



# Ministry of Education Effectiveness & Efficiency Review

## **Nipissing-Parry Sound Student Transportation Services**

Phase 3 Review

March 2009

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**

### **Introduction**

This report details the findings and recommendations of an Effectiveness and Efficiency Review (“E&E Review”) of Nipissing-Parry Sound Student Transportation Services (“NPSSTS” or the “Consortium”) conducted by a review team selected by the Ministry of Education (hereafter the “Ministry”). This review is the result of government initiatives to establish an equitable approach to reforming student transportation across the province and to minimize the administrative burden for School Boards associated with providing safe, reliable, effective, and cost efficient transportation services. This section of the report is designed to provide an overall assessment of the Consortium and detail the major findings and recommendations of the overall report. These major findings and recommendations are enhanced and supplemented by the specific findings and recommendations detailed in each section of the report.

The E&E Review evaluated the Consortium’s performance in four specific areas of operation including consortium management; policies and practices; routing and technology use; and contracting practices. The purpose of reviewing each of these areas was to evaluate current practices to determine if they are reasonable and appropriate; identify whether the Consortium has implemented any best practices; and provide recommendations on opportunities for improvement in each of the specific areas of operation. The evaluation of each area was then utilized 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.

### **Effectiveness and efficiency review summary**

NPSSTS represents four coterminous School Boards – Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco- Nord (“CSDCFN”), Conseil scolaire public du district du Nord-Est de l’Ontario (“CSDNE”), Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board (“NPSCDSB”), and Near North District School Board (“NNDSB”).

Since 2001, these four School Boards (“Member Boards”) have been operating as a Consortium to provide shared transportation services under a Consortium Agreement. In 2003, the Consortium was incorporated as a non-share capital corporation.

NPSSTS services 79 schools with approximately 19,500 students, of which approximately 13,000 are transported by NPSSTS. The Consortium has approximately 35 operators that provide student transportation via school buses, vans, taxis, city

transit, and boats. The Consortium has more than 100 transfer locations, with over 450 bus routes and 820 runs traveling nearly 28,000 kilometers per day.

In addition, the Consortium also provides transit passes to about 400 students, and sells transportation services to Moose Deer Point First Nation, and Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

NPSSTS has successfully created a skeleton for an effective and efficient student transportation organization. This skeleton now needs to be built upon. Due to the considerable and diligent efforts of the General Manager, Consortium staff and the Board of Directors, the Consortium has taken several key steps towards improving its effectiveness and efficiency as a student transportation Consortium.

Particular areas of achievement include:

- *Separate legal entity* - Establishment of an operation that is legally and physically separated from the Member Boards. This incorporated entity structure is an effective safeguard against any third party establishing liability on the part of a member School Board. In addition, incorporation provides assurance of continuous existence and gives the Consortium greater stability in the long run. The Board of Directors that oversee the Consortium has equal representation from each Member Board which promotes fairness and equal participation in decision making and ensures the rights of the stakeholders are considered equally;
- *Role of the Board of Directors* - Roles and responsibilities for the Board of Directors and Consortium management are clearly articulated. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities in addition to the incorporation status provide a robust accountability framework for all key parties involved.
- *Short-term planning* – Operational planning process that is effectively linked to staff performance, evaluation, and management. These processes contribute to a corporate culture of continuous self-assessment and improvement. A detailed Operational Plan for the 2008-09 school year allows the Consortium to remain focused on goal-oriented initiatives aimed at improving service levels, operational procedures and accountability frameworks; and
- *Operator management* – Route audits are conducted regularly, ensuring that operator service-levels are consistent and in line with the Consortiums expectations.

While its achievements are noteworthy, there are still significant gaps and challenges that need to be addressed in order for the Consortium to enjoy the full benefit of the work that has been done thus far. The most significant of these gaps would be the

exclusion of critical safety related clauses in its operator contracts and the exclusion of basic service related clauses in its Memorandum of Agreement. Additional, equally significant areas for improvement include student data management, system effectiveness and operator management.

- *Completeness of operator contracts* - Essential clauses should be included in operator agreements that outline specific safety, regulatory and performance requirements such as driver first-aid training, dispute resolution and a specified maximum bus age. The absence of such clauses exposes the Consortium to serious service, financial, legal and safety risks;
- *Operator Oversight* - The Consortium should immediately establish an operating practice to document and analyze safety and legal compliance such as license validation and criminal record checks for all of its operators. The establishment of this type of documentation will ensure that the Consortium is well-positioned to properly manage key operational risks;
- *System Effectiveness* – The analysis indicates that an opportunity exists to make improvements to the overall effectiveness of the transportation system. The Consortium should assess routing strategies and bell time separation across the entire service area to analyze the potential for cost savings associated with a reduction in the number of buses dedicated to making runs exclusively to facilitate transfers;
- *Student data management* - Student data management should be improved in terms of content, accuracy and the frequency with which student data is imported from the student information systems. The Consortium should improve its collaboration with school sites to ensure that this data is accurate in order to improve both the efficiency of planning and the transfer of data to school bus operators;
- *Policy and operations manual* - The Consortium and its Member Boards should formalize the process being used to update policies and practices. This process should also coincide with the Consortium's ongoing development of its Operations Manual. The Operations Manual, when fully assembled and approved should serve the Consortium and its Member Boards as the single source document to address all transportation related questions and issues;
- *Routing Software Training* - A regular program of staff training should be implemented with a focus on effective route planning and data analysis. Formal training specific to the routing software application should fully train all Area

Technicians in the more advanced reporting and routing capabilities of the software.

- *Transportation service agreements* – Formal transportation service agreements should be executed with Member Boards and purchasers of service that outline the services to be provided by the Consortium and the service levels to which the Consortium is committed. Formal contracts protect the Consortium by ensuring that scope of services and fees, insurance/liabilities, quality of service; dispute resolution and contract terms are clearly articulated and agreed upon prior to the delivery of service.
- *Procurement policies* – Well defined rules and conditions for the acquisition of goods and services support effective internal control within the consortium. The Governance Committee, in reviewing the policies of each member boards, should establish and communicate clear procurement policies to consortia staff to guide all purchasing decisions and processes. Adherence to policies and guidelines will ensure accountability in procurement decision making, safeguard consortium's interests as well as make sure that the process is open, fair and transparent.
- *Competitive procurement process* – A competitive procurement process brings fairness, impartiality and transparency to any procurement exercise. It also enables the Consortium to purchase services from Operators that are able to meet specific requirements. Using a competitive procurement process will provide the Consortium with the opportunity to obtain the best value for their money and set service level expectations. Furthermore, this process will reflect market prices as it allows Operators to submit proposals based on achievable operational efficiency and an appropriate return on investment, with full knowledge of the service level requirements as specified by the Consortium. Additionally, it provides a fair and measurable basis for evaluating Operator performance and allows the Consortium to utilize financial incentives to meet desired service levels. If there are areas within the Consortium geography where this process may not be appropriate, the Consortium can use the competitively procured contracts as a proxy for service levels and costs negotiated with the Operators. Based on Ministry's direction as communicated through numbered memorandum 2008:B15 of December 10, 2008, 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 process and a criteria and timeline to phase-in competitive procurement. The plan should also utilize the best practices and lessons learned from the pilot Consortia.

The E&E Review team has noted that the Consortium has been moving in the right direction in terms of its overall effectiveness and efficiency and is of the belief that adopting the recommendations of this report will lead to further improvements. We are also encouraged by the high level of commitment demonstrated by the General Manager and the Board of Directors to continuous operational improvement. Continued refinement of identified best practices and the implementation of the recommendations identified throughout this report will be required to ensure the continued efficiency and effectiveness of the operations of NPSSTS.

**Funding adjustment**

As a result of this review of current performance, NPSSTS has been rated as a **Moderate-Low** Consortium. Based on this evaluation, the Ministry will provide additional transportation funding that will narrow the 2008-09 transportation funding gap for Conseil scolaire public du district du Nord-Est de l’Ontario in proportion to the amount of transportation expenditure attributed to this Consortium in 2007-08. The transportation allocation for Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord, Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School board and Near North District School Board will remain unchanged in the 2008-09 school year.

The funding adjustments to be received are detailed below<sup>1</sup>:

Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord	Nil
Conseil scolaire public du district du Nord-Est de l’Ontario	\$8,520
Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board	Nil
Near North District School Board	Nil

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Section 7 for the calculation of funding adjustments.

# **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 consortia 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 consortia sites in the province. Currently, the majority of School Boards cooperate to some degree in delivering transportation services. Cooperation between 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.

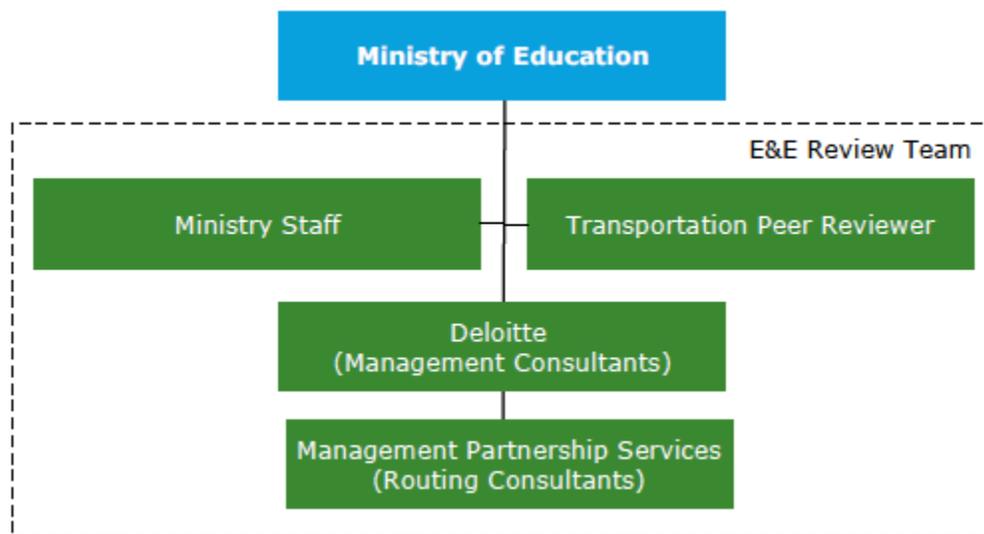
#### **1.1.4 Effectiveness and efficiency review**

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 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:

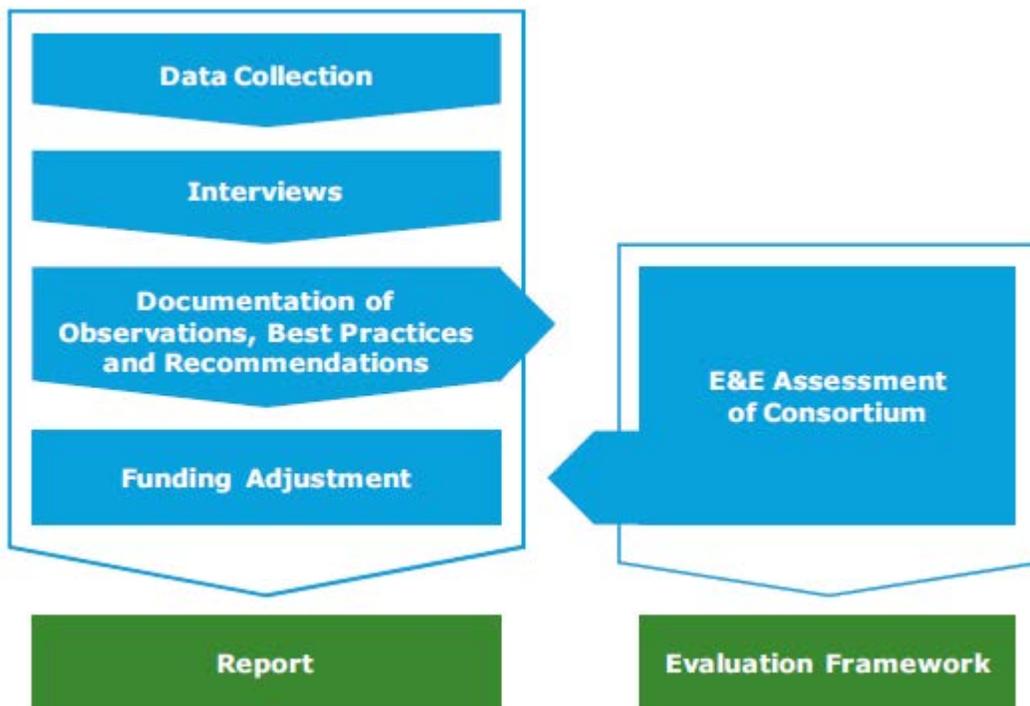
- Lead the planning and execution of E&E Reviews for each of the 18 transportation consortia to be reviewed in Phases Three and Four (currently in phase 3A);
- At the beginning of each E&E Review, convene and moderate E&E Review Team planning meetings to determine data required and availability prior 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 its Member Boards. Once finalized, each report will be released to the consortium and its Member Boards.

### 1.3 Methodology used to complete E&E Review

The methodology for the E&E Review is based on the five 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:-

#### **Effectiveness**

##### ***Consortium management***

- Distinct entity focused on providing student transportation services for the partner boards

- Well defined governance and organizational structure with clear roles and responsibilities
- Oversight body exists with the mandate to provide strategic directions to the 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
- Well established accountability framework reflected in the set up and operation of the consortium including documentation of terms in a Consortium Agreement
- Operations are monitored for its performance and continuous improvement
- Financial processes ensure accountability and equality to Partner Boards
- A budgeting process is in place which ensures timely preparation and monitoring of expenses
- Key business relationships are defined in contracts

### ***Policies and Practices***

- Development of policies is based on well defined parameters as set by strategic and operational plans to provide safe, effective and efficient transportation service to students of the partner boards; and
  - Policy decisions are made with due considerations to financial and service impacts to partner boards
  - Communication between the consortium and partner boards facilitates informed decision making on issues directly affecting student transportation
  - Consortium's policies and practices are adequate and in compliance with all relevant safety regulation and standards
  - Practices on the ground follow policies

### ***Routing and Technology***

- Advanced use of transportation management software to store student data, and create a routing solution.

