A procedure defines the process for the maintenance of the maps which includes a quarterly schedule as a guideline for map updates. Assignment of overall maintenance of the map to a single staff member is an appropriate strategy that ensures map accuracy and eliminates the possibility of changes made by one coordinator impacting the accuracy of the entire base map and subsequent planning accuracy.

Map accuracy

Interviews with the Mapping and Transportation Coordinators indicate a high level of accuracy of the base map with a reported 100 percent of the map containing valid addressing and school locations. While the procedure establishes a quarterly schedule for the updating of the map, the procedures provides for updates as needed upon the request from an area Transportation Coordinator. This process for map maintenance and updating is consistent with best practices, which helps ensure complete and accurate student eligibility and supports effective route planning.

Default values

While the overall responsibility for map and system maintenance rests with the Mapping Coordinator, including the maintenance of street ranges and street paths, each individual Transportation Coordinator is responsible for maintaining specific map values within each of their own areas such as road speeds, no travel roads, and drawing polygons. While it is desirable in certain circumstances to have a single staff member responsible for all map maintenance and value setting, each of the Coordinators have a distinct and separate geographical area of responsibility which makes the division of map maintenance an acceptable practice. Given that each staff member does have the ability to change default values, it is imperative that an oversight procedure be in place to ensure that the setting of default values is consistent across the service area.

Student data management

Downloads are received on a daily basis from each Member Board. The process for the assignment of a student to transportation is documented using a flowchart; which also defines a maximum time by which students are to have received stop and route assignments. Any change in a student's information is to be initiated at the school level, which is then processed by NSTS. The school secretary is responsible for the correction of any errors in student data as observed by NSTS (e.g. incorrect municipal code). *MapNet Web* is used almost exclusively as the source for information to the stakeholders which supports the effective and efficient use of staff.

Coding structures

To achieve the greatest possible benefit from sophisticated routing software systems, it is imperative that thoughtful consideration be given to the design of the coding structure. A well designed coding structure first serves to accurately identify the students that are truly eligible for transportation based on documented walking distance policies and those students with special needs. Correct coding at this level provides the foundation for effective planning. Additional subsets of codes should clearly identify those groups of students that also will be provided service based on approved and documented exceptions. Examples of these exceptions include safety and hazardous transportation, courtesy eligibility, and out of boundary or out of zone transportation. In addition to the coding of students, both routes and trips should also have logical coding structures that support the easy identification of the purpose of each route such as special needs, combination routes, and which schools and Member Boards are served.

An array of codes are used to ensure the identification of student ride type including default walk distance codes, run codes and student codes. Additionally, a highly detailed coding structure has been established to guide the identification of routes and

trips. This coding structure allows for the immediate identification of run type, vehicle type, operator and area of service.

5.3.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Student data management

The use of daily downloads for student information from each of the Member Boards into *MapNet* is a best practice as it limits redundant data entry, increases the accuracy of route manifests, and ensures that each student's information is fully recorded in the routing software.

Coding structure

The coding structure used by NSTS is logical, informative, and flexible. This structure offers a significant amount of highly relevant information on students, runs, and routes to Transportation Coordinators in a condensed format. The philosophical and operational considerations that were used to establish the coding structure and the ultimate implementation of the approach are model practices for use by consortia across the sector.

5.3.3 Recommendations

Map management

The Consortium has adopted a relatively unique bifurcated approach to map management where the Mapping Coordinator is responsible for higher order maintenance and Transportation Coordinators can alter underlying characteristics in their individual areas. While the key to the success of this strategy is the relative independence of the planning areas as established, it is imperative that a process to monitor changes is established. This process should ensure that changes made in any one area do not negatively influence the planning of routes in adjacent areas. Additionally, this process should establish guidelines that assist current and future Transportation Coordinators with determining when it is appropriate to alter critical underlying map data such as road speeds and travel characteristics.

5.4 System reporting

A key benefit of modern routing software is the ability to quickly gather, collate and analyze large data sets. These data sets can then be used to communicate a wide

variety of operational and administrative performance indicators to all stakeholders. Actively using transportation data to identify trends that may negatively impact either costs or service and communicate both expectations and performance is a key component of a continuous improvement model. This section will review and evaluate how data is used to evaluate and communicate performance and assess organizational competencies in maximizing the use of data retained in the routing software and related systems.

5.4.1 Observations

Reporting and data analysis

The Consortium has developed an extensive array of custom reports that are generated directly from *MapNet*. These reports include daily reports such as adds, changes, and deletes; and monthly and annual reports that are used for both planning and operator performance monitoring. Examples of these include routes with minimum kilometres, student ride times, shared trip and route reports, and budget and expenditure reports such as cost per trip and student.

The reporting and data analysis program at NSTS is one of the most robust and comprehensive that has been observed throughout the E&E process. Efforts are made to develop both tactical and strategic data extracts to assist in both immediate and long term planning efforts. Additionally, efforts are made to ensure that the data is easily understood by staff and simplified so they have the ability to extract particular data sets and analyze them using office tools such as spreadsheet software. Of particular note is the use of both internal and external reporting schemes designed to both inform NSTS staff and other stakeholders of the performance relative to established service guidelines. The most telling instance of the organizational emphasis on data use and analysis was the establishment of multiple bulletin boards that contained operational and financial performance data within the NSTS office.

To facilitate the extraction of reports, the Consortium has developed a team that includes the Transportation Manager and Systems Coordinator. This staffing deployment allows the Transportation Coordinators to focus on effective and efficient route planning while ensuring they have the analytical support necessary to quickly address additional data and reporting needs.

5.4.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Data analysis and reporting

The use of data for both performance analysis and reporting is a recognized best practice as both are paramount for effective and efficient operations. NSTS has embraced this philosophy as evidenced by the dedication of two particular staff members who are primarily committed to the assessment of performance. The designation of two staff members ensures that Managers and Coordinators have the analytical tools necessary to plan for and manage an effective and efficient operation.

5.5 Regular and special needs transportation planning and routing

Effective route planning is a key function of any high performing transportation operation. This section of the report evaluates the processes, strategies, and procedures that are used to maximise the use of the fleet, control costs while delivering a high level of service to students using each mode of transportation.

5.5.1 Observations

Bus route management

Each of the five Transportation Coordinators and the Mapping Coordinator are assigned planning responsibilities for both regular and special needs students within their geographic areas. The Transportation Manager (with oversight from the Executive Director) is responsible for monitoring the entire routing network and for setting specific "improvement" goals for each of the geographic areas.

Vehicle assignment is based on both capacity requirements of the route and on the minimum kilometres as described in the operator contract. Vehicle assignment is made to maximize the use of the vehicle, reduce the number of unused seats, and considers factors such as road and pick-up point geometry.

Coordinators are aware of contract specifications on minimum runs and are knowledgeable of evaluating service tradeoffs relative to minimum kilometres. All students must first register at their school of attendance and request transportation before a stop and route assignment can be processed. This is an appropriate process that not only ensures that a student is eligible for the school program and transportation, it also ensures the validity of pertinent student information.

