



First Nations Student Transportation Fund Planning, Policy and Procedures Guide

2022-23 School Year

INTRODUCTION

The [BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success](#) (“BCTEA”) between the Province of British Columbia (BC), the First Nations Education Steering Committee (“FNESC”), and Indigenous Service Canada (ISC), collectively the “Parties”) sets the foundation for further growth and changes to support the enhancement of the B.C. public education system. As a component of BCTEA, the Parties agreed to establish a First Nation Student Transportation Fund (“Fund”) to address the transportation needs of First Nation Students who live on-reserve and attend BC Public Schools, as described in BCTEA - [Schedule G: Transportation for First Nations Students Attending BC Public Schools](#). Refer to Appendix A for a list of relevant definitions.

Starting in 2018/19, Boards of Education (“Boards”) and First Nations were encouraged to work together to determine First Nation Student transportation needs and co-develop Joint First Nations Student Transportation Plans (“Joint Plans”). The Joint Plans were to be informed by the [Guiding Principles for Developing Joint First Nations Student Transportation Plans](#) (“Guiding Principles”) outlined below and criteria established by the BCTEA Parties. The Parties established a tripartite First Nation Student Transportation Committee (the “Joint Committee”) to assess the Joint Plans submitted by a Board and on behalf of the First Nations it serves.

The Parties agreed to continue the interim approach for the 2022/23 school year, including that:

- Service levels and associated spending will remain in place and be used as a baseline for assessing gaps in new Joint Plans;
- Additional funding is being phased in, to enhance existing school district services and funding to improved/extended services based on approved Joint Plans;
- As in previous years, transportation funding to enhance participation by First Nations Students in extracurricular activities for the 2022/23 school year is automatically allocated to each district on a per capita basis with annual reporting requirements, and is handled separately from the Joint Plans; and
- The Ministry of Education will administer the funds as a special grant under section 115(a) of the *School Act*.

PURPOSE

The Joint Committee has developed these *First Nations Student Transportation Planning and Procedures* as a guideline for school districts and First Nations for the application process to access transportation funds.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING JOINT FIRST NATION STUDENT TRANSPORTATION PLANS

The following Guiding Principles apply to the development of Joint First Nation Student Transportation Plans by Boards and First Nations:

1. The Board of Education and First Nation will identify transportation needs and services to get all First Nation Students enrolled in BC public schools to and from those schools, respecting parental choice of where to enroll their child to attend school.
2. Safety is paramount in all planning and decisions:
 - a) there will be a safety protocol in place to address safety issues for the First Nations (e.g., weather conditions; wildlife);
 - b) shelters will be made available where needed.
3. Transportation will be available for extracurricular activities and sports, sporting events.
4. There will be no walk limits (i.e., drivers need to go into the community or catchment area to pick up and drop off children).
5. The shortest ride possible will be implemented.

6. Wherever possible, there will be no highway pickups or drop offs.
7. A communications protocol will be established and agreed upon to ensure effective and timely communications to address issues that arise (e.g., travel disruption due to inclement weather) and method of preferred communication (e.g., radio/satellite communication).
8. Drivers will receive adequate professional development related to customer service, student management, etc. as required.
9. Criminal record checks will be required for bus/water taxi employees (including school district staff and non-school district staff).
10. Changes to the joint plan may only be made by written agreement, with timely notice to parents.

There will be a joint review and evaluation of the overall strategy and assessment of the joint plans after a full implementation year i.e., in Year 4 (2022/23) for effectiveness and to identify any improvements.

2022/23 JOINT PLAN SUBMISSION PROCESS

All reference documents, including the 2022/23 Joint Plan Transportation Worksheet can be found on the [Ministry Events Calendar](#) and on the [FNESC website](#).

The 2022/23 Joint Plans will be submitted under one of the following three categories:

- **Status Quo**

If, after consultation and agreement with respective First Nations, the Joint Plan submitted in 2021/22 is meeting the needs of the First Nation, use the BCTEA 2022/23 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet and resubmit your plan. Please note, any carry-over funding from 2021/22 will automatically be deducted from the 2022/23 funding.

- **Revisions to 2021/22 Joint Plans**

If, after consultation and agreement with respective First Nations, the 2021/22 Joint Plan **is not** meeting the needs of the First Nation and revisions to services and funding are required for 2022/23, use the BCTEA 2022/23 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet to clearly note the changes.

- **New Joint Plans**

For school districts and First Nations that did not submit Joint Plans for previous years (i.e., this is your first submission), please complete and submit BCTEA 2022/23 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet. Districts and First Nations may refer to the Instructions tab in the Worksheet for more details on how to complete the template.

School districts are required to project the use of existing sources of funding for transportation of students living on reserve in the 2022/23 Joint Plan Transportation Worksheet. Districts may refer to the 2021/22 BCTEA Transportation Reporting template for information regarding funding sources to inform the development and budget of costs in the 2022/23 Joint Plan.