- Disaster recovery plans and back up procedures are in place and operating properly
- Responsibility and accountability for student data management is clearly identified
- Routing is reviewed regularly
- Reporting tools are used effectively
- Special needs routing is integrated with regular needs where reasonable

### ***Contracts***

- Competitive contracting practice is used
- Contract negotiations are transparent, fair, and timely
- Contracts are structured to ensure accountability and transparency between contracted parties
- Contracts exist for all service providers
- Ongoing compliance checks for safety, legal and service requirements are performed by the consortium

### **Efficiency**

#### ***Consortium management***

- Oversight committee focuses only on high level decisions
- Organizational structure is efficient in utilization of staff
- Streamlined financial and business processes
- Cost sharing mechanism are well defined and implemented

#### ***Policies and Practices***

- Harmonized transportation policies between partner boards enable efficient planning

- Proper level of authority delegated to consortium to enable the realization of potential efficiencies e.g. bell times setting
- Best practices in planning are adopted e.g. utilize tiered runs and combination runs to maximize the use of available capacity
- Public transit usage is optimized where available and efficient
- Service levels are reasonable and comparable to common practices

### ***Routing and Technology***

- System can be restored quickly if database fails
- Student data is accurate, requires little post processing verification
- System functionalities are used to identify efficiencies

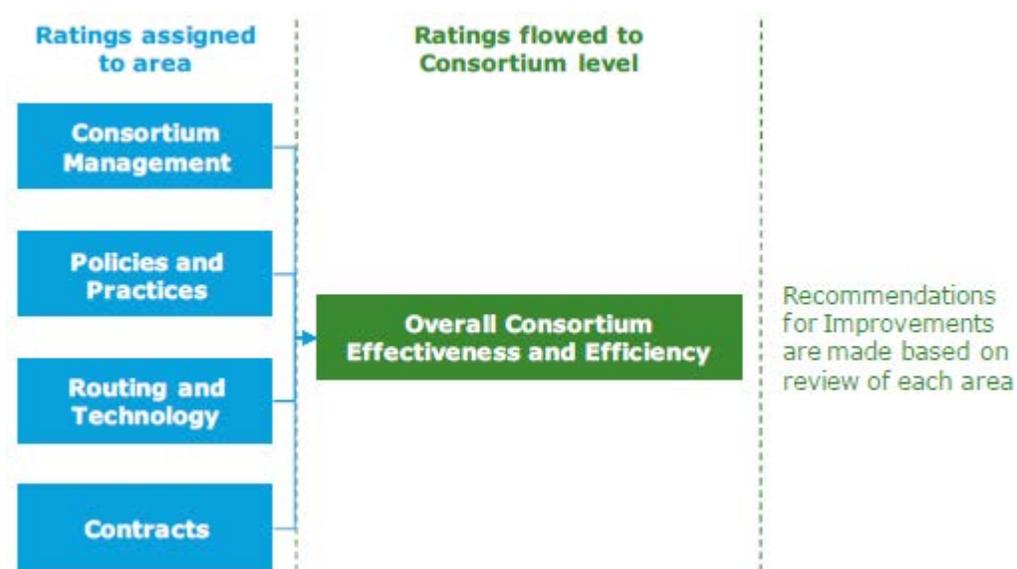
### ***Contracts***

- Contracts awarded are based on market prices and best value for money
- Fair payment terms are included in contracts and implemented with clarity to both parties

#### **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 Consortium - 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 to inform any future funding adjustments. Only 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**

<b>Overall Rating</b>	<b>Effect on deficit Boards<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Effect on surplus Boards<sup>2</sup></b>
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 in the range of 0% to 30%	Same as above

### **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 5, 2009.

### **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 NPSSTS.

### **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.

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to Boards that have a deficit/surplus on student transportation (see Section 7 – Funding Adjustments)

## 2 Consortium Overview

### 2.1 Consortium overview

NPSSTS represents four coterminous School Boards – Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco- Nord, Conseil scolaire public du district du Nord-Est de l'Ontario, Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board, and Near North District School Board. Since 2001, these four School Boards have cooperated to provide shared transportation services under the Consortium Agreement for Shared Transportation Services. The Consortium was incorporated in 2003.

NPSSTS Consortium services 79 schools with approximately 19,500 students, of which approximately 13,000 are transported by NPSSTS. The Consortium has approximately 35 operators that provide student transportation via school buses, vans, taxis, city transit, and boats. The Consortium has more than 100 transfer locations, over 450 bus routes covering nearly 820 runs, and its vehicles travel nearly 28,000 kilometers per day.

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

**Table 2: 2007-08 Transportation Survey Data**

Terms	CSDCFN	CSDNE	NPSCDSB	NNDSB	Total Consortium
Number of schools served	17	5	14	43	79
Total general transported students	1,871	624	1,535	5,928	9,958
Total special needs <sup>3</sup> transported students	39	3	78	132	252
Total wheelchair accessible transportation	2	-	7	7	16
Total specialized program <sup>4</sup> transportation	-	-	457	1,355	1,812

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<b>Terms</b>	<b>CSDCFN</b>	<b>CSDNE</b>	<b>NPSCDSB</b>	<b>NNDSB</b>	<b>Total Consortium</b>
Total courtesy riders	-	-	-	-	-
Total hazard riders	302	23	219	474	1,018
Total students transported daily	2,214	650	2,296	7,896	13,056
Total public transit riders	23	-	47	314	384
Total contracted full- and mid-sized buses <sup>5</sup>	66	16	59	199	340
Total contracted mini buses	1	-	-	4	5
Total contracted school purpose vehicles <sup>6</sup>	15	1	13	19	48
Total contracted PDPV	-	-	-	1	1
Total contracted taxis	7	1	18	45	71
Total number of contracted vehicles	89	18	90	268	465

**Table 3: 2007-08 Financial Data<sup>7</sup>**

<b>Terms</b>	<b>CSDCFN</b>	<b>CSDNE</b>	<b>NPSCDSB</b>	<b>NNDSB</b>
Transportation Allocation	\$3,404,350	\$1,326,194	\$3,611,215	\$10,333,253
Transportation Expenditures	\$3,297,676	\$1,377,632	\$3,454,660	\$10,002,613
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$106,674	(\$51,438)	\$156,555	\$330,640
Percentage of transportation expenditure attributed to the Consortium	100%	55.21%	100%	100%

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Includes school-purpose vans, mini-vans and sedans.

<sup>7</sup> Based on Ministry Data – see Appendix 2.

## **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 NPSSTS, and from information collected during interviews with the Transportation General Manager (“General Manager”) and selected operators. 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 NPSSTS is as follows:

### **Consortium Management – E&E Rating: Moderate**

### **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 as follows: 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.

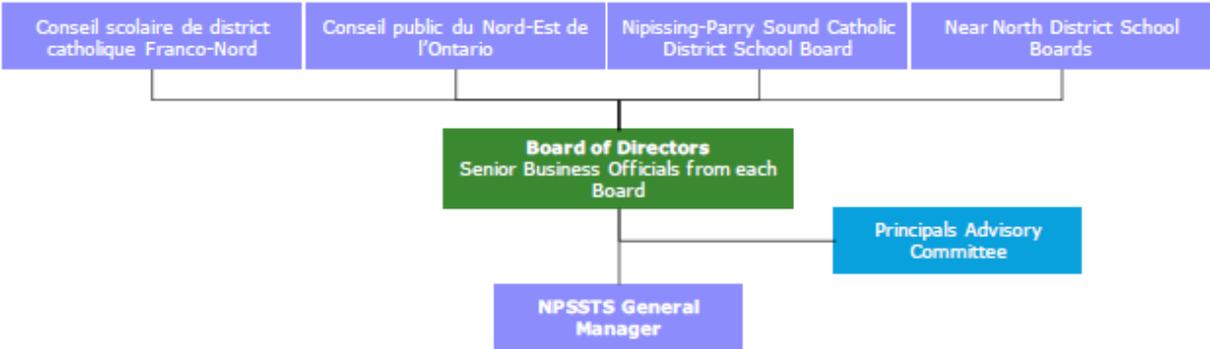
#### **3.2.1 Observations**

##### **Governance structure**

The NPSSTS operations are overseen by a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors consists of the Superintendents of Business from each of the Member Boards. The role

of the Board of Directors, as defined in the By-law number 1 (“Consortium by-law 1”), is to manage the affairs of the Corporation. As per discussions with the Consortium General Manager this includes setting the strategic direction of the Consortium; approving all management and administrative policies; approving operating procedures in conjunction with the General Manager; approving budgets and program priorities; and facilitating communication with School Boards. The governance structure of the Consortium is outlined in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4: Consortium Governance Structure<sup>8</sup>**



The Board of Directors meets approximately once every month and sometimes more frequently whenever pressing issues arise. Agendas are established by the General Manager. Minutes of the meetings are taken by the General Manager’s Executive Assistant, and notes are distributed for review to Board Members during the next meeting where they are reviewed, ratified and signed.

The Chair of the Board of Directors is a formal position as outlined in the NPSSTS Transportation Memorandum of Agreement (“Consortium Agreement”) but can be substituted by another Board Member in case of nonattendance. The Chair is elected by the Board of Directors, and must be a Director of a Board committee. The Chair shall hold office for a term of one year or until his/her successor is duly elected. The Board of Directors has equal representation from all four member School Boards.

Interviews with the Board of Directors and Consortium staff revealed that the Board of Directors is involved with some day-to-day operational issues. This involvement is due to the prolonged absence of previous Consortium management and the associated transition to new management. The Board of Directors has expressed the need to become more policy oriented and they are currently in the early stages of moving in this

<sup>8</sup> The Principals Advisory Committee is described in section 3.4.1

direction. Board Members indicated a high-level of confidence in the current management team and it is this confidence that is enabling the transition of the governance committee from a management to an oversight body.

The Board of Directors governs by consensus. While members of the Board of Directors have historically cooperated with each other, it was noted during interviews that decisions can sometimes reach an impasse when members of the governance committee do not accommodate each other and Board of Director members indicated that they were reluctant to invoke the Board level dispute settlement mechanism as per the Consortium Agreement to resolve the issue.

### **Board level arbitration clause**

The NPSSTS Consortium Agreement arbitration clause states that “in the event that the parties hereto disagree on any matter arising under this Agreement, then every such disagreement shall be referred to Arbitration pursuant to the provisions of the Arbitration Act”.

### **3.2.2 Best Practices**

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

#### **Structure of the Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors, which is charged with oversight responsibilities for the Consortium, has equal representation from the Member Boards. Equal representation promotes fairness and equal participation in decision making and ensures the rights of each Member Board are considered equally. This is a key element in effective governance and management. However, as noted in the recommendation below, the Consortium needs to make efforts to put into practice the governance structure defined in the Consortium Agreement and Consortium by-law 1.

#### **Role of the Board of Directors**

Roles and responsibilities for the Board of Directors are clearly articulated in the Consortium Agreement and Consortium by-law 1. This ensures that there is no ambiguity in their oversight and strategic direction functions. This is a key element in effective and efficient governance and management.

#### **Meetings of the Board of Directors**

The Board meets monthly and requires a formal agenda and minutes. Minutes are ratified and signed, making NPSSTS accountable and transparent to its stakeholders.

### **3.2.3 Recommendations**

#### **Reduce Board of Directors' involvement in day-to-day management**

The Board of Directors' current involvement in day-to-day operational issues makes it difficult to clearly distinguish management from governance and impinges on the governance committee's ability to properly oversee the management of the Consortium. It is recommended that the governance committee move away from being directly involved in the operational aspects of the Consortium and focus its efforts on the governance of the Consortium's strategic needs.

It is, however, recognized that input from the Board of Directors is sometimes necessary on operational issues, this type of discussion is more appropriate in an operations oriented sub-committee of the Board. It is recommended that a Management Board of the Board of Directors be established to further support the realignment of responsibility and accountability between the Board of Directors and Consortium management. This committee should be comprised of members chosen by the Board of Directors and should include the General Manager.

#### **Modify the current dispute resolution mechanism**

While it is recognized that the current dispute resolution policy promotes quick dispute resolution, it also implies that every irresolvable dispute between Board Members must be sent to Arbitration without any intermediate steps. It is recommended that this dispute resolution framework be modified to allow for a more deliberate and measured escalation of disputes. An example of such an intermediate step may include the involvement of a neutral mediator during the early stages.

The option to undertake an intermediate dispute resolution steps prior to Arbitration would provide the Board of Directors with more options when attempting to reach decisions on issues where consensus is not forthcoming.

### **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

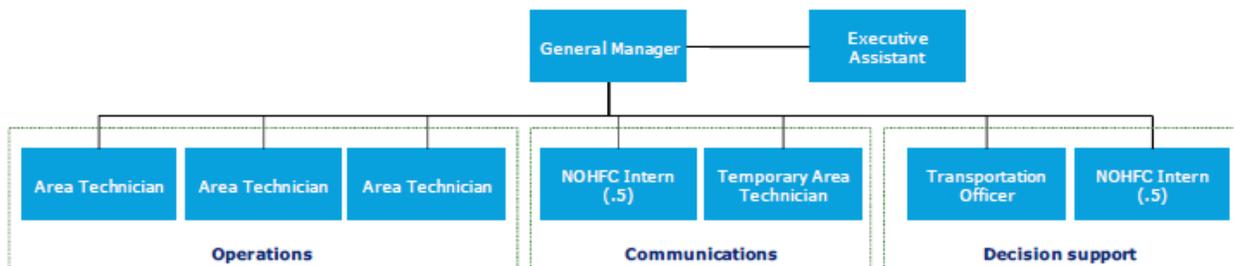
NPSSTS is organized as a separate legal entity with each Member Board being granted membership status rights as established in the Consortium Agreement and Consortium by-law 1. Member Boards are not liable for the liabilities of the Consortium as outlined in the Consortium by-laws.

The Consortium's office is physically separate from its member boards.

#### Organization of entity

The following is the organizational chart presented to the E&E team by the Consortium:

**Figure 5: NPSSTS Organization Structure**



1 General Manager, 1 Transportation Officer, 3 Area Technicians, 1 Information and Technology and Communications Assistant, 1 Casual Assistant Area Technician and 1 Executive Assistant.

#### *General Manager*

As per the job description, the management of the Consortium's operations is to be conducted by a General Manager. The role of the General Manager includes, among other things, negotiation of contracts for services from operators; creating and maintaining contracts with operators; supporting, supervising and evaluating the performance of employees and contractors; preparing reports and recommendations to the Board of Directors; processing payments to operators; calculating the allocation of costs among School Boards; recovering costs from coterminous School Boards; coordinating Board of Director's Meetings and Consortium Meetings; determining transportation needs based on policy and communication and determining bus routes and stops. The General Manager is an employee of NPSSTS and spends 100% of his time working for the Consortium.

### *Transportation officer*

Reporting to the General Manager, the Transportation Officer is responsible for, among other things, the management of student data, and data related issues. This includes overall responsibility for the day-to-day tracking of incidents, safety related issues, coordinating route audits and analyzing results in addition to ensuring that transportation services are provided to eligible students on a fair and equitable basis, giving priority to safety and maximizing the efficiency of operations. The Transportation Officer is an employee of NPSSTS and is a member of a collective bargaining unit. A job description is available for this position.

### *Area technicians*

Reporting to the General Manager, the three Area Technicians are responsible for the administration of resolving technical issues such as route timing and delays, as well as planning routes and other planning related activities. The Area Technicians are employees of NPSSTS and are members of a collective bargaining unit. A job description is available for this position.

### *Assistant area technician*

Reporting to the General Manager, the Assistant Area Technician supports routine stop assignments and provides communication support to parents. The Assistant Area Technician is an employee of NPSSTS, is employed on a casual basis during peak periods and is not a member of a collective bargaining unit. A job description is not currently available for this position.

### *Information technology and communications assistant*

Reporting to the General Manager, the Information Technology and Communications Assistant supports the General Manager in developing formal communications, maintaining the Consortium's website and aiding with other external communications such as designing pamphlets for schools and parents. The Information Technology and Communications Assistant is employed by NPSSTS. This position is a one-year temporary position.

### *Executive assistant*

Reporting to the General Manager, the Executive Assistant provides general office administration and accounting support. The Executive Assistant is an employee of NPSSTS and is not currently a member of a collective bargaining unit. A job description is currently available for this position.

### **3.3.2 Best practices**

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

#### **Separate legal entity**

NPSSTS is incorporated as a non-share capital corporation. This structure provides the Consortium with independence in terms of managing daily operations and also provides contractual benefits. As a separate legal entity, the Consortium can enter into binding legal contracts, including operator contracts, for all services purchased. Separate legal entity status effectively limits risk to the Member Boards for activities related to the provision of student transportation. Thus it is an effective safeguard against the possibility of a third party establishing liability on a member School Board. Over the long term, this status will also provide benefits from an organization perspective in terms of corporate continuity, staff planning, liability, contracting and management.