For students with special needs, Consortium staff meets on an annual basis with the Special Needs Coordinators from each Member Board. Each student's individual needs are discussed and then considered during the planning process. Interviews validates that multiple policy and procedure statements support planning flexibility and the full integration of both special needs and regular education students on either type of route. This is considered a best practice as recognized in the *Policies and Practices* section.

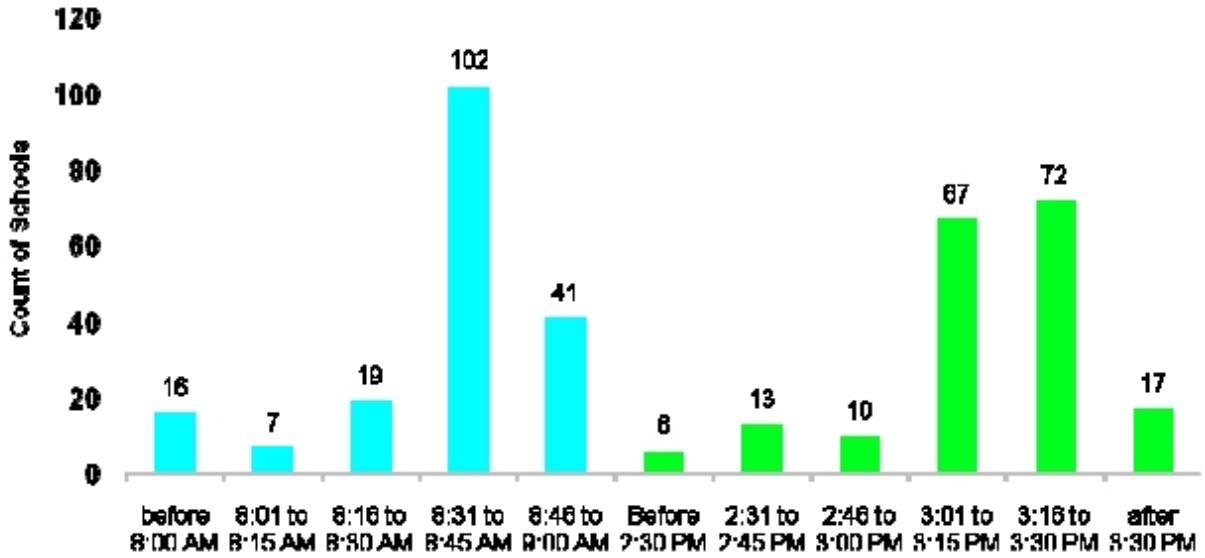
Analysis of system effectiveness[7]

NSTS manages a large and diverse area that incorporates several mixes of demographic and geographic types. The service area covers 1,868 square kilometres, and includes 180 elementary and secondary schools. The service area includes urban, suburban, ex-urban and rural areas that are populated in ways that range from sparse to highly dense. The Consortium provides transportation services to over 31,000 students using approximately 900 vehicles covering more than 50,000 kilometres each day.

A key underlying aspect of transportation efficiency is the array of school times that must be accommodated by the routing structure. Given that student transportation is a constrained optimization problem designed to transport as many students as possible using as few resources as possible, having sufficient time to reuse assets is a key component of effectiveness and efficiency. The current bell time structure that NSTS must accommodate is highly clustered around a 30-minute operating window in the morning and afternoon. The chart below shows the number of schools that have a common latest bus arrival time and earliest bus departure time within a given 15 minute time block. These values were chosen because they provide the maximum point of flexibility when developing routes to or from a given school site.

[7] All data reported in this section of the report refers to data collected while the E&E team was on site. There may be inconsistencies with some previously reported Ministry data due to the different timing of the data collection.

Figure 7: School Arrival and Departure Distribution



As can be seen from the chart, there is a significant clustering within the 8:31 to 9:00 AM and 3:01 to 3:30 PM windows. This type of clustering generally limits the opportunities to reuse the routing strategies (i.e. tiering), where single buses will service multiple schools independent of each other. As a result, organizations faced with this type of bell structure have to rely on extensive use of combination runs (where the same bus serves more than one school at the same time) and high seating capacity rates to operate efficiently.

As could be expected, route data indicates that a substantial number of bus runs continue to service one school. However, alternative routing strategies such as the use of combination runs (where a single bus serves multiple schools on the same run) have been employed to both mitigate the impact of the clustered bell times and increase the efficiency of operations. Interviews suggested that NSTS is focused on evaluating opportunities to increase the use of route tiering to reduce the number of buses required through changes to bell times. The bell time management procedure detailed in Section 4.1.1.6 should assist in these efforts. The influence of the current bell times can be seen when evaluating the actual time that buses are carrying students throughout the day. The two graphs below depict the number of buses that are carrying students in five minute intervals for the morning and afternoon panel.

