



**First Nation Student Transportation Fund: Planning, Policy, and Procedures Guide**

**2024-25 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 Nation 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 Nation Student Transportation Plans (“Joint Plans”). The Joint Plans were to be informed by the [Guiding Principles for Developing Joint First Nation 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 2024/25 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;
- Allocations from the First Nation Student Transportation Fund will be used to level up between existing spending/services and approved Transportation Plans;
- As in previous years, transportation funding to enhance participation by First Nation Students in extracurricular activities for the 2024/25 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 BC Ministry of Education and Child Care (the “Ministry”) 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 Boards 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.

## 2024/25 JOINT PLAN SUBMISSION PROCESS

All reference documents, including the 2024/25 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet can be found on the Ministry's [BCTEA website](#) and on the [FNESC website](#).

The 2024/25 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 2023/24 **continues** to meet the needs of the First Nation, use the BCTEA 2024/25 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet and resubmit your plan.

- If the services are similar and the request of funds in your BCTEA Joint Plan have an increase up to 15%, you may submit a Joint Transportation Plan Status Quo Letter instead of a Joint Transportation Plan. This does not apply if you have Parental Assistance or Special Supports.

- **Revisions to Joint Plans**

If, after consultation and agreement with the respective First Nation, the 2023/24 Joint Plan **is not** meeting the needs of the First Nation, and revisions to services and/or funding are required for 2024/25, use the BCTEA 2024/25 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet to detail the changes.

- **New Joint Plans**

For Boards and First Nations that did not submit Joint Plans for previous years (i.e., this is your first submission), please complete and submit BCTEA 2024/25 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet. Boards and First Nations may refer to the Instructions tab in the Worksheet for more details on how to complete the template.

### Transportation “Proxy”

Introduced in the 2021/22 Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet was the request for Boards to include their baseline spending on First Nation Student transportation from their available funding sources e.g., Provincial General Operating Grant budget, including the First Nation Student Rate (FNSR), and the Provincial Student Transportation Fund (STF).

Under BCTEA, there is a portion of the First Nation Student Rate (FNSR) derived from the Student Location Factor (SLF), Supplementary Student Location Factor<sup>1</sup> (SSLF) and Provincial Student Transportation Fund (STF) that is considered a “proxy” for funding First Nation Student transportation.

This amount is the minimum of the FNSR that should be applied to the transportation of First Nations Students living on reserve. This proxy amount can be supplemented by other funding from the FNSR and/or from

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<sup>1</sup> These factors were used by BCTEA as a formula to determine per First Nation Student spending and doesn't mean the student has to meet the Supplementary Student Location Factor criteria.

provincial operating funding and special grants. As per BCTEA Schedule G, this amount was meant to be removed from the FNSR and it has not been removed.

A Board's spending of the proxy will inform the tripartite Joint Committee decision-making on supplemental BCTEA funding and approval of Joint Plans.

The deadline for 2024/25 Joint Plan submissions is **May 31, 2024**, however, early submissions are encouraged. When completed please submit Joint Plans, signed by First Nations and Boards, to [BCTEA@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BCTEA@gov.bc.ca). Late submission will delay the approval process and flow of funding.

**Note:** Boards are asked to return the *Final 2024/25 BCTEA Joint Transportation Plan Worksheet.xls* to the Ministry in Excel format along with any other formats that best supports the Board and First Nation sign-off processes e.g., Excel and a signed Adobe PDF.

## JOINT PLAN REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS

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

1. The Ministry, working with the BCTEA 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 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 school-organized activities (such as athletics) not falling within the scope of a regular curriculum and carrying no academic credit. They improve student engagement and connection with their school including benefiting the social, cultural, and physical health and well-being of students.

Examples of eligible extracurricular transportation costs are school organized extracurricular activities e.g., athletics, homework and music clubs and cultural activities. These activities may be located off school property e.g., a different school gym or soccer field and/or delivered by a private organization in cases where the school district works with an organization to deliver extracurricular activities.

Examples of ineligible extracurricular transportation costs:

- All-classroom field trips that take place within the school day that would be addressed separately through the Board;
- Community-based activities/services e.g., recreation centre or First Nation based activities, counselling, private ballet, swimming, karate lessons, library events, community athletics teams, arts, crafts, drumming, weaving, etc.

Boards and First Nations are expected to find reasonable, and the most cost-effective transportation means for students to attend extracurricular activities and sports. They are also expected to work together to provide opportunities for First Nation Students' participation in extracurricular activities in ways which best meet the

needs of those students. If more funds are needed, Boards may also supplement costs from general operating funds.

