



Ministry of Education Effectiveness &  
Efficiency Follow-up Review  
Tri-Board Student Transportation Services

E&E Phase 3 Follow-up Review  
August 2009

**Table of Contents**

- Executive Summary ..... 1
- 1 Introduction ..... 5
  - 1.1 Background..... 5
    - 1.1.1 Transportation Reform..... 5
    - 1.1.2 Follow-up Review ..... 5
  - 1.2 Scope of Deloitte Engagement..... 5
  - 1.3 Methodology and team used to complete E&E Reviews ..... 6
    - 1.3.1 Team & Methodology ..... 6
    - 1.3.2 Funding adjustment ..... 9
    - Table 1: Funding Adjustment Formula ..... 10
    - 1.3.3 Purpose of Report..... 10
    - 1.3.4 Material relied upon ..... 10
    - 1.3.5 Limitations on the use of this report ..... 11
- 2 Consortium Management..... 12
  - 2.1 Introduction ..... 12
  - 2.2 Governance ..... 12
    - 2.2.1 Original Recommendations ..... 12
    - 2.2.2 Accomplishments ..... 13
  - 2.3 Organizational structure ..... 13
    - 2.3.1 Original Recommendations ..... 13
    - 2.3.2 Accomplishments ..... 13
  - 2.4 Consortium Management..... 13
    - 2.4.1 Original Recommendations ..... 13
    - 2.4.2 Incremental changes ..... 14
    - 2.4.3 Accomplishments ..... 16
    - 2.4.4 Opportunities for improvement ..... 17
  - 2.5 Financial management..... 18
    - 2.5.1 Original Observations ..... 18
    - 2.5.2 Accomplishments ..... 18

2.6	Results of E&E follow-up review.....	18
3	Policies and Practices .....	19
3.1	Introduction .....	19
3.2	Transportation Policies & Practices.....	19
3.2.1	Original recommendations.....	20
3.2.2	Incremental progress .....	20
3.2.3	Accomplishment .....	22
3.2.4	Opportunities for improvement .....	22
3.3	Results of E&E follow-up review.....	22
4	Routing and Technology .....	23
4.1	Introduction .....	23
4.2	Software and technology use .....	23
4.2.1	Original recommendations.....	23
4.2.2	Incremental progress .....	24
4.2.3	Accomplishments .....	25
4.3	Digital map and student database management .....	26
4.3.1	Original recommendations.....	26
4.3.2	Incremental progress .....	26
4.3.3	Accomplishments .....	27
4.4	System Reporting.....	28
4.4.1	Incremental progress .....	29
4.4.2	Accomplishments .....	29
4.5	Regular and Special Needs Transportation Planning and Routing.....	30
4.5.1	Original Recommendations .....	30
4.5.2	Incremental Progress.....	30
	Figure 1 – Exception Code Assignments .....	31
4.5.3	Opportunities for improvement .....	31
4.6	Results of the follow-up E&E Review .....	32
5	Contracts.....	33
5.1	Introduction .....	33
5.2	Contract Structure .....	33

5.2.1	Original recommendations.....	34
5.2.2	Incremental progress.....	34
5.2.3	Accomplishments.....	36
5.2.4	Opportunities for improvement.....	37
5.3	Contract Negotiations.....	37
5.3.1	Original recommendations.....	37
5.3.2	Incremental progress.....	38
5.3.3	Accomplishments.....	39
5.4	Contract Management.....	40
5.4.1	Original recommendations.....	40
5.4.2	Incremental Progress.....	41
5.4.3	Accomplishments.....	42
5.5	Results of E&E follow-up review.....	43
6	Funding Adjustment.....	44
	Table 2: Funding Adjustment Formula.....	44
	Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board.....	45
	Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board.....	45
	Limestone District School Board.....	45
	Conseil des écoles catholiques de langues françaises du Centre-Est.....	46
	Conseil des écoles publiques de L'Est de L'Ontario.....	46
7	Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms.....	47
8	Appendix 2: Financial Review – by School Board.....	49
	Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board.....	49
	Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board.....	49
	Limestone District School Board.....	49
	Conseil des écoles catholiques de langues françaises du Centre-Est.....	50
	Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario.....	50

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**

This report details the findings and recommendations of an Effectiveness and Efficiency Review (E&E Review) of the Tri-Board Student Transportation Services (“Tri-Board” or the “Consortium”) conducted by a review team (E&E Review Team) selected by the Ontario Ministry of Education (the Ministry). The Consortium provides transportation services to the Limestone District School Board (“Limestone”), Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (“Algonquin”) and the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (“Hastings”). The Consortium also sells transportation services to the Conseil des écoles publiques de l’Est de L’Ontario (“CEPEO”) and to the Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est (“CECLFCE”).

A follow-up E&E Review, initiated at the request of the Consortium, was conducted. The first E&E Review report was issued in May 2008 (the original report) and this follow-up report is intended to document the changes made by the Consortium to date. This report is designed to provide an overall assessment of the Consortium and outline the incremental findings and recommendations that were particularly noteworthy.

The E&E Review evaluated four areas of performance – Consortium Management, Policies and Practices, Routing and Technology use and Contracting practices - to identify whether the Consortium had implemented any best practices and recommendations from the original report; and to provide incremental recommendations on opportunities for improvement in each of the specific areas of performance. The evaluation of each area was then utilized to determine an overall rating for the Consortium that would be used by the Ministry to determine any in-year funding adjustments to be provided.

### **Original report summary**

Subsequent to the first E&E Review, it was found that the Consortium’s foundational documents were complete. The Consortium was found to have clear documentation of cost sharing arrangements, defined and documented dispute resolution procedures, defined roles and responsibilities for employees, appropriate entity and governance structures and appropriate financial management practices. The Consortium achieved a “high” rating and no recommendations were made in Consortium Management.

The Consortium was found to have established policies and practices that were well harmonized, well-communicated and concise. The Consortium achieved a rating of High in Policies and Practices. It was recommended that Tri-Board make continuous improvements to policies and practices and to document all practices in a formal

manner. It was also recommended that formal confirmation of the necessity for bilingual documentation be obtained.

The Consortium achieved a rating of Moderate-High in Routing and Technology. Consortium staff was found to be well trained on the application of routing software; however, an increasingly formalized and regular training program was recommended so that planners could gain expertise in routing software and program implementation. A further recommendation was made regarding the implementation of a system coding technique so that identification of any route's purpose and/or type may be facilitated for both day-to-day operations as well as for analysis and reporting purposes. Additional recommendations were made for proper maintenance of digital maps, student database management, and reporting and performance management. Lastly, a recommendation was put forward for an analysis to be completed regarding the effect of courtesy riders on the overall number and type of vehicles used as well as the use of taxis.

The Consortium received a rating of Moderate in Contracts in the original report. It was originally recommended that the Consortium implement an Operator compensation clause directly in its Operator contracts, as opposed to having the compensation clauses as part of a separate document. A change to the fee structure was also recommended. Finally, it was suggested that the Consortium incorporate improvements to its monitoring processes and reassess the need for board owned vehicles.

As a result of the initial E&E Review, Tri-Board achieved an overall rating of **Moderate-High**.

### **Follow-up report summary**

The Consortium has maintained its high operational excellence in Consortium Management. Not only has it continued to implement the pre-existing best practices that achieved the Consortium a "High" rating in its original review, Tri-Board has also increased transparency and operational excellence by implementing clear procurement policies with defined purchasing thresholds. The Consortium should, however, develop and implement formal succession plans to ensure that operational excellence, through the establishment of human resource policies, will continue even with staff turnover. The Consortium continues to be rated High in Consortium Management.

The Consortium has enhanced its policy and procedures manual to address the issue of bell time changes and their impact on cost and service times. A recommendation was made in the original E&E Review to have documents translated from English to French. However, Tri-Board indicated this was not necessary as this was a service that was still not demanded. The Consortium should establish a formal process for the documentation of record maintenance and translation needs, including costs and timelines. The Consortium continues to be rated High in Policies and Practices.

Each recommendation in the original report regarding routing and technology has been fully addressed in a manner consistent with best practices. Tri-Board has formalized training programs according to each employee's specific needs; increased its knowledge and use of the MapNet software, map maintenance and updates; implemented monthly reporting of key performance indicators; and applied additional practices that will ensure operational excellence. The Consortium should, however, continue the analysis of cost and service impacts with regard to the provision of services for otherwise non-eligible students; this analysis would ensure that there is a common understanding of impacts at the Member Board level. The Consortium has obtained a High in Routing and Technology.

