



**Date:** October 23, 2024 **Agenda Item:** 8.4

**To:** Board of Trustees

**From:** Shawna Warren, Superintendent

**Originator(s):** Sean Nicholson, Associate Superintendent, Corporate Services  
Amy Kolesar, Manager, Transportation Services

**Subject:** **Transportation Services Report 2024-2025**

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**Background:**

Sturgeon Public Schools provides safe, dependable and efficient transportation for students. 75 school buses transport over 3,000 students to and from school each day. Sturgeon Public School Division bus routes travel 10,235 kilometres every day, which is 1,842,300 kilometres each school year.

Transportation Services operates from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm on operational school days. The team focuses on managing bus dispatch, handling internal and external inquiries related to transportation services, processing transportation applications and addressing questions regarding school attendance boundaries.

The 2024-2025 school year startup went well for Transportation Services. The Division had only one route which was not operational for the first day of school due to bus driver shortage. Drawing on feedback from previous years, the Division implemented several minor adjustments that greatly improved the overall startup experience.

Transportation Services held meetings in each school community with bus operators, bus contractors and school administration to debrief the startup of the school year and address any remaining concerns. These startup meetings proved invaluable, providing a platform for all parties to collaborate and communicate effectively in one room.

The report is broken down into four sections:

1. Transportation Funding
2. Ridership Information
3. Transportation Fee Collection
4. Transportation Challenges
  - Bus Operator Shortages
  - Ride Times
  - Transportation Fees
  - Student Misconduct

## Transportation Funding

### Transportation Funding Application

The Transportation Funding Application serves as the primary source of funding for the transportation services provided to our students. Completing this application involves thorough detail and requires extensive collaboration from the Transportation Services team with many departments to ensure accurate submission. The grant application will be submitted on November 29, 2024, for the 2024-2025 school year. Approval of the grant is usually announced in January/February of each school year.

Please note that the funding eligibility distance criteria for ECS to Grade 6 is 1.0 kilometres and for Grades 7 to 12 is 2.0 kilometres. This currently is an optional requirement but will be mandatory on September 1, 2025.

### School Bus Driver Grant

Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors (TEC) introduced a School Bus Driver Grant beginning April 1, 2023, which included 2 initiatives; the Training Costs and Driver Reimbursement Grant and the Driver Competency Training Grant. Below is a summary of the submissions completed at this time:

Grant	Training Costs and Driver Reimbursement	Driver Competency Training
23-24 Submissions	12	16
23-24 Funding Received	\$46,000	\$64,000
24-25 Submissions (To Date)	6	No Submissions
24-25 Funding Received (To Date)	\$24,000	\$0

Transportation Services facilitates the school bus driver grant submission process by receiving the applications from bus contractors, reviewing the information to confirm eligibility and submitting these applications as well as a School Authority Information Form to Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors (TEC). Once approved, the grant dollars are received by Sturgeon Public Schools before being forwarded to the contractors.