The BCTEA Parties agree that:

- Transportation funding to enhance participation by First Nations students in extracurricular activities for the 2024/25 school year would be automatically allocated to each Board with annual reporting requirements, and will be handled separately from “to/from school”;
- Funds issued in previous years, including “Extracurricular Transportation,” that have not been spent by the end of the 2023/24 school year may be subject to repurposing – see *Reporting Carry Over/Deferred Revenue* section below. If needed, funds issued in 2023/24 may be carried forward for use in the 2024/25 school year;
- The allocation of funding for transportation to extracurricular activities is automatically generated based on the number of students ordinarily living on reserve as noted in a data match between the previous year’s Provincial 1701 calculation and the Indigenous Services Canada Nominal Roll (including those from First Nations who have not signed a Joint Plan);
- Even though funding is allocated on a per student basis, this does not mean the funds must be spent this way and can be spent to support those students who participate in extracurricular activities, in the most efficient way possible;
- These funds may not be adequate to support full transportation services to extracurricular activities and Boards may also supplement costs from general operating funds;
- It is important to ensure a discussion occurs with First Nations regarding First Nation Students’ extracurricular transportation needs and priorities;
- Boards and First Nations must work together to determine the most efficient process for reimbursement of funds for transportation to extracurricular activities;
- Extracurricular transportation funding is not allocated to Treaty/Self-Governing First Nations, who are not eligible for BCTEA funding.

## **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.

First Nations and school districts are encouraged to participate on their local BC Ferries Advisory Committee to offer feedback regarding the most efficient and appropriate routes for First Nation Students.

## **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 Board responsibility and will not be considered for BCTEA funding.

## PARENTAL TRANSPORTATION SUPPORTS

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

## FIRST NATION SCHOOL OF CHOICE

Under amendments made to the School Act, First Nations can designate a public school of choice for First Nation Students living on reserve. Implementing the First Nation School of Choice should consider the use of existing funding sources: Operating Grant, Student Transportation Fund, Transportation Proxy, and the BCTEA Student Transportation Fund.

## 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 First Nations, particularly in cases where the First Nation is not local, to make sure the Student's transportation needs "to/from" school and home are addressed equitably, including transportation to extracurricular activities. 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 as for all other eligible students the approval of funding is not guaranteed.

## FUNDING FOR CAPITAL ACQUISITION

**Yellow Fleet Buses:** Requests for buses are processed through the established Ministry application-based [Bus Acquisition Program](#). This Program is for school district assets only and is restricted to "yellow fleet" (diesel and electric) buses.

The Fund 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.

**Funding for Shelters:** Funding for bus shelters was made available to school districts in 2019 and to First Nations in 2021. The BCTEA Transportation Fund currently does not provide funding for shelters. Funding options could include school district Local Capital; the Annual Facility Grant (AFG) and/or the use of other operating funds.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Data collected through the BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template (introduced for the 2021/22 reporting period) that includes Board spending, description of transportation services and student count information is being used to better understand school baseline spending on First Nation Students transportation, and to inform Joint Committee decision-making related to Joint Plans.

As noted in the 2023/24 Transportation Funding Approval letters, there are specific reporting requirements for the transportation funding. Boards will meet the transportation reporting requirements by completing the following forms on the 2023/24 BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template:

- (1) Revenue - Spending Report;
- (2) Extracurricular Report.

### Revenue – Spending:

Data and financial values will be pre-populated where possible. Reporting requirements include:

- 2023/24 Amended budget for all First Nation Student Transportation as of February 29, 2024 to June 30, 2024;
- Spending of the First Nation Student Transportation Proxy;
- Spending of the approved funding values for transportation “to/from” school, “shelters” and “extracurricular”; and
- Qualitative information regarding how the “to/from school” funding allocation assisted in reducing travel times and extending services to First Nations.

### Reporting on Extracurricular Activities

Reporting requirements for transportation to school-organized extracurricular activities is required.

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

**Note:** Boards are asked to return the *Final 2023-24 BCTEA Joint Transportation Reporting Template.xls* to the Ministry in Excel format in addition to other formats that best supports the Board and First Nation sign-off processes e.g., Excel and a signed Adobe PDF with signatures (or email to confirm Report has been shared from First Nation).