#### **Obligations of Member Boards**

Consortium by-law 1 clearly articulates the expectations and obligations of each Member Board and the Consortium. This is a fundamental requirement for an effective business relationship. The availability of current and complete documentation related to the roles and responsibilities of Member Boards ensures and enforces accountability related to the provision of student transportation.

#### **Job descriptions**

Notwithstanding the recommendation below, job descriptions for all permanent Consortium employees are clearly defined within NPSSTS ensuring that they can efficiently execute on their duties.

### **3.3.3 Recommendations**

#### **Create a new position with managerial responsibilities**

It is recommended that a new managerial position be created that is responsible for the coordination of the Area Technicians and the management of day-to-day transportation operations. The General Manager will then be allowed to focus his efforts on the general, strategic management of the Consortium and on transportation matters that cannot be addressed by other staff. Thus the General Manager will be able to take on a more strategic role while operational matters are addressed by the person in this new position. This position could be filled by either existing staff or through a new hire.

### **Job descriptions for temporary positions should be created**

Job descriptions should be made available for all employees of the Consortium, including casual workers. Job descriptions help to clearly define a position's roles and responsibility and can also be used as a framework for effective succession planning.

## **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**

#### **Consortium formation and agreement**

An executed Consortium Agreement dated June 16, 2003 as well as the articles of incorporation, executed on March 23, 2003, forms the legal and contractual foundation for the Consortium. The Consortium by-laws attached to the incorporation documentation outline the governance structure and membership of the incorporation. The Consortium Agreement outlines in detail the governance and operating structures of the Consortium, the roles and responsibilities of each of the governance and operating parties and establishes some operating guidelines such as services to be provided, dispute resolution, and indemnity.

The Consortium Agreement includes a section on services to be provided by the Consortium. These include, among others: investigating the possibility of issuing an RFP for transportation services; coordinating negotiations with operators; developing and maintaining a common student database; coordinating the optimization of bus routes; reviewing existing policies to make recommendations regarding policy harmonization; developing a cost sharing formula and making recommendations relating to any matter beneficial to the effective and efficient operation of the Consortium. There is no explicit mention of the provision of transportation services to Member Boards. There are also no formal contracts<sup>9</sup> between the Member Boards and the Consortium that explicitly outline the activities of the Consortium or the performance levels expected of the Consortium.

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<sup>9</sup> 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 to describe a less detailed document that only outlines the services to be provided and the rates at which they are to be provided.

## **Purchase of service agreements**

NPSSTS currently has two service agreements with the NPSCDSB, one service agreement with the NNDSB and one service agreement with CSDNE. The four agreements are for services as follows:

- Benefits administration for all non unionized staff and management (CSDNE);
- Benefits administration for all unionized staff (CUPE) (NNDSB);
- Accounts payable/accounts receivable and general accounting (NPSCDSB); and
- Payroll services and LTD benefits (NPSCDSB).
- IT services are provided on an ad-hoc basis by a local provider. All system maintenance and back-up work is conducted by the Transportation Officer.

Services to be provided by the Consortium are outlined in Consortium Agreement. This document outlines the Consortium's responsibilities. These responsibilities include, among other things: investigating the feasibility of issuing a Request for Proposal for transportation services; making recommendations to the Member Boards on matters related to the selection of bus operators; coordinating negotiations with selected operators; developing a common student database; optimizing bus routes; reviewing the administrative and operating costs of the Consortium on a regular basis; developing cost-sharing formulas for the Member Boards; engaging necessary resources to carry out the approved activities of the Consortium; making recommendations regarding the purchase and placement of computer hardware and software for the coordination of activities and making any recommendations relating to any matters beneficial to the effective and efficient operation of the Consortium..

## **Purchasing practices**

NPSSTS does not have formalized procurement/purchasing policies in place. A draft policy was proposed in May 2003 but was never approved. The Consortium's use of competitive procurement practices is discussed in section 6.3.

## **Transportation services to other entities**

NPSSTS is currently also providing transportation services to students from the Moose Deer Point First Nation. Discussions related to a formal contract have occurred, however, a formal contract is not yet in place. A draft contract has been provided to the First Nation.

The Consortium is also providing transportation services to students from the Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Authority. Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Authority transportation policies mirror those of the Near North District School Board. The contract expired on August 31, 2008 but a verbal agreement was made to continue service. A written contract is not yet in place.

### **Banking**

All banking for NPSSTS is done by NPSCDSB.

### **Insurance**

NPSSTS has purchased liability insurance as stipulated in the Consortium Agreement. NPSSTS has obtained Liability, Crime, Property, Boiler and Fleet Automobile Insurance from OSBIE (Ontario School Board Insurance Exchange). The current policy is effective from January 1, 2009 to January 1, 2010.

### **Staff performance evaluation, training, and management**

All NPSSTS staff are employees of the Consortium. Evaluations, training and management of staff are executed under the guidance of the General Manager on a bi-annual basis. It was also noted that the staff do not currently have learning plans. Performance guidelines to evaluate the performance of employees were developed but have not been implemented. Job evaluation guidelines have been developed for all employees of the Consortium as well as the Board of Directors. Criteria against which employees are evaluated include the quality and quantity of work performed; employee communication, organizational and technical skills; as well as initiative, among other things. The General Manager noted that the performance evaluation guidelines would be reviewed and modified as necessary and conducted in the spring of 2009.

Staff are effectively cross-trained in each other's duties. Area Technicians are trained in the Transportation Officer's duties through their involvement in the evaluation of safety concerns, programs and their involvement in operator audits. The Transportation Officer is often involved in route planning and resolving timing and delay issues. The Information Technology and Communications Assistant intern position is currently being transitioned to accept more IT related duties as a replacement for the Transportation Officer. Area Technicians also assist with IT related activities while the Executive Assistant is also involved in communication duties.

### **Monitoring of Consortium operations**

The General Manager conducts twice-weekly meetings with staff to review unresolved problems, service requests and project updates, etc. Interviews with staff indicated that

reportable events are monitored, reviewed and updated as required at these meetings. These meetings are not, however, a part of a formalized monitoring process. Meeting minutes are not taken and as such, we were not able to verify the incident tracking and monitoring process.

An Operations Manual is currently under development. This manual will deal with issues such as how to process students with joint custody arrangements, CAS forms, etc. Additionally, the Consortium is attempting to document current practices as policy, have them vetted by the Principal Advisory Committee (“PAC”) and ultimately approved by the Board of Directors. When policies are developed, they are discussed with the Board of Directors.

The PAC is comprised of four school principals, each representing a Member board and a variety of geographical areas (rural and urban) and panels (elementary and secondary). The first meeting of PAC was held in December of 2008. A portion of PACs mandate is to, among other things, draft terms of reference for the committee with an initial focus on reviewing existing policies, procedures, practices, guidelines, forms and communications and to assess their overall impact on school operations and students. The PAC is then expected to discuss these with other school principals and provide feedback to NPSSTS.

### **Short term and long term planning**

It was noted through discussions with the General Manager that there is currently no long-term business plan in place. However, there is a mission statement in place for the Consortium. It was noted that the General Manager set shorter term goals in the 2008-2009 operational plan which was approved by the Board of Directors. This operational plan outlines the expectations of Consortium management in terms of major deliverables and projects that are to be conducted or produced during the 2008-2009 school year. The operational plan also sets the resources that have been allocated to these projects, the timelines over which they are to occur and the expected cost of the projects.

The Board of Directors had noted that the objectives seemed aggressive, and encouraged the General Manager to focus on 3 or 4 goals and incorporate the other goals as part of a longer-term strategy plan still to be developed. Minutes of the Board of Directors indicate that NPSSTS’ main objective for the current year is to implement a formal transportation request and student data validation process to ensure the accuracy of student information. An equally important priority is to continue to conduct route audits in order to improve routing information.

## **Consortium Key Performance (Service) indicators (“KPIs”)**

The Consortium tracks a limited number of Key Performance indicators such as;

- cost per pupil analysis;
- route delays;
- monthly actual financial results vs. budgeted figures;
- incident tracking report; and
- data validation errors by school report.

Discussions with the General Manager reveal that there are integrity issues with the student data currently on file. This has hindered the routine use of KPIs since the accuracy of the information on the system must be verified before they are compared to a benchmark. In an effort to resolve these issues, the Consortium has stopped accepting changes to student data unless the request is accompanied by a transportation request form and has a pick up address, drop off address and the signature of the relevant school principal.

Other than informal monitoring of delays, accidents and other reportable incidents, the Consortium does not make use of KPIs to measure the performance of bus operators, making it difficult to assess whether operators are offering the level of service expected by the Consortium. Bus operator’s performance is also measured using a survey, which is discussed in greater detail in section 6.4.1.

## **Confidentiality agreements**

There is no confidentiality clause in the Consortium Agreement or Consortium by-law 1. Confidentiality agreements have been signed with all Consortium employees and operators.

## **Cost sharing**

### *Administration & Transportation costs*

The Consortium Agreement outlines the cost sharing formula for the four School Boards. It states that each Member shall be responsible for its own costs in relation to the management of its own transportation operation and policies.

In practice, however, the costs of the Consortium are split among the Member Boards. Transportation costs are allocated to the Members based on a percentage weighted ridership for each Member.

Administration costs are allocated based on ridership alone. Direct costs are charged fully to the Member Board requesting additional services. This formula is documented in the Consortium plan submitted to the Ministry in November 2006 but has not been formalized and documented by the Consortium.

### **3.4.2 Best practices**

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

#### **Insurance**

NPSSTS carries liability, crime, property, boiler and fleet equipment insurance. In addition, each Member Board is required to carry its own insurance. Insurance coverage for both the Consortium and School Boards is essential to ensure each are suitably protected from potential liabilities.

#### **Staff performance evaluation and management**

Notwithstanding the recommendation below, the methodology used for staff performance evaluations are considered to be a best practice. The evaluations use an easily understood framework that is specific to NPSSTS and based around its departmental work plan. The metrics which are used are supportive of the goals and objectives of the Consortium.

#### **Staff cross-training**

Support staff are effectively cross trained in operational functions to provide assistance in the event of redundancy which is important given the small size of the Consortium team.

#### **Short term planning and mission statement**

Notwithstanding the recommendation below, it is recognized that the operational plan created by the Consortium for the 2008-09 school year drives its operations and outlines specific, measurable goals with resources and costs associated to them. The detail and specificity of this plan is highlighted as a best practice.

#### **Principal Advisory Committee**

It is recognized that the process being used by the Consortium to create an operations manual is a best practice. The involvement of school principals in the creation of Consortium policies and procedures is a novel approach that allows for comprehensive stakeholder input into Consortium operations.

### **3.4.3 Recommendations**

#### **Execute a formalized transportation service agreement**

While the Consortium Agreement outlines some points related to the provision of transportation services, greater clarity and precision is required with respect to the specific conditions and characteristics of the transportation services to be provided. The primary role of the Consortium Agreement should be that of an agreement among School Boards that establishes the Consortium; it is to be an over-arching agreement that specifies the terms and structure of the Boards' joint venture. Distinct from the Consortium Agreement is a transportation service agreement, which articulates the service relationship between the Member Boards and the Consortium as a separate legal entity. In order to make the above distinction clearer, it is recommended that the Consortium develop and execute a joint transportation service agreement with the Member Boards. The transportation service agreement should include clauses that specify the scope of services to be provided, fees, insurance/liabilities, quality of service, dispute resolution and other terms that the Member Boards deem to be appropriate.

#### **Execute transportation service agreements with other service purchasers**

While it is recognized that a verbal agreement is in place, the Consortium should formalize and execute transportation service contracts with the Moose Deer Point First Nation and the Parry Sound Roman Catholic Separate School Authority. Without a contract in place, the Consortium is significantly increasing its exposure to liability and financial risks.

#### **Formally document the cost sharing mechanism**

While issues related to the splitting of costs are partially addressed in the Consortium Agreement, there is no clear, Board of Directors approved cost splitting formula in either this document or the Consortium by-laws. The cost sharing formula is only documented in the Consortium plan submitted to the Ministry. It is therefore recommended that cost sharing arrangements be documented in a formal, executed contract that has been approved by the Board of Directors. This will help avoid any possible confusion between the Consortium and its Member Boards and will mitigate the risk of disputes arising in the future.

#### **Develop and formalize a set of procurement policies**

Notwithstanding the recommendation regarding competitive procurement in section 6.3.2; which takes precedence to this recommendation, it is recommended that NPSSTS formalize its policies related to procurement. An effective procurement policy

will identify the type of procurement method to be used for a given size, type and complexity of good or service being purchased. All consortia should establish formal procurement policies or adopt the policies of a member board once reviewed for appropriateness in transportation purchasing decisions, internal controls and work processes. Particular attention should be paid to the purchasing thresholds associated with initiating a competitive procurement process. This threshold should be practical to allow for sole sourcing of transportation services when it is warranted in varying circumstances. Formalizing these policies will ensure standardization in the procurement methods of the Consortium and will also act as a financial control mechanism by providing clarity to the Member Boards. It will also allow the Consortium to harmonize each Board's purchasing policies while ensuring that these policies are adapted to the particular needs of the Consortium.

### **Draft a long term planning document**

Minutes from Board of Directors meetings indicate that a portion of the goals outlined in the 2008-09 operational plan are to be included in a longer term planning document for the Consortium. The separation of long term goals from short term goals is important to help differentiate the issues that need immediate attention from those which can be implemented over a longer term. It is recommended that a long term planning document be drafted by Consortium management and approved by the Board of

Directors on an annual basis. This will ensure that the Consortium has a clear strategic focus and can plan for continuous performance improvement. A long term plan should also establish KPI's against which the Consortium can monitor service quality and improvement.

### **Regularly use Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess Consortium performance**

NPSSTS, with guidance and approval from the Board of Directors, should expand the list of KPIs that it will use to monitor and assess its own performance. KPIs can be used to inform management decision making and provide a method to ensure that organizational goals and objectives are being met. Some sample KPIs include:

- eligible unassigned student lists;
- total students transported;
- average vehicle statistics and other route statistics;
- program costs; and
- total vehicles in operation.

The General Manager should also formally assess the performance of the organization against the set of key benchmarks that have been listed in 3.4.1.10. Formally monitoring a relevant portfolio of KPIs will allow NPSSTS to quantify its performance. The Consortium can use the results of the analysis to generate realistic business improvement plans or make policy recommendations to the Member Boards based on current and relevant data obtained through the KPIs.

### **Continue to formalize the Operations Manual**

The Consortium's efforts to develop an Operations Manual to document currently undocumented policies, practices and procedures are admirable. NPSSTS should continue to focus on reviewing, drafting and formalizing existing policies, procedures, practices, guidelines, forms and communications. Standardized administrative and operating procedures will help to ensure that Consortium staff can manage their time effectively, use appropriate resources, and organize communication appropriately. They also form the basis of effective succession planning.

### **Formalize learning plans for staff and initiate regular training**

While it is understood that staff performance evaluations are conducted on a regular basis, it is recommended that these staff performance evaluations also include a component that addresses staff training and learning needs. Staff training should be provided on a regular basis, should be tracked internally, and training goals should be aligned with overall consortium objectives to support continuous service quality improvement.

