

Transporting Students with Special Needs

A PRESENTATION TO TDSB SEAC

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Overview of Student Transportation –

Number of routes = **1886**

Number of students transported = **43421**

Total route distance = **82,314km**

Average route distance = **39.01km**

Average route time = **2hours, 14 minutes**

Longest travel time = **5 hours, 43 minutes**

Average student ride time = **19 minutes**

Average student travel distance = **5.09 km**

How do we transport students with Special Needs

TDSB is part of a consortium, along with TCDSB, that collaborates on all transportation planning and routing. The consortium is called “Toronto Student Transportation Group” – “TSTG” and is executed through a membership agreement between the boards. TSTG is overseen by a General Manager

Students with special needs are supported with an individual student transportation plan that outlines the specific requirements needed to transport the students.

Schools forward new applications to the Transportation Group for processing. Applications for transportation for students with special needs are prioritized by staff for processing.

The transportation system is optimized each summer given the changing needs of students. Students are grouped based on geography, program hours, and physical or other needs.

Once routes are established, changes are made throughout the school year to existing or new students. Where possible, students are simply added to existing runs but in many cases the addition of a student may require the movement of other students to accommodate the new students.

Challenges in transporting students with special needs

Many students with special needs are attending schools that are not local requiring extensive time on the bus. This is especially true of our congregated locations.

Many students with special needs require specific transportation arrangements i.e. car seats or safety vests that limits our capacities and minimizes route sharing and our flexibility to utilize the buses to a greater degree.

Student needs can be extreme, requiring additional services including ride alone status to address student behaviour, splitting students from the same geographic location onto different buses, plexi-glass installations to protect drivers.

Transporting students with special needs

The chart below summarizes the number of students with special needs transported by School Board.

School	Bloorview	TCDSB	TDSB	Grand Total	%
ALT			31	31	0.3%
AUT		7	853	860	8.4%
BEH		87	90	177	1.7%
DDS	29	38	2131	2198	21.5%
DHH		32	127	159	1.6%
DIA			420	420	4.1%
ECPP		59	292	351	3.4%
EGF			1033	1033	10.1%
ESL		1		1	0.0%
LAN		205	110	315	3.1%
LED		77	702	779	7.6%
MEX		569		569	5.6%
MID		51	1385	1436	14.1%
PAST		1		1	0.0%
PHD	10	753	89	852	8.4%
PHY			135	135	1.3%
SED		335	1	336	3.3%
VIS		1	1	2	0.0%
(blank)		518	29	547	5.4%
Grand Tot	39	2734	7429	10202	100.0%

Board	Big Bus	Mini Bus/MV	TAXI	WC Accessible	Grand Total
Bloorview		12		27	39
TCDSB	300	2301	88	45	2734
TDSB	807	6098	39	485	7429
Grand Total	1107	8411	127	557	10202
%	10.9%	82.4%	1.2%	5.5%	

Board	0-1KM	1-2KM	2-3KM	3-4KM	4-5KM	5-10KM	10-15KM	>15KM	Grand Total
Bloorview			2	1	1	19	10	6	39
TCDSB	475	737	318	229	208	569	140	58	2734
TDSB	201	686	1027	1077	1026	2609	629	174	7429
Grand Total	676	1423	1347	1307	1235	3197	779	238	10202
	6.6%	13.9%	13.2%	12.8%	12.1%	31.3%	7.6%	2.3%	100.0%

Cost to Transport Students

Student transportation in Toronto is calculated based on the vehicle type and the time to perform the service.

Each vehicle type has an associated cost based on the bus operator providing the service. This cost is based on 3 hours of work as performed in both the morning and afternoon. If the bus route goes over three hours there is additional payment based on 15-minute increments.

Since students may be transported in almost any school bus configuration it is difficult to assign absolute costs. The following figures are from the 2023-2024 draft budget.