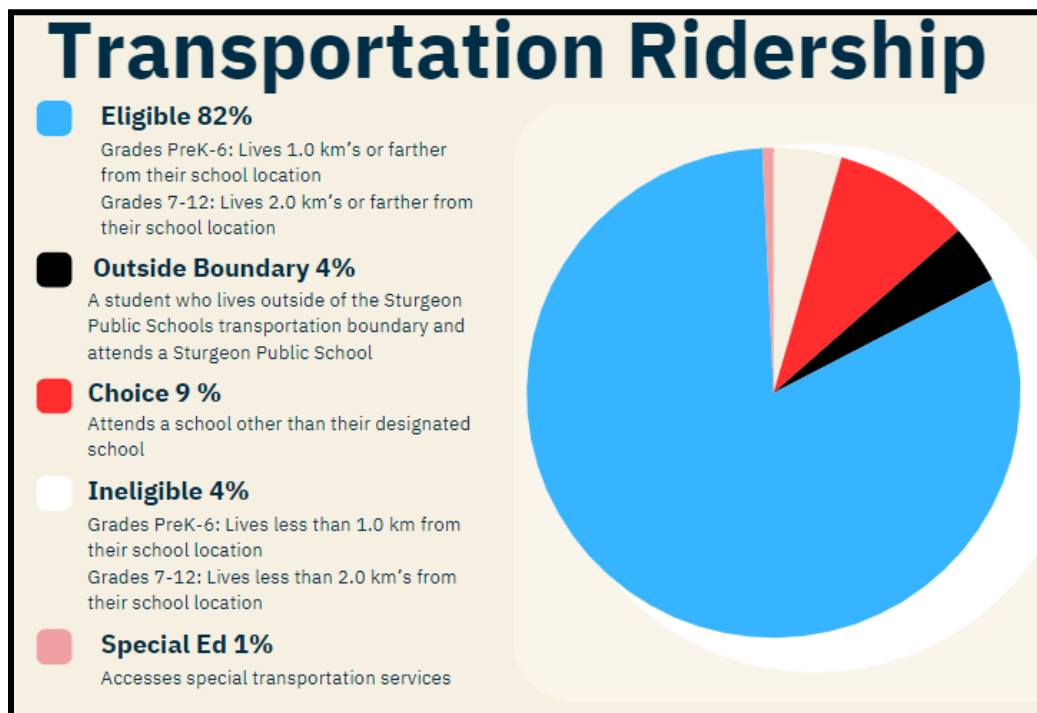
2024-2025 Ridership Information

The Division has seen an increase in ridership from the 2023-2024 school year with approximately 49 additional students registered for transportation services for the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

School Year	Ridership	Increase/(Decrease) in Ridership	Percent Increase
2022-2023	2,898		
2023-2024	3,008	110	3.80%
2024-2025	3,057	49	1.63%

Over the summer months, the team completed a review and optimization of all current transportation routes. Transportation Services was able to add one route for Namao and Sturgeon Composite High School to support an increase in ridership with a focus on students coming from the Town of Morinville. The Division also added a route for Legal Public School to support transportation for students in the rural area surrounding the town. Lastly, the Division saw a reduction of one route for the Camilla attendance area, absorbing the route into the two remaining routes in the Northern area of the attendance area.