### **Sign confidentiality agreements with all Member Boards**

Since the Consortium provides services to a number of different Member Boards, Consortium employees have access to information from the Member Boards. In the interest of ensuring that confidential Board information is not passed from one Board to another, it is recommended that confidentiality agreements be signed between the Consortium and the Member Boards stating that each Board's information is given to the Consortium in confidence. The confidentiality of this information should be ensured through signed confidentiality agreements.

## **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. They also clearly define the financial processes of the Consortium in a way that ensures appropriate oversight without impinging on efficiency.

### **3.5.1 Observations**

#### **Budget planning and monitoring**

The process for developing the annual transportation budget is undertaken by the General Manager using the prior year's budget as a guide and adjusting for current year expected revenue and expenditure changes. This process is repeated for every line item identified in the budget. Subsequently, the budget estimates are submitted to the Board of Directors for approval. Once approved by the Board of Directors, the budget is submitted to the Member Boards at which point it becomes the official operating budget for the Consortium. It was noted that the budget for the current year was approved by the Board of Directors on June 26, 2008. It was then decided on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 that the budget will be reviewed as operator costs were underestimated in the previous year's budget.

The accounting function is performed for the Consortium by the NPSCDSB. A monthly statement generated from the NPSCDSB accounting system is sent to the General Manager for review on a monthly basis. The General Manager and NPSCDSB accounting staff cooperatively undertake year-end financial processing.

#### **Accounting practices and management**

All accounting services are provided by NPSCDSB. These services include invoicing, payments to suppliers, and financial statement preparation. As an example, an invoice for telephone services would be received by the Executive Assistant of the Consortium who verifies and codes the expense, which would then be passed on to the General Manager for review and approval (sign-off). The invoice is then copied and filed with the original being sent to NPSCDSB accounting staff for processing and payment. Budget to actual reconciliation reports are produced by NPSCDSB staff and tracked monthly by the NPSSTS General Manager.

All expenses of the General Manager are reviewed and approved by the NPSCDSB Finance Director who is also a Director of the Consortium. No accounting is performed by the Consortium. Invoices are verified for accuracy and coded according to NPSSTS' account structure.

The NPSSTS' year-end financial results are presented and approved by the Board on an annual basis.

## **External audit**

The financial statements of NPSSTS are subject to an annual audit by external auditors. There is no other internal audit that covers the Consortium.

### **3.5.2 Best Practices**

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

#### **Centralized accounting**

Accounting for the Consortium is centralized at the NPSCDSB, thus helping to ensure clarity in accounting procedures and allowing for oversight at a single location.

#### **Internal controls**

NPSSTS and its Member Boards have established appropriate policies and internal controls for the accounting of the Consortiums revenues and expenses. The accounting function is performed at the Board level however there is a first review and approval (including coding of accounts) at the Consortium level. NPSSTS is not able to disburse funds therefore the second level of reviews occurs at the Board level prior to disbursements; this protects the Consortium and Boards against fraud and/or errors in accounting.

#### **Budget monitoring**

The General Manager and the Board of Directors conduct routine reviews and approves reconciliations to ensure proper control and prevent accounting errors. Budget-to-actual variations are also documented on a regular basis

### **3.5.3 Recommendations**

#### **Formalize and document current accounting processes**

It is recommended that the accounting policies and procedures currently being used by the Consortium be formalized and documented. The documentation of these procedures is critical as it will help to ensure that appropriate checks are in place and that the financial stability of the Consortium will not be impacted due to employee turnover.

### 3.6 Results of E&E review

This Consortium has been assessed as **Moderate**. On the positive, the structure of the Board of Directors provides sufficient oversight to the Consortium and ensures that the Consortium is operating in the best interests of all Member Boards. The Consortium is also established as a separate legal entity, thus effectively limiting risk to the Members Boards for activities related to the provision of student transportation. Over the long term, this status will also provide benefits from an organization perspective in terms of corporate continuity, staff planning, liability, contracting and management.

However, there are number of areas that require improvement. It is recommended that, as a first step, NPSSTS aim to reduce the involvement of the Board of Directors in the day-to-day operations of the Consortium. This will allow the Board of Directors to add more value to the work of the Consortium by focusing on oversight and overall strategic direction.

It is also important that the Consortium execute transportation service contracts or agreements with all Boards, authorities and other organizations to which it provides transportation services. In similar vein, the Consortium should also execute a formal documented cost sharing agreement with all Member Boards that outlines a specific cost sharing formula.

NPSSTS should also establish learning plans for its entire staff to ensure that they are adequately trained in the use of all relevant software and tools available to them. Lastly, Consortium management should create a set of long term goals for itself in order to have a framework that guides all the activities of the Consortium.

## 4 Policies & Practices

### 4.1 Introduction

Policies and practices examine and evaluate the established policies, operational procedures, and the 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 findings and recommendations found in this section of the report are based on onsite interviews with the Transportation Manager, senior staff, routing technicians, and on an analysis of supplied documents and data. Best practices, as established by the E&E process, provided the source of comparison for each of these key areas. The results 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-Low**

### 4.2 Transportation policies & practices

Clear and concise policies, procedures, and enforceable practices are essential elements of an effective and efficient transportation operation. Policies establish the parameters that define and determine the *level of service* that ultimately will be provided by the Consortium. Equally important is the application of policies through well defined and documented procedures, operational practices and protocols all of which determine *how* services are actually delivered. Policy harmonization between the Member Boards and the application of practices helps to ensure that service is delivered safely and equitably to each of the Member Boards. This section will evaluate the established policies and practices and their impact on the effective and efficient operation of the Consortium.

For any transportation operation to provide effective and efficient transportation services, a comprehensive array of documented policies, procedures, and practices are fundamental to its success. Clear policies establish and define the level of service that ultimately will be provided by the Consortium and where well documented operational

procedures, practices and protocols determine *how* services will actually be delivered. Policy harmonization among the Member Boards and the application of consistent practices helps to ensure that service is delivered equitably to each of the Member Boards. This section will evaluate the established policies and practices and their impact on the effective and efficient operation of the Consortium.

**4.2.1 Observations**

Recognizing the necessity for clarity in the policies and procedures that provide the basis for route planning, communication, and general operational practices, the Consortium has worked to update policies to ensure alignment to practices and to clearly establish what level of services can and will be provided. These guiding elements are incorporated into several manuals including an Emergency Procedures Manual and a manual for Transporting Special Needs Students along with a developing Operations Manual. While many of the policies presented for E&E assessment are currently pending approval, these drafts are based on current policies and practices and serve as the point of reference for planning and operational decisions. When completed and approved, these manuals will provide the Consortium staff, school principals, Board staff, and parents and students with a consistent source of information regarding how student transportation is planned and what services will be provided. Key planning elements which are already harmonized include general eligibility for transportation, stop distances and ride times. The following paragraphs summarize the major policy areas, the consistency or inconsistency among Board policies, and suggestions for improvements.

**General transportation eligibility**

A transportation eligibility policy that clearly defines which students are eligible to receive service is essential in supporting both effective and efficient route planning. The harmonization of an eligibility policy helps to ensure consistency in application and supports equitable service. NPSSTS benefits from a transportation eligibility policy that is common among Member Boards as illustrated in the following table:

**Table 4: Transportation Eligibility Distances**

<b>Grades JK/SK</b>	<b>Grades 1 to 3</b>	<b>Grades 4 - 8</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
Door to Door	1.0 km	1.6 km	3.0 km

### Walk to stop distances

Stop distances have also been harmonized supporting route planning and consistency in the provision of service. Stop distances are currently door-to-door for JK and SK students, 0.5 km for Grades 1 to 6 and 1.0 km for Grades 7 to 12.

### Stop placement criteria

The criteria for stop locations include posted speeds, traffic volume, line of sight visibility, road type, number of lanes, and traffic signals. The Transportation Officer is charged with the responsibility of investigating stop locations. A Stop Location Review form has been developed to ensure a comprehensive review of the location and to provide documentation for future reference.

### Alternative drop-off locations

Service is provided for students attending before and/or after school day care programs, however, the eligibility criteria varies by Board as illustrated in the following table:

**Table 5: Eligibility Criteria**

Day Care Type	NNDSB	CSDNE	NPSCDSB	CSDCFN
Non-Registered	Within School Zone Only	Within School Zone Only	Within School Zone Only	Within School Zone
Registered	Any registered daycare providing student is in their home school zone	Any registered daycare providing student is in their home school zone	Within School Zone Only	Within School Zone Only

This service element should be examined to determine the potential cost and service benefits of a harmonized policy.

### Hazardous transportation

The Consortium has drafted a Walking Hazard Eligibility policy that defines when transportation eligibility will be granted for hazardous conditions. Examples include:

- A review of traffic volume and the number of traffic lanes based on Ministry of Transportation criteria;

- Posted speed limits and a history or observations of area speeding;
- Safe walking paths including the lack of sidewalks in conjunction with other elements;
- The availability of traffic control devices and crossing guards, and
- The age of the student(s).

The proposed policy contains an excellent statement that allows for the review of “historical” areas for the review of long established areas based on the above criteria to verify the need for the continuance of providing transportation. Providing transportation based on hazardous conditions is an example of how transportation systems can provide additional services in support of student safety.

### **Courtesy transportation**

Grades 1 and 2 may be given courtesy transportation based on seating capacity (for all Boards). In discussions with Area Technicians, much of the current courtesy transportation is historic in nature with approval criteria not well documented.

With the harmonization of the walk policy, the stated goal is to eliminate courtesy transportation altogether with the exception of medical or safety, however, it appears the courtesy transportation may be continued under the draft walking distance policy which states in part: “Students in grades 1 through 3 are expected to walk up to and no more than 1 kilometer to school. If there is sufficient room on an appropriate bus route, students in these grades may be given courtesy seating, valid for the immediate school year and revocable during the immediate school year should seating requirements on a particular route change.” This is an excellent example of where the analysis of extracted route data can provide useful information on both the cost and service impacts of providing courtesy transportation.

### **Student ride times**

The time students spend on a bus is a key indicator of the overall level service provided by any transportation operation. As this Consortium serves multiple boards over a large rural and urban service area, effective route planning is an important factor in limiting, to the extent possible, the time a student spends time on the bus. Consortium planning practices limit ride times to 70 minutes with a limit of 60 minutes for elementary students. Based on the analysis of extracted data, ride times average 31 minutes with a median time of 28 minutes. This value is well within the established guidelines. However, about 4 percent of the total ride times are greater than the established 70

minutes guideline. Ride times and overall routing efficiency will be discussed in further detail in the following *Routing and Technology* section.

### **Bus transfers**

The strategic use of bus to bus transfers can be an excellent strategy to reduce student ride times, support overall efficiency, reduce the loading/unloading zone pressure on space impacted school sites, and reduce the number of required fleet assets. While the use of transfers can be of benefit to the overall routing structure, transfer procedures and transfer site issues must be considered and managed including the number of allowable transfers, site supervision, and general safety considerations. The Consortium has established an excellent practice of having signed contracts with all major transfer locations.

Contractual elements agreed upon include the term, insurance coverage, and winter maintenance responsibilities. In addition to the contract, onsite procedures clearly delineate how the transfers are managed to ensure student safety. These include very specific procedures for drivers such as assigned staging locations and bus to bus transfer procedures ensuring student safety. Site supervision is the responsibility of the drivers and a site supervisor who reports directly to the Consortium. As the Consortium continues to evaluate and review its policies, a policy should be considered that incorporates the procedures established above and other service level parameters such as the number of transfers allowed and the total allowable time that a student spends in travel including time at a transfer site.

### **Student discipline**

A *Code of Conduct* is published clearly explaining the responsibility for the students and the resulting consequences for inappropriate behavior.

### **Dispute resolution and appeal process**

All service related issues are to be recorded on a Service Request Sheet. Issues that are not able to be resolved at the route planner level are forwarded to the General Manager for resolution. The Consortium is currently drafting a formal appeal process for a review and approval by the Member Boards. Currently, the Superintendents of Business are the last step in the appeal process.

### **Information dissemination**

Although a Consortium policy does not directly address communications, information is readily available to parents including an active website that includes access to check basic eligibility, route cancellations and delays, and links to important information

including inclement weather procedures, links to general safety information, and contact information. Printed materials are mailed direct or are provided directly to students. A regular newsletter will be provided monthly starting in January, 2009 to provide timely transportation information. In an effort to standardize its written and voice communications, the

Consortium has hired an interim specialist to assist in the drafting of responses. Communications are available in both English and French promoting equitable service to each of its Boards.

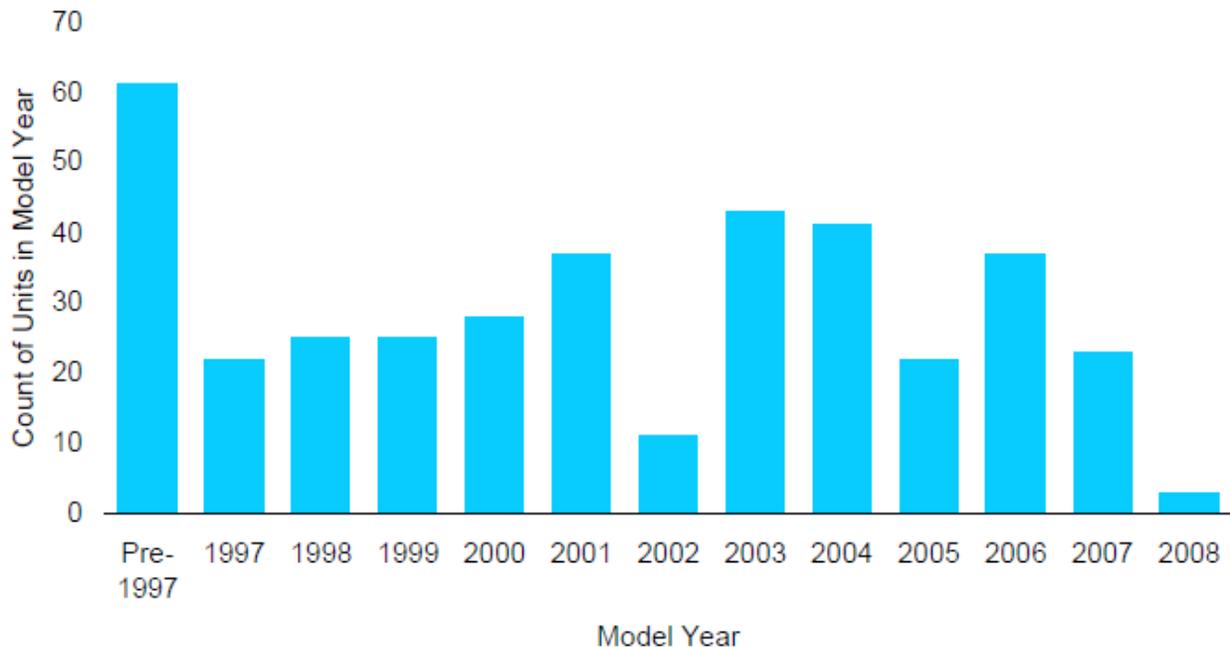
### **Inclement weather procedures**

In the event that weather conditions are determined unsafe for operation, operators are required to call the General Manager (or designate) by 6:15 am. Decisions for early dismissal must be made by 11:00 am. The General Manager is responsible for ensuring that Member Boards are contacted as well as the media for the dissemination of an announcement. The Consortium has developed standard communications to ensure consistency. The Consortium's website provides active information regarding current cancellation or delays and also has links to the supporting procedural documents.