The Consortium was provided with several recommendations regarding contract completeness and monitoring during the original E&E Review. Tri-Board was also tasked with analyzing the use of board owned vehicles. The Consortium has amended Operator contracts to include all relevant clauses.

Moreover, the Consortium has developed a standard performance guide for all Operators to adhere to, so that Operator service standards remain high. As such, it is recommended that the Consortium include an additional clause mandating first aid/CPR/EpiPen training in the existing Operator contracts. Finally, the Consortium is working with its Member Boards to reduce the use of board owned vehicles. The Consortium has obtained a High in Contracts.

### **Funding adjustment**

In light of past and current achievements and its continuous improvement trajectory, the Consortium has been rated as **High**. Based on this evaluation, the Ministry will provide additional transportation funding that will narrow the 2008-09 transportation funding gap for Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board and Limestone District School Board. Conseil des écoles catholiques de langues françaises du Centre-Est and Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario will have their 2008-09 transportation funding gap reduced on the same basis but proportionately to the amount of transportation expenditures which they purchased from Tri-Board in 2007-08.

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

Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board	\$411,687
Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board	\$655,769

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to Section 6 for the calculation of funding adjustments.



Limestone District School Board	\$1,595,100
Conseil des écoles catholiques de langues françaises du Centre-Est	\$56,091
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario	\$148,680

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Background**

### **1.1.1 Transportation Reform**

The Ontario Ministry of Education has introduced significant education reforms over the past four years. One of the focuses of their reforms is on support of school board management processes and systematic review of school board business operations. Student transportation was the first “line of business” to undergo such a reform since 2006-07.

### **1.1.2 Follow-up Review**

The Ministry has established a multi-phase approach to review the performance of consortia (collectively the “E&E Reviews”) across the province. Tri-Board was reviewed in Phase 2 of the E&E Reviews completed in October 2007. Based on the findings of the original review, the Ministry provided a total of \$1.4M in additional funding to the reviewed boards. To encourage continuous improvement, the Ministry has decided to provide follow-up reviews.

The follow-up review was triggered at the request of the Consortium as they communicated that they had made some progress since the original review. The purpose of the follow-up E&E Review is to assess the extent of the Consortium’s progress and review evidentiary working papers to support that progress. The report therefore focuses on the incremental changes from the original E&E Review conducted in 2007.

## **1.2 Scope of Deloitte Engagement**

Deloitte was engaged to lead the E&E Review 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 follow-up reviews for each of the transportation consortia to be reviewed in Phases three and four (currently in Phase 3);
- At the beginning of each 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 report for each consortium that has been subject to an E&E Follow-up 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 and team used to complete E&E Reviews**

#### **1.3.1 Team & Methodology**

The composition of the team and the methodology used for this follow-up review are the same as in the initial 2007 review. Please refer to the first report for a detailed description. The same Evaluation Framework and Assessment Guide were also applied in the follow-up review to ensure consistency in evaluation. For each of the four sections examined in terms of Effectiveness and Efficiency, the existing operations have been analysed based on observations from fact (including interviews) in order to document progress incremental to the 2007 E&E Review. Observations which have been assessed as best practice are documented as accomplishments of the Consortium. Areas for additional improvement have also been noted. In situations where there has been no incremental progress related to the recommendations from the 2007 E&E Review, those topics remain unaddressed in this report and the related recommendations from the 2007 report continue to be valid. Incremental accomplishments or areas for improvement are used to revise, as appropriate, the E&E assessment for each of the four sections. The criteria of an effective and efficient Consortium are summarized below.

#### **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 school 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

### **1.3.2 Funding adjustment**

The Ministry will use the results of the E&E Reviews and Follow-up 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 by 0%	Same as above

The Ministry has announced, through memorandum B: 2 dated March 27, 2009, that effective from the 2009-10 school year, in addition to the funding adjustments made based on the overall E&E rating, for any consortium not achieving a high rating in Routing and Technology, a negative adjustment of one percent to a board's transportation allocation will be made to recognize potential efficiencies through ongoing routing optimization and technology use. To acknowledge sites whose systems are already operating in an efficient manner, the adjustment will only apply to boards that have not achieved a "high" rating in Routing and Technology from the E&E Reviews. Boards that achieve a "high" rating in the Routing and Technology area in future reviews will be exempt from the reduction in the subsequent year.

### **1.3.3 Purpose of Report**

This Report serves as the deliverable for the E&E follow-up review conducted on the Consortium by the E&E Review Team during the week of June 22, 2009.

### **1.3.4 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 the Consortium.

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<sup>2</sup> This refers to Boards that have a deficit/surplus on student transportation (see Section 6 – Funding Adjustments)

### **1.3.5 Limitations on the use of this report**

The purpose of this Report is to document the results of the follow-up 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.



## **2 Consortium Management**

### **2.1 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 the Consortium, and from information collected during interviews with the Superintendent of Business, Board Trustees and selected bus 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 the Consortium is as follows:

**Consortium Management – Original E&E rating: High**

**Consortium Management – New E&E rating: High**

### **2.2 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: 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.

#### **2.2.1 Original Recommendations**

The Consortium did not have any recommendations in this area in the original review completed in May 2008.

### **2.2.2 Accomplishments**

The Consortium has made continuous minor adjustments and improvements to its governance structures and procedures since the original E&E Review. The Consortium's governance structure and practices remain consistent with best practices.

## **2.3 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 that tasks are not being duplicated and that 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.

### **2.3.1 Original Recommendations**

The Consortium did not have any recommendations in this area in the original review completed in May 2008.

### **2.3.2 Accomplishments**

The Consortium has made continuous minor adjustments and improvements to its organization structure since the original E&E Review. The Consortium's organization structure remains consistent with best practices.

## **2.4 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.

### **2.4.1 Original Recommendations**

The Consortium did not have any recommendations specific to this area in the original review. The following section outlines the incremental changes made by the Consortium since the original E&E Review.

## **2.4.2 Incremental changes**

### **Succession Planning**

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was scheduled to retire shortly after the E&E Team completed its follow-up review. A replacement CEO had not been identified at the time of the follow-up review. The outgoing CEO stated that he had an understanding with the Member Boards that he was to return to the Consortium on a one year contract to facilitate an effective transition and knowledge transfer. There was no formal contract in place at the time of the Review that documented this arrangement.

### **Strategic Plan**

A documented strategic plan with the objective of planning for both operational and financial goals has been developed. Both long term and short term goals are defined and discussed. The strategic plan is presented at the annual Board of Directors' meeting which typically takes place in June of every year. Throughout the year, changes and updates to the goals and objectives are discussed and amended as needed. These goals are monitored and tracked on a continuous basis.

The strategic plan is produced by the CEO, Supervisors and Safety officer. The goals and objectives are communicated to staff through regular meetings and are uploaded on a common drive accessible to all staff members.

### **Purchase of Service Agreements**

The terms and conditions by which Tri-Board purchases services are documented in purchase of service agreements. The Consortium has purchase of service agreements for the provision of technology services, and telecommunications services; and with Limestone District School Board for the provision of accounting and other financial and property management services.

The purchase of service agreement for the provision of technology services is valid for three years commencing November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The services to be provided are described in the contract and in general, these services will include the regular supervision, maintenance upgrades, training and research related to all Information Technology services rendered to the Consortium. The agreement contains, among other things, a payment clause, a technology system management clause, a confidentiality clause and additional clauses related to severability and service disruptions.

There is a purchase of service agreement outlining details for wireless voice services and/or wireless data, information or messaging services supplied to the Consortium. In its agreement, the service provider has consented to provide Voice over Response

(VoR) services for a term of three years beginning August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The agreement contains, among other things, a confidentiality clause, a termination clause, a limitations of services clause, a monitoring clause as well as an arbitration clause should a dispute between the service provider and the Consortium arise.

There is a purchase of service agreement between the Consortium and the Limestone District School Board for the provision of accounting, other financial services and property management services. The term of the agreement commences on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006 and extends to August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2011. The agreement contains a description of the services that will be rendered by the Limestone District School Board. The contract also stipulates services that will not be included such as information technology services.