2024-2025 Ridership Overview Chart



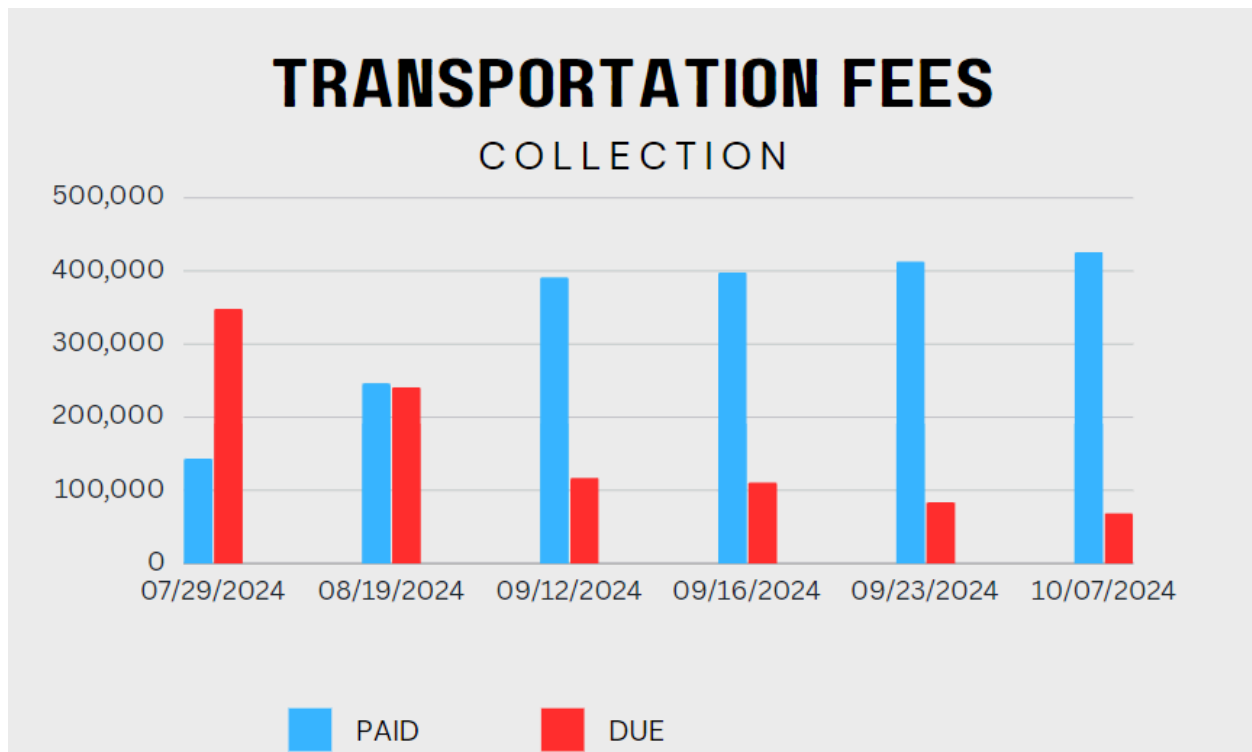
**Transportation Fee Collection**

As of October 2024, the Division has a collection rate of 86% of all transportation fees assessed. In an effort to increase the total fee collection, the team will initiate the transportation service suspensions with the support of the operators and school administration in November. This has had a large impact on the total fees collected, and holding parents accountable for the transportation fees assessed each year.

Currently, the Division has 338 overdue accounts totalling, \$58,170 and is actively contacting families to make arrangements for full payment, partial payments or where necessary, fee waiver applications. The Division is planning to have transportation services and schools work closely with families to further reduce this number over the coming month. The goal is to communicate with all families and require a minimal amount of service discontinuations in November.

According to AP464 - Fees any overdue fee notices will be sent to parents who have not submitted payments. A monthly payment plan may also be established for transportation fees to be paid over the school year.

Transportation Fee Collection Chart (2024-2025)



## **Transportation Challenges**

### *Bus Operator Shortages*

One common challenge within Sturgeon Public Schools, as well as across the province, is the bus operator shortage. Transportation Services has heard the most common issue is that there are no spare operators available, making it more difficult to cover the absences of regular bus operators. Additionally, some contractors have been unable to apply for new transportation routes as they cannot find a bus operator to commit to a full-time route. This has become a growing concern with our local contractors as it is a constraint to their ability to compete.

The implementation of the training costs and driver reimbursement grant by Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors has assisted contractors in being able to provide financial support to get bus operators trained and out on the road. The Division is hopeful that this additional funding will help to get some additional support in place within the Division and reduce the impact of the bus operator shortage.

### *Ride Times*

Transportation Services continues to receive communication from parents regarding concerns with the length of time that students are on the bus each day. There are typically two categories of concerns that come forward:

1. **Route Changes:** This is typically when there is a change in the route due to student registrations or changes in the overall route path. This can create a change in the ride time that the family had in previous years. This is typically a concern related to a change in their expected pickup and drop off time rather than a concern with the overall route time. Oftentimes these types of concerns can be resolved by reviewing the route changes overall, rather than with a focus on the impact on the family pickup and drop off time specifically.
2. **Overall Ride Time:** This is typically a concern which is brought forward by students who are riding the longest each day. These concerns are related to the overall route time, and there are often no drastic changes to improve the overall ride time year over year, impacting the students who have to travel the furthest distance to and from home each day.

Transportation Services continues to receive many transportation applications for Choice Riders. The impact of the accepted applications has been additional student capacity on bus routes, as well as some routes having higher total ride times due to the additional stops made for Choice Riders.