### **Fleet age policy**

The age and condition of the bus fleet is a key element in an operator's ability to provide both safe and efficient transportation. Older or under maintained buses can contribute to unnecessary route delays or cancellations. Currently, operators are not required by policy or contract to operate within a maximum age. The Consortium has established a recommended age of 12 years or less for a 72 passenger bus. An analysis of data indicates that the median age of the bus fleet is eight years. Of the total units in the fleet 83 buses or approximately 22 percent are 12 years of age or older. The distribution of fleet age is illustrated in the following chart:

**Figure 6: Distribution of Bus Age**



As illustrated in the preceding chart, without a mandated vehicle age policy, the percentage of buses 12 years or older will be approximately 35 percent by the end of the year. As the Consortium continues to evaluate its contracting procedures, a maximum age policy should be included for all types of vehicles used in the provision of transportation.

### **Bell time management**

Essential to a Consortium's ability to provide effective and effective service is the management of bell times. The management of the bell schedule, while respecting the needs of educational programs, allows route planners to shift school times which may present opportunities for routing strategies that maximize fleet usage such as combination or multi tiered runs. Bell time management is currently guided by the *Synchronization of School Start and Finish Times* policy that details the process for requesting a change by either the school or the Consortium. Included in the review and approval process is the analysis of the impact to both cost and service.

### **Policy enforcement**

Interviews with the technicians indicate a common understanding of the Consortium policies and practices. To further institutionalize how service is to be designed and delivered, the Consortium has recently established regular team meetings to review and discuss current issues regarding service or routing issues to ensure consistent

application of its procedures. An *Operations Manual* is being developed that will fully encompass all of the guiding policies, procedures, and daily practices that determine the delivery of transportation services.

### **Policy harmonization**

NPSSTS benefits from the harmonization of key route planning elements including eligibility walk to stop distances, maximum ride times, and arrival windows. As identified in the previous paragraphs, the Consortium recognizes the benefits of common policies and has begun a review process with its Member Boards for the discussion and potential approval of common policies. Courtesy and day care transportation are service areas where harmonization not only would equalize service between the Boards but may offer the potential for cost savings.

#### **4.2.2 Best Practices**

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

##### **Use of bus transfers**

The use of bus to bus transfers can be an effective strategy to reduce both student ride times and the number of required buses. The Consortium's transfer site agreements and bus to bus transfer procedures are excellent examples where both the management of risks and student safety are fully considered.

##### **Inclement weather/emergency procedures**

The Consortium's *Emergencies Procedures and Contact Information* manual provides detailed action and communication responsibilities for staff and bus operators. Procedural information is provided to the schools and parents including links to the Consortium's website and local media.

##### **Bell time setting**

The consortium has an established role in evaluating bell times to promote efficiency through the modeling of alternative routing scenarios. This flexibility will be increasingly important for the Consortium to implement the recommendations including in the Routing and Technology section.

### **4.2.3 Recommendations**

#### **Establish a formal policy review and approval process**

The Consortium has begun an ambitious process for the review and updating of its current policies and practices as evidenced by the number of updated policy drafts awaiting approval. It is recommended that the Consortium and its Member Boards formalize the process including agreed upon timelines. This process should coincide with the Consortiums ongoing development of its Operations Manual. The Operations Manual, when fully assembled and approved should serve the Consortium and its Member Boards as the single source document to address all transportation related questions and issues.

#### **Establish a data driven process for policy change recommendations**

The previous discussions on Courtesy and Day Care Transportation are examples of where the extraction and analysis of data can add clarity and support recommended changes by clearly defining both the cost and service impacts of current service delivery models against potential improvements. The value of data for cost and performance analysis will be discussed in greater detail in the following section of *Routing and Technology*.

#### **Develop and include a maximum vehicle age policy in contract procurement development**

Based on the age of the current fleet, it is recommended that immediate steps are considered to reduce the combined age of the fleet through negotiations or the procurement process. As stated previously, as a fleet ages, higher incidences of mechanical failures can be expected resulting in negative service impacts. Reducing fleet age will also ensure that buses being used by the Consortium are up to date in terms of their safety features.

### **4.3 Special needs transportation**

The needs of all students including those with special needs or those attending special programs must be considered for any transportation operation to be fully effective. Special needs transportation in particular must consider a student's individual needs including time or distance constraints, assistance to increase mobility including lifts and restraints, medical condition awareness and medication administration, behavioral issues and student management. Given the complexity of providing both safe and effective special needs transportation, it is imperative that clear and concise policies and documented practices are established and followed to ensure that the unique needs of the students are met.

### **4.3.1 Observations**

Each of the routing technicians plans for the needs of special education students within their region of responsibility. A student's specific requirements are documented by each Board's Special Needs Coordinator for review by the Consortium which includes both service and cost considerations. Students are assigned to the mode of transport including Para-Transit buses, wheel chair buses, taxis, or regular education buses as is appropriate to meet the needs of the students. Operators are contractually required to provide drivers with four hours of training per year, student behavior training, and medication use and administration. A driver workshop is scheduled for February, 2009 to provide drivers with additional information on autism spectrum disorders and other conditions which may impact a student's behavior.

Driver awareness is supported by a Consortium provided *Transporting Special Needs Students* manual that serves as a resource guide for drivers including:

- Acceleration and general driving techniques;
- Loading and unloading procedures including detailed wheelchair procedures;
- Disability type recognition; and
- First aid awareness.

A policy (draft) has been developed to clearly communicate what medications can be transported on a bus (life threatening medications such as an EpiPen or insulin) and the parent's responsibility for transporting other medications directly to the student's school. An anaphylaxis procedure has also been created that explains both parents and driver responsibility for the administration of an EpiPen.

### **4.3.2 Best Practices**

#### **Special needs students manual**

The distribution of the *Transporting Special Needs Students* manual to operators and drivers promotes an understanding of the complexity of transporting students that need mobility assistance or those with emotional needs. The manual provides drivers with information that supports not only student safety but their own.

### **4.3.3 Recommendations**

#### **Draft current policies, practices and guidelines in to a special needs policy manual**

The contractual requirements, draft policy and guideline statements, and the information in the Special Needs Transportation Manual all provide evidence of the Consortium's concern for special needs students. However, policies or procedures on how special needs transportation is to be planned and delivered is not well defined including specific ride time limitations, emergency evacuation procedures, or behavior management or discipline specific to special needs students. Therefore, it is recommended that the Consortium combines the current practices, guidelines, and draft policy statements into an all inclusive special needs policy manual that clearly defines what services will be provided and how they will be delivered.

### **4.4 Safety policy**

Clear and concise safety policies, practices, and procedures are all essential in the promotion and delivery of safe student transportation. As the Consortium manages services over a large geographical area utilizing multiple operators, it is imperative that safety related initiatives are well defined and documented to ensure system wide compliance. Equally important is an understanding that all communities, parents, students, and bus drivers each have roles and responsibilities in the provision of safe transportation.

#### **4.4.1 Observations**

Direct support to student safety training is evidenced by the Consortium's support of the First Rider and the School Bus Safety Patrol Training Programs. Each of operators provides support for the First Rider program for the schools within their service area. Over 350 students were trained as Bus Patrollers with the program presented in 6 training sessions. The Consortium's website provides links for parents including the Ten Simple Safety Rules, School Bus Danger Zones, safe passing information, school related traffic signs, and links to sites with safety related information. To determine the effectiveness of the programs, the Consortium is planning to conduct an audit during the 2009 school year.

In addition to the above programs, the Consortium has assigned the overall safety initiative to its Transportation Officer whose responsibilities will include stop inspections, operator and driver audits, and the tracking and analysis of service related issues including *Reportable Events* such as accidents or observations of unsafe driving.

An Emergency Procedures Manual provides information on inclement weather, emergency, and accident procedures. The accident procedure is supported by a form for the recording of accident details which will, over a period of time, provide valuable data for the analysis and prevention of accidents and the identification of specific driver improvement training.

#### **4.4.2 Best Practices**

##### **Inclement weather/emergency procedures:**

The Consortium's *Emergencies Procedures and Contact Information* manual provides detailed action and communication responsibilities for staff and bus operators. Procedural information is provided to the schools and parents to ensure a common understanding and includes links to the Consortium's website and local media.

#### **4.4.3 Recommendations**

##### **Develop and document specific safety related policies**

As a component of the Operation's Manual, it is recommended that the Consortium develop and document specific safety related policies in support of its goal to provide safe student transportation. While many of necessary safety related practices are in place, they lack the support of a documented policy and or are not clearly defined. As an example, while the contract mandates four hours per year of driver training, it does not specify what type training is expected such as defensive driving skills or student management training.

#### **4.5 Results of E&E review**

Policies and Procedures development and implementation has been rated as **Moderate-Low**. In its effort to become a highly efficient and effective organization, the Consortium has undertaken many difficult activities including a change in routing software, staff organization, communication procedures, and not the least, a review and rewriting of many of its guiding policies and practices. However, at the time of the review much of this work remained incomplete or formally un-adopted by the Board of Directors. The review and potential harmonization of key planning policies such as courtesy and day care transportation would equalize service between the Boards and support overall effective route planning. The establishment of a maximum fleet age policy is imperative for its potential in the reducing failure related delays or cancellations and overall vehicle safety.

## 5 Routing & 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 analyzed 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-Low**

### 5.2 Software and technology setup and use

Modern student transportation routing systems allow transportation managers to make more effective use of the resources at their disposal. These systems allow for improvements in the management and administration of large volumes of student and route data. However, the systems must be fully implemented with well designed coding structures and effective mechanisms to extract and report data to all stakeholder groups. This section of the evaluation was designed to evaluate the baseline acquisition, setup, installation, and management of transportation related software.

#### 5.2.1 Observations

##### **Routing & related software**

NPSSTS implemented *BusPlanner* from GEOREF, Ltd. in 2007 in an effort to improve the availability of management data, increase the ease of use of the transportation management software, and simplify the management of transfer activities. The system has been used in conjunction with the two previous school starts and throughout parts of the three previous school years.

NPSSTS has also established a branded website available in both French and English. The site provides access to policy documents, contact information, and to a database query function that allows parents to determine school location and eligibility for transportation services based on address. In addition, the site provides functionality that will notify parents of delays or cancellations based on different regions serviced by NPSSTS and the underlying policy rationale for cancellations.

### **Maintenance and service Agreements**

NPSSTS has established a standard maintenance and service agreement with the transportation management software vendor. This agreement is current and provides for regular (currently bi-annual) updates to the software and technical assistance. The agreement also establishes designated rates for services that NPSSTS can utilize in the event that further assistance is required. NPSSTS management has also established an agreement with an outside service company to assist in addressing hardware or networking issues that may be beyond the scope of existing staff to address.

System maintenance is generally performed by the Transportation Officer. NPSSTS has not documented the requirements associated with system management but existing practices do provide for a reasonable assurance that the system can be available quickly in the event of a hardware or software failure. The Transportation Officer and General Manager have established a procedure that provides for coverage in the event that the Transportation Officer is absent to ensure that backup procedures occur. Additionally, the restoration process has been tested to ensure validity of backup process.

### **Staff training**

All Consortium staff received basic user training on the system at the time of implementation and several staff have also received advanced training. Management recognizes that there is a continuing need for additional training on system use, particularly higher order functionality. However, no formal training routines have been established for either ongoing or targeted training. Interviews suggested that these schedules will be established following the hiring of replacement staff for a departing Area Technician position.

## **5.2.2 Recommendations**

### **Document system management schedule and requirements**

NPSSTS should document the schedule and specific requirements related to systems management and administration in a manner that is specific to *BusPlanner*. This would

require revisions to the currently documented process associated with the previous software package coupled with a formalization and documentation of current practices.

### **Initiate formal staff training on the use of *BusPlanner***

A formal schedule of staff training on the use of *BusPlanner* should be established for each Area Technician. This training schedule should be established based on an assessment of existing competency with the software, expectations regarding management analyses and planning, and available software functionality. NPSSTS could coordinate with the vendor to determine the availability of different training options and a reasonable progression strategy for staff. This type of progressive approach will be increasingly important as individuals are hired to address the expected retirement in the organization.

## **5.3 Digital map and student database management**

This aspect of the E&E Review was designed to evaluate the processes and procedures in place to update and maintain the student data and map data that forms the foundation of any student transportation routing system.

### **5.3.1 Observations**

#### **Digital map**

One digital map is available for the entire service area. The map was established as part of the initial implementation and has been updated based on information received from area municipalities and regional agencies. The map allows for near universal geocoding of students once the addresses have been properly entered and school site locations with little to no manual entry required. The primary addressing concern is related to the accuracy of data entry and not the completeness of map data.

#### **Map accuracy**

NPSSTS has established an annual Survey of Service that is used to improve map accuracy. Data collected as part of this process includes stop loads, times, and route directions. A comparison is conducted to verify system data. Interviews conducted during the course of the review indicated that some stakeholders were concerned about the accuracy of map data and consequently conducted their own verification routines. This is a significant issue that should be addressed immediately in order to ensure the accuracy of both operational and system data. Specifically diagnosing the primary causes for the inaccuracy should be the major effort rather than a regular soliciting of school and operator input to verify the data due to the significant distraction and effort

these verifications require. As is mentioned in section 5.3.1 below, specific emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring that the school sites are fully and accurately entering all of the necessary data to allow NPSSTS to properly manage the student records.

NPSSTS established virtually all of its existing exception boundary areas on the base digital map. While continuing efforts are required to ensure the continued necessity of each of the exception areas and when a hazard area should be established, the geocoding of the boundaries on the base map simplifies eligibility assignments when student data is imported or added to the database and improves Area Technician efficiency.

### **Default values**

Management of default values helps promote accurate route timings. Default values were established upon the initial implementation of the system. Management of these values is assigned to the Transportation Officer who manages all key data elements including road speed values, default loading times, seating criteria, street numbering and travel restrictions. Limiting change authority to these key data elements is an important tactic to ensure that the map reflects actual operating conditions. As was previously mentioned, there are concerns about the accuracy of the data and route times in the system. Therefore, continued effort will be necessary to ensure that the default values are regularly monitored to ensure synchronicity between actual conditions and system data.

### **Student data management**

One student database has been established based on monthly downloads from each Board's student information system. The database includes all students whether eligible or not for services. The setup of the data extraction does not allow for several common fields (including date of birth and gender) to populate the student record. Additionally, the timing of downloads requires that intermediate changes will be manually entered in the interim and are then verified during the download process. Routines have been established to test and determine eligibility based on distance parameters and map characteristics. Additionally, JK/SK student records are automatically flagged based on grade assignment. Some concern was expressed that additional assignment of grades could be used to improve the identification of student data by program type; however, no detailed efforts are underway to determine the viability of this approach.

Review of previous extracts indicated that approximately 1500 records per month must be reviewed and evaluated. The primary cause of these records appears to be related to address changes that do not immediately reconcile with the record in the transportation management software. Consequently, there has been the need to

establish reconciliation and tracking mechanism within NPSSTS to identify the cause of recurrent issues with the same student record. The reconciliation process requires a significant commitment of Technician time. Efforts are being made to improve data entry from the schools but most efforts must be individual contact with individual school staff. Support from the Board of Directors will be necessary to ensure that data accuracy improves.

### **Coding structures**

NPSSTS recently revised its coding structure in an attempt to simplify and clarify the assignment of different values. The structure remains fundamentally a two tier structure that begins with identification of an eligibility code and followed by the use of a travel code to provide a more detailed description of service mode. Supplementary data describing student needs is kept in both comment and grouping fields that can be queried from the software.