The deadline for 2022/23 Joint Plan submissions is **May 20, 2022**, however, early submissions are encouraged. When completed please submit Joint Plans, signed by First Nations and school districts, to BCTEA@gov.bc.ca.

JOINT PLAN REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

The Joint Plan review and approval process will encompass the following 3 steps:

1. The Ministry of Education, working with the Transportation Technical Team (“Technical Team”), will conduct a preliminary assessment of all received Joint Plans including verification of complete information, assessment of costs reasonableness, etc.
2. The Ministry of Education will share the submitted Joint Plans and additional information with the tripartite Joint Committee. The tripartite Joint Committee will review the submitted Joint Plans and approve funding levels.
3. The tripartite Joint Committee will provide direction to the Technical Team for further action or follow up as necessary.

TRANSPORTATION TO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extracurricular activities are activities not falling within the scope of a regular curriculum but often relating to officially or semiofficially approved and usually organized school-based student activities (such as athletics) connected with school and usually carrying no academic credit. They improve student engagement and benefit the social, cultural, and physical health and well-being of students. Some examples include cultural events, sports, homework, writing, drama, and music clubs, etc.

School districts and First Nations are expected to find reasonable and most cost-effective transportation means for students to attend extracurricular activities and sports. The BCTEA Parties agreed that transportation funding to enhance participation by First Nations students in extra-curricular activities for the 2022/23 school year would be automatically allocated to each district on a per capita basis with annual reporting requirements and will be handled separately from “to/from school”. While the allocation of funding for transportation to extracurricular activities is generated on a per capita basis, this does not mean that it should be spent this way. The funds allocated to the school district for this purpose should be spent to support students who participate in extracurricular activities, in the most efficient way possible. The Parties acknowledge that these funds are not adequate to support full transportation services to extracurricular activities. Regardless of whether school districts fund transportation to extracurricular activities for any students, ensure a discussion regarding First Nation Students on reserve is included during Joint Plan review and co-development. Districts may also explore supplementing costs from general operating funds.

Extracurricular funding is allocated to First Nations who have opted out of participating in the Transportation Fund or have not signed a Joint Plan. It is not allocated to Treaty/Self Governing First Nations, who are not eligible for BCTEA funding.

If previously approved funds under this category were not fully spent, the surplus may be carried forward to the next year and used for extracurricular activities. Boards must work with First Nations to determine the process for reimbursement of funds for participation in extracurricular activities.

FUNDING FOR SHELTERS

Funding for bus shelters was allocated through BCTEA in 2019. The BCTEA transportation fund no longer provides funding for shelters. Funding options include the use of capital funding provided to school districts to maintain school facilities through the Annual Facility Grant (AFG). School districts working on bus shelter projects with First Nations may apply AFG funding through this annual grant. It can also be a school board decision on how to fund a shelter.

In Spring 2022, eligible BC First Nations were able to apply for funding for bus shelters to support their students living on reserve and attending BC public schools through FNEESC’s one-time First Nations Student Bus

Shelter Program (BSP). For more information contact Christian González, Manager, Local Education Agreements, FNEESC, at christiang@fnesc.ca.

WATER TRANSPORTATION

Modes of transportation in areas where First Nation Students are required to cross bodies of water to attend school may be included in the Joint Plan. Some preliminary identified eligible expenses include:

- Operational costs for ferries/water taxis;
- Required supervision during ferry ride or while waiting for the ferry;
- Required supervision boarding and disembarking water transportation.

Note: More information and discussion may be required prior to funding approval.

SUPPORTS

In some cases, there may be a need for additional supports to facilitate the safe arrival of children. Some preliminary eligible expenses may include:

- Supervision during bus travel for special needs children;
- Supervision while waiting for the bus.

Note: Bus monitor supports and/or strategies to prevent bullying during transportation should be a school district responsibility and will not be considered for BCTEA funding.

PARENTAL TRANSPORTATION SUPPORTS

It is the expectation that students on reserve will be bused to school. Funding for parental transportation assistance has only been allocated in extraordinary circumstances. School of choice is not considered an extraordinary circumstance eligible for BCTEA funding. Previous approvals for parental transportation support are subject to review and may not be approved in future Joint Plan reviews.

BOARDED STUDENTS

Some First Nation Students are required to leave home to attend school and are boarded or billeted away from home. These Students may need additional supports. Boards should be reaching out to parents and their First Nation, particularly in cases where the First Nation is not local, to make sure the Student's transportation needs "from/to" school and home are addressed equitably, including extracurricular. This may include the allocation of available transportation services or alternative services (e.g., providing bus passes). Boards and First Nations may include funding requests under a Joint Plan; however, it should be noted that the approval of this funding is not guaranteed.