Figure 8: Active Deployment of School Vehicles in the Morning Panel

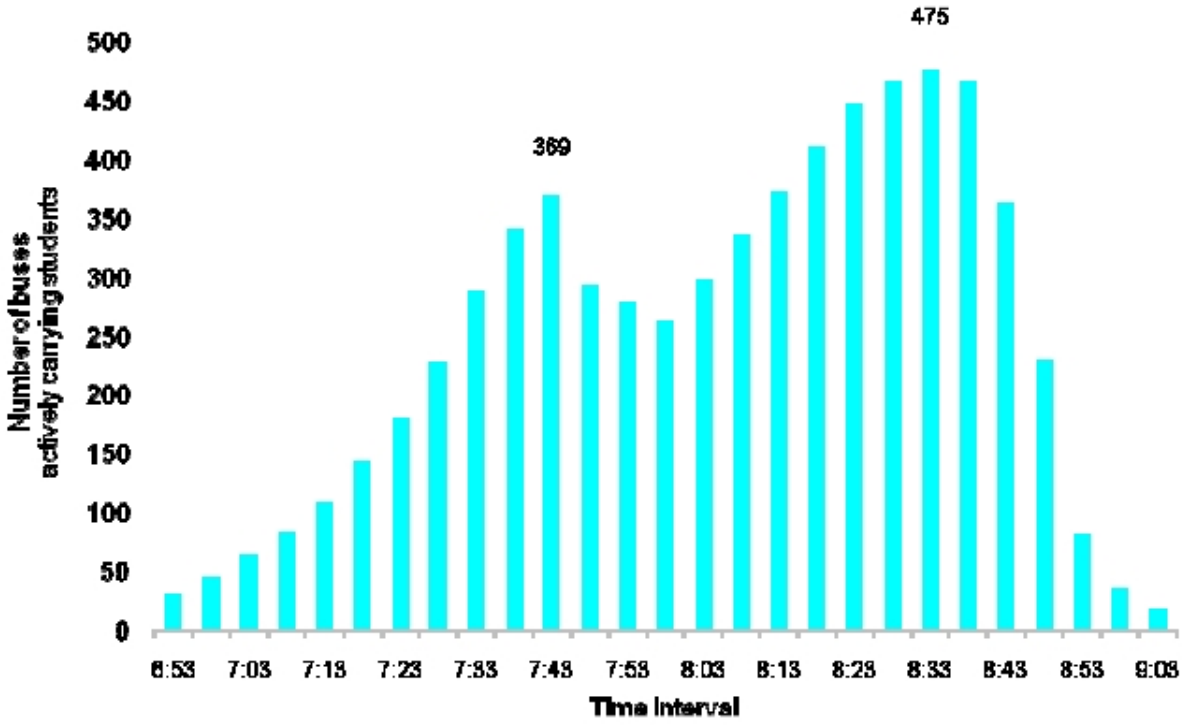
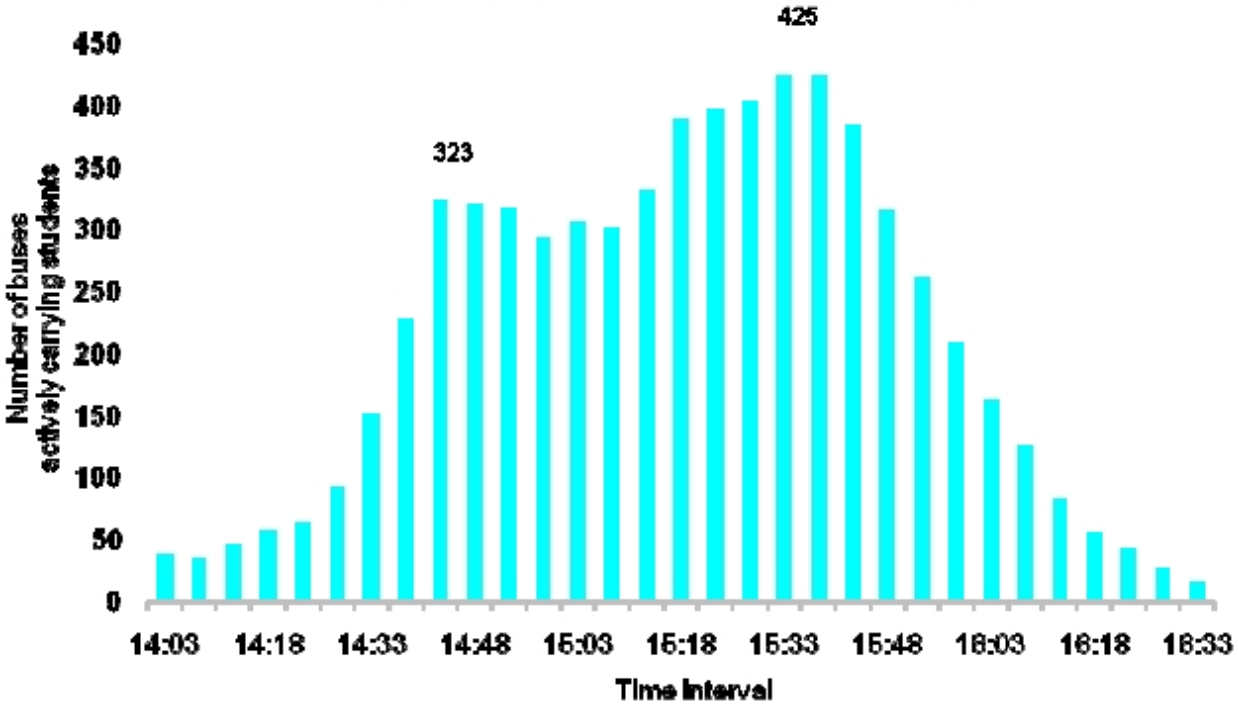


Figure 9: Active Deployment of School Vehicles in the Afternoon Panel

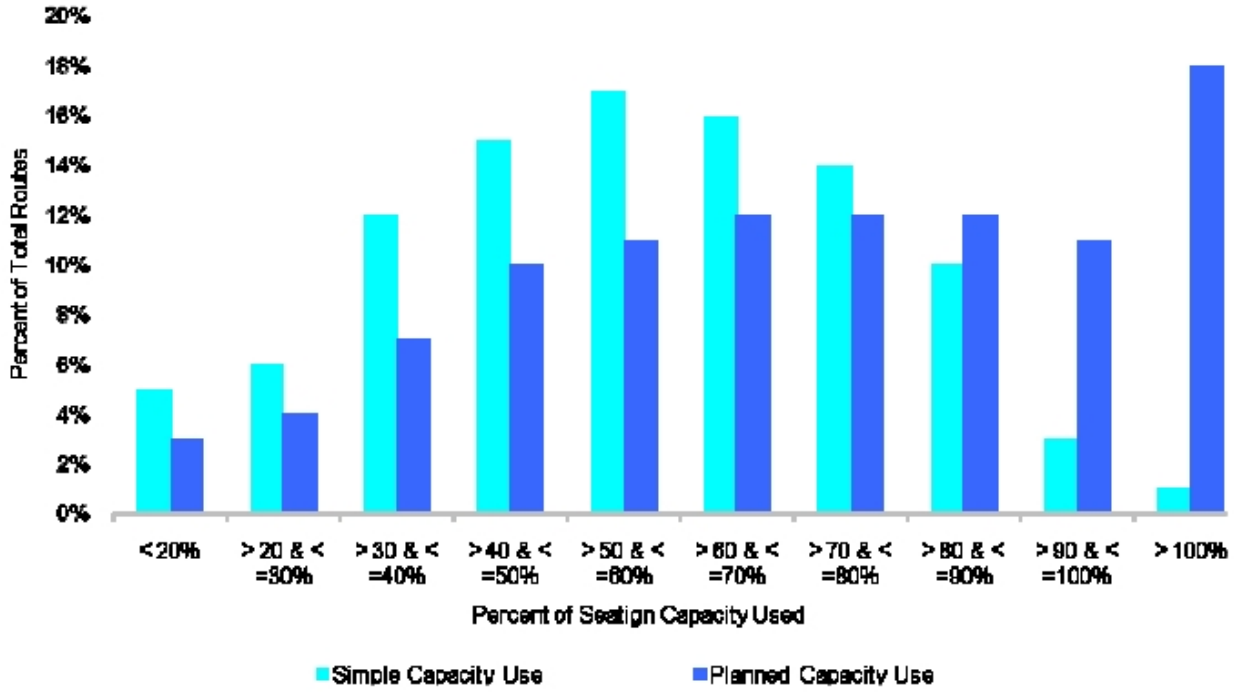


When analyzing the results it is critical to note two elements. The first is that the peak of the highest bar will dictate the minimum number of buses required to operate the system. As can be seen in the graphs, this equates to 475 buses in the morning and 425 buses in the afternoon panels. The second element of note is the difference in peaks between the first and second tiers. The first tier peaks are 369 buses in the morning and 323 buses in the afternoon. These charts provide a graphical depiction of the potential for bell time changes for these asset types. If NSTS and its Member Boards are able to revise bell times to better balance the first and second tier peaks, it would be possible to reduce the maximum number of buses required to provide service and the subsequent cost of transportation.

In addition to using a bus as much as possible throughout the day, efficiency is also achieved by using as many of the available seats as possible (a concept known as capacity utilization). Capacity utilization is generally measured in two ways. The first, known as simple capacity use, considers the legal capacity of each bus (e.g., a 72-passenger bus has 72 possible seats available) and analyzes the number of students that are scheduled to be on that bus. The second approach is to evaluate planned capacity use which considers the influence of policy decisions regarding how many students can be placed on a bus (e.g., seating high school students two to a seat reduces legal capacity from 72 seats to a planned capacity of 48 seats). Evaluating each of these statistics provides an indication of the effectiveness of the route planning strategies.