The current approach has improved the simplicity of the structure; however, additional revisions and refinements are necessary to ensure the accuracy of all categorization data. Interviews with staff indicated an awareness that substantial review and consideration of the groupings was required and that efforts were on going. A review of a small sample of records indicated that there is still a significant effort required to ensure that all students are grouped into the proper subsets, that subsets are consistent with established eligibility and travel codes, and that all records are complete and current. The effort to improve these records must proceed quickly as clarifying these grouping assignments will ensure that route planners can properly evaluate both the requirements for and availability of transportation services.

### **5.3.2 Best Practices**

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

#### **Stakeholder input to verify map data**

The use of input from multiple stakeholders to evaluate and validate map accuracy and data is recognized as a best practice. The use of stakeholder input will increasingly provide more consistent and accurate route timings.

### **5.3.3 Recommendations**

#### **Collaborate further with school sites to ensure the accuracy of student data**

Emphasis should be placed on improving the content, accuracy and frequency with which student data is imported from the student information systems. The current

process does not incorporate all relevant or necessary data and the infrequent schedule necessitates the establishment and use of a number of alternative work processes to ensure the completeness and accuracy of student data that introduce inefficiency into the Planner's work requirements. Of particular and most significant concern is the need to ensure collaboration and cooperation between NPSSTS and the school sites to ensure all necessary data is entered fully and completely at its primary source.

A necessary component of the implementation of this recommendation will be a review of eligibility, travel code, and grouping assignments. Full assignment and establishment of appropriate codes will be necessary before any large scale review and revision of the routing scheme can be conducted.

## **5.4 System reporting**

Adequate reporting allows for the early identification of trends that may be detrimental to operations, improves the analytical capacity of the organization, and allows for internal and external stakeholders to be more adequately informed about operations. The purpose of this aspect of the review was to evaluate what reports are typically generated, who receives these reports, and what capabilities exist to develop ad hoc reports.

### **5.4.1 Observations**

#### **Reporting and data analysis**

NPSSTS does not have any formal reporting structure with the exception of the review of downloaded student data discussed previously. The reporting functionality of the transportation management software is generally related to run reports for schools and route reports for bus operators. Efforts are under way to increase the use of the *GeoQuery* module by both operators and school sites. As previously mentioned, concerns regarding the completeness and accuracy of available data have limited the use of *GeoQuery*. In addition to improvements in data management discussed previously, it will be necessary to establish an internal assessment mechanism to determine who is using *GeoQuery*, how frequently, and for what purpose.

Given that many operators are extracting and replicating the data from the system into their own management systems, there would be an efficiency benefit to designing a mechanism to transmit data electronically to the operators in a suitable format. *GeoQuery* provides for the capability to extract data into standard third-party productivity software that could be then imported into other management systems. In the event that this process is inadequate to support operator requirements, NPSSTS

should facilitate the development of a process between the software vendor, the Consortium, and the operators.

## **5.4.2 Recommendations**

### **Establish a regular reporting initiative**

NPSSTS should establish a regular reporting initiative to include an evaluation of each position in the organization to determine what data those individuals require, the schedule on which it is required, and establish a proactive reporting schedule to reflect these requirements. The lack of regular reporting limits opportunities to regularly validate and verify the completeness and accuracy of system data, which will be imperative given the recommendations of Section 5.3.1.

Possible reports could include: a daily student change log for each technician (as part of the data management efforts discussed in Section 5.3.1); a weekly route change report for the General Manager; a quarterly performance operations report for the General Manager that provides summary statistics and detailed data on issues like capacity utilization, route pairing, average run times, and lateness; and an annual operational summary to the General Manager that summarizes the key performance statistics mentioned above and incorporates detailed cost measures such as the direct and indirect cost per bus, cost per student, and cost per kilometer.

## **5.5 Regular and special needs transportation planning and routing**

Transportation route planning is the key activity undertaken by NPSSTS. This portion of the review was designed to evaluate the strategies, tactics, and processes used to provide transportation to regular and special education students and the approaches used to minimize the cost and operational disruption associated with both types of transportation.

### **5.5.1 Observations**

#### **Planning cycle**

A planning calendar had been established based on the functionality and requirements of the previous transportation management software. However, this document has not been updated based on the changes in timelines or the functionality of the current transportation software. The timing of the required tasks has not changed significantly and the planning calendar should be updated for both content and task order.

## **Management of regular bus routes**

NPSSTS has established three service areas to which Area Technicians are been assigned. The areas are generally aligned geographically; however, the need for bilingual communications has resulted in the dedicated assignment of French boards to a single Technician and the assignment of the NNDSB to a single Technician. Within each service area Technicians are responsible for all of the route design activities. A summary of the critical responsibilities include:

- Validating the completeness and accuracy of map attributes;
- Ensuring that service eligibility boundaries are complete and accurate;
- Locating bus stops;
- Assigning students to stop locations;
- Designing bus runs and pairing runs together in route combinations; and
- Addressing the concerns of parents, schools, or bus contractors.

The planning process is not guided by any formal procedural guidelines nor is it formally restricted on run planning techniques. Consideration for vehicle size and fleet mix are not presently major components of route planning.

## **Special education route planning**

Special education planning is performed by Area Technicians for each of their areas. There is a limited population of special education students but they are specifically identified using the designated flag in the system. There are no explicit restrictions on Area Technicians in allocating special needs students to regular education buses or regular education students to special needs buses where it is reasonable and appropriate. However, the current approach to allocating schools that isolates the North Bay area may be unintentionally limiting opportunities to integrating special needs students. This is due to the fact that the designated geographic areas managed by each of the Area Technicians does not readily provide for the opportunity to see existing resources serving a particular school. Consequently, if there are special education students attending a school in an area that is in close proximity to a NNDSB school, it may not be obvious that there is an opportunity to integrate students from multiple boards on the same bus for delivery to schools located within a reasonable distance from each other.

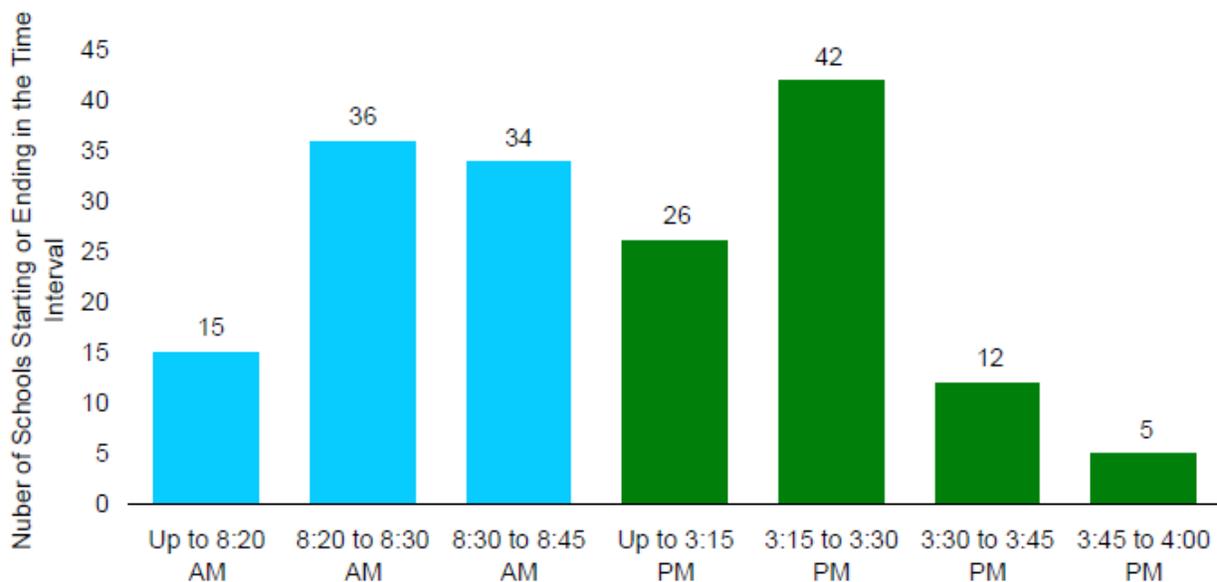
## Analysis of system effectiveness

NPSSTS provides service over a large, dispersed land area that includes a limited component of urban density with the predominance of the service area being represented by suburban to rural road and density characteristics. Consequently, the design of the routing structure must account for this type of density, roadway patterns, and school location distribution.

The goal of every transportation service department is to provide as much service as possible with as few buses as possible. Achieving this level of service requires a consideration of the distances that must be traveled and the time available to travel within. The primary determinant of the time available to operate bus routes is the designated start and end times of schools. NPSSTS operates within a school bell time

framework where approximately 95 percent of schools start within approximately 25 minutes of each other and where 94 percent of all schools finish within approximately 30 minutes of one another<sup>10</sup>. The following chart shows the distribution of school bell times.

**Figure 7: Distribution of School Start Times**



As can be seen from the chart, there is a substantial bunching of start times between 8:20 and 8:45 and between 3:15 and 3:30. In instances where school start and/or end

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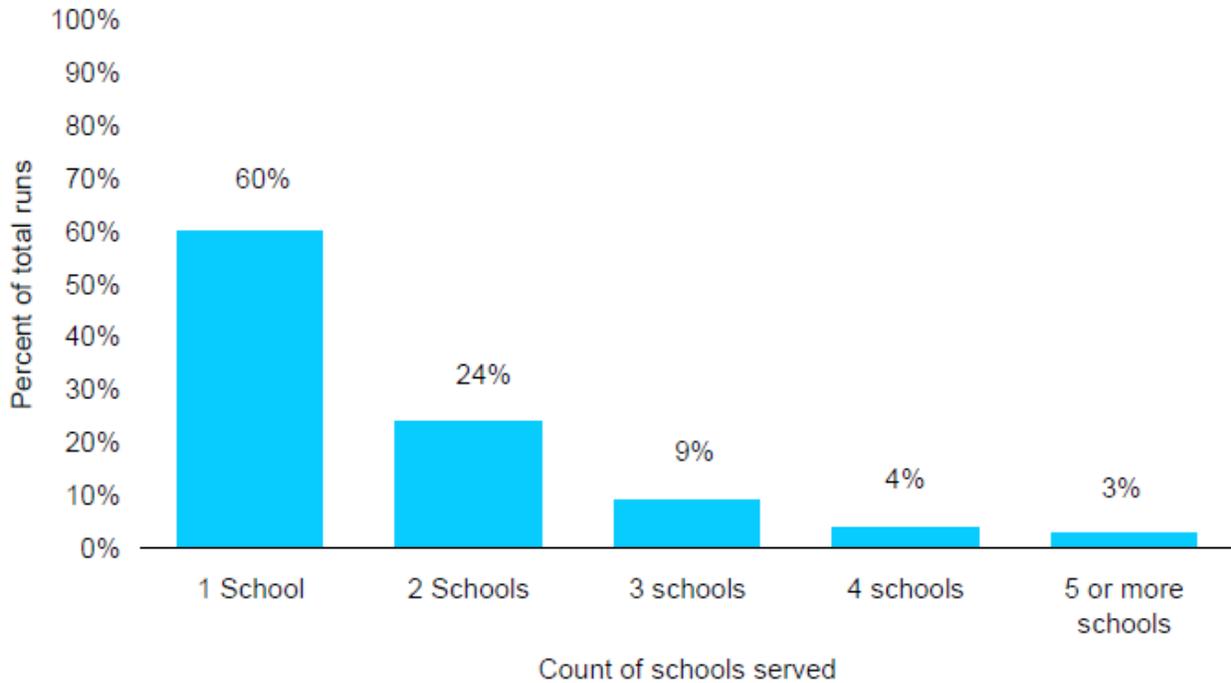
<sup>10</sup> All data reported in this section of the report refers to data collected while the E&E team was on site. There may be inconsistencies with some previously reported Ministry data due to the different timing of the data collection.

times are grouped closely together and the transportation services must be provided over a large area it is difficult to develop a multi-tier system that allows for the reuse of the same bus to service multiple schools at different times during the day. The influence of the constraints imposed by narrow bell windows is evident in the design of the routing structure adopted by NPSSTS.

NPSSTS has designed a routing structure that relies primarily on a single tier system with combination runs and transfers in place in an effort to promote efficiency. Approximately 80 percent of all bus routes provide service in a single tier in the morning or afternoon. This statistic indicates that as a consequence of available time or decisions regarding run design it is difficult for NPSSTS to reuse any substantial portion of its fleet for multiple missions throughout the day. Consequently, the routing scheme demonstrates a preponderance of combination runs (where a single bus will collect students who attend multiple schools and drop them off serially) and transfer runs (where students from multiple geographic areas are dropped off at a central location and board another bus that takes them to their destination school) throughout the system.

Analysis of the bus run data indicates that of the 820 morning and afternoon runs developed by NPSSTS, 492 (60 percent) service a single school. Over half of the remaining 40 percent service 2 schools, indicating that over 80 percent of all runs service two or fewer schools. The following chart shows the distribution of all morning and afternoon runs (including special education) and the number of schools that are serviced.

**Figure 8: Distribution of Bus Runs by Count of Schools Served**



As an adjunct to the use of combination runs, NPSSTS relies on transfer runs to promote operational efficiency. Of the 820 morning and afternoon runs, 347 (42 percent) provide transfer service to at least one school. This type of routing strategy serves as an attempt to realize benefits similar to those that would be received through tiering without the need to return to neighborhoods where buses have collected students already. However, analysis of the transfer run indicates that a number of buses are assigned to transfer runs that begin a significant time after the primary run has completed. There are 119 runs in the database that indicate they are transfer only runs (they have no primary school assigned).

Within this group of 119 runs, 31 of total (26 percent) are runs that begin 20 or more minutes before or after the primary run. In addition, there were 17 of the 119 transfer only runs (14 percent) that performed no other mission than transfers. Run data indicated that the majority of these transfer runs were serviced by smaller buses that may indicate they are used as part of special services to designated programs. The preponderance of single tier, single school service and the use of transfers (particularly the 119 transfer- only runs) is often an indication that the time constraints imposed by the bell time structure is adversely impacting overall efficiency. As a result, there is a need to conduct a comprehensive review of all aspects of the routing structure to determine if efficiencies can be realized.

The current routing scheme provides a level of service consistent with the policy expectations established by the Board of Directors. As was previously mentioned, median student ride length is 28 minutes. It should be noted that the calculation of student ride time is based on the time of pickup to the point of first drop off. Therefore, the median value is somewhat understated because it does not account for time spent on transfer runs. However, the available data does provide a reasonably accurate composite picture of service levels, particularly related to student ride times. The following chart shows the distribution of student ride lengths (less transfer trips) for morning and afternoon runs.

**Figure 9: Student Ride Length**



As Figure 9 indicates, over 90 percent of all students have ride times that are within the established elementary policy guideline of 60 minutes. Given that overall bus run lengths average 47 minutes (with a median of 43 minutes), it appears that NPSSTS is providing services to all students that are within established guidelines.

Additionally, there was no indication from Area Technicians or NPSSTS management that any significant concerns regarding the provision of timely service by bus operators was an issue. Although no formal mechanism or procedure is currently in place to monitor and analyze service disruptions and their associated cause, a tool to establish the base data necessary for analysis will be available from the software vendor in the near future. This will allow NPSSTS to more fully evaluate operator performance and should become an important component of the overall reporting and data analysis program.

