

BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA) - Transportation

Joint Transportation Plan Questions and Answers

The purpose of this Question-and-Answer document is to provide information on frequently asked questions from school districts and First Nations regarding the BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation Fund. If you have additional questions, please contact BCTEA@gov.bc.ca

BCTEA Guiding Principles for Developing Joint First Nation Student Transportation Plans

1. What does “no walk limits” mean in the BCTEA Guiding Principles?

- Many school districts have a walk limit policy where students who live within the designated walk limit distance from the school would not be eligible for bus transportation.
- There is no provincial standard for walk limits. Each school district sets their own walk limit.
- As per the 2025/26 Policy and Procedures Guide, there are no catchment areas or walk limits for on-reserve students.
- School districts and First Nations need to meet to discuss the unique needs of First Nations Students living on reserve, and transportation services through co-development of Joint Transportation Plans.

BCTEA Joint Transportation Plans, Reporting Template and Status Quo Letter

2. Are school districts with First Nation Students living on reserve who do not require transportation expected to develop Joint Transportation Plans?

- BCTEA parties are looking to make sure all Students’ transportation needs are being met. If there are First Nation Students who are ordinarily living on-reserve who do not require transportation to public school, the school district should send an email to BCTEA@gov.bc.ca (copy the First Nation) indicating that there has been a conversation with the First Nation confirming that there are no transportation needs.
- Transportation for Students living off-reserve should be addressed separately and through other funding mechanisms that may be implemented by the school district.

3. What training and support is available for school districts and First Nations in completing the Joint Transportation Plans?

- School districts and First Nations are invited to the Annual Meeting on Transportation (AMT) and to virtual informational drop-in sessions.
- The 2025/26 Policies and Procedures and other materials to support the co-development of the Joint Transportation Plan and Transportation Reporting template is available on both the [Ministry website](#) and [FNESC website](#).
- School districts can send any BCTEA related questions to BCTEA@gov.bc.ca.
- First Nations can reach the First Nations Education Steering Committee at BCTEA@fnesc.ca or Indigenous Services Canada at bceducation@sac-isc.gc.ca.

4. Do we need to submit a Joint Transportation Plan if our school district pays for all the transportation and will not request any BCTEA funding?

- To ensure the transportation needs of First Nation Students ordinarily living on reserve are being met, school districts are asked to jointly develop and submit a Joint Transportation Plan even where all student transportation needs are provided by the school district.
- A Status Quo letter may be used instead of the Joint Transportation Plan in these cases. Please note, the First Nation’s signature is still needed (confirmation of agreement by email will be accepted).

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5. Can I use the Status Quo Letter if my request includes both a To/From school request, as well as a bus monitor?

- Special supports, such as bus monitors, or parental assistance requests are not eligible for the Status Quo Letter.
- A Joint Transportation Plan will need to be submitted because a bus monitor is included. Select the “status quo” option when completing the Joint Transportation Plan.

Local Education Agreements (LEA)

6. Does there need to be a LEA in place to apply for BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funding?

- No, a Local Education Agreement is not required to be eligible for BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funding. Any school district with one or more First Nation Students attending their BC public school who are ordinarily living on-reserve, and requiring transportation should develop and submit a Joint Transportation Plan or Status Quo Letter as applicable (even if all Student transportation needs are being met).

Expense Eligibility

7. What kilometre rate should we be using when completing our Joint Transportation Plans?

- When completing Joint Transportation Plans, school districts and First Nations should refer to the school district’s policy on parental assistance. The First Nation Student Transportation Fund may supplement up to the [National Joint Council rates](#) payable per kilometre for British Columbia as of the submission deadline.

8. Can BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funds be used for bus monitor supports to address bullying?

- No, bus monitor supports and/or strategies to prevent bullying during transportation is a school district responsibility.

9. Can BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funds be used to pay for driver training?

- BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funding cannot be used to pay for driver training. Driver training and other driver-related training costs are the responsibility of the school district e.g., cultural awareness, group management, customer service, etc.
- First Nations and school districts are encouraged to recruit First Nation members as bus drivers wherever possible and to seek driver training opportunities in their region (e.g., consult with the Association of School Transportation Services of BC).

10. Are there going to be opportunities for capital purchases in the 2025/26 school year?

- BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funding is for operational costs only. Requests for buses are processed through the established provincial application-based [Bus Acquisition Program](#). This program is now offered through the Ministry of Infrastructure (INF).
- There is currently no water vessel acquisition program similar to the Bus Acquisition Program.
- Funding for bus shelters was made available to school districts in 2019 and to First Nations in 2021. The BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation Fund currently does not provide funding for shelters.

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Funding options could include school district Local Capital, the Annual Facility Grant (AFG) and/or the use of other operating funds.

11. Is transportation to childcare or before and after school programs eligible for BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation Fund (to/from or Extracurricular)?

- Transportation costs to childcare and before and after school programs are ineligible.

BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation Funding

12. What are the funding sources for transportation for on-reserve students?

- As noted in Schedule G of the BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success (BCTEA), the cost of transportation for on-reserve students attending public schools is typically funded from a number of funding allocation sources including the Provincial Student Transportation Fund, Student Location Factor, Supplemental Student Location Factor, general operating funding, and Federal funding. School districts are expected to consider these funding sources when co-developing Joint Transportation Plan(s) with First Nations.
- Only students who ordinarily live on-reserve and attend BC public schools are eligible to be on ISC BC Region Nominal Roll. These students should be included in the Joint Transportation Plan and considered for supplementary funding from the BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation Fund if needed.

13. Do the transportation requirements under BCTEA apply to Self-Governing or Treaty First Nations?

- First Nations with treaties or self-government agreements are currently not part of the First Nation Student Transportation Fund approach as they are not covered by BCTEA; however, they may choose to access certain services through a separate negotiation process.

14. Will implementing the First Nation Student Joint Transportation Plans create different levels of services for different students?

- The BCTEA Parties are committed to developing and implementing effective measures to address existing and future issues arising from the transportation of First Nation Students to BC Public Schools.
- First Nation Students often face unique transportation challenges - true equity means acknowledging and accommodating these different needs.
- First Nation Students who live on-reserve are often required to travel significantly longer than average distances to and from BC Public Schools. In some cases, these commutes are unsafe and require First Nation Students to navigate wildlife and adverse weather conditions. The remoteness of First Nations communities must be considered in the interest of equity and in recognition of the Parties' commitment to improving outcomes for First Nation Students.
- Transportation for students living off-reserve should be addressed separately and through other funding mechanisms that may be implemented by the Board.

15. When are BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funds transferred? What if the timelines are not in sync with a First Nations' fiscal year?

- BCTEA Parties recognize school districts, First Nations and the Ministry of Education and Child Care (ECC) may follow different fiscal years. BCTEA Parties want to ensure that Joint Transportation Plan approvals by the Joint Transportation Committee are communicated through funding letters as soon as

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possible so that funding is available for new and existing transportation services.

- Based on feedback to allow for school district and First Nation planning, agreement and to implement any new transportation services in time for school start, plans are due by the deadline indicated in the 2025/26 Policy and Procedures Guide e.g., typically Spring every year.
- BCTEA Parties review Joint Plans, Spending Reports and school district audited financial statements submitted September 30 every year which means ECC transfers funds to school districts typically every Fall.
- BCTEA parties expect that funding to First Nations for transportation services should not be delayed; school districts are encouraged to cash manage funding to ensure undue hardship is not experienced by First Nations.

16. Why is funding flowed to school districts and not directly to First Nations?

- The BCTEA agreement outlines how the funding is flowed as a Special Purpose Grant to school districts, with restrictions on spending and reporting.
- This funding is supplementary to other sources of funding available to school districts.
- ECC transfers all transportation funds to school districts by way of a Special Purpose Grant pursuant to section 115(a) of the *School Act* as per the intended purpose outlined in Schedule G of the BCTEA. These funds must be used for the purpose outlined in the Joint Transportation Plans and must be reported as a Special Purpose Grant on Schedule 3A of the school district's budgets and financial statements. Funds not spent by June 30, may be 'subject to' repurposing.
- There are a number of accountability mechanisms to ensure First Nations are in agreement and their concerns are addressed. The Joint Transportation Plan requires the Chief of the First Nation (or delegate) to confirm the agreement of the Joint Transportation Plan by signing before submission.

17. How are school districts accountable to First Nations for unused BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation funding?

- An estimate of BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation fund spending to June 30 is reported by the school districts on the Revenue and Spending Report and confirmed through the annual audited financial statements.
- Unspent BCTEA funding can only be used for its intended purpose. Funds that are not spent by the end of the school year may be carried forward for use in the following school year. The Joint Transportation Committee may direct the school district to repurpose any remaining carryover funding to address To/From Transportation costs and/or Extracurricular requests for the 2025/26 school year.

First Nation Schools of Choice

18. Is there additional funding to support transportation to First Nation Schools of Choice?

- There is no additional funding. Boards should consider the use of existing funding sources (e.g., Operating Grants, Student Transportation Fund (STF), Student Location Factor (SLF), Supplemental Student Location Factor (SSLF), Transportation Proxy which is comprised of the STF, SLF and SSLF portion of the First Nation Student Rate, BCTEA First Nation Student Transportation Fund) when implementing First Nations School of Choice.

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Parental Assistance

19. When is it appropriate to request funding for parental assistance?

- Funding for parental assistance has only been allocated in extraordinary/unique circumstances.
- Parental school of choice is not considered an extraordinary/unique circumstance eligible for BCTEA parental assistance funding. Parent/caregiver(s) may follow school district policies to enroll First Nation Students in non-designated schools and consider what the school district's policy is for transportation and parental assistance.
- Previously approved requests for parental assistance are subject to review on a case-by-case basis every year and may not be approved in the future.