### **Transportation service agreements**

The Consortium currently has three Transportation Service Agreements (TSA) with its Member Boards. Each one is signed by a representative on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Each TSA is valid from September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 2009 and may be extended for an additional three years. The TSAs provide information with respect to the transportation services to be provided to each Member Board. All Agreements contain financial management clauses with respect to administration and overhead costs as well as operating budget practices, unanticipated costs and surplus practices. In addition to the abovementioned clauses, there are also a number of other terms specifying Dispute Resolution and Confidentiality requirements. Articles regarding the management of Board buses and Board drivers are also included.

Each Board is invoiced by the Consortium and pays direct costs for the transportation services provided based on weighted average student usage.

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

All staff members have a development plan with personal objectives and goals. This development plan is linked to the larger goals of the Consortium and is in line with the Consortium's overall objectives.

As was evident during the first review, the practice of technical skill building is still ongoing through the regular encouragement and availability of training opportunities. Training sessions are provided to all staff on a bi-weekly basis for several different programs including Microsoft Outlook, MapNetWeb, Trapeze and Adobe/PDF. Training is also provided with respect to the usage of reporting tools, student/routing data, route, stop and building stop creation and student coding. Advanced training sessions are also available for the optimization of routes and student record downloads.

Performance evaluations are completed every three years, in line with Board requirements.

### **Key performance indicators**

The Consortium monitors a number of key performance indicators such as the number of students transported, ride times, walking distances and taxi costs. The tracking results on these key performance indicators are forwarded to the Board of Directors for their review.

### **Procurement**

The Consortium has clear procurement policies in place with purchasing thresholds associated with various procurement methods. The dollar limitations are stated and the procurement methods are clearly outlined.

### **2.4.3 Accomplishments**

It is recognized that the Consortium now demonstrates the following best practices in addition to the best practices outlined in the original report:

#### **Strategic Plan**

A documented strategic plan with the objective of planning for both operational and financial goals has been developed. Strategic plan is an effective tool to drive continuous progress in an organization. It helps to ensure a common understanding for all stakeholders of the direction in which the organization is moving. The plan, and subsequent monitoring thereof, also contributes to a corporate culture of continuous self-assessment and improvement. The Consortium's planning process allows it to remain focused on goal-oriented initiatives aimed at improving service levels, operational procedures and accountability frameworks and encourages team members to work together towards a common goal.

#### **Purchase of service agreements/support services**

There are purchase of service agreements in place between the Consortium and all of its service providers that outline the scope of the services to be provided and the manner in which the suppliers are to be compensated for these services. Clear contracts ensure required services are satisfactorily provided to the Consortium and decrease the chances of misunderstanding.

### **Transportation service agreements**

The Consortium currently has three TSAs with its Member Boards. Each one was signed by a representative on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The TSAs outline the scope of the services to be provided and the manner in which the Consortium is to be compensated for these services. Clear contracts ensure required services are satisfactorily provided by the Consortium and decrease the chances of misunderstanding.

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

Staff performance evaluations are conducted on a regular basis with a clear, easily understood framework that is specific to the Consortium and its needs. The metrics which are used are supportive of the goals and objectives of the Consortium. Likewise staff training is provided on a regular basis and is tracked internally; training goals are aligned with overall Consortium strategy and objectives which is important to ensure alignment between efforts and goals.

### **Key performance indicators**

The Consortium monitors a number of KPIs and uses these measures to communicate performance to Member Boards. These indicators serve as a documented source of measurable quality and performance. Formally monitoring a relevant portfolio of KPIs allows the Consortium to quantify its performance and generate realistic business improvement plans.

### **Procurement**

The Consortium has clear procurement policies in place with purchasing thresholds associated with various procurement methods. Documentation regarding these procedures encourages transparency and standardization in the procurement methods of the Consortium.

## **2.4.4 Opportunities for improvement**

### **Develop a formal succession plan**

It is recommended that a formal succession plan be developed for all positions. Documentation of job responsibilities and duties, as well as cross training, mentoring and professional development programs will help to ensure operational excellence and effective knowledge transfer when staff turnover.

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

### **2.5.1 Original Observations**

The Consortium did not have any recommendations in this area in the original review completed in May 2008.

### **2.5.2 Accomplishments**

The Consortium has made continuous minor adjustments and improvements to its financial management processes since the original E&E Review. The Consortium's financial management policies and procedures remain consistent with best practices.

## **2.6 Results of E&E follow-up review**

Consortium Management has been assessed as **High**. Despite already achieving a high rating in the original E&E review, Tri-Board has demonstrated commitment to continuous operational excellence by successfully implementing new procedures that improve operational effectiveness and efficiency.

Particularly noteworthy best practices that the Consortium continues to implement include the maintenance of effective governance and organization entity statuses; effective staff evaluation and training procedures; executed and detailed transportation service agreements; effective long term and short term planning procedures and strong accounting and budgeting practices.

The primary areas for improvement include the establishment of a complete and formalized succession planning process that would assist the Consortium in continuing to maintain its high standards of service delivery in the event of employee turnover.

## **3 Policies and Practices**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Policies and practices examine and evaluate the established policies, operational procedures, and the documented 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 observations, findings, and recommendations found in this section of the report are based on onsite interviews with the Superintendent of Business and Area Transportation Officers, and on an analysis of presented documents, extracted data, and information available on the Consortium's website. 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 & Practices – Original E&E Rating: High**

**Policies & Practices – New E&E Rating: High**

### **3.2 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 School Boards helps to ensure that service is delivered safely and equitably to each of the service-providing and service purchasing School Boards. This section will evaluate the established policies and practices and their impact on the effective and efficient operation of the Consortium.



### **3.2.1 Original recommendations**

#### *Ongoing Policy and Practice Evaluation and Documentation*

*The ongoing success of the Consortium in providing consistent and equitable service to its Member Boards will be dependent on its continued use and enforcement of documented policies and operational practices. Currently, some of the success enjoyed by the Consortium can be attributed to the respect and trust that is exhibited between current Consortium management and the Board of Directors. As the Consortium evolves and continues operations into the future, staff will turn over and change both within the Consortium and its Member Boards. A continuous evaluation of existing documentation, and expansion to include currently undocumented but established practices such as bell time management and courtesy riders (discussed further in section 5), will be important to ensure that the current success survives future staff turnover and changes in expectations. It is recommended that Tri-Board Student Transportation Services – Member Board Policies (Document #40 per Appendix 3) be updated to reflect any changes to the Consortium’s policies since it was last Board approved in January 2002.*

#### *Bilingual Translations*

*Purchasers of service include CEPEO and CECLFCE. Historically the translation of Consortium documents into French has not been necessary. According to Consortium management, there is no demand for, or request from, the French language boards for translated documents. We suggest that the Consortium solicit formal confirmation on an annual basis as to whether their purchasing boards wish to be communicated with in French or English. Furthermore, it may be necessary to ensure translation resources are in place as Tri-Board’s usage of Web enabled communication media with parents increases. There will likely be a need for French translated versions of specific pages of the Tri-Board website.*

### **3.2.2 Incremental progress**

#### **Ongoing Policy and Practice Evaluation and Documentation**

Interviews with Consortium staff indicate an understanding of the recommendation, and an awareness of the need for ongoing monitoring and modification of existing policy and practice documentation. Specific actions taken in regard to bell time management and courtesy transportation in particular reflect a positive response to the recommendation. Actions taken by the Consortium in this area are fully in keeping with the expectations of the specific recommendation and the E&E process.

**Bell Time Management:** A protocol for the management of bell times has been established. This includes a written submission to the Board of Directors that states the rationale for the proposed change. The Consortium must also follow this process as it identifies proposed changes that will lead to routing efficiencies. In either case, the Consortium is tasked with providing a cost and service analysis for consideration by the Board of Directors. This is an appropriate process that respects the needs of the educational programs, while also recognizing that the management of bell times is critical to the Consortium's ability to deliver effective and efficient services.

**Courtesy Eligibility:** To support fair and equitable service, it is imperative that all service offerings be predicated on established policy. The Consortium has developed a policy on courtesy transportation that helps to clarify the current operational practices. The policy allows for the delivery of transportation service to otherwise ineligible students providing that the following criteria are met:

- There is no additional cost to the Board(s);
- The student can walk to an established stop;
- There is no resulting extension of the route and
- Seating is available within the existing capacity of the vehicle (i.e., a larger vehicle will not be substituted for this purpose).