When evaluating seating capacity use at NSTS, it is clear that the planned guidelines are having a significant influence on the overall performance indicators. When evaluated system wide, NSTS is filling 53 percent of the seats with riders (simple capacity) and 68 percent of the seats based on planned loads. However, these numbers can be dramatically influenced by the relatively low capacity rates experienced on special needs runs. Therefore, a more detailed analysis of large buses (those with 66 or more seats available) used in the morning and afternoon panels (no noon time routes were considered) was performed. Using this subset of runs, simple capacity use was 56 percent and planned capacity use was 73 percent. The following chart shows the distribution of both simple and planned capacity use for this subset of routes.

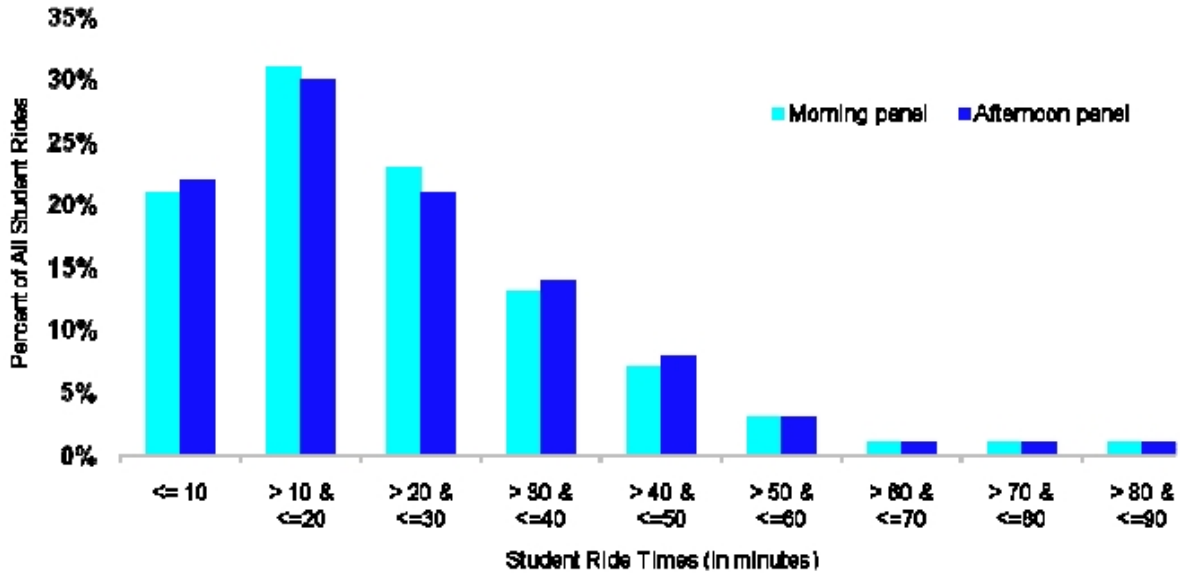
Figure 10: Simple and Planned Use of Seating Capacity



The chart indicates that there are a significant number of runs whose planned capacity is at or above the available seating capacity, thus increasing the overall percentage of seats used. This overloading of runs is a common and appropriate strategy particularly for secondary runs where actual riders are likely to be less to much less than planned because high school students often do not ride the bus. It is also likely that the time constraints mentioned above are adversely impacting overall seating capacity use.

Analysis of student ride time, a key measure of service effectiveness, was evaluated against the established ride time guidelines of one hour. Student ride time was calculated by determining the difference in minutes between the student's point of pick up to their point of arrival. The following chart demonstrates the percent of student ride times within given intervals of times.

Figure 11: Distribution of Student Ride Times



This analysis was conducted using all available student ridership data. Consequently, it includes a small proportion of special needs students. The chart demonstrates that 74 percent of all students have bus rides that are 30 minutes or less and 97 percent of students ride for less than 60 minutes. This data would indicate that service to the students is effective in that the amount of time spent on the bus, for the vast majority of students, is well within established guidelines.

5.5.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practices in the following areas:

Route planning practices

The understanding of the contractual implications on effective route planning is a best practice. This understanding ensures that the type of vehicle is matched correctly to provide both cost effective and efficient services.

5.5.3 Recommendations

Evaluate alternative bell time options

The current bell time scheme constrains NSTS' ability to use the key efficiency technique of route tiering. The clustering in current bell times has caused a significant imbalance in the number of buses used in the two major morning and afternoon time

blocks. To the extent that the established bell time management policy can be used to evaluate alternative times it would be possible to reduce the number of buses required and the cost of transportation. Any analysis of bell times must also consider the impact on instructional and other building staff in order to fully consider the total possible costs or savings associated with bell time changes.

5.6 Results of E&E Review

Routing and technology has been rated as **Moderate-High**. NSTS has done an excellent job of establishing the route planning software as both a tactical and strategic planning tool. The current system reporting and data analysis program is particularly noteworthy and a model for other consortia. The predominance of recommendations is targeted at incremental improvements that would result in NSTS being rated as high performing consortium in this area. The primary efforts should be targeted at using the bell time management procedure established among the Member Boards to improve both seating capacity use and asset utilization.

6 Contracts

6.1 Introduction

The Contracts section refers to the processes and practices by which the Consortium enters into and manages its transportation and other service contracts. The analysis stems from a review of the following three key components of Contracting Practices:

- Contract structure;
- Contract negotiations; and
- Contract management.

Each component has been analyzed based on observations from information provided by the Consortium, including information provided during interviews. The analysis included an assessment of areas requiring improvement that were informed by a set of known best practices identified during previous E&E Reviews. These results are then used to develop an E&E assessment for each component. The E&E assessment of contracting practices for the Consortium is as follows:

Contracts – E&E Rating: Moderate-High

6.2 Contract Structure

An effective contract[8] establishes a clear point of reference that defines the roles, requirements, and expectations of each party involved and details the compensation for providing the designated service. Effective contracts also provide penalties for failure to meet established service parameters and may provide incentives for exceeding service requirements. Contract analysis includes a review of the clauses contained in the contract to ensure that the terms are clearly articulated, and a review of the fee structure is conducted to enable comparison of its components to best practice.

[8] The word Contract in this context refers to detailed documents outlining the scope of services, rates and expected service levels. The phrase Purchase of Service agreement is used in this report to describe a less detailed document that only outlines the services to be provided and the rates at which they are to be provided.