Please find attached to this report three tables showing ride times and bus capacity Information

1. Attachment 1 - Sturgeon Public School Division Route Information
2. Attachment 2- Ride Time Over 75 Minutes
3. Attachment 3 - Capacity over 60 Students

### Transportation Fees

Transportation fees continue to be an area of conversation with parents. It is important to provide parents/guardians with the context of the transportation fee categories and an understanding of the fee structure and funding. There are two main challenges related to transportation fees:

- Collection of Fees: As noted previously in this report, there are many hours dedicated to the collection of transportation fees. This includes the fee waiver process, the notifications related to transportation payment plans and the various types of communication to parents to ensure that fees are paid. The schools and bus operators also support the collection of fees with the service suspension process in November, as the process requires support from all sides.
- Understanding & Acceptance of Fee Structure:
  - The fee structure based on the eligibility distances set by the government for funding are often not understood by parents. We continue to inform them that the eligibility distances are determined externally, and this is the criteria that is used to determine the fee categories related to the funding received.
  - Another area of conversation this school year in particular is the supplemental bus fee assessed for families who are requesting transportation from two primary locations. This fee is applied when students are assigned a full time seat on two buses and they are able to access transportation to both locations. Some examples of when the supplemental bus fee is applicable are below:
    - When a student is transported to and from home on some days and transported to and from daycare on other days.
    - When a student is transported to and from one home for a period of time, and transported to and from a secondary home for a period of time.

### Student Misconduct

Managing student behaviour on the bus presents an ongoing challenge for bus operators, schools and Transportation Services. The Division is dedicated to providing clear and concise communication about behavioural expectations. Close collaboration with schools is

essential in ensuring that both parents and students understand the importance of maintaining appropriate conduct while riding the bus.

**Status & Relationship to Superintendent Leadership Quality Standard (SLQS):**

This report aligns with the [SLQS](#) in the following way:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>COMPETENCY:</b> | (1) Building Effective Relationships  |
| <b>INDICATORS:</b> | a. collaborating with community and provincial agencies to address the needs of students and their families;<br>b. employing team-building strategies and using solution focused processes to resolve challenges; and<br>e. establishing constructive relationships with students, staff, school councils, parents/guardians, employee organizations, the education ministry and other stakeholder organizations. |
| <b>COMPETENCY:</b> | (6) School Authority Operations and Resources   |
| <b>INDICATORS:</b> | a. providing direction on fiscal and resource management in accordance with all statutory, regulatory and school authority requirements; and<br>e. establishing data-informed strategic planning and decision-making processes that are responsive to changing contexts.  |
| <b>COMPETENCY:</b> | (7) Supporting Effective Governance   |
| <b>INDICATORS:</b> | d. ensuring that the board's plans, resource allocations, strategies and procedures lead to the achievement of its goals and priorities.  |

**Governance Implications:**

[Education Act](#)

Board responsibilities

33(1)(i)] A Board, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to (i) ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources

[Policy 225: Role of the Board](#)

Resource Stewardship

The Board shall ensure effective stewardship of the Board's resources [Education Act s. 33(1)(i)]. Specifically, the Board:

- 39. Within the context of the strategic plan, approve budget assumptions and establish priorities at the outset of the budget process.

### [Policy 500: Student Transportation Services](#)

The Board establishes and operates a student transportation system to provide service to students who reside within the boundaries of the Sturgeon Public School Division to attend their designated school. This service is available to all students within the Division who Qualify for this service in accordance with the criteria outlined in the *Education Act and Regulations* and Board Policy. 4.0 Transportation Fees 4.2 Transportation fees shall be paid prior to accessing bussing.

### [AP464: Fees](#)

Fees are assessed to students to offset the cost of providing education and transportation services. Fees shall be utilized for the purpose which it was obtained. Definition of Transportation Fees: shall refer to fees that are charged for bus services for transportation to and from school. Collection of Fees; all fees are due within 30 days of receipt. Overdue notices will be sent to parents who have not submitted payments. A payment plan may be established for transportation fees. Once Transportation Fees are paid, Bus Passes shall be obtained.

Administration is prepared to respond to questions at the October 23, 2024, Public Board meeting.