While this is a clearly elicited policy statement, our review indicates some inconsistency or, at a minimum, some confusion in how students' eligibility is coded within the *MapNet* system. It was indicated by Consortium management that ongoing staff meetings and in-service training will continue to focus on the importance of, and processes for, the correct coding of students.

### **Bilingual Translations**

According to management, there continues to be a lack of demand for, or request from, the French language Boards for translated documents. The Consortium has nevertheless produced public safety announcements in French. This effort is in support of furthering bus safety programs. The Consortium demonstrates continued awareness of this issue and an understanding of the costs associated with producing translations in the absence of demand for these services. Consortium actions to date are consistent with the expectations of the recommendation made in the original E&E review.

### **3.2.3 Accomplishment**

It is recognized that the Consortium now demonstrates the following best practices in addition to the best practices outlined in the original report:

#### **Bell Time Management**

The formalization and documentation of a bell time management protocol is an excellent example of how the Consortium identifies opportunities for its Member Boards. A documented protocol supports recognition by the Boards of the importance of bell time coordination to effective route planning. Within this protocol, a framework is provided for the rational business-case analysis of opportunities relative to the service demands of the Consortium's customers.

### **3.2.4 Opportunities for improvement**

#### **Implement a formal process for reviewing French language needs**

The Consortium has committed to continued communication with service purchasing boards and has also been tasked with the responsibility to determine translation needs. As such, it is recommended that a formal process be implemented for an annual review, including documenting the costs of service and timelines for the production of requested documents.

### **3.3 Results of E&E follow-up review**

Policies and Practices continues to be rated as **High**. The Consortium has carefully considered the recommendations identified in the original E&E review and as a result, has implemented positive changes. The Consortium should be mindful of the need for further refinement in the area of exception transportation management and of the need for regular review of the needs of the French language Boards. This will help ensure that transportation is delivered fairly and equitably between the Member and Service Purchasing Boards. A regular focus on the management of policy and practice documentation, as demonstrated during this follow-up review, will continue to keep this Consortium in a leadership position in this area.

## 4 Routing and Technology

### 4.1 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 analysed 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 & Technology – Original E&E Rating: Moderate-high**

**Routing & Technology – New E&E Rating: High**

### 4.2 Software and technology use

#### 4.2.1 Original recommendations

##### *Training*

*Tri-Board's strategy is to develop enhanced software expertise among a subset of key users. Within this framework it is important to the ongoing success and improvement of the organization and the route system itself that a regular program of in-service training be developed. Indeed, a tacit recognition that differing levels of software and industry experience and expertise will continue to exist among the corps of Tri-Board Transportation Planners makes a comprehensive training program necessary. While we do not dispute that a great deal of cross-training and knowledge sharing occurs as a result of the physical proximity and operational practices of the organization, we nevertheless recommend the development of a formalized approach to training. At a minimum, this should include a monthly in-service training program that targets the relative level of expertise of individual Transportation Planners. This training should not*

*be limited to the routing software, but should include subjects touching on all aspects of student transportation route planning and operations. Most of these sessions can tap the expertise that currently exists throughout the organization, but some sessions should bring in outside sources such as representatives from the Operators association, business officials from the Member Boards, ministry representatives, and other industry experts.*

### **System Coding**

*Tri-Board's ability to manage and analyze its route structure would be considerably enhanced through the implementation of a revised route numbering system. Trip numbering can continue to reflect the assigned bus number, but changing route numbers to reflect the school serviced and/or the type of route it is would greatly improve the utility of the data for analysis and reporting. For example, current routes are assigned a numeric identification based on the bus providing the service, whether it is a morning or afternoon route, and the sequence of the route in the morning or afternoon series. Thus the trip name "869 AM TRIP" and the route identification "869-1AM" in the current structure indicates the first route in the morning sequence and that it is performed by bus #869. A revised structure might continue to include the same trip name, to keep a link with the bus number and morning sequence, but a revised route identification such as "420- 01T". This route identification incorporates a reference to the school serviced (Centennial SS), a sequence to indicate the number of the route servicing this school (01), and a suffix indicating that this route also passes through a transfer point. Similarly "465-1PM" might become "150-03C" indicating a combination run ("C") serving multiple school locations, with school 150 (Madoc PS) being the last school served in the sequence. Many other variations of this approach can be developed. This approach allows for easy identification of the route's purpose and type, both for day-to-day operations and for analysis and reporting purposes.*

### **4.2.2 Incremental progress**

#### **Training**

During the review, the Consortium management demonstrated its understanding of the value and importance of a more formal and tailored training program specific to the needs of each employee. The following are examples of specific training program enhancements developed and implemented since the original E&E Review. Collectively, these meet the expectations of the original recommendation:

- Training logs document training completed by each of the Planners and future training opportunities identified for each staff member.

- Each of the Transportation Planners responsible for special needs students has attended a workshop specific to the needs of children with autism.
- Two of the Transportation Planners are currently enrolled in the Transportation Management program at Guelph University.
- All staff participates in both local and regional Trapeze user groups allowing staff to benefit from skills of other Transportation Planners.

Additionally, a process has been implemented whereby staff who have already received advanced training serve as in-house trainers and mentors to the other Planners. A prime example is in the area of route optimization. After two of the Transportation Planners attended advanced training directly from Trapeze, a structured session was provided by these staff to two other Planners whose areas of responsibility were being targeted for optimization. This is an excellent example of an efficient training program that provides great benefit to the organization, while minimizing cost and disruption.

### **System Coding**

With respect to the original recommendation, the Consortium determined that a change in the route numbering system would lead to confusion on the part of the Operators. The existing system has been in place for a long time and the Consortium determined that it would be counterproductive to alter it at this time. In response to the recommendation, however, the Consortium devised an alternative system of route coding within a text-based description field of *MapNet*. This method more than exceeds the intent of the recommendation, and facilitates the ready filtering and extraction of data for operational use and for use in the development of key performance indicators. The only caution we express related to the approach, as it is currently designed, is that it requires a great deal of accuracy in the entering of data.

Also, close oversight and auditing of this will be an on-going requirement to ensure a high level of data integrity.

### **4.2.3 Accomplishments**

#### **System Coding**

The methodology developed by the Consortium to implement the E&E recommendation in such a way that it accomplishes the intent while meeting local needs, represents a new best practice. This response is in keeping with the goal of the E&E Reviews to drive improvement while remaining sensitive to unique local circumstances. The Consortium responded appropriately to the recommendation by recognizing the value

inherent in a revised coding structure, but also by ensuring that the approach chosen for implementation meets local needs and not just requirements of the recommendation.

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

#### **4.3.1 Original recommendations**

##### *Digital Map Maintenance*

*The Consortium should continue to design and implement a regular, proactive map auditing protocol to establish and sustain a high level of map attribute accuracy. Along with this, Tri-Board should explore alternatives to the current dependence on internal map maintenance procedures. The Consortium should investigate whether there are other digital map users throughout the region, to the extent feasible, and explore the creation of a cooperative approach to information collection and reporting that would enhance accuracy and reduce the overall level of effort required by all users.*

##### *Student Database Management*

*Once all Boards (partner and purchasing) are providing daily "add/change/delete" student downloads, and the accuracy of the data being provided is judged to be at a high level, then consider moving toward automated assignment of new and changed records to stops and routes. Manage true exceptions only that either need intervention by Transportation Planners for proper routing, or that cause overloads/underloads or other exceptions to be created on routes. Manual manipulation of the daily downloads should be kept to a minimum. Ideally, once verified and validated, these changes should flow through the routing system such that manual action on the part of Transportation Planners is minimized. The Consortium should address changes that, for example, cause a reassignment of a student from one stop or route to another, but that do not cause an overload or under load situation on either route should be automated, facilitating the comprehensive management of exceptions only.*

#### **4.3.2 Incremental progress**

##### **Digital Map Maintenance**

The Consortium actively sought assistance from local municipalities specifically with regards to the coordination of map data. Support was only found to be available from the City of Kingston. The rural nature of the service area means that GIS map data is not readily available elsewhere. As an alternative to shared map data sources, the Consortium has begun the process of integrating an automatic vehicle locating system (AVL) onto all buses in the fleet. 200 units have currently been installed, with an

additional 125 additional units to be installed in the near future. To integrate the AVL system into the Trapeze routing software, two software products are being evaluated: a web-based application from Everywhere Solutions; and the VEO product from Trapeze (the makers of *MapNet*). The Consortium has established a process for map maintenance (road speeds and route paths) and route auditing utilizing the on-board AVL system. Additionally, AVL is reducing the amount of time required by staff to perform actual on-site route audits. In particular, AVL has allowed the Consortium's Safety Officer to allocate additional time on bus and rider safety and less time on the actual auditing of route paths. These efforts more than meet the expectations of the original recommendation.