### 5.5.2 Recommendations

#### **Conduct an assessment of routing and bell-times across the entire service area**

It is recommended that a routing and bell time assessment be undertaken across the entire service area to analyze the potential for cost savings associated with revisions to the existing routing scheme. A particular point of focus should be the bell time schedule, its impact on the ability to reuse assets either through tiering or the transfer system, and the prevalence of student transfers. Any reduction in the number of buses that are dedicated to transfer only runs would result in the need for fewer buses and a concurrent reduction in total costs. It is likely that this effort would be more comprehensive and more technically challenging than the annual route review performed by Area Technicians and will require increased training in the strategic planning tools available in the transportation management software.

### 5.6 Results of E&E review

Routing and Technology use has been rated as **Moderate-Low**. NPSSTS has effectively implemented the transportation management software system for use in planning. Additionally, staffing responsibilities have been reasonably assigned to promote effective management of the system.

NPSSTS must focus on improving the availability of student data for planning through coordination with the Member Boards. There is a need to improve the accuracy of the data entry at its source and the availability of the data for planning purposes. Much of the improvement in data accuracy will necessarily occur at the school sites and will require assistance of the Board of Directors to assure adequate training is provided to school staff. In addition, greater emphasis on ongoing operational analysis through regularized reporting will ensure the continuing provision of effective and efficient services.

## 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 NPSSTS, including interviews with Consortium management and select operators. 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 NPSSTS is as follows:

#### **Contacts – E&E Rating: Moderate-Low**

### 6.2 Contract structure

An effective contract<sup>11</sup> 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.

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<sup>11</sup> 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 operators in the area serviced by NPSSTS have formed an association that is composed of all school bus operators working for the Consortium. The association is not a legal entity. Its purpose is to liaise with the NPSSTS on operational (e.g. route optimization) and contractual matters (e.g. negotiating and interpreting contractual terms). The association does negotiate contractual terms, pricing and standard clauses that are included in NPSSTS' contracts. However, each operator signs a separate contract with NPSSTS.

The NPSSTS has executed contracts (transportation agreements) from September 1, 2006, to August 31, 2009 with its bus operators. However, the contracts were only signed in March/April of 2008 as there were ongoing discussions between the operators and the NPSSTS on the wording of certain clauses within the contracts. Contractual terms are standardized across all transportation agreements and provide for general clauses enabling the NPSSTS to audit routes and ensure operator compliance with the terms of the contract. However, the contracts neither contain specific performance standards nor any information on the timing, form, and process for audits/reviews of compliance with performance standards. The contracts are not specific with respect to:

- Driver training and safety instruction- although drivers are expected to receive first aid training as available through Ministry funding and drivers are expected to receive at least 4 hours of safety training per year ;
- Vehicle licensing and mechanical maintenance, including vans not classified as a school bus for which the contract requires annual brake and safety inspections;
- Vehicle age limits – although there are clauses that reference the relationship of vehicle age to routing assignments;
- Communication by operators to the Consortium with respect to driver medical conditions and discipline (e.g. no requirement for proactive communication of conditions or discipline to the Consortium); and
- First aid, CPR/Epi-Pen training – It is recognized that there are clauses that require drivers to assist students with special needs in the administration of medication as outlined by the Consortium's policies and procedures. There are also clauses that require that all drivers receive Emergency First Aid training as available through Ministry funding.

As it is not stipulated as a contract term from the Consortium, some operators do not provide CPR/Epi- pen/First aid training to drivers.

The contracts clearly detail the process and accountability for route allocation and re-allocation. NPSSTS reserves the right in its contracts to alter routes and, during the term of the agreement, shall notify any operator of a change in the number of routes in writing prior to April 30<sup>th</sup>. Route allocations are conducted based on a number of factors including the age of the vehicles serving the area; the loss or gain of routes experienced by the operator serving the area; past operator performance and the tenure of the operator.

### **Boat operator contract clauses**

NPSSTS has a contract in place with a boat operator to transport students who live on Georgian Bay. The contract for the 2007-08 school year was provided and management stated that the contract was renewed for the 2008-09 school year. The contract states requirements with respect to the expected safety features of boating vessels. There are no clauses in the contract referencing agreements and/or requirements for: (i) fuel or capital investment escalators; (ii) maximum age of vessels; (iii) first aid requirements for boat operators; (iv) general policy and safety training for boat operators interacting with students; (v) criminal record checks; (vi) first aid/CPR/Epi-pen training; and (vii) performance expectations and measures. Unlike the contract with bus operators, this contract does not have clauses related to the information required to be shared and exchanged between NPSSTS and the boat operator. A clause requiring boat operators to carry insurance is included. It should be noted that while it is not a contractual requirement, documents given to the E&E Review Team indicate that boat operators do supply NPSSTS with criminal record check information.

### **Taxi operator contract clauses**

NPSSTS has contracts in place with two of the five taxi companies that it uses to transport students. However, price and rate information was not evident in the contracts provided for review by NPSSTS. Criminal reference checks are completed and filed with the Consortium as per contractual requirements. The taxi contracts do not provide for regular performance and compliance reviews with respect to first aid/CPR/Epi-pen training. Confidentiality agreements are in place with all five taxi companies.

### **Special needs transportation**

Some NPSSTS students with special needs are transported to programs in vehicles supplied by two contractors. There was no competitive process used to procure special needs transportation. Both contracts lack requirements with respect to performance monitoring, incident tracking, first aid and safety training and criminal background

checks. One agreement is a tri-partite agreement involving NPSSTS and the City of North Bay.

### **Bus operator compensation**

Operator compensation, outlined in Schedule A to the contracts, is based on a basic route rate plus a kilometer (KM) rate based on size of vehicle. The KM rate applies to total daily kilometers, which is the sum of the distance from the point of first pick up to the last drop-off and the shortest distance back to the point of first pick up for the morning and afternoon routes. All routes are paid a daily minimum of 50 kilometers.

The transportation contract outlines two mechanisms for the payment of operators during inclement weather days. The transportation agreement states that in the event of a service interruption that is outside the control of the bus operator, the operator will receive the basic route rate plus 50% of the KM component. However, Schedule A of the transportation agreement highlights that “Contractors (operators) will be paid for inclement weather days.” Inclement weather days are not defined in either the transportation agreement or Schedule A. Transportation in the entire service area was cancelled due to inclement weather for a total of five days during the 2007-2008 school year. The Mattawa and East Parry Sound regions experienced two additional cancellation days (for a total of seven days), while West Parry Sound had six more days (total of 11 days). Individual or limited combinations of routes were cancelled in certain corridors on certain dates (14 affected days).

### **6.2.2 Best Practices**

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

#### **Standard contracts**

Notwithstanding the recommendation below, the Consortium has standard contracts in place for all operators from which it obtains transportation services. The specific clauses in these contracts vary according to the type (bus, taxi, boat) of transportation services being provided. Standardized contracts ensure that the contractual relationship between transportation service providers and the Consortium are defined, equitable and enforceable. The standardization of these contracts also ensures that expectations and obligations are the same across all operators.

#### **Bus route allocation**

It is recognized that the specificity of the criteria by which routes will be allocated as outlined transportation agreement is a best practice. The preciseness of this clause and

its inclusion in the transportation agreement reduces the potential for disagreements between the operators when routes are reduced or re-allocated.

### **6.2.3 Recommendations**

#### **Include additional clauses in all operator contracts**

It is recommended that NPSSTS review its contracts with all operators (bus, boat, taxi and special needs transportation) to ensure that all of these contracts contain clear specifications with regard to:

- the provision and enforcement of driver first aid, CPR, EpiPen, and shock treatment training;
- vehicle age limits;
- criminal record checks;
- vehicle spare ratio;
- length of time a spare vehicles can be used;
- dispute resolution clauses;
- rate negotiation procedures; and
- provision for the automatic extension of the contract should negotiations not be concluded before the start of a new school year.

Full and complete contracts help to ensure the Consortium is provided the standard of service they require and help to ensure that any miscommunications or conflicts can be appropriately addressed in a timely manner.

It is further recommended the Consortium to follow the direction communicated by the Ministry through numbered memorandum 2008:B15 of December 10, 2008 on clauses and use of Contract Template. Included in the Contract Template are clauses discussed at length and options for alternate wording, optional clauses, and variable content to suit local needs. Consortium should carefully consider the terms and conditions included in the template in order to determine whether adjustments to current contracts may be appropriate. In addition, Consortium should take into consideration the findings of the cost benchmark study and the updated funding in determining the appropriate service levels and contract rates in their new contracts.

### **Establish written contracts with all taxi operators**

Written contracts should be established with all taxi companies. The lack of contract documentation for these operators increases risk to the Consortium. These contracts should include the same terms as existing contracts with appropriate additions from the list outlined in 6.2.3

### **Compensate operators for fixed costs only during inclement weather days**

It is acknowledged that there are costs which are incurred in terms of ensuring the fleet of buses and drivers are ready to resume duty when inclement weather passes. However, these costs should be fully captured within the fixed basic route rate component of the contract. It is important to make this distinction because variable costs - those which are specifically derived from distance travelled - are not incurred by the operators and operators are not out-of-pocket for these expenses. As such, payment of these variable amounts on inclement weather days should not continue. Should driver attrition be raised as an issue, this would be best captured in a separate driver's wages component which would continue to be paid on inclement weather days. Proper fleet maintenance should continue given the continuation of the fixed component of remuneration.

## **6.3 Contract negotiations**

Contract negotiations 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**

#### **Bus operator contract negotiation process**

All operators are represented at negotiations by the operator's association, and through this association they have come to a common contractual agreement with NPSSTS. The association is currently comprised of 29 bus operators and does not include taxi and boat operators contracted by NPSSTS. No competitive procurement process is followed. Although membership in the operator's association is not restricted, only operators under contract with NPSSTS have ever been members.

The contract is silent on a minimum requirement for providing operators with their route information prior to the start of the school year. Route manifests are updated daily as new registrations and address changes are completed. The system also has the ability to flag and report route and manifest changes by operator.

Negotiations have not commenced on a new contract for September 1, 2009.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations**

#### **Competitive procurement process**

Contracts for school bus transportation services are currently not competitively awarded. By not engaging in a competitive process, NPSSTS will 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 at prices that ensure they earn an appropriate return on investment. This may not mean that rates will decline; however, the concern for NPSSTS 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.

If the current negotiation process is deemed to be most appropriate for particular areas - such as remote areas where there may not be many operators interested in providing the service - the Consortium will be able to use the competitively procured contracts as a proxy for service levels and costs negotiated with the more rural operators.

As the package on competitive procurement has been released and pilot programs are underway, 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 are available from the pilot Consortia.

## **Conclusion of contract negotiations**

Notwithstanding 6.3.2.1, which takes priority over this recommendation, it is recommended that negotiations between the Consortium and the bus operators be concluded prior to the beginning of the school year. It is further recommended that future transportation negotiations be initiated earlier. Future transportation agreements should also include a contract extension clause (outlined in 6.2.3.1.) that is triggered automatically in the event that negotiations are not completed prior to the beginning of the school year. This is to ensure that transportation services are not interrupted due to ongoing negotiations.

## **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. Monitoring should be performed proactively and on a regular and ongoing basis in order to be effective.

### **6.4.1 Observations**

#### **Transportation operator contract management**

Contracts are not standardized across all operators (bus, boat and taxi) but are standardized between bus operators. The contracts for bus and taxi operators have a higher level of specificity than the contract in place with the boat operator. All contracts lack a comprehensive performance measurement and management regime, particularly for the completion and communication of safety training, first aid instruction and qualification, and vehicle condition and quality. While the contract does call for NPSSTS to conduct semi-annual performance and compliance reviews of its bus operators, there is no evidence that this is currently being done.

Operators are provided route information from NPSSTS. It has been noted that there are concerns regarding the accuracy and integrity of student data held by the Consortium. With respect to student medical information, the contract states that school principals are to provide this information directly to the operator/driver.

#### **Monitoring**

Bus operator performance is informally monitored using indicators such as bus delays, accidents and other reportable incidents. In addition, Management stated that regular route audits are completed by NPSSTS and that 20 route audits were completed last year. Three route audit documents were provided to the E&E Team – one dated June

28, 2004, one dated June 11, 2007 and another full route and bus audit (field audit) dated November 8, 2008. The first two route audit documents provided indicate that the audits are self-assessments completed by the operator and filed with the Consortium. Once these forms are received, Consortium staff conduct a follow up visit to verify the operator's self assessment. This occasionally leads to a route audit. The General Manager has indicated that the Consortium uses a risk- based approach to the self-assessment in order to determine which operators are to be audited directly. The field audits conducted by the Consortium are used to verify the accuracy of route information, including distances, student manifests, driving ability and include a mechanical review of the bus as well as a bus driver evaluation.

Incidents involving bus vehicles (including timing, mechanical and student behavior) are filed with NPSSTS and management reviews these incidents with the Area Technicians to reinforce or amend practices to avoid similar incidents in the future. A new online system was recently implemented for operators to input incident information. The feedback from operators on this system was positive, though they cautioned that it is too early for them to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

### **Dispute resolution**

A dispute resolution process is only provided for in the operator's contract for performance and compliance reviews completed by the Consortium. Bus operators have the right to petition NPSSTS board if they disagree with the results of a performance and compliance review conducted by NPSSTS staff.

### **6.4.2 Best Practices**

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

#### **Performance monitoring and route audits**

Notwithstanding the recommendation below; which relates specifically to operator compliance with safety and regulatory expectations, NPSSTS performs periodic 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.

## **Incident reporting**

Incident reports are filed with the General Manager and reviewed periodically. Practices are also reviewed in light of incidents and all incidents are tracked using the online system. This is a proactive system of incident and practice management that ensures that practices are always promoting student safety.

### **6.4.3 Recommendations**

#### **Improve the accuracy and completeness of student data currently in the system**

NPSSTS should fully assess the completeness and reliability of its student route information and provide sufficient information to operators to ensure that both the operators and the Consortium have up-to-date information related to the identities of students en route to and from school. This will also help ensure that there are no discrepancies in the route information held by the operators and the Consortium.

The Consortium should also begin to coordinate the transfer of student medical information to the operators. This would allow the Consortium to ensure that operators always have up to date medical information on the students that they are carrying.

#### **Perform periodic legal and safety compliance checks on all operators**

In addition to the periodic route audits conducted to ensure that operators are providing adequate service levels to the schools, NPSSTS should also perform periodic checks to ensure operators and drivers are in compliance with safety and legal requirements (e.g. valid driver's licenses, first aid training etc). This is a crucial element of not only effective contract management, but ultimately a determining factor of the safety and reliability of the service.

#### **Include a broader dispute resolution clause in all operator contracts**

In line with 6.2.3.1, a broader clause regarding dispute settlement (beyond performance assessment) should be included in future transportation agreements. This will ensure that there is a formal system by which disputes can be settled without the need for a reduction in service levels or litigation. This process should be neutral and transparent.

## **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-Low**.

Contracts are not complete with respect to essential safety, legal and dispute settlement clauses. This is of great concern since the lack of these clauses diminished the

Consortiums ability to enforce requirements, thus negatively impacting the safety and quality of the service being provided by the Consortium. In addition, safety and legal compliance checks are also not done regularly, which further diminishes the safety and quality of the service being provided.