FUNDING FOR CAPITAL ACQUISITION

Requests for buses will be processed through the established Ministry of Education application-based [Bus Acquisition Program](#). Please note that the Bus Acquisition Program is for School District assets only and is restricted to "yellow fleet" buses.

Capital funding is provided to school districts to maintain school facilities through the Annual Facility Grant (AFG). Boards of Education working on bus shelter projects with First Nations may apply AFG funding through this annual grant.

Version: March 2022

BCTEA funding is not to be used to acquire transportation assets like mini-vans or transport vans. It is to support operational costs of enhanced transportation services.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

After three years of implementation, BCTEA parties are collecting financial information including revenue, spending and a description of transportation services to review the effectiveness of the strategy outlined in BCTEA Schedule G, and to help identify and implement any necessary improvements and/or further options.

Reporting on “to/from” and Transportation Revenue and Spending Form *new*

To report on the use of approved funding for transportation “to/from” school, boards may refer to the Revenue and Spending tab (Transportation Services Revenue and Actuals table) of the 2021/22 BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template found on the [Ministry Events Calendar](#) and on the [FNESC website](#). Qualitative information regarding how the “to/from” funding allocation assisted in reducing travel times and extended services to First Nation Students may be included in the Revenue and Spending Report form of the 2021/22 BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template.

Funding Assumptions

BCTEA partners are collecting information about the methodology to calculate transportation costs in the Funding Assumptions form of the 2021/22 BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template.

Reporting on Extracurricular Activities

Boards will be required to administer these funds in order to collect data and report as per the Extracurricular Reporting tab within the BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template. This data will help support student participation in extracurricular activities and develop a more long-term approach to transportation for extracurricular activities.

Boards will meet the transportation reporting requirements by completing the following forms within the 2021/22 BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template or “Reporting Template”:

- Transportation Revenue and Spending Reporting form (including To/From information) *NEW*;
- Funding Assumptions Reporting form *NEW*;
- Extracurricular Reporting form.

The deadline for 2021/22 BCTEA Transportation Reporting Templates is **May 20, 2022**. Boards may submit their Reporting Templates, signed by First Nations and school districts, to BCTEA@gov.bc.ca.

NOTE: The above reporting requirements are in addition to the Ministry of Education’s regular financial reporting related to special grants.

IMPORTANT DATES

To support the Joint Plan submission process, and to respond to questions, two Joint Transportation Plan Information sessions have been scheduled:

- **May 5, 2022** from 10:30 am - 11:30 am – Transportation Plan Information session #1 (via zoom) [Register here.](#)
- **May 11, 2022** from 10:30 am - 11:30 am – Transportation Plan Information session #2 (via zoom) [Register here.](#)

Please note, representatives from First Nations and school districts are not expected to attend more than one Information Session but they are welcome to do so if they have further questions.

May 20, 2022:

- 2021/22 Transportation Reports are due to BCTEA@gov.bc.ca
- 2022/23 Joint Transportation Plans are due to BCTEA@gov.bc.ca

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have questions related to the 2021/22 Transportation Report and/or the 2022/23 Joint Plans, First Nations may contact Christian González, Manager, Local Education Agreements, FNESC, at christiang@fnesc.ca and Boards may contact Jane London, Project Director, Funding and Financial Accountability Branch, Ministry of Education, at Jane.London@gov.bc.ca.

For more information, refer to BCTEA 2022-23 Joint Plan Questions and Answers.

SUMMARY

Policy	Eligibility
<p>Administrative Fees Costs for administering education and/or transportation programs to cover expenses for students (First Nations and Non-First Nations) attending a BC Public School in a provincial school district. Examples of ineligible items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation registration fees • Bus cleaning supplies and/or personal protective equipment • Overhead costs to operate a school district transportation web portal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.
<p>Courtesy Rider Fees – No catchment areas First Nation Students living on-reserve and attending BC public schools will not be charged rider fees. There are no catchment areas or walk limits for on-reserve students. Courtesy rider fees are not applicable to First Nations students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.
<p>Accessories Communication devices and additional equipment for school buses are considered to be the school district's responsibility. Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buying and installing cameras on school buses • Bus driver cell phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.