### **Student Database Management**

Interviews indicate that daily add, change and delete information is now received from each of the Member Boards for integration into the *MapNet* database. Management made an internal policy decision to prevent these records from automatically updating route information to ensure the accuracy of actual riders as compared to students that are eligible but do not ride. Route Planners receive alerts based on the daily updates on routes that have been updated. This “flag” allows for manual intervention by individual planners who must verify the changes before the system is updated. Once the changes are accepted, bus routes and stop information is updated. Although this is a semi-automated process, it meets the intent of the recommendation by ensuring accurate student and routing information with minimal staff intervention. The Consortium is capable of implementing a fully automated process, but has *chosen* this approach as best for meeting their local needs, which is consistent with the overall objectives of the E&E process.

### **4.3.3 Accomplishments**

#### **Digital Map Maintenance**

The implementation of Automatic Vehicle Location technologies (AVL) as a means of improving map accuracy, monitoring Operator performance and auditing bus routes remotely is innovative and represents a new best practice. The benefits derived from this investment are immediate in terms of improved data accuracy and reduce the staff time required for map and route maintenance. The long term benefits to be accrued in overall safety and effectiveness of operations will also be high.



## 4.4 System Reporting

### Original recommendations

#### *Reporting and Performance Measurement*

Tri-Board is sufficiently advanced in its routing processes and use of technology to garner significant benefits from the implementation of a structured performance measurement program. Specifically, we recommend that Tri-Board consider designing and implementing a program to calculate, report, and track over time several key indicators of performance. These include:

- Count of Daily Routes per Bus – Capacity utilization (discussed next) measures how well each individual bus route is being loaded. Daily routes per bus measures how effectively each bus is being utilized over a period of time. The combination of these two measures captures the two key elements in establishing an efficient system – filling the bus, and reusing the bus. As with all measures, it should be calculated on a regular periodicity and tracked over time to reveal trends in performance. As with capacity utilization, it should be calculated for key subsets such as large and small buses, and for each Operator.
- Capacity Utilization – Along with daily routes per bus this is a key measure that defines how effective Tri-Board is utilizing its transportation vehicles. It should be regularly calculated for key subsets of the system (primary and secondary schools, regular and special needs buses, etc.). Tracking this measure over time will serve the dual purpose of enlightening management as to the effect of routing decisions, and illuminating the causes behind changes in per student costs (discussed below).
- Average Ride Time – Filling and reusing the bus has a negative impact on service. As a rule, striving for higher levels of capacity utilization, for example, requires that each bus route be longer. Measuring ride times serves to illuminate these tradeoffs and provides further explanation for the causes behind trends in overall performance.
- Cost per Student – The end result of changes to the route structure should be its impact on overall cost. Higher capacity utilization and more daily routes per bus should, all else being equal, increase average ride times but lower the cost per student. Thus, a unit-based measure of cost is a critical addition to the package of measures that should be routinely calculated and tracked overtime.
- Daily Cost per Bus – This final measure compliments the understanding of cost impacts by establishing a second unit of measure, one that may move in

opposition to cost per student and that lends additional clarity to the overall understanding of system performance. Many of these measures of performance are discussed in context in the Transportation Planning and Routing Section below.

#### **4.4.1 Incremental progress**

##### **Reporting and Performance Measurement**

Since the original E&E review, the Consortium has developed a comprehensive system of monthly reporting and performance measurement. As with several earlier recommendations, management has determined which data and performance metrics would provide the most value to its customers and for internal management purposes, rather than implementing the recommendation exactly as elicited in the original E&E report. A comprehensive and appropriate process for the extraction of data, and a series of reporting templates that summarize and provide visual representation of the results have been implemented. Examples of the metrics that are now generated monthly include:

- Average ride time per Board by grade level;
- Daily Routes Per Bus; and
- Exception rider reports.

Each of these metrics is further refined into key subsets, such as by Board, region, or mode of transportation. A prime example of the value of performance measurement and analysis is part of the Consortium's recent route optimization analyses that has resulted in the removal of a number of buses and taxis from the system. This demonstrates that Consortium management clearly understands and has embraced the importance of using key performance indicators for improving system performance.

#### **4.4.2 Accomplishments**

##### **Performance Measurement**

The implementation of a comprehensive performance measurement program based on local needs, which utilizes accurate and complete route system data, represents a new best practice. Management clearly demonstrates an understanding of the importance and the value of regular performance measurement for reporting to users and stakeholders, and for improving the operation. Further evidence is provided in the customized approach that generates reports and indicators according to the

Consortium's own need and standards, as opposed to focusing only on those used for the evaluation of performance during the E&E process.

## **4.5 Regular and Special Needs Transportation Planning and Routing**

### **4.5.1 Original Recommendations**

#### *Courtesy Riders*

*The Consortium should undertake a comprehensive analysis to gauge the impact of courtesy riders and/or the current approach to coding of these riders on the overall system. This should be combined with the overall strategic route analysis and optimization planned for 2008. The premise for this analysis should be measuring the impact that these riders have on the overall number and type of vehicles required to operate the system.*

#### *Use of Taxis*

*The Consortium should undertake an analysis of the use of tax as part of the overall strategic route analysis and optimization planned for 2008. The goal should be to measure the financial and service impact of this system component, and to seek alternatives where possible. Coupled with this should be the development of a formal documented guideline that establishes the specific circumstances under which taxi service will be authorized for specific students.*