6.2.1 Observations

Bus operator contract clauses

The Consortium has standardized, executed contracts with all of its bus operators. The current contract was executed in September, 2009 and is valid for one school year. Also included is a clause that extends the contract for one additional year at the sole discretion of the Consortium. Noteworthy clauses in the contract outline, among other things:

- Training requirements for drivers: The Consortium mandates that operators provide it with an outline of their training programs. These training programs are required to include a number of topics, including First Aid/CPR and EpiPen training. The cost of providing this training is compensated by the Consortium;
- Details related to driver, vehicle and operator performance, communication, and operational expectations including the implementation of trial runs prior to the start of the school year;
- Compliance requirements with respect to the contract, Consortium policies, and provincial and federal regulations;
- Vehicle age requirements. The contract mandates an average fleet age and a maximum vehicle age (7 and 12 years respectively for 72-passenger school buses);
- A mandated vehicle spare ratio of 10%;
- Fee structures and payment schedules, including information on adjustments due to inclement weather, labour disputes and fuel costs; and
- Other terms related to insurance coverage requirements, dispute resolution, termination and confidentiality.

The Consortium reserves the right to re-allocate routes among operators. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that mid-year route reallocations usually only take place if additional efficiencies are identified in a given area. In these cases, the Consortium provides the bus operator with advance notice of cancellations as per the contract.

Operators are required to provide evacuation training to elementary students prior to December of each year. The cost of this training is paid by the Consortium. Principals book this training directly through the bus operators; operators in turn, then charge the

Consortium for this training. The Consortium reconciles safety training invoices on a monthly basis.

Bus operator compensation

The compensation formula identified in the bus operator contract is the sum of the following four components:

- A base rate, which varies according to the size of vehicle, the type of route assigned, and the timing of the route;
- A variable rate per kilometre travelled, which also varies according to the size of vehicle, the type of route assigned, and the timing of the route;
- A fuel compensation factor, which is determined using fixed fuel rate, route distance, the number of days a route was implemented, and a fuel efficiency factor that varies according to the size of the vehicle; and
- Other adjustments for, among other things:
    - Inclement weather days: only the base rate is to be provided during inclement weather days;
    - Service interruptions caused by either the operator, Consortium or Member Board labour disputes;
    - Trial runs and safety training costs; and
    - Subsidies for the provision of on-board cameras and ‘check mate’ equipment.

Taxi operator contract clauses

The Consortium has executed standard contracts with all of its taxi operators. The contract signed by these taxi operators is the same as those used for bus operators. As such, the same clauses and conditions are currently in effect except for those clauses related to legal and safety compliance, and fares.

Discussions with Consortium management indicated that taxi operators in the Niagara Region are regulated by the Regional Municipality of Niagara’s Police Service Board Licensing By-Law No. 285- 2008. This by-law addresses both fares and safety issues and, in the opinion of Consortium management, is more stringent than the clauses currently included in the bus operator contract.

The Consortium has signed a letter of understanding with its taxi operators indicating that taxi operators are to abide by this regulation and that, in event that the regulation and the contract are not consistent, further letters of understanding may be required in order to address specific terms.

Parent drivers

The Consortium has executed contracts with parent drivers and the scenarios in which parent drivers are used are documented in a governance approved policy on special transportation. The Consortium currently contracts four parent drivers.

The parent contract outlines the Consortium's licensing and insurance requirements - which are verified upon the execution of the contract - and the conditions under which students are to be transported. The contract indemnifies the Consortium and Member Boards from all liabilities associated with the agreement, although a clause requiring parents to review and abide by the Consortium's transportation policies is not included.

The policy on special transportation outlines situations in which parent drivers are to be used. It states that parent drivers are to be used as a last resort to transport children with specialized transportation needs.

Parent drivers are compensated based on a fixed value per kilometre travelled; Consortium management indicated that the kilometre rate is the same as that used by Member Boards to reimburse employees for business travel. Student attendance is verified using each Member Board's student database.

Public transit operator contract clauses

The Consortium has a signed letter of understanding from the transit authority that outlines the historical nature of the relationship and the current rates for secondary and elementary tickets. The letter states that the transit authority is to notify the NSTS in March of each year if price changes are expected.

The situations in which public transit is to be used are documented in a governance approved policy on special transportation. This policy indicates that public transit is to be used in situations where it is requested by the school services department of a Member Board. The Consortium currently receives a discount on its purchases of public transit passes. Approximately 1,500 students in the city of St. Catharines are currently transported by public transit.

6.2.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practice in the following areas:

Bus operator contract clauses

The Consortium has contracts in place with all bus operators which detail appropriate legal, safety and other non-monetary terms. This ensures the contractual relationship between bus operators and the Consortium is defined and enforceable. Contract wording automatically extends the contract into the next year based on the terms and conditions from the previous year, thus ensuring that a contract is in place at the start of the school year.

Taxi operator contract clauses

The Consortium has detailed contracts in place with taxi operators that outline all appropriate legal, safety and other non-monetary terms including confidentiality and the obligations of the both the Consortium and the taxi operator. Taxi operator contract meet the same burden in terms of appropriate contract clauses as bus operators.

Parent drivers

Contracts are signed with all parent drivers. The formalization of this type of arrangement through contracts and stipulated compliance requirements helps to limit the liability to the Consortium. It is suggested, however; that the Consortium include an additional clause requiring parent drivers to review the Consortium’s policies.

Transit operators

The Consortium has a letter of understanding in place with its municipal transit authority that outlines the historical nature of the relationship and the current rates for secondary and elementary tickets. The availability of such a letter helps clarify the terms under which services are to be provided and also provides security in the event of a dispute.

Insurance

The Consortium requires operators to provide proof of insurance prior to the start of the school year. This ensures that this important safeguard is met prior to providing any services.

6.2.3 Recommendations

Mandate that EpiPen training be provided prior to the start of the school year

It recognized that the Consortium requires bus operators to provide First Aid/CPR and EpiPen to its drivers. Discussions with Consortium management and operators also indicated that, in practice; drivers receive this training prior to the first day they are to drive a bus. However, in order to bring contract clauses in line with current practices, it is recommended that the Consortium modify its operator contract to require operators to provide EpiPen training prior to the first day they are to drive a bus. This will provide added assurance that all drivers will be appropriately trained to deal with this type of emergency should it occur.

6.3 Goods and Services Procurement

Procurement processes are intended to provide an avenue by which the Consortium, as a purchaser of services, can ultimately obtain the best value for money. The goal of the Consortium is to obtain high quality service at fair market prices.

6.3.1 Observations

Operator services procurement

The Consortium negotiates its bus operator contracts on an annual basis. While the Consortium's bus operators have not formed an association, negotiations with all bus operators are conducted simultaneously. The bus operator contract negotiation process and timeline is documented in a governance approved policy on operator procurement.

As per the policy, negotiations for the annual bus operator contract begin in April of each year when the Executive Director and MAC members meet with the operators to discuss the terms of the following year's contract. The policy states that this phase of the negotiation process is to conclude in June and that the operator contract is to be finalized, executed and verification documents submitted between July and September of each year. This procurement calendar is communicated to operators during the first negotiation meeting. Discussions with operators and Consortium management indicated that there were three negotiations meetings during 2009 and that the contract was finalized well before the start of the new school year.

The policy on operator procurement states that the Consortium is to continue to review the implementation of competitive procurement practices. Members of Consortium governance acknowledge that, since both Member Boards intend to align themselves with the Ministry of Finance Broader Public Sector Supply Chain Guideline, the Consortium will be required to implement competitive procurement processes for its bus

operators. Discussions with Consortium management indicated that the Consortium intends to move forward with the implementation of competitive procurement for bus operators pending further guidance from the Ministry and additional consideration of the way in which the student transportation sector in the Niagara Region is organized.