### **Attachment(s):**

1. Sturgeon Public School Division Route Information
2. Ride Times Over 75 Minutes
3. Capacity Over 60 Students



**Attachment 1 - Sturgeon Public School Division Route Information**

Bus Number	Total Students	23-24 Ride Time (One-Way)	24-25 Ride Time (One-Way)	Change In Ride Time	School of Attendance	Notes
301	40	65	62	-3	Ochre Park & Redwater	
302	48	80	62	-18	Ochre Park & Redwater	
303	63	58	48	-10	Ochre Park & Redwater	
305	36	82	51	-31	Ochre Park & Redwater	
704	45	43	38	-5	Namao & SCHS	
901	22	80	66	-14	SCHS	
905	53	87	71	-16	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
906	47	67	59	-8	SCHS	
907	45	75	66	-9	SCHS	
908	21	80	79	-1	SCHS	
909	29	91	88	-3	SCHS	
913	45	75	58	-17	SCHS	
914	23	79	77	-2	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
919	60	38	33	-5	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
920	35	58	55	-3	Namao & SCHS	
921	44	62	54	-8	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
922	37	69	65	-4	SCHS	
923	53	54	47	-7	Namao & SCHS	
BA2	34	56	45	-11	Bon Accord & Lilian Schick	
BA6	53	77	64	-13	Bon Accord & Lilian Schick	
C1	38	50	49	-1	Camilla	
C3	42	52	40	-12	Camilla	
C4	39	53	49	-4	Camilla	
C6	30	54	51	-3	Camilla	
C8	26	69	56	-13	Camilla	
LT1	43	70	65	-5	Bon Accord, Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
LT2	65	88	75	-13	Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
LT3	60	60	46	-14	Gibbons & Landing Trail	
LT4	49	54	52	-2	Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
LT6	59	60	57	-3	Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
LT7	49	47	43	-4	Gibbons & Landing Trail	
M2	71	51	42	-9	MPS & Four Winds	
M4	50	36	24	-12	Four Winds	
M5	61	71	62	-9	MPS & Four Winds	
M6	53	50	28	-22	MPS	

M7	95	49	45	-4	MPS & Four Winds	
M8	42	56	43	-13	MPS & Four Winds	
SE1	1	80	27	-53	Redwater	
SE5	5	84	75	-9	Namao & SCHS	
SE6	8	124	105	-19	Unlimited Potential	
SH1	40	68	50	-18	Sturgeon Heights	
SH4	19	41	37	-4	Sturgeon Heights	
SH8	34	47	42	-5	Sturgeon Heights	
702	49	28	32	4	Namao & SCHS	
703	37	59	73	14	Namao & SCHS	
705	54	46	46	0	Namao & SCHS	
707	47	48	50	2	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
902	32	54	74	20	Namao & SCHS	
903	29	77	80	3	SCHS	
904	52	32	42	10	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
910	60	56	69	13	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
912	43	68	78	10	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
915	48	63	67	4	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
918	45	70	73	3	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	
924	49	69	72	3	Namao & SCHS	
BA1	32	68	70	2	Bon Accord, Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
BA3	55	65	68	3	Bon Accord, Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
BA4	25	55	56	1	Bon Accord & Lilian Schick	
BA5	50	68	68	0	Bon Accord, Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
BA7	38	67	72	5	Bon Accord, Gibbons & Lilian Schick	
C10	41	47	52	5	Camilla	*Route C11 Removed
C2	46	51	68	17	Camilla	
C5	53	65	87	22	Camilla	
C7	47	45	48	3	Camilla	
C9	30	50	56	6	Camilla	
LT5	50	53	60	7	Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
LT8	50	39	48	9	Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	
M1	70	49	52	3	MPS & Four Winds	
M3	76	26	32	6	MPS & Four Winds	
SE3	9	43	47	4	Bon Accord, Four Winds, Gibbons & Landing Trail	
SH2	22	39	42	3	Sturgeon Heights	
SH3	38	60	63	3	Sturgeon Heights	
SH6	29	50	56	6	Sturgeon Heights	
916	50	-	46		Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	New Route