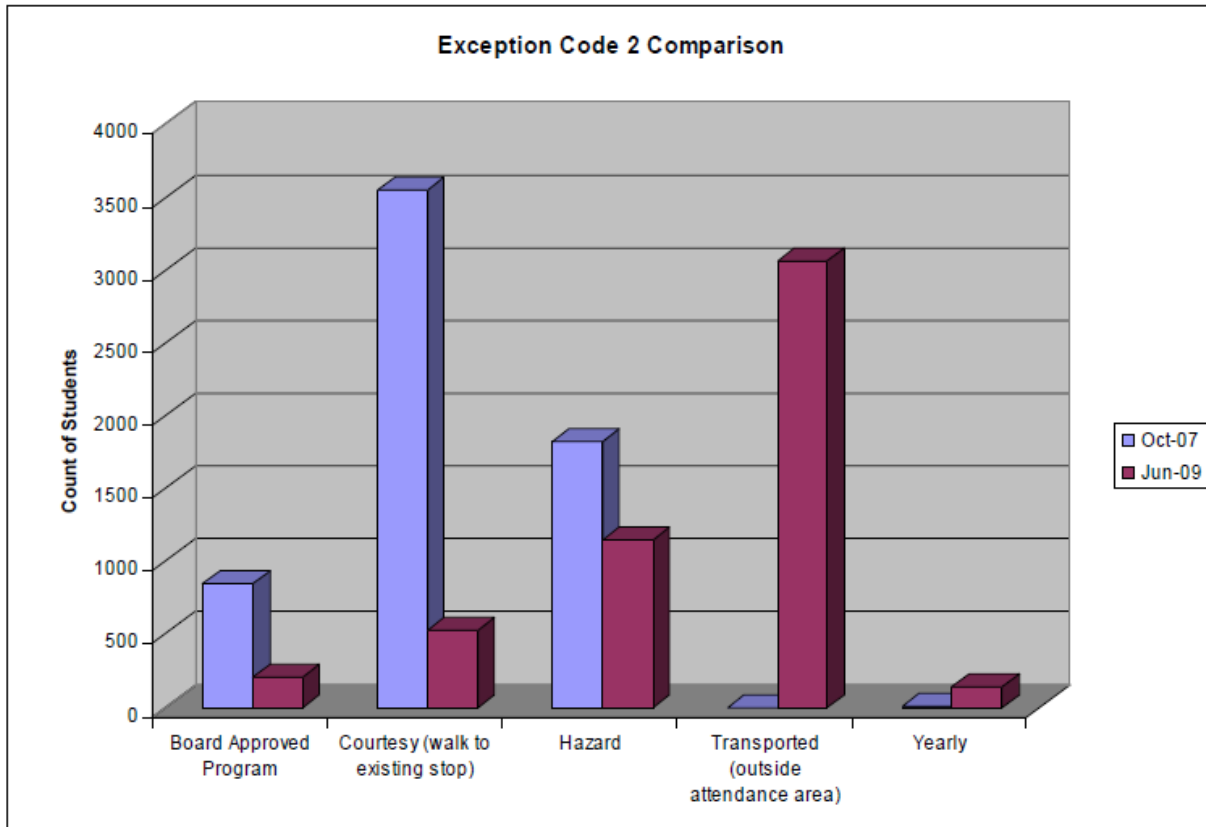
### **4.5.2 Incremental Progress**

#### **Courtesy Riders**

As discussed in the Policies and Practices section, the Consortium has clarified the courtesy transportation question by evaluating the manner in which such transportation is considered and approved, and by ensuring that these students are appropriately classified in the routing system. The coding structure has been changed to recognize differences in "courtesy" students from those students receiving transportation based on "Board Direction". While the improvements in policy and the change of the coding structure are both positive changes, the current analysis finds no significant change in the aggregate number of students transported. At the same time as there has been a reduction in the number of students classified as "courtesy" riders, there has been a corresponding increase in the number of students receiving "Board Directed" service (those with a "Transported" classification – see Figure 1). The purpose of an E&E Review is not to dictate which services are to be provided, but rather to provide an opportunity to demonstrate that cost and service impacts are considered, understood,

and clearly communicated. With this understanding, the Consortium has satisfied the intent of the recommendation. The concern remains, however, that these types of services be more fully analyzed to understand the resulting cost and service impacts.

**Figure 1 – Exception Code Assignments**



**Use of Taxis**

As a component of the route optimization process, the use of taxis was examined and resulted in the reduction of taxis in use system-wide by approximately 30 vehicles. This is an excellent example of how the use of the routing software, data analysis, and advanced staff training has helped to identify opportunities and significant cost savings.

**4.5.3 Opportunities for improvement**

**Continued analysis for non-eligible riders**

It is recommended that the Consortium continue to analyze and report the cost and service impacts of providing services for otherwise non-eligible students, whether these

are classified as “courtesy riders” or “Board Directed” services, to ensure a common understanding of the impacts at the Member Board level.

#### **4.6 Results of the follow-up E&E Review**

Based on the response and implementation of the critical recommendations contained within the original E&E Review, Routing and Technology is now rated as **High**. The complete and accurate implementation, and advanced use of the routing software is a key element in this success. The implementation and use of comprehensive structured training programs and role definitions, combined with regular data extraction, has provided the Consortium with a valuable performance measurement, reporting, and route planning program. This is evidenced by the results achieved in the removal of a substantial number of both buses and taxis from the system. Further analysis in the area of exception transportation management (courtesy and Board Directed) will help to ensure that costs are fully understood and considered as the Consortium’s services evolve in response to declining enrolment and other changes. However, the Consortium should continue to analyse the costs and service implications for the transportation of, and the rationale, for transporting otherwise non-eligible students.

## 5 Contracts

### 5.1 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 the Consortium, 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 the Consortium is as follows:

**Contracts – Original E&E rating: Moderate**

**Contracts – New E&E Rating: High**

### 5.2 Contract Structure

An effective contract<sup>3</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>3</sup> The word Contract in this context refers to detailed documents outlining the scope of services, rates and expected service levels. The phrases Purchase of Service agreement, statement of understanding, or memorandum of 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.

## **5.2.1 Original recommendations**

### *Contract Completeness*

*The formula and agreed upon inputs for Operator compensation is not included in the current contract with the school bus Operators. The compensation is detailed in a separate document called the Formula for Basis of Payment to School Bus Operators but there is no output from the formula or summary of agreed upon formulae inputs (such as rate of compensation per student kilometer) in the contract. By not having compensation terms in the signed contract, it could leave the payment amount open to dispute by transportation providers. It was also noted that the current contract does not include specification of the fleet ages, although this is specified in the formula for basis of payment document. It is recommended that the Consortium include the compensation component and maximum fleet age requirements as integrated clauses in all standard contracts.*

### *Fee Structure*

*The Operator rate structure is such that Tri-Board is paying both the Driver wages and the variable kilometer cost for the time and distance travelled by the Operators between the last drop off and first pick up for both the morning and evening routes. For some of the longer routes in the region, this may not be appropriate. If a Driver does not return to the point of the first pick up, and instead remains in the in the population centre near the school between the morning and afternoon routes, then payment of the deadhead kilometers may not be necessary, as the deadhead may not be driven. While it may be good practice to pay the Driver wage component for the deadhead time, it would be recommended that practice of paying the variable per kilometer rate be examined to ensure that it is not paid when deadhead kilometers are not actually being driven.*

## **5.2.2 Incremental progress**

### **Bus Operator Compensation**

The 2009-2010 Operator contracts outline the current compensation formula, consistent with the recommendations of the original E&E Review. The compensation formula consists of a fixed rate, a variable fuel rate, a double load premium, a monitor rate, a wheelchair premium and a driver wage rate.

The Contracts stipulate;

- The duties and obligations of the Operator, including the maintenance of licenses for the safe operation of vehicles, C.V.O.R. minimum rating requirements, proof of insurance;

- Consistent with the recommendations made in the initial E&E review, a payment for services clause including a breakdown of the difference between fixed and variable rates; and
- Termination requirements to be completed by the Consortium and the Operator as well as other standard contract clauses.

Tri-Board continues to pay both the driver wages and the variable kilometer cost for the time and distance travelled by the Operators between the last drop off and first pick up for both the morning and evening routes. The Consortium conducted an analysis to determine whether a change in the compensation formula, as suggested in the previous E&E Review, would result in cost savings. The results of the analysis showed that minimal changes to the compensation amount would be realized and thus, the Consortium has elected not to change the compensation formula at this time.

### **Bus Operator Contract Clauses**

A contract is signed between the individual bus Operators and the Consortium. The Consortium has contracts with 70 Operators. The current contract is valid from September 2008 until June 2009 but was only executed in December 2008. Letters of intent were signed by the Operators during the 2008-2009 school year extending the 2007-2008 contracts until new contracts could be finalized.

The contract does stipulate vehicle age requirements, detailed duties and Operators obligations including, among other things, the necessity to provide the Consortium with Criminal Record Checks for all drivers; details on vehicles to be used; a list of drivers and their licenses; and proof of insurance.

The contract does not mandate First Aid/CPR/EpiPen training. The contract does not have a confidentiality clause; however, a separate confidentiality agreement is signed with each Operator. The Consortium also provides a confidentiality agreement template to the Operators to have signed by each driver.

### **Bus Operator contract management**

Bus Operator information is collected from the Operators prior to the start of each school year. Information collected includes vehicle age, driver licenses and valid insurance. The Safety Officer reviews information submitted for accuracy and completeness.

While current contracts require bus Operators to provide safety training to bus drivers, they do not specify that safety training is to include First Aid, CPR or EpiPen training. In practice, the Consortium, through St John's Ambulance, provides this training to drivers



on professional activity days four times throughout the year. The Consortium does keep track of those drivers that attend the training and/or sign up for training but do not attend. They do not, however, presently mandate or monitor to ensure 100% of drivers have attended training and are certified with valid first aid, CPR and EpiPen training.

### **Parent drivers**

Parent driver agreements were revised on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009. In the new contract, the name of the child (ren) transported, insurance requirements in the amount of \$1,000,000, compliance with Consortium Policy and the Education Act, a valid driver's license as well as other details are stipulated. The driver(s) must immediately inform the Consortium of any changes in driver information. The parent must sign and date the Agreement as does the CEO of the Consortium.

### **Standards of Performance**

The Consortium has developed a Standards of Performance document that outlines the service standards required to be met by Operators.