Transportation Element		TDSB	TCDSB
		2023-2024	2023-2024
Gifted Program Transportation (Non-transit)		\$ 3,245,739.42	\$ -
Special Transportation Needs (Non-transit)		\$39,070,963.36	\$18,206,641.86
Transportation - Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (Non-transit)		\$ 8,333,858.71	\$ 1,516,603.71
Section 23 (ECCP) transportation		\$ 2,533,109.59	\$ 869,322.55
Total		\$53,183,671.09	\$20,592,568.12

Student Transportation Timelines

TSTG sends out verification lists to schools in March/April for confirmation that the student is returning to their program and that the information is accurate. Schools are requested to send all changes, deletes, and new applications to the TSTG before the end of May.

All applications received by the end of June are processed over the summer while the planning team addresses student and bussing needs. These students are set up to start on the first day of school unless noted otherwise.

Unfortunately, TSTG sees about 60% of application changes and additions in September requiring significant re-routing to the system.

During startup, families can expect an application (that is fully vetted) to take upwards to 10 business days to get on the road. During the rest of the year, once applications are received, we work on a 72-hour turnaround to get students on the bus.

Logistics to Planning Bus Routes

The transportation group uses three strategies to plan school bus routes for students.

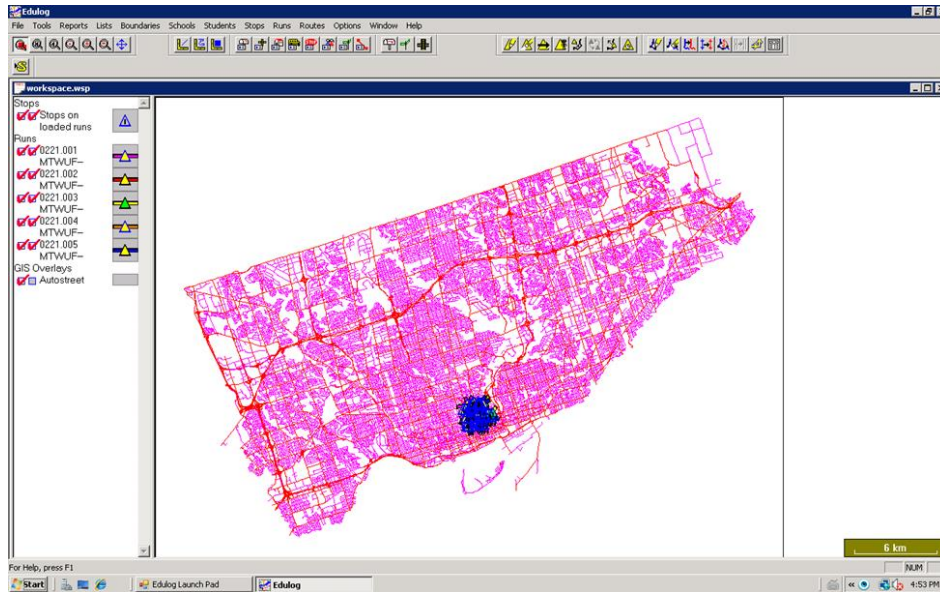
Where there is a large, concentrated, and dense population, the **'coupling'** of buses is used. This is where a bus will go out and pick up students, take them to the school and repeat at another nearby school at a later bell time and so on. This strategy is used for those students that live close to the school and are serviced on the large capacity buses.

Where the population is small, dispersed, and sparse the **'one bus one road'** solution is used. This is where a bus will start at the most remote location and pick up students from various schools along the way to the schools that are clustered together. This is used for students who are not attending their local schools but are going to congregated or magnet schools.