The Consortium has implemented a tendering process to acquire the services of taxi operators for inter- municipal transfers that are not regulated by the taxi bylaw. The Request for Quotation document outlines the terms under which fares are to be determined and accepted, and the terms under which the Consortium is to acquire taxi operator services.

Special needs transportation

Discussions with Consortium management indicated that special needs transportation is procured through the same process used to procure regular operator services.

6.3.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated a best practice in the following area:

Procurement calendar

The Consortium has a governance approved operator procurement calendar in place which mandates that operator procurement be completed well before the start of the school year. This calendar is also communicated to operators.

6.3.3 Recommendations

Develop plans for the implementation of competitive procurement processes

Contracts for school bus transportation services are currently not competitively procured. By not engaging in a competitive process, the Consortium is in violation of its own procurement policies. The Consortium will also not know whether it is paying best rates for services provided. If a competitive process is used to procure contracted services, the Consortium can clearly state all service requirements in the procurement document. In addition, the Consortium can be sure that it will obtain the best value for its money as operators will compete to provide the required service levels. The use of competitive procurement may not mean that rates will decline; however, the concern for the Consortium should be to obtain best value for money expended.

A competitive process can be used with certain safeguards in place to protect the standards of service. The Consortium should continue to enforce limits placed on the

amount of business any one operator can hold to avoid a monopoly situation. Additionally, in evaluating the successful proponents, cost should not be the overriding factor as that will encourage low cost proponents to enter the market while not necessarily ensuring that the same or improved levels of service are being provided. Local market conditions should be considered at all points in the development and evaluation of any service proposal. For example, local operators can be encouraged to participate in this process by placing a value on having local experience as part of the evaluation criteria; however, this specific criterion for local experience should also not be an overriding factor in the proposal evaluation process.

As the *Contracting Practices Resource Package* has been released, the Consortium should start developing an implementation plan for competitive procurement. A plan should include a review of existing procurement policies, an analysis of the local supplier market, strategies to help determine the RFP scope and processes and a criteria and timeline to phase-in competitive procurement. The plan should also utilize the best practices and lessons learned that are available from the pilot Consortia.

6.4 Contract Management

Contracting practices do not end after a contract is signed. Ongoing monitoring of compliance and performance of contracted service is an important and valuable practice to enhance service levels and ensure that contractors are providing the level of service that was previously agreed upon. Effective contract management practices focus on four key areas:

- Administrative contract compliance to ensure that operators meet the requirements set out in the contract;
- Operator facility and maintenance audits to ensure that operators keep their facilities and vehicles in line with the standards outlined in the contract;
- Service and safety monitoring to ensure that the on the road performance of drivers and operators reflects the expectations set out in the contract; and
- Performance monitoring to track the overall performance of operators over time.

6.4.1 Observations

The Consortium’s contract management processes are documented in a governance approved policy on operator and route audits. In addition, the Consortium has developed a Standards of Performance document that outlines the items and behaviours to be reviewed and presents a scoring framework for bus operators.

Bus operator administrative and contract compliance

The Consortium conducts administrative reviews ("administrative and contract compliance audits") and the process used to conduct these audits are currently documented in the policy. The policy requires the Consortium to audit all of it operators at least once per year.

Administrative and contract compliance is ensured through prescheduled bus operator site visits conducted by the Executive Director and a member of Consortium staff. Consortium management indicated that audits are prescheduled in order to ensure the availability of staff at the operator site. The standards to be met by the bus operators are determined by the Executive Director and are documented in a Standard of Performance Administrative Review document that presents all safety, operational management, communication, document control and training requirements outlined in the bus operator contract. A scoring framework is also presented and, as per the document, operators that receive less than 80% compliance are to be reviewed once again by the Consortium. The result of the Consortium's administrative and contract compliance audits are communicated to operators.

The Consortium ensures taxi operator administrative and contractual compliance by contacting the Niagara Region Police, who monitor compliance with the taxi bylaw. The Consortium applies the same administrative review process used for bus operators to taxi operators.

Operator facility and maintenance monitoring

The Consortium has a policy, framework and documentation in place that outlines the process to be used to conduct operational reviews ("operator facility and maintenance reviews"). The document to be used when conducting the review indicates that, in general, the Consortium reviews five instances of each scoring criteria (for example, five drivers are to be interviewed and five buses are to be inspected). Discussions with Consortium management indicated that, while the foundation for these reviews is currently in place, the operational review process has not been implemented as the Consortium is currently focused on completing its operator administrative review process.

Operator facility and maintenance monitoring is ensured through either prescheduled or random bus operator site visits conducted by the Executive Director and a member of Consortium staff. The procedure outlined is comparable to that used for administrative reviews, although different scoring criteria are used. The Standard of Performance Operational Review document indicates that the review will look into the operator's safety, operational management, communication, training and documentation control practices. Where relevant, the scoring criteria refer back to the relevant clause in the

bus operator contract. As with the administrative reviews, operators that receive less than 80% compliance are to be reviewed once again by the Consortium. The results of the Consortium's operator facility and maintenance audits are communicated to operators.

Operator safety and service monitoring

The Consortium has policy and documentation in place that outlines the process to be used to conduct route audits ("operator safety and service reviews"). The policy provides an outline of the process to be used and states that Consortium is to audit five percent of each bus operators each year.

Operator safety and service monitoring is achieved through random, documented route audits. Items to be reviewed during the route audits include the system load count, schools services, arrival and departure times and compliance with the route provided by the Consortium. The results of the Consortium's route audits are communicated to operators.

Operators are required to conduct trial runs prior to the start of each school year. Compliance with this contract clause is ensured through a driver sign-off and invoice reconciliation.

Performance monitoring

The Consortium communicates the results of its administrative and operational reviews as well as its safety and service route audits back to operators.

6.4.2 Best Practices

It is recognized that the Consortium has demonstrated best practice in the following areas:

Operator administrative, contract, facility and maintenance compliance

The Consortium ensures that the information, facility and vehicle requirements outlined in the operator contracts are verified in a timely manner and tracks the performance of operators over time. Such efforts to ensure operator compliance help the Consortium to measure whether the operators are complying with stated contract clauses and, ultimately, if they are providing safe and reliable service.

Operator safety and service monitoring

The Consortium performs periodic, documented route audits of operators and drivers to ensure they are providing adequate service levels to the schools in terms of on-time

service, compliance with routes and driver compliance with traffic regulations. Audits are a key component of contract management. They measure whether the operators and drivers are complying with stated contract clauses and ultimately if they are providing safe and reliable service.

6.5 Results of E&E Review

The process by which the Consortium negotiates, structures, and manages its contracts for transportation services has been assessed as **Moderate-High**. The Consortium has complete contracts with all transportation service providers and has effective contract management policies, frameworks and processes in place. Key areas for improvement include a modification to the bus operator contract to bring it in line with current practices, and the development of plans for the competitive procurement of bus operator services. The implementation of a competitive procurement process will not only expose the business opportunity to a competitive environment, it will also bring the Consortium in line with its own procurement policies.

