

Frequently Asked Questions

(The following is from information shared at the May 4th public information meeting, or questions submitted.)

Q1: What changes to the district's transportation services are being implemented for September 2016?

A: Bus routes that do not serve catchment schools or district programs will be eliminated. There is a change to walk limits, which are now set at 3.2 km for elementary/middle, and 4.0 km for secondary. Other factors (such as hazardous crossings) are considered in determining eligibility for service. Routes will be re-designed to improve efficiency (to increase average ridership). There will be an increase in fees (*See question #3*).

Q2: Why is bus service being reduced?

A: Transportation funding was eliminated from school districts in 2012-13. School districts have not been required to provide bus service since the early 2000s; it is up to each school district to determine the levels of bus service that can be offered. Abbotsford has offered an extensive service until now; however to maintain funding for classroom instruction, the district has had to make cuts in discretionary spending. Transportation was also identified as one of the discretionary spending areas where savings could be realized. This year (2015-16), almost 2,800 students are transported daily on 43 routes with service at/to 25 schools. Transportation service represented a cost to the district of \$3.1 million in 2014-15. User fees were set at about \$400,000 to offset those costs. The District has identified inefficiencies in its bus service and now need to reduce the net costs of transportation.

Q3: What are the new fees?

A: As of September 2016, students being bused to 'in catchment' schools and who live outside walk limits will pay \$400 per student per year and \$600 per family per year. For students attending district programs and outside walk limits the fee will be \$600 per student per year and \$800 per family per year.

Q4: Who can still request bus service?

A: Services will be still be available for students living outside the policy walk limits (see Q1) to the nearest (catchment) school; students within the walk limits may be provided services if space permits. Service will also be continued for students attending district programs and who are outside the policy walk limits, and for students with special needs.

Q5: What are considered “District Programs”?

A: All Career Programs, French Immersion, Abbotsford Schools of Integrated Arts (‘ASIA’), Traditional schools and the International Baccalaureate Programme (at Abby Senior and Abby Middle). Students in these district programs, and who live outside policy walk limits, will still have access to transportation services.

Q6: Isn’t French Immersion a federally funded program? Why can’t federal funds be used to bus FI students?

A: The assumption that French Immersion is funded entirely by the Federal government is not correct. The school district – like other districts - receives some funding via the Province from the Federal government for ALL French instruction, including ‘FI’. It is used directly to support French classroom instruction and resources.

Q7: What payment options are there?

A: Once their child(ren) have been registered, and the Transportation Department has confirmed their place on a bus (usually starting in August), parents/guardians can pay online (full annual fee only) by using e-cheque directly from your bank account or credit card with SchoolsCash Online, at <https://abbotsford.schoolcashionline.com>. Or pay in-person at the school district administration offices (2790 Tims street—behind city hall; please [check office hours](#)). In-person payment provides options of monthly or full-year payments with cash, cheque, VISA/MasterCard or debit card.

Q8: When will we know what the new routes will be and when can we register for them?

A: We expect routes and schedules for 2016-17 to be established over the first part of summer. In August, the Transportation department will coordinate all the registrations, fill buses routes and finalize bus runs. Registered, qualifying riders will be notified as usual in the last week of August.

Q9: What changes may happen after 2016-2017?

A: Continued budget pressures may impact future student transportation services in the district.

Potential considerations/changes could include:

- Changes and/or reductions to service levels for district program riders and catchment area riders
- Increasing user fees
- BC Transit options

Q10: What communication/engagement has occurred with BC Transit operations in Abbotsford?

A: As part of the ongoing need to reduce the net cost of transportation services, the district will be working with BC Transit to explore options for students attending district schools.

Q11: What impact will reducing transportation have on attendance in district programs?

A: Program enrolment in all programs will be monitored through the year. Any proposed changes would require advance consultation and discussion with parents, students, and staff. There is no plan to curtail district programs.

Q12: Is service to Aldergrove affected?

A: There is one Abbotsford school bus route with a single stop in Aldergrove, otherwise there is no other service into Langley, including Aldergrove. The district does currently have service in the Hansen/Aberdeen/Reimer schools catchment that services areas at the west end of town along Fraser Highway. This route and all others are currently being reviewed to ensure improved efficiency.

Q13: How will we address increased traffic congestion at schools with less bus service?

A: Every school—whether it has bus service to it or not—experiences some level of congestion in the mornings, and at the afternoon dismissal. Not all schools have bus service. There have been growing levels of traffic in the past decade as parents/guardians increasingly drive their children to school(s). While we are able to provide some monitoring and traffic direction by staff at these two key times, the focus of school personnel is on the safety of students. We encourage all families to consider alternate means of travelling to school when and where feasible, including walking or biking. We also encourage drivers to be patient, courteous and provide ample time to transport children to schools.