Policy	Eligibility
<p>Professional Development Professional development is considered to be the school district’s responsibility. For example, bus drivers may require training in the following areas: cultural awareness, group management, customer service, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.
<p>Parental Transportation Assistance It is the expectation that students on reserve will be bused to school. Parental Transportation assistance may be considered on a case-by-case basis <u>only under extraordinary/unique circumstances</u>. Transportation to/from school of choice is not considered an extraordinary circumstance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible except for extraordinary/unique circumstances. Requires Joint Committee review and approval.
<p>Water-taxi and/or Ferry Services Modes of transportation in areas where First Nation Students are required to cross bodies of water to attend school are eligible for funding. For example, Students travel by water taxi from Opitsaht to Tofino in school district 70. Refer to Water Transportation section for more information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible for operational costs.
<p>Boarded Students Some First Nation Students who are required to leave home to attend BC Public School are boarded or billeted. Regular communication must take place between the First Nation, the Board, parents, and the billeted family to ensure the boarded students have the appropriate transportation supports and services. Refer to Boarding Students section for more information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible for to/from school. • Eligible for transportation to/from. extracurricular • Eligible for to/from home.
<p>Dual Credit Courses/Programs Dual credit courses/programs provide high-school students the opportunity to earn credits recognized by both a high school and a post-secondary institution under the British Columbia Transfer System or programs offered in French through Educacentre. Dual credit courses/programs are part of a regular school day, which are administered by school districts. Transportation to/from dual credit programs are considered the responsibility of the school district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.
<p>Unsigned Plans Unsigned Joint Plans received by the Ministry of Education to express the need of transportation for First Nation Students to attend a BC Public School will be considered incomplete. Email agreement/confirmation from both the school district and First Nations will be accepted in lieu of a signed plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.
<p>Allocation of Extracurricular Funding The funding provided to Boards may be used for all on-reserve First Nation Students attending public school and being transported to extracurricular activities in their respective district. Extracurricular funding is allocated to First Nations who have opted out of participating in the Transportation Fund or have not signed a Joint Plan. It is not</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Ineligible</u> for funding through the submission of Joint Transportation Plans. • <u>Eligible</u> through an automatic allocation

Policy	Eligibility
<p>allocated to Treaty/Self Governing First Nations, who are not eligible for BCTEA funding.</p> <p>Refer to the Transportation to Extracurricular Activities section for more information.</p>	<p>process (refer to Transportation to Extracurricular Activities section).</p>
<p>Alternate Education Programs</p> <p>Transportation costs to Alternate Education Programs are ineligible. School districts are expected to assess student transportation needs and address them equitably.</p> <p>Alternate Education Programs focus on educational, social, and emotional issues for students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program (e.g., standard school). An alternate education program provides its support through differentiated instruction, specialized program delivery and enhanced counselling services based on students' needs (see related policy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.
<p>Funding for Shelters</p> <p>The BCTEA Transportation Fund provided funding for shelters in 2019/20. Capital funding is provided to school districts to maintain school facilities through the Annual Facility Grant (AFG). Boards of Education working on bus shelter projects with First Nations may apply AFG funding through this grant to build new or complete shelters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.
<p>Funding for Buses</p> <p>Requests for buses will be processed through the established Ministry of Education application-based Bus Acquisition Program. Please note that the Bus Acquisition Program is for School District assets only and is restricted to "yellow fleet" buses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineligible.

NEXT STEPS

The BCTEA Parties will proceed with the 2022/23 Joint Transportation Plan submission process, review of Joint Plans and approvals. The Parties are planning a transportation evaluation in 2022 to assess whether the strategy has effectively addressed transportation issues for First Nation students attending BC public schools and, where necessary, identify and implement improvements and/or further options.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

The following definitions from the BCTEA support common interpretation of transportation-related Q&As:

- **“BC Public School”** means all public schools in British Columbia providing kindergarten to grade 12 education, but does not include BC Independent Schools or First Nation Schools.
- **“First Nation Student”** in BCTEA means a student who is ordinarily resident on reserve in BC and is eligible to be on the Nominal Roll.
- **“Nominal Roll”** means the registry of all eligible elementary and secondary students ordinarily resident on reserve and funded by Canada to attend a band-operated, federal, provincial, or private/independent school. To be eligible for the Nominal Roll, a student must be:
 - i. enrolled in a band-operated, federal, provincial, or a private/independent school (including E-learning institutions and Alternative/Outreach schools) recognized by the province in which the school is located as an elementary/secondary institution;
 - ii. a school- student aged 4 to 21 years on December 31 of the school year in which funding support is required and enrolled in Kindergarten 4 through grade 12, or an adult student age 18 and over and enrolled in an Adult Graduation Diploma program, on December 31 of the school year in which funding support is required; and
 - iii. ordinarily resident on reserve; and
 - iv. a student who is ordinarily resident on reserve land that is leased is not eligible to be on the Nominal Roll unless that student is a registered Indian.
- **“Ordinarily resident on reserve”** means that the student usually lives at a civic address on reserve, is a child in joint custody who lives on reserve most of the time or is staying on reserve and has no usual home elsewhere. Students continue to be considered ordinarily resident on reserve if they return to live on reserve with their parents, guardians, or maintainers during the year, even if they live elsewhere while attending school or working at a summer job. (In this context, reserves are deemed to include all land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of an Indian band, along with all other Crown lands which are recognized by Canada as settlement lands of the Indian band of which the student is a resident).