7 Funding Adjustment

The Ministry has asked the E&E Review Team to apply their Funding Adjustment Formula to each Board that was subject to an E&E Review in Phase 3. Note that where Boards are incurring transportation expenses in multiple Consortium sites, the Board's adjustment will be prorated for the portion attributed to the consortium under review. For example, if 90% of Board A's expenditures are attributed to consortium A, and 10% of expenditures are attributed to consortium B, the funding adjustment resulting from consortium A's review will be applied to 90% of Board A's deficit or surplus position.

The Ministry's funding formula is as follows:

Table 7: Funding Adjustment Formula

Overall Rating	Effect on deficit Board[9]	Effect on surplus Board
High	Reduce the gap by 100% (i.e. eliminate the gap)	No in-year funding impact; out-year changes are to be determined
Moderate-High	Reduce the gap by 90%	Same as above
Moderate	Reduce the gap by 60%	Same as above
Moderate-Low	Reduce the gap by 30%	Same as above
Low	Reduce the gap by 0%	Same as above

Based on the Ministry's funding formula, in conjunction with our E&E assessment of the Consortium, it is anticipated that the following funding adjustments will be made for each Board:

[9] This refers to Boards that have a deficit/surplus on student transportation

District School Board of Niagara

Item	Value
2008-2009 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	$(197,653)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium	100%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	$(197,653)
E&E Rating	Moderate-High
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	90%
2009-2010 Total Funding adjustment	$177,888

Niagara Catholic District School Board

Item	Value
2008-2009 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	$(1,498,359)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium	100%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	$(1,498,359)
E&E Rating	Moderate-High
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	90%
2009-2010 Total Funding adjustment	$1,348,523

(Numbers will be finalized once regulatory approval has been obtained.)

8 Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Terms	Definition
Act	Education Act
Assessment Guide	The guide prepared by the E&E Review Team and the Ministry of Education which will be used as the basis for determining the overall effectiveness and efficiency of each Consortium
Common Practice	Refers to a set of planning parameters that have been reported by Ontario school boards as the most commonly adopted planning policies and practices. These are used as references in the assessment of the relative level of service and efficiency.
Consortium, the; or NSTS	The Niagara Student Transportation Services Consortium
Deloitte	Deloitte & Touche LLP (Canada)
Driver	Refers to bus Drivers, see also operators
DSBN	District School Board of Niagara
E&E	Effectiveness andEfficiency
E&E Review Team	As defined in Section 1.1.5
E&E Reviews	As defined in Section 1.1.4
Effective	Having an intended or expected effect; the ability to deliver intended service
Efficient	Performing or functioning in the best possible manner with the least waste of time and effort; the ability to achieve cost savings without compromising safety
Evaluation Framework	The document, titled “Evaluation Framework for the Renfrew County Joint Transportation Consortium” which supports the E&E Review Team’s Assessment; this document is not a public document
Funding Adjustment Formula	As described in Section 1.3.5
HR	Human Resources

Terms	Definition
IT	Information Technology
JK/SK	Junior Kindergarten/Senior Kindergarten
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
Management Consultants	As defined in Section 1.1.5
Memo	Memorandum 2006: SB13, dated July 11 issued by the Ministry
Ministry	The Ministry of Education of Ontario
MPS	Management Partnership Services Inc., the routing consultant, as defined in Section 1.1.5
MTO	The Ministry of Transportation of Ontario
NCDSB	Niagara Catholic District School Board
Operators	Refers to companies that operate school buses, boats or taxis and the individuals who run those companies. In some instances, an operator may also be a Driver.
Overall Rating	As Defined in Section 3.2 of the Evaluation Framework
Partner Boards, Member Boards, School Boards or Boards	The School Boards that have participated as full partners or members in the Consortium; the DSBN and the NCDSB
Rating	The E&E Assessment score on a scale of High to Low, see Section 1.3.4
Report	The report prepared by the E&E Review Team for each Consortium that has undergone an E&E Review (i.e. this document)
Separate Legal Entity	Incorporation

9 Appendix 2: Financial Review – by School Board

District School Board of Niagara

Item	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010[10]
Allocation[11]	$13,028,386	$13,187,850	$15,212,391	$15,711,958	$15,789,750
Expenditure[12]	$13,531,470	$14,175,245	$14,426,485	$15,909,611	$16,393,174
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	$(503,084)	$(987,395)	$785,906	$(197,653)	$(603,424)
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	$13,531,470	$14,175,245	$14,426,485	$15,909,611	$16,393,174
As % of total Expenditures of Board	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Niagara Catholic District School Board

Item	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Allocation	$7,542,118	$7,631,474	$9,358,174	$9,666,443	$9,714,363
Expenditure	$8,676,302	$9,108,063	$9,205,194	$11,164,802	$10,641,110
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	($1,134,184)	($1,476,589)	$152,980	($1,498,359)	($926,747)
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	$8,676,302	$9,108,063	$9,205,194	$11,164,802	$10,641,110

10 Appendix 3: Document List

[10] 2009-2010 allocations and expenditures based on Ministry data – Revised Estimates for 2009-2010
[11] Allocation based on Ministry data – includes all grant allocations for transportation (Section 9 00008C, Section 13 00006C, Section 13 00012C)
[12] Expenditure based on Ministry data – taken from Data Form D: 730C (Adjusted expenditures for compliance) – 212C (Other Revenues) + 798C (Capital expenditures funded from operating)

1. 2009 and 2009-10 Work Process
2. A019 - Confidentiality of Personal Information
3. A020 - Management of Data
4. A021 - Insurance
5. A022 - Business Planning and Reporting
6. Age of Vehicle Addendum
7. Article - 1.5 kim zone of safetyBus doesn't stop her
8. Article Appeal Committee DSBN.pdf
9. Article - Bus drivers reject contract offer
10. Article - Bus policy not safe for children parents
11. Article - Busing change get rough ride
12. Article - Bussing arranged for students affected by boundary changes
13. Article - Clearing the air on some NDSS issues
14. Article - DSBN is shirking responsibility for NDSS woes
15. Article - FW Welland Tribune Trustees already planning for next school year
16. Article - Giving parents a choice
17. Article - Improving cost efficiency and service effectiveness
18. Article - Kids have to walk to school after bus is taken away
19. Article - Local officials say formula works
20. Article - More students lacing up locally
21. Article - Most bussing issues resolved school board
22. Article - Niagara Board from Internet
23. Article - Niagara District high school one worth saving

24. Article - Niagara_Dec 9, 2009
25. Article - Niagara-on-the-Lake Transportation
26. Article - No injuries in school bus accident_nov 2 2007
27. Article - NOTL parents want to keep their kids close to home
28. Article - Parent wants answers
29. Article - ption C close NDSS not one for Niagara-on-the-lake
30. Article - School board budget - 356 million
31. Article - School bus back in subdivision
32. Article - School bus driver fired for impaired driving
33. Article - School bus drivers found drinking
34. Article - School bus rules don't make sense, for safety reasons
35. Article - School bus yanked from subdivision
36. Article - Too far to walk
37. Article - Transport truck rear-ends school bus no students hurt
38. Article - Trustees already planning for next school year
39. Article - Trustees peeved with bus plan for NOT
40. Article - West Niagara boundaries rejigged - Niagara
41. Article - Writer wonders about DSBN busing cuts
42. Article Appeal Committee DSBN
43. Beginner's Guide (way to school with mapnet)
44. Bus Stop Assessment Form
45. C 1a/3b/7a.pdf/Transportation Agreement
46. C 1b/3c.pdf – Signed Agreements