L1	5		30		Legal Public	New Route
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**Attachment 2 - Ride Times Over 75 Minutes**

<b>Bus Number</b>	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>23-24 Ride Time (One-Way)</b>	<b>24-25 Ride Time (One-Way)</b>	<b>Change In Ride Time</b>	<b>School of Attendance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
SE6	8	124	105	-19	Unlimited Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a special education route which begins in the Town of Redwater, travels to the Town of Morinville and then ends the route at Unlimited Potential in Edmonton.</li> </ul>
909	29	91	88	-3	SCHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is one outside boundary student and 3 students ride for greater than 75 minutes. Majority of the students assigned to this route are picked up in the Town of Bon Accord.</li> <li>• This route begins North of the transportation boundaries picking up an Outside Boundary rider.</li> </ul>
C5	53	65	87	22	Camilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five students ride for more than 75 minutes</li> <li>• This route was previously assisted by C11, which was removed in the 24-25 school year resulting in an increased ride time for the students assigned to this route. There are many rural residences in the area who have students attending at Camilla School.</li> <li>• There are seven turnaround locations on this route to help reduce the ride times.</li> </ul>
903	29	77	80	3	SCHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only one student is riding for longer than 75 minutes</li> <li>• The sparse number of student pickups leads to longer ride times with a lower number of students assigned to the route.</li> <li>• The travel time between the last pickup and reaching the school accounts for approximately 15 minutes of the total route time.</li> </ul>
908	21	80	79	-1	SCHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only one student rides for longer than 75 minutes.</li> <li>• There are large traveling distances between the stops for the students assigned to this route.</li> <li>• Proximity to St.Albert has an affect on the limited number of students assigned to access transportation services to Sturgeon Composite High School.</li> </ul>
912	43	68	78	10	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six student rider for longer than 75 minutes because they are school of choice.</li> <li>• This route begins in the Town of Redwater for students attending Sturgeon Composite as Choice Riders.</li> </ul>
914	23	79	77	-2	Namao, Guthrie & SCHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One student rider for longer than 75 minutes</li> <li>• This route picks up Outside Boundary riders from a community stop outside of Fort Saskatchewan and 1 stop within the City of Edmonton.</li> <li>• The sparse number of student pickups leads to longer ride times with a lower number of students assigned to the route.</li> </ul>

**Attachment 3 - Capacity Over 60 Students**

<b>Bus Number</b>	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>23-24 Ride Time (One-Way)</b>	<b>24-25 Ride Time (One-Way)</b>	<b>Change In Ride Time</b>	<b>School of Attendance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
M7	95	49	45	-4	MPS & Four Winds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This route is able to complete two full loops in the Town of Morinville.</li> <li>• The route is able to provide transportation for 47 and 48 students in each loop.</li> </ul>
M3	76	26	32	6	MPS & Four Winds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This route is able to complete two full loops.</li> <li>• The first loop provides transportation for 51 on the first loop and 25 students on the second.</li> </ul>
M2	71	51	42	-9	MPS & Four Winds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This route is able to complete two full loops.</li> <li>• The first loop provides transportation for 31 on the first loop and 40 students on the second.</li> </ul>
M1	70	49	52	3	MPS & Four Winds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This route is able to complete two full loops.</li> <li>• The first loop provides transportation for 40 on the first loop and 30 students on the second.</li> </ul>
LT2	65	88	75	-13	Gibbons, Landing Trail & Lilian Schick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This route is able to complete two full loops.</li> <li>• The first loop provides transportation for 40 on the first loop and 25 students on the second.</li> </ul>
303	63	58	48	-10	Ochre Park & Redwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This route is able to complete two full loops.</li> <li>• The first loop provides transportation for 35 on the first loop and 28 students on the second.</li> </ul>
M5	61	71	62	-9	MPS & Four Winds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The route picks up 42 Four Winds students within the Town of Morinville before traveling only a few minutes before dropping off at Four Winds School.</li> <li>• Most of the student picked up in the Town of Morinville are ineligible.</li> </ul>