Currently, contracts for transportation services are not awarded using a competitive procurement process. By not engaging in a competitive procurement process, the Consortium will not know whether it is are paying best rates for services provided. If a competitive process is used to procure services, the Consortium can clearly state all service requirements in its 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 at prices that ensure an appropriate return on investment. A competitive procurement process should be used with certain safeguards in place to protect the standards of service and be sensitive to local market conditions. In areas where this process may not be appropriate due to limited service availability, the Consortium can ensure that transparent and accountable processes are supported, by using the competitively procured contracts as a “proxy” for negotiating service levels and costs. Established procurement policies will determine the process for service acquisition.

## 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 3A. 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 6: Funding Adjustment Formula**

Overall Rating	Effect on deficit Boards <sup>12</sup>	Effect on surplus Boards <sup>12</sup>
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 in the range of 0% to 30%	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:

### Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord

Item	Value
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$106,674
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	100.00%

<sup>12</sup> This refers to Boards that have a deficit/surplus on student transportation

<b>Item</b>	<b>Value</b>
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	\$106,674
E&E Rating	Moderate-Low
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	No Adjustment
Total Funding adjustment	\$0

### **Conseil scolaire public du district du Nord-Est de l'Ontario**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Value</b>
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$51,438)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	55.21%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	(\$28,400)
E&E Rating	Moderate-Low
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	30%
Total Funding adjustment	\$8,520

### **Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board (NPSCDSB)**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Value</b>
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$156,555
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	100.00%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	\$156,555
E&E Rating	Moderate-Low
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	No Adjustment
Total Funding adjustment	\$0

## Near North District School Board (NND SB)

<b>Item</b>	<b>Value</b>
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$330,640
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	100.00%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	\$330,640
E&E Rating	Moderate-Low
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	No Adjustment
Total Funding adjustment	\$0

## 8 Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Items	Definition
Act	Education Act
Area Technicians	As shown in Figure 5
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
Assistant Area Technician	As shown in Figure 5
Board of Directors	As described in 3.2.1.1
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.
CSDCFN	Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord
CSDNE	Conseil scolaire public du district du Nord-Est de l'Ontario
Deloitte	Deloitte & Touche LLP (Canada)
Driver	Refers to bus Drivers, see also Operators
E&E	Effectiveness and Efficiency
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 NPSSTS Student Transportation Services " which supports the E&E Review Team's Assessment; this document is not a public

<b>Items</b>	<b>Definition</b>
	document
Executive Assistant	As described in 3.3.1.2
Funding Adjustment Formula	As described in Section 1.3.5
General Manager	As described in 3.3.1.2
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
Information and Technology and Communications	As describe in 3.3.1.2
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
NNDSB	Near North District School Board
NPSCDSB	Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board
NPSSTS or the Consortium	Nipissing-Parry Sound Student Transportation Services
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	The school boards that have participated as full partners in the Consortium

Items	Definition
Boards or Boards	
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
Transportation Officer	As described in 3.3.1

## 9 Appendix 2: Financial review – by School Board

### Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Allocation <sup>13</sup>	\$3,060,242	\$3,180,858	\$3,167,499	\$3,404,350
Expenditure <sup>14</sup>	\$3,021,211	\$3,226,767	\$3,139,020	\$3,297,676
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$39,031	(\$45,909)	\$28,479	\$106,674
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	\$3,021,211	\$3,226,767	\$3,139,020	\$3,297,676
As % of total Expenditures of Board	100%	100%	100%	100%

### Conseil scolaire public du district du Nord-Est de l'Ontario

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Allocation	\$872,780	\$1,168,160	\$1,109,519	\$1,326,194
Expenditure	\$990,303	\$1,342,354	\$1,260,497	\$1,377,632
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$117,523)	(\$174,194)	(\$150,978)	(\$51,438)
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	\$485,716	\$783,978	\$723,618	\$760,619
As % of total Expenditures of Board	49.05%	58.40%	57.41%	55.21%

### Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board

<sup>13</sup> Allocation based on Ministry data – includes all grant allocations for transportation (Section 9 00008C, Section 13 00006C, Section 13 00012C)

<sup>14</sup> Expenditure based on Ministry data – taken from Data Form D: 730C (Adjusted expenditures for compliance) – 212C (Other revenues) + 798C (Capital expenditures funded from operating)

<b>Item</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>	<b>2005/2006</b>	<b>2006/2007</b>	<b>2007/2008</b>
Allocation	\$3,100,115	\$3,296,521	\$3,347,640	\$3,611,215
Expenditure	\$3,143,748	\$3,276,691	\$3,487,061	\$3,454,660
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$43,633)	\$19,830	(\$139,421)	\$156,555
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	\$3,143,748	\$3,276,691	\$3,487,061	\$3,454,660
As % of total Expenditures of Board	100%	100%	100%	100%

### **Near North District School Board**

<b>Item</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>	<b>2005/2006</b>	<b>2006/2007</b>	<b>2007/2008</b>
Allocation	\$9,649,853	\$10,070,278	\$10,130,640	\$10,333,253
Expenditure	\$9,021,508	\$9,364,895	\$9,601,608	\$10,002,613
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$628,345	\$705,383	\$529,032	\$330,640
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	\$9,021,508	\$9,364,895	\$9,601,608	\$10,002,613
As % of total Expenditures of Board	100%	100%	100%	100%
Pourcentage du total des dépenses du conseil	100%	100%	100%	100%

## **10 Appendix 3: Document List**

1. 2008 Program Summary
2. ABF 10.0 -Share of Administration Costs
3. Absence Report - ABS 2
4. Addendum A - Clarification and Proposal Template
5. Assigned Vehicle Numbers
6. 6 Budget 2008 - 2009 - December 11, 2008
7. Boat Transportation Agreement
8. Bus Operators - Agreements for Transportation
9. Business Number - Summary of Accounts
10. Bulletin January, 2009
11. By Law No. 1
12. Code of Conduct (New Format - Sep. 2006)
13. Communication Protocol (Revised Nov. 25, 2005)
14. Conditions of Employment Non-Union
15. Common Level of Service Overview – June, 2008
16. Common Level Policy - Walking
17. Confidentiality Agreement (5 taxi operators)
18. Confidentiality Agreement - staff
19. Consortia Plan - Appendix 2
20. Consortia Plan - Appendix 2
21. Consortium - Memorandum of Agreement
22. Consortia Plan Submission - Signature Page

23. Contact Information
24. Child Car Seats (draft)
25. CUPE - draft1165 6 Student Transp. 082012
26. CUPE - Memo of Settlement Local 1165 November, 2008
27. Data files – runs, stop, students and fleet inventory (6 files)
28. Designated Operators - Summer School 2008
29. Drivers Criminal Record Checks - Boat Transportation
30. Drivers Criminal Record Checks
31. Emergency Procedures Manual
32. Emergency Transportation Policy Draft
33. Executive Assistant Job Description
34. Evaluation Form
35. Financial Statements (Aug. 31, 2008)
36. First Nation Agreement - Moose Deer Point docs
37. Governance Organizational Chart
38. Guidelines & Forms (MED.)
39. Guidelines & Forms (MED.) New-Draft
40. Inclement Weather Days 2003-2008 (June 3, 2008)
41. Inclement Weather Pamphlet - EPS
42. Inclement Weather Pamphlet - NR - French
43. Inclement Weather Pamphlet - NR
44. Inclement Weather Pamphlet - WPS
45. Inclement Weather Policy

46. Instruction for Drivers at Parry Sound Transfer Point
47. Invoice Templates
48. Lease Agreement - 1870 Bond
49. Leave Authorization Request - ABS 1
50. Manual Transportation Special Needs
51. Memo Bus Patrol Program
52. Memo re Driver Workshop
53. Monthly Report of Absences - ABS 3
54. Monthly flowchart of responsibilities
55. Mission Statement (Approved Feb. 14, 2006)
56. Near North Memo - CONSORTIUM1 (May 4, 2004)
57. Newsletter January 2009
58. NOHFC Internship Program
59. NPSSTS 2008 02 12 Minutes in Camera
60. NPSSTS 2008 03 25 Minutes in Camera
61. NPSSTS 2008 04 15 Minutes in Camera
62. NPSSTS 2008 05 13 in Camera Minutes
63. NPSSTS 2008 06 26 in Camera Minutes
64. NPSSTS 2008 08 13 in Camera Informal
65. NPSSTS 2007 02 08 Teleconference
66. NPSSTS 2007 02 20 Minutes
67. NPSSTS 2007 04 10 Minutes
68. NPSSTS 2007 05 30 Minutes

69. NPSSTS 2007 08 30 Minutes
70. NPSSTS 2007 10 10 Minutes
71. NPSSTS 2007 11 13 Minutes
72. NPSSTS 2007 12 10 Minutes
73. NPSSTS 2007 12 10 Minutes Draft
74. NPSSTS 2008 01 16 Minutes-2
75. NPSSTS 2008 02 12 Minutes-rev
76. NPSSTS 2008 02 26 Teleconference-3
77. NPSSTS 2008 03 25 Minutes-rev
78. NPSSTS 2008 04 15 Minutes
79. NPSSTS 2008 05 06 Minutes (Planning Session)
80. NPSSTS 2008 05 13 Minutes
81. NPSSTS 2008 06 02 Ad Hoc Exec. Com. Minutes
82. NPSSTS 2008 06 20 Ministry Conference Call - Report
83. NPSSTS 2008 06 26 Minutes
84. NPSSTS 2008 08 13 Informal
85. NPSSTS 2008 09 09 Informal
86. NPSSTS 2008 11 25 Teleconference
87. NPSSTS 2008 12 02 Follow-up
88. NPSSTS 2008 12 02 Minutes
89. NPSSTS-Annual General Meeting (AGM)-2003 06 16
90. NPSSTS- Annual General Meeting (AGM)-2004 12 14
91. NPSSTS- Annual General Meeting (AGM)-2005 12 13

92. NPSSTS- Annual General Meeting (AGM)-2006 12 19
93. NPSSTS- Annual General Meeting (AGM)-2007 12 10
94. NPSSTS Governance Model
95. NPSSTS Operations Plan (May 2008)
96. NPSSTS Org Chart - Current
97. OSBIE Certificate of Insurance
98. OG 12.0 -Transfer of Bus Routes
99. Operations Manual - Dec. 15, 2008
100. Operator Performance Review & Route Audit - 2004
101. Operator Performance Review & Route Audit - 2007
102. Operators - Confidentiality Agreements
103. Org. Chart - Staff
104. Parents - Reimbursement 08-09
105. PC 11.0 -Travel Allowance (Adopted May 19, 2005)
106. Performance Review - Board of Directors
107. Performance Review Manager
108. Performance Review Office staff
109. Performance
110. Proposal Template
111. Purchasing Cards
112. P R Summary Sheet
113. Pricing Proposals Received - Rates
114. Protocol Mandate (Revised Nov. 25, 2005)

115. Reports to Shareholders
116. Request for bus stop location review form
117. Request for Proposals - Summer School 2008-2
118. Route Audit - 01a Nov.6 2008
119. SG 10.0 - Synchronization of School Start & Finish Times
120. S 12.0 – Child Car Seats (draft)
121. S 13.0 - Transportation of Medication (Draft Updated Feb. 1, 2006)
122. SG 13.0 - Video Monitors
123. Sample Agreement - Parent Reimbursement
124. Schedule A - Tentative Routes
125. Schedule B - Price Form
126. Schedule C - Survey of Service
127. Schedule D-1 - List of students by route (AM run)
128. Schedule D-2 - List of students by route (1230 run)
129. Schedule D-3 - List of students by route (PM run)
130. Schedule E - Invoice Template
131. Service Agreement - CSDNEO (Non-Union Benefits Plan)
132. Service Agreement - Municipality of Calander
133. Service Agreement – 1
134. Service Agreement – 2
135. Sample Agreement - Parental Support
136. Service Agreement - NNDSB (CUPE Benefits Plan)
137. Service Agreement - NPSC - Accounting

138. Service Agreement - NPSC - HR
139. Service Agreement - Town of Parry Sound
140. Service request form
141. Software Agreement - Georef
142. Special Projects
143. Summer School 2008-Actual Routes summary
144. Survey of Service 08-09
145. Synchronization of School Start and Finish Times
146. Taxi Transportation Agreement
147. Taxi Transportation Agreement
148. Transportation Clerk Job Description
149. Transport Contract - Managers
150. Transportation Officer
151. Transportation of Medication
152. Transfer Point & Service Agreement - City of North Bay
153. Trillium - Student Standards Manual - Original Bustops
154. Uniform Code of Accounts
155. Video monitors
156. Walking Hazard Eligibility
157. Yr To Date Expenses (Dec. 20) vs. 08-09 Budget

## 11 Appendix 4: Common Practices

### Home to School Distance

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 3	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr.7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	0.8 km	1.2 km	1.6 km	1.6 km	3.2 km
Policy – NPSCDSB	Door to door	1.0 km	1.6 km	1.6 km	3.0 km
Policy – NNDSB	Door to door	1.0 km	1.6 km	1.6 km	3.0 km
Policy – CSDNE	Door to door	1.0 km	1.6 km	1.6 km	3.0 km
Policy – CSDCFN	Door to door	1.0 km	1.6 km	1.6 km	3.0 km

### Home to Bus Stop Distance

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 3	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr.7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	0.5 km	0.8 km	0.8 km	0.8 km	0.8 km
Policy – NPSCDSB	0.5 km	0.5 km	0.5 km	1.0 km	1.0 km
Policy – NNDSB	0.5 km	0.5 km	0.5 km	1.0 km	1.0 km
Policy – CSDNE	0.5 km	0.5 km	0.5 km	1.0 km	1.0 km
Policy – CSDCFN	0.5 km	0.5 km	0.5 km	1.0 km	1.0 km

### Arrival Window

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 3	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr.7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	18	18	18	18	25
Policy – NPSCDSB	30	30	30	30	30
Policy – NNDSB	30	30	30	30	30
Policy – CSDNE	30	30	30	30	30
Policy – CSDCFN	30	30	30	30	30
Practice	15	15	15	15	15

## Departure Window

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 3	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr.7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	16	16	16	16	18
Policy – NPSCDSB	30	30	30	30	30
Policy – NNDSB	30	30	30	30	30
Policy – CSDNE	30	30	30	30	30
Policy – CSDCFN	30	30	30	30	30
Practice	15	15	15	15	15

## Earliest Pick Up Time

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 3	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr.7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	6:30	6:30	6:30	6:30	6:00
Policy – NPSCDSB	-	-	-	-	-
Policy – NNDSB	-	-	-	-	-
Policy – CSDNE	-	-	-	-	-
Policy – CSDCFN	-	-	-	-	-

## Latest Drop Off Time

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 3	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr.7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	5:30	5:30	5:30	5:30	6:00
Policy – NPSCDSB	-	-	-	-	-
Policy – NNDSB	-	-	-	-	-
Policy – CSDNE	-	-	-	-	-
Policy – CSDCFN	-	-	-	-	-

## Maximum Ride Time

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 3	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr.7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	75	75	75	75	90
Policy – NPSCDSB	60	60	60	60	70
Policy – NNDSB	60	60	60	60	70
Policy – CSDNE	60	60	60	60	70
Policy – CSDCFN	60	60	60	60	70
Practice Avg./Median	31/28	31/28	31/28	31/28	31/28

## Seated Students Per Vehicle

Activity	JK/SK	Gr. 1 – 6	Gr. 4 – 6	Gr. 7 – 8	GR. 9 – 12
Common Practice	69	69	69	53	52
Policy – NPSCDSB	72	72	72	48	48
Policy – NNDSB	72	72	72	48	48
Policy – CSDNE	72	72	72	48	48
Policy – CSDCFN	72	72	72	48	48

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