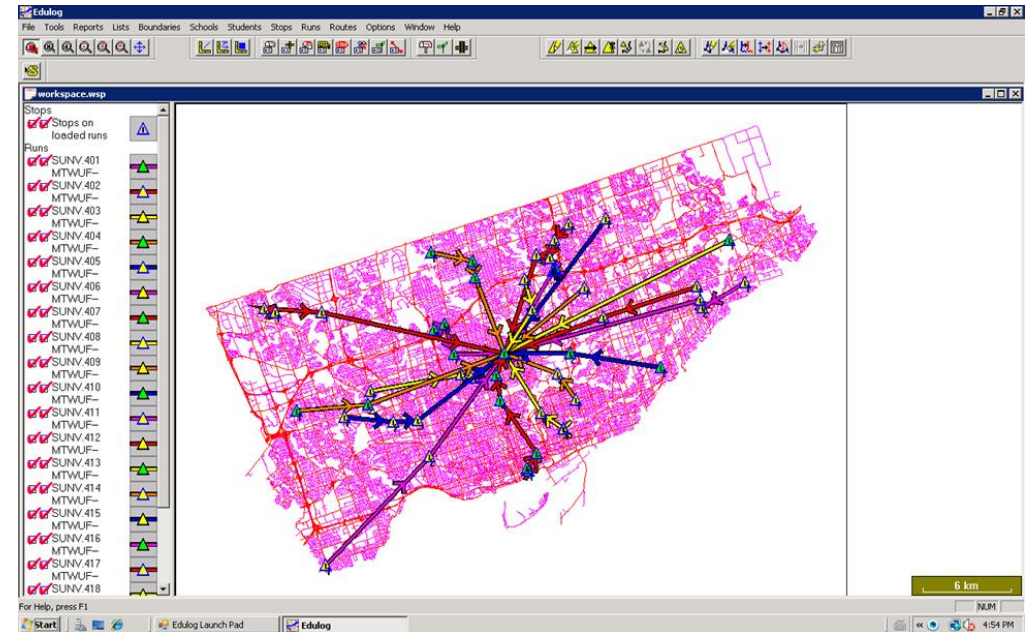
The third solution is a **hybrid** of the two solutions identified above. You may have a longer run with multiple schools come in early and then couple it with a short run at a later bell time.

Mapping examples

Coupling



One Bus One Road



Driver Qualifications / Training –

INITIAL TRAINING

- Awareness of sensitivity for Special Needs Students & AODA Requirements
- Awareness of racial and Ethnocultural Issues (Human Rights)
- First Aid, EpiPen
- Bus Evacuation, Accident Procedures, Fire Extinguisher
- Student Management, Maintaining Bus Discipline (Conflict Management)
- Lost Child, Late Bus, Late Parent, Child Check, and Ride Refusals Procedures, Authorized Stops
- Defensive Driving
- Dealing with Street Cars and Traffic Management
- Restraint Systems – How to secure and release students in restraints
- Purple Equals Parent Program

ANNUAL REFRESHERS

- Student Management, Bus Discipline
- Human Rights and Racial Ethno Cultural Issues
- Bus Evacuation, Accident Procedures
- EpiPen
- Lost Child, Late Bus, Late Parent, Ride Refusals, Child Check, and Authorized Stops

EVERY THREE YEARS

- Defensive Driving
- First Aid

Steps for Improvement

New transportation software was implemented in 2018. What we've found is that it works pretty well for the big bus routes but not as much for the unique needs of students with special needs.

We have continued to push for parents to access the [Transportation portal](https://busplannerweb.torontoschoolbus.org/Subscriptions/Login.aspx) <<https://busplannerweb.torontoschoolbus.org/Subscriptions/Login.aspx>> early-mid August to confirm their transportation details prior to school staff returning. We have inquired about new applications such as SMS for text messages but still awaiting updates.

Looking into phone 'apps' to improve communication since 70% of individuals accessing transportation information are using their phones.

Tablets will be on all buses for September 2024 so that drivers can 'sign in' to their route which then ensures the GPS and route are accurately matched. Will also allow drivers access to route, roster, and directions to improve reliability of service.

Questions

We are more than happy to take your questions today and anytime in the future that you have questions around student transportation services.

Thank You

[Toronto Student Transportation Group](#)

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