47. C 1c.pdf – Operator Contract

48. C 2.pdf – Special Transportation/Routing 005

49. C 3a.pdf – Transportation Contractor

50. C 4.pdf – Operator Contract – Schedule A

51. C 5.pdf – Bus age/Report Example

52. C 6a.pdf – Board Student Transportation Policy

53. C 6b.pdf – Board Student Transportation Policy

54. C 7b 7c.pdf – Certificate of Liability Insurance

55. C 8a.pdf – Operator Procurement/Administration 003a

56. C 8b.pdf – School Transportation Services Procurement Guidelines

57. C 8c.pdf – Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

58. C 9a.pdf – Operator and Route Audits/Routing 004

59. C 9b.pdf – Standards of Performance Administrative Review

60. C 9c/9f.pdf – Standards of Performance Administrative Review/Summary Report

61. C 9d.pdf – Route Change Notification

62. C 9e.pdf – Route Details

63. C 9g.pdf – Service Delivery Timing

64. CM 10a.pdf – Integrated Business Planning Cycle

65. CM 10b.pdf – 2009-10 Strategy Report

66. CM 10c.pdf – Work Process Definition for Back to School 2009

67. CM 11a.pdf – Key Performance Indicators/Administration 011

68. CM 11b.pdf – Key Performance Indicators/Administration 011a

69. CM 11c.pdf – 2008/09 Annual Report

70. CM 11d.pdf – Route redesign

71. CM 12a.pdf – Elementary Student Registration Form

72. CM 12b.pdf – Confidentiality of Personal Information/Administrative 019

73. CM 12c.pdf – Presentation/Securing our Future

74. CM 12d.pdf – Confidentiality Agreement Template

75. CM 12e.pdf – Operator Contract – Schedule D (Confidentiality Agreement)

76. CM 12f.pdf – Confidentiality Agreement

77. CM 13c.pdf – Invoice Notifications

78. CM 13d.pdf – Management Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

79. CM 13e.pdf – Management Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

80. CM 14b.pdf – Financial Statement 2008-09

81. CM 14f.pdf – Transportation Invoices

82. CM 1a.pdf – Transportation Services Agreement

83. CM 1b.pdf – Letters Patent for Incorporation

84. CM 1c.pdf – Dispute Resolution

85. CM 2a.pdf – Governance Organization Chart 2009/10 School Year

86. CM 2b.pdf – Management Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

87. CM 2c.pdf – Governance Structure/Administration 005

88. CM 3a.pdf – NSTS Organization Chart

89. CM 3b.pdf – Position Definition

90. CM 4, 13a, 13b, 14a, 14c, 14d.pdf – Financial Management

91. CM 5.pdf – Service Level Agreement

92. CM 6a.pdf – Service Level Agreement

93. CM 7a.pdf – MAC and Board Lawyer Meeting Minutes

94. CM 7b.pdf – 2010 Insurance Renewal

95. CM 8.pdf - Procurement

96. CM 9a.pdf – Human Resources

97. CM 9b.pdf – Individual Performance and Development Plan

98. CM 9c.pdf – Staff Training Requirements/Administration/006a

99. CM 9d.pdf – Staff Training Matrix

100. CM 9e.pdf – Succession Planning Process

101. CM 9f.pdf – Staff Bulletin Board

102. Contingency Plan

103. Cost Study Mid Day to Full Day

104. Draft NSTS Procedures

105. DSBN and NCDSB Hazards

106. Early Release Memo and Email

107. Future Year Data Advance

108. Jan 08 Multi-Year Plan

109. Lease

110. MapNet Certification

111. Menu of Reports

112. Niagara Consortia Plan

113. Niagara STS Capacity Building Report

114. Niagara STS Financial Summary

115. NSTS E & E Kick-Off Presentation

116. PP 1.pdf – Board Student Transportation Policy/Eligibility 001

117. PP 2.pdf – Integrated Business Planning Cycle

118. PP 3.pdf – Route Design/Routing 007

119. PP 4 1 of 2.pdf – Key Performance Indicators

120. PP 4 2 of 2.pdf – Key Performance Indicators/Miscellaneous Report Examples

121. PP 5.pdf – Student Transportation Safety Programs/Safety 004

122. PP 6.pdf – Schedule A – First Aid

123. PP 8.pdf – Specialized Programs

124. Previous Performance Review to Expectation

125. Project Busted

126. R004- Bus and Route Auditing

127. RFQ

128. RT 1.pdf – Altering School Hours/Routing 001

129. RT 2.pdf – Changes in Student Data/Routing 006

130. RT 3.pdf – Service Level Agreement/NSTS, NCDSB, and DSBN

131. RT 4.pdf – NSTS Advanced User Guide

132. RT 5.pdf – Technology Matrix

133. School Year Calendar Alignment

134. Staff Meeting Minutes 2009-10

135. Strategies to Address Declining Enrolment

136. Taxi Rate Addendum

137. Teaching kids the rules of the road - Feb 3 2010

138. Transit Letter of Understanding Feb 1 2010

11 Appendix 4: Common Practices

Home to School Distance

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 8	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	0.8 km	1.2 km	3.2 km
Policy - DSBN	0.8 km	1.6 km	2.5 km
Policy - NCDSB	0.8 km	1.6 km	2.5 km

Home to Bus Stop Distance

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 8	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	0.5 km	0.8 km	0.8 km
Policy - DSBN	0.8 km	1.6 km	2.5 km
Policy - NCDSB	0.8 km	1.6 km	2.5 km
Practice	800 Meters	800 Meters	1000 Meters

Arrival Window

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 8	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	18	18	25
Policy - DSBN	10	10	10
Policy - NCDSB	10	10	10

Departure Window

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 8	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	16	16	18
Policy - DSBN	10	10	10
Policy - NCDSB	10	10	10

Earliest Pick Up Time

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 8	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	6:30	6:30	6:30
Policy - DSBN	6:13AM	6:13AM	6:13AM
Policy - NCDSB	6:13AM	6:13AM	6:13AM

Latest Drop Off Time

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 8	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	5:30	5:30	6:00
Policy - DSBN	5:02 PM	5:02 PM	5:02 PM
Policy - NCDSB	5:02 PM	5:02 PM	5:02 PM

Maximum Ride Time

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 8	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	75	75	90
Policy - DSBN	60	60	60
Policy - NCDSB	60	60	60

Note: 74 percent of all students have ride times < 30 minutes with 97 percent < 60 minutes

Seated Students Per Vehicle

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 - 6	GR. 9 - 12
Common Practice	69	69	52
Policy - DSBN	60	60	48
Policy - NCDSB	60	60	48

Note: Guidelines for a combined load of K-12 students is 55

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