#### **5.2.3 Accomplishments**

It is recognized that the Consortium now demonstrates the following best practices in addition to the best practices outlined in the original report:

### **Standards of Performance**

The Consortium has developed a Standards of Performance document that outlines the service standards required to be met by Operators. This document is an effective method of ensuring that Operators know what is expected of them in terms of providing consistently efficient, effective and safe services. The Consortium should consider making compliance with this document a contractual obligation for Operators.

### **Fee Formula Amendments**

Alteration of the compensation formula was recommended in the initial E&E Review, however the Consortium has elected not to make a change. It is noted, however, that the Consortium has conducted extensive analysis to understand and justify the existing formula. Interviews with the CEO indicate an understanding of the recommendation, and an awareness of the need for ongoing monitoring and modification of payment clauses to ensure appropriate compensation is paid for services obtained. Specific actions taken with regard to understanding and calculating the impact of payment clauses reflect a positive response to the recommendation. Actions taken by the

Consortium in this area are fully in keeping with the expectations of the specific recommendation and the E&E process.

#### **5.2.4 Opportunities for improvement**

##### **Mandate first aid, CPR and Epi-Pen training**

It is recognized that a standard clause with respect to basic first aid, CPR and Epi-Pen training is currently not mandated in the Operators' contracts. The Consortium has included this requirement in its new draft contract to be used in the RFP process. It is recognized that the Consortium intends to change all existing bus Operator contracts to the RFP contract template which includes all appropriate clauses. However, it is nonetheless critical that the existing contract be amended to include this clause since it applies to the majority of the Consortium's routes and will still be in effect for the upcoming school year.

It should be clarified that, presently, all drivers receive the mandatory first aid, CPR and Epi-pen training, even though this is not explicitly stated in the current contracts. The Consortium is also encouraged to enhance existing monitoring practices to ensure the Consortium can verify that all drivers have valid first aid, CPR and Epi-pen certifications.

#### **5.3 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.

##### **5.3.1 Original recommendations**

###### *Competitive Procurement Process*

*Contracts for transportation services are currently not competitively awarded. By not engaging in a competitive process, the Consortium 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 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 the Consortium should be to obtain value for money expended for service provided. A competitive procurement process may not be appropriate for all areas or routes under service depending on the available supply of service providers. A competitive process should 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 bid or 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.*

*In areas where this process may not be appropriate, such as remote areas where there may not be many Operators interested in providing the service to a particularly remote area, the current negotiation process may serve the needs of both the Operator and the Consortium. The Consortium, however, can use the competitively procured contracts as a proxy for service levels and costs negotiated with the more rural Operators.*

*Regardless of the process, the Consortium should require that all contracts with Operators be signed and returned prior to the beginning of the school year. This will ensure that the Consortium is appropriately protected from a liability perspective in that all contractual terms are agreed upon in advance.*

### **5.3.2 Incremental progress**

#### **Taxi Operator contracts**

The Consortium did not have contracts in place with their taxi Operators for the 2008-2009 school year; however, through an RFP process, Tri-Board has executed contracts with taxi Operators for the 2009-10 school year. These contracts are valid for two years.

Noteworthy clauses in the proposed taxi Operator contract outline, among other things:

- The Consortium's requirements with respect to driver training;
- The Consortium's explicit fleet age requirement policy in which it is stated that no vehicle may exceed 10 years;
- Requirements imposed on the taxi Operator. This includes the maintenance of appropriate insurance; legal compliance; compliance with instructions issued by the Consortium; preferred driver characteristics; and compliance with service levels outlined in the agreement;

- The information required from the taxi Operators. This includes information on:
  - Programs offered by the taxi Operator related to the safety of students using taxis. The contract states that an appropriate driver safety training program is to include basic first aid, CPR and EpiPen training; and
  - Driver's license abstract and C.V.O.R. search.

### **Special Needs Vehicles**

An RFP was extended to Special Needs Vehicle Operators to facilitate the competitive procurement process for wheelchair enabled transportation services. The RFP announcement was posted on the Consortium's website and in local newspapers. The RFP process closed on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and proponents were evaluated on their technical and financial submissions. The contract for the provision of special needs vehicles transportation services is similar to the taxi contracts. The same provisions for the supply of driver and vehicle information is evident - the need for proof of insurance, first aid, CPR and EpiPen training requirements, fleet age and other clauses are all clearly stated.

### **Bus Operator contract negotiation process**

The Consortium's standard practice has been to negotiate Operator contracts on an annual basis. The Consortium is initiating preparation of an RFP to obtain transportation services. Actions undertaken by the Consortium to-date include the drafting of an Operator contract to be used in the RFP process and an analysis, conducted by an independent third party that has evaluated each of the Consortium's Operators to determine those that could be exempt from the RFP process, based on the criteria established by the

Consortium's procurement process. The criteria used to exempt Operators are aligned with their procurement policies and include operating under a contract with a value less than \$100,000.

### **5.3.3 Accomplishments**

It is recognized that the Consortium now demonstrates the following best practices in addition to the best practices outlined in the original report:

#### **Competitive Procurement**

Subsequent to the initial E&E Review, the Consortium completed a process of competitive procurement for taxis and special needs vehicles. The taxi and special

needs transportation services RFP processes assisted the Consortium in achieving transparency and helped to ensure the Consortium obtain the maximum value for money. The Consortium has also developed a contract template for all bus routes based on the Ministry's contracting templates. The Consortium has indicated they will undertake a competitive procurement process for all eligible routes in the future and has commenced an analysis of existing Operator contracts.

## **5.4 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 ensures 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.

### **5.4.1 Original recommendations**

#### *Monitoring*

*As discussed above, the Consortium currently has a process of monitoring in place. However it could be improved and expanded to further benefit the Consortium. Some suggestions for improvement include:*

- Operators should be required to demonstrate that they have provided their Drivers appropriate safety and first aid training prior to start of the school year. Though the Consortium does provide some training and some tracking as which drivers have attended certain training sessions, a more formal training monitoring program should be implemented. Operators can provide copies of certifications or proof of training to the Consortium for each Driver with regular updates as additional training is completed. This will be proof that the Drivers are appropriately trained in the case of an emergency and also will allow the Consortium to monitor where additional training maybe required; and*
- The Consortium should seek to implement their future plan of an Operator ranking system that is based on Operators' performance. Operators are assessed against the standards annually, and will be ranked accordingly. For those Operators with lower rankings, improvement plans must be submitted. Penalty clauses should be documented to supplement the ranking.*

## *Board Owned Vehicles*

*It is recommended that the Boards place appropriate controls in place to continuously ensure that the board owned vehicles are meeting their needs from a cost benefit perspective. Logically a smaller fleet does not benefit from the economies of scale associated with maintaining a larger fleet and thus cost effectiveness is questionable. However, we understand that maintenance in this situation, is done by one of the larger Operators rather than through otherwise commercial terms. We suggest that key financial indicators be monitored related specifically to board owned vehicles and that each year the cost be compared to those of outside providers to ensure there is an acceptable business case in terms of cost / benefit to maintaining and owning this relatively small fleet of vehicles. The financial analysis and related business case conclusion should be subject to board approved policies in terms of frequency of review and documented as to whether the periodic decision to keep the fleet is at the discretion of the management of the Consortium (as they have been delegated responsibility for student transportation) or the Limestone Board.*

### **5.4.2 Incremental Progress**

#### **Monitoring**

An Operator performance monitoring program is currently in place at the Consortium. The Standards of Performance monitoring system was implemented in September 2008. The monitoring process produces a report card for each Operator based on tracked and numerically coded performance items (both positive and negative) during the year. Operators are rated on a high to low spectrum. At the beginning of the school year, each Operator begins at the same level and, based on performance during the year, the Operator either escalates or deteriorates in ranking levels. At the end of year, the report is provided to the Operator with suggestions on how to improve their performance and service to the Consortium. The report card is kept on file by the Consortium.

Monitoring activities at the Consortium have also been enhanced through the use of real time Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) monitoring devices. As was previously mentioned, this device allows the Consortium to track and compare actual to planned routes, locate buses, track vehicle speed, stops made, idle times etc. The Consortium uses the AVL system to investigate complaints. There is currently no formal monitoring plan in place that identifies, for example, that 10% of an Operator's routes will be monitored on at least one day in every year. The Consortium does log and follow-up on any negative Operator performance issues identified using AVL.

