

Ineligible Riders Fee Reduced

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Grande Yellowhead's Board of Trustees approved a reduction of the transportation fee for ineligible riders at today's Public Board Meeting from \$300 to \$250 - a savings of almost 20% back to those families in the jurisdiction. At the May 3, 2017 Public Board Meeting, trustees had reluctantly increased the rider fee from \$200 to \$300 in an effort to help offset escalating expenses in the division's transportation department which was projecting a deficit budget. The ineligible ridership fee had not been increased since 2006.

"As public school board trustees, we work very hard to ensure that we provide the best service and educational opportunities for our students while being accountable to our stakeholders for fiscal due diligence," noted Board Chair Brenda Rosadiuk. "Many school jurisdictions in the province have eliminated transportation services for ineligible riders due to the increasing expenses associated with providing busing for students residing within the 2.4km boundary as regulated by the School Act. Our Board reviewed many options this spring on alternate strategies to continue this important service based on needs expressed by our school communities despite the increasing costs. Our analysis of the cost of providing this service averages to \$600 per rider to the division and we do not receive transportation funding for ineligible riders. This is something that our board will need to discuss further over the next year if we can afford to continue supporting ineligible ridership."

The division's \$300 fee came into effect for the 2017-18 school year. Since then, trustees have been consulting with both internal and external stakeholders about the reasons for the increase and its possible impact to families. In addition, streamlining routes and in-depth reviews of expenses led to more discussion amongst the board, and resulted in the reduction of the original increase for this year.

Chair Rosadiuk continued. "Rather than eliminating ineligible ridership, the board discussed other ways to tighten the budget such as the introduction of inter-school busing in Hinton, and we streamlined some in-town routes in both Hinton and Edson. Although we couldn't manage a full decrease back to the original fee of \$200, we were very pleased to be able to lower the fee to \$250 from the original increase of \$300."

Families that have already paid the \$300 ineligible ridership fee will be reimbursed the \$50 difference by the division over the next 30 days.

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