### Reporting carryover

Various factors have impacted the ability of Boards to fully invest the transportation funds previously received to carry out the Joint Plans, resulting in carryover (deferred revenue), in some cases over 3 years. Moving forward, funds issued in previous years for “To/From School”, “Special Supports”, “Bus Shelters” and “Extracurricular Transportation” that have not been spent by the end of the 2024/25 school year may be subject to repurposing. If needed, funds issued in 2023/24 may be carried forward for use in the 2024/25 school year.

The deadline for 2023/24 BCTEA Transportation Reporting Template is **May 31, 2024**.

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

### **IMPORTANT DATES**

To support the Joint Plan submission process, and to respond to questions, the fourth Annual (Virtual) Meeting on Transportation was held on April 18, 2024 and there are two upcoming Joint Transportation Plan and Reporting drop-in information sessions on the following dates:

- **April 30, 2024:** 10:00 am – 11:00 am PST – Transportation Joint Plan Drop-in session #1 [Registration link](#)
- **May 23, 2024:** 10:00 am – 11:00 am PST – Transportation Joint Plan Drop-in session #2 [Registration link](#)

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.

#### Submission Deadline

Please submit the following completed documents **by May 31, 2024** to [BCTEA@gov.bc.ca](mailto:BCTEA@gov.bc.ca):

- Co-signed 2023/24 Transportation Reporting Template (in Excel format)
- Co-signed 2024/25 Joint Plan Worksheet (in Excel format) or Status Quo letter (if eligible)

#### **QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION**

If First Nations have questions related to the 2023/24 BCTEA Joint Transportation Report or the 2024/25 Joint Plan Template, they may contact Christian González, Manager, Local Education Agreements, FNESC, at [christiang@fnesc.ca](mailto:christiang@fnesc.ca). Boards may contact Kristine Heaney, A/Project Director, Funding and Financial Accountability Branch, Ministry of Education and Child Care, at [bctea@gov.bc.ca](mailto:bctea@gov.bc.ca).

#### **SUMMARY**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
<p><b>Administrative Fees</b></p> <p>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"> <li>• Transportation registration fees</li> <li>• Overhead costs to operate a school district transportation web portal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Courtesy Rider Fees (and catchment areas)</b></p> <p>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 Nation Students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accessories</b></p> <p>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"> <li>• Buying and installing cameras on school buses</li> <li>• Bus driver cell phone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional Development</b></p> <p>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"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>



Policy	Eligibility
<p><b>Parental Transportation Assistance</b></p> <p>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 parental school of choice is not considered an extraordinary circumstance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible except for extraordinary/unique circumstances. Requires Joint Committee review and approval.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Water-taxi and/or Ferry Services</b></p> <p>Modes of transportation in areas where First Nation Students are required to cross bodies of water to attend school are eligible for funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible for operational costs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Boarded Students</b></p> <p>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"> <li>• Eligible for to/from school.</li> <li>• Eligible for transportation to/from extracurricular</li> <li>• Eligible for to/from home.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dual Credit Courses/Programs</b></p> <p>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"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unsigned Plans</b></p> <p>Unsigned Joint Plans received by the Ministry to express the need of transportation for First Nation Students to attend a BC public school will be considered incomplete and not considered for funding. Email agreement/confirmation that the Joint Plan is complete from both the school district and First Nations will be accepted and considered a signed plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Allocation of Extracurricular Funding</b></p> <p>The funding provided to Boards may be used for the transportation of on-reserve First Nation Students attending public schools and participating in school-organized extracurricular activities. Extracurricular Funding is not allocated to Treaty/Self-Governing First Nations, who are not eligible for BCTEA funding. Requests for extracurricular transportation funding through the Joint Plan worksheet are not eligible for funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Eligible</u> through an automatic allocation process (refer to Transportation to Extracurricular Activities section).</li> </ul>

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
Refer to the Transportation to Extracurricular Activities section for more information.	
<p><b>Alternate Education Programs</b></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 <a href="#">policy</a>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Funding for Shelters</b></p> <p>Funding for bus shelters was made available to school districts in 2019 and to First Nations in 2021. The BCTEA Transportation Fund currently does not provide funding for shelters. Funding options could include school district Local Capital; the Annual Facility Grant (AFG) and/or the use of other operating funds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Funding for Buses</b></p> <p>Requests for buses will be processed through the established Ministry application-based <a href="#">Bus Acquisition Program</a>. Please note that the Bus Acquisition Program is for school district assets only and is restricted to “yellow fleet” (diesel and electric) buses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ineligible.</li> </ul>

#### NEXT STEPS

The BCTEA Parties are proceeding with the 2023/24 Reporting and 2024/25 Joint Transportation Plan annual processes.

## 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(K) 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).