Discussions with the Consortium's Safety Officer indicated that increased contract compliance monitoring practices have been established. The Safety Officer monitors the update and maintenance of all public vehicle operating licenses (PVOLs). Bus route audits and bus stop audits are facilitated through the AVL system in use, however, the Safety Officer continues to conduct random stop visits to ensure that Operators are utilizing practices that are effective, efficient and safe.

The Consortium has hired an independent contractor to conduct bus Operator facility and maintenance evaluations through random Operator audits. The latest audit was performed from May 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Consultants evaluated the Martins Bus Service Operator according to terms specified by the Consortium

CEO and the Operator contract. The criteria against which this Operator was evaluated included, among other things, vehicle maintenance records for each commercial vehicle, trip inspection reports, source documentation, system used to maintain maintenance records, vehicle inspection records for each commercial vehicle, recall notices and Operator records of maintenance program established for fleet. The results of this evaluation are rendered to the Consortium for follow-up purposes.

### **Board owned vehicles**

Subsequent to the initial recommendation provided in the first E&E review, the Consortium re-evaluated the use of board owned vehicles. The Board of Directors has been made aware of the cost inefficiencies pertaining to operating and maintaining board owned vehicles. The Boards have reduced their vehicle fleet; however, they have not, to date, been able to phase out these vehicles. Contracts are in place between the relevant Boards and the Consortium to ensure board owned vehicles and drivers achieve and maintain the same levels of service and safety provided by Operators.

### **5.4.3 Accomplishments**

It is recognized that the Consortium now demonstrates the following best practices in addition to the best practices outlined in the original report:

#### **Monitoring**

The Consortium has introduced four levels of monitoring:

1. Operator facility audits conducted by an independent third party;

2. Standards of Performance report cards that monitor operator performance on a year round basis - both positive and negative and allows the Consortium to provide constructive feedback to the Operators;
3. Administrative contract compliance; and
4. Service and safety monitoring through the use of AVL.

These four monitoring programs ensure that operational excellence is obtained from service providers and the highest safety and service standards are met, or exceeded. The Consortium is encouraged to formalize its AVL monitoring program to ensure the systematic and equitable monitoring of all Operators and routes.

### **Board owned Vehicles**

We acknowledge that the Consortium has undertaken an extensive cost benefit analysis of board owned vehicles and that the number of these vehicles has decreased. There are, however, still board owned vehicles being used. The Consortium is encouraged to continue working with school Boards to assess the appropriate management of board owned vehicles until such time as these vehicles can be withdrawn from service.

### **5.5 Results of E&E follow-up review**

The process by which the Consortium negotiates, structures and manages its contracts for transportation services has been assessed as **High**. Particularly positive elements include the use of competitive procurement processes to engage service providers and increased monitoring of contract compliance and service standards.

The primary areas for improvement include the addition of a mandatory first aid/CPR/EpiPen training clause and the Consortium should continue its preparation to competitively procure bus operator services.



## 6 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 3B. 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 2: Funding Adjustment Formula**

Overall Rating	Effect on deficit Boards <sup>4</sup>	Effect on surplus Boards <sup>4</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 by 0%	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:

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to Boards that have a deficit/surplus on student transportation

## Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board

Items	Values
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$411,687)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	100%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	(\$411,687)
E&E Rating	High
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	100%
Total Funding adjustment	\$411,687

## Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

Items	Values
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$655,769)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	100%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	(\$655,769)
E&E Rating	High
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	100%
Total Funding adjustment	\$655,769

## Limestone District School Board

Items	Values
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$1,595,100)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	100%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	(\$1,595,100)
E&E Rating	High
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	100%
Total Funding adjustment	\$1,595,100

### Conseil des écoles catholiques de langues françaises du Centre-Est

Items	Values
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$1,202,286)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	4.67%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	(\$56,091)
E&E Rating	High
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	100%
Total Funding adjustment	\$56,091

### Conseil des écoles publiques de L'Est de L'Ontario

Items	Values
2007-08 Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$1,901,242)
% of Surplus (Deficit) attributed to the Consortium (rounded)	7.82%
Revised amount to be assessed under the Consortium	(\$148,680)
E&E Rating	High
Funding Adjustment based on Ministry's Funding Adjustment Formula	100%
Total Funding adjustment	\$148,680

(Numbers will be finalized when regulatory approval has been obtained.)

## 7 Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Algonquin	Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board
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
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.
Consortium, the; or Tri-Board	Tri-Board Student Transportation Services
CECLFCE	Conseil des écoles catholiques de langues françaises du Centre-Est
CEPEO	Conseil des écoles publiques de l'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 1.3
Follow-up Review	As defined in Section 1.1.2
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 the Tri-Board Student Transportation Services Consortium" which supports the E&E Review Team's Assessment; this document is not a public document

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
Funding Adjustment Formula	As described in Section 1.3.2
Hastings	Hastings and Price Edward District School Board
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
JK/SK	Junior Kindergarten/Senior Kindergarten
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
Limestone	Limestone District School Board
Ministry	The Ministry of Education of Ontario
MPS	Management Partnership Services Inc., the routing consultant, as defined in Section 1.2
MTO	The Ministry of Transportation of Ontario
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 1.3.2 of the Evaluation Framework
Member Boards or Boards	The school boards that have participated as full partners or members in the Consortium
Rating	The E&E Assessment score on a scale of High to Low, see Section 1.3.2
Report	The report prepared by the E&E Review Team for each Consortium that has undergone an E&E Review or E&E follow-up review (i.e. this document)
Separate Legal Entity	Incorporation

## 8 Appendix 2: Financial Review – by School Board

### Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Allocation <sup>5</sup>	\$7,933,234	\$8,252,333	\$8,387,843	\$8,582,763	\$8,846,526
Expenditure <sup>6</sup>	\$8,101,485	\$8,514,097	\$8,440,811	\$8,994,450	\$9,117,392
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$(168,251)	\$(261,764)	\$(52,968)	\$(411,687)	\$(270,866)

### Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Allocation <sup>5</sup>	\$11,763,764	\$12,238,518	\$12,240,182	\$12,689,570	\$13,120,735,
Expenditure <sup>6</sup>	\$11,642,848	\$12,462,813	\$12,503,345	\$13,345,339	\$15,013,097
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	\$120,916	(\$224,295)	(\$263,163)	(\$655,769)	(\$1,436,404)

### Limestone District School Board

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Allocation <sup>5</sup>	\$11,214,168	\$11,643,598	\$11,634,201	\$12,713,050	\$13,120,735
Expenditure <sup>6</sup>	\$12,133,777	\$13,264,796	\$12,561,259	\$14,308,150	\$15,013,097
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$919,609)	(\$1,621,198)	(\$927,058)	(\$1,595,100)	(\$1,892,362)

<sup>5</sup> Allocation based on Ministry data – includes all grant allocations for transportation (Section 9 00008C, Section 13 00006C, Section 13 00012C)

<sup>6</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)

### Conseil des écoles catholiques de langues françaises du Centre-Est

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Allocation <sup>5</sup>	\$9,215,617	\$9,641,948	\$11,391,265	\$11,983,289	\$12,668,172
Expenditure <sup>6</sup>	\$10,302,053	\$10,992,770	\$12,401,180	\$13,185,575	\$14,113,026
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$1,086,436)	(\$1,350,822)	(\$1,009,915)	(\$1,202,286)	(\$1,444,854)
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	\$410,526	\$450,100	\$599,898	\$615,159	N/A
As % of total Expenditures of Board	3.98	4.09	4.84	4.67	N/A

### Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

Item	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
Allocation <sup>5</sup>	\$5,892,936	\$6,347,950	\$6,484,120	\$7,448,351	\$7,783,287
Expenditure <sup>6</sup>	\$9,209,055	\$10,353,031	\$9,605,307	\$9,349,593	\$10,478,090
Transportation Surplus (Deficit)	(\$3,316,119)	(\$4,005,081)	(\$3,121,187)	(\$1,901,242)	(\$2,694,803)
Total Expenditures paid to the Consortium	\$674,294	\$573,724	\$695,372	\$731,150	N/A
As % of total Expenditures of Board	7.32	5.54	7.24	7.82	N/A

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