

What is the main benefit to having the City of Lethbridge collaborate with Lethbridge School Division and Holy Spirit Catholic School Division to provide school bus service?

- The relationship with the city provided for an efficient and effective transportation service, and has allowed both school jurisdictions to have balanced transportation budgets. At this time, parents are not charged a transportation fee for students living 2.4 kilometres or more from their resident school. Holy Spirit does charge a transportation fee of \$20/month for elementary students transported from 1.2-2.4 kilometres.

How is this collaborate model viewed outside of Lethbridge?

- The partnership we have with transportation is touted as the model for everyone else in the province, (as was recognized by Education Minister LaGrange and Transportation Minister McIver) and in fact, the province is looking at how this model can be implemented elsewhere on a regional basis. Lethbridge could be walking away from a 50-year partnership that may become the “new standard” in school bus operations.

Is the partnership between the city and the two school divisions cost neutral?

- School bus operation from 2018/2019 had a surplus of \$74,371 between both school boards, which the city has applied to our 2019/2020 payments. The school divisions are billed based on the budget for that particular year. Boards cover any deficit incurred by the city, or a surplus is returned to boards. The partnership is based on a complete cost share by the school boards. Payments from the divisions to the city include over \$250,000 for overhead (for example, facility support). The City of Lethbridge has never communicated there are other “hidden” costs.

If the bus partnership with the city is canceled prior to the start of the 2020/2021 school year, what are the implications for the school divisions?

- The school divisions will most likely have to seek out a for-profit company to deliver in-city bus service for 2020/2021.

Can the school divisions simply deliver school bus services on their own, similar to what the city is currently doing?

- With only eight months until the start of the new school year, the school divisions would be unable to effectively takeover school bus operations from the city. The list of steps needed to be taken in order to make this happen make this unfeasible.

If the school division select a for-profit school bus provider, what are the implications for local families?

- Transportation fees are a reality for parents in almost every jurisdiction that contracts for-profit companies to operate school busses. This would be a devastating change for parents in Lethbridge who are accustomed to not having this burden, as an outcome of the City of Lethbridge's partnership with the school divisions. School divisions of similar size to Lethbridge levy school bus transportation fees in the neighbourhood of approximately \$300 per child.

The City of Lethbridge has concerns centred around risk management. How can the school divisions alleviate this issue?

- Through our insurance provider, the school divisions can take on a greater share of the liability. In a solid partnership, risk is shared among all involved, but the school divisions are willing to develop solutions to the concerns of the city regarding risk associated with school buses and school bus drivers.

How long has the school bus partnership been in place?

- The school bus partnership has existed for over 50 years, and it is the only such partnership in North America. The collaborative model serves to benefit the young residents of the city and provides reliable transportation and peace of mind to parents. The partnership eliminates the need for school bus transportation fees, and helps keep more money in the hands of families, many of whom are already stretched thin financially.

How do other school divisions across Alberta deliver school bus service, and in what manner?

- School bus service is provided in a number of ways. Some divisions deliver school bus services themselves, while others have entered contracts with third-party providers. Of the 61 school divisions in Alberta, 53 divisions run a transportation deficit, at a total of \$25 million in 2017/2018. Even divisions that charge transportation fees have incurred deficits in their respective transportation departments. A deficit in the transportation budget requires school divisions to take money out of other parts of the budget in order to present a balanced overall budget. Lethbridge School Division and Holy Spirit Catholic School Division are two of eight school divisions that do not run a transportation deficit. This is thanks to the partnership with the City of Lethbridge.

What would the school divisions like to see happen next?

- The divisions would like to have the opportunity to meet with the city to further address any concerns the city has in relation to the school bus agreement, and find a way to continue what has been a very beneficial arrangement for over five decades. Alternatively, the school divisions would seek a one-year extension on the current agreement, to give the divisions more time to seek alternatives for the 2021/2022 school year.