

Review of Student Transportation Eligibility

**ASBA Spring General Meeting
June 5, 2018**

Alberta Education, Strategic Services and Governance
Business Operations and Stakeholder Support Branch



Student Transportation Review

How We Got Here

- In 2017, the Government of Alberta reduced school fees, prompting renewed discussion about whether the eligibility criteria for student transportation were still appropriate.
- In early 2018, Minister Eggen committed to seeking further feedback from education stakeholders and parents to inform changes to transportation eligibility. This includes:
 - Sessions with CASS, ASCA, STAA and ASBOA
 - An online survey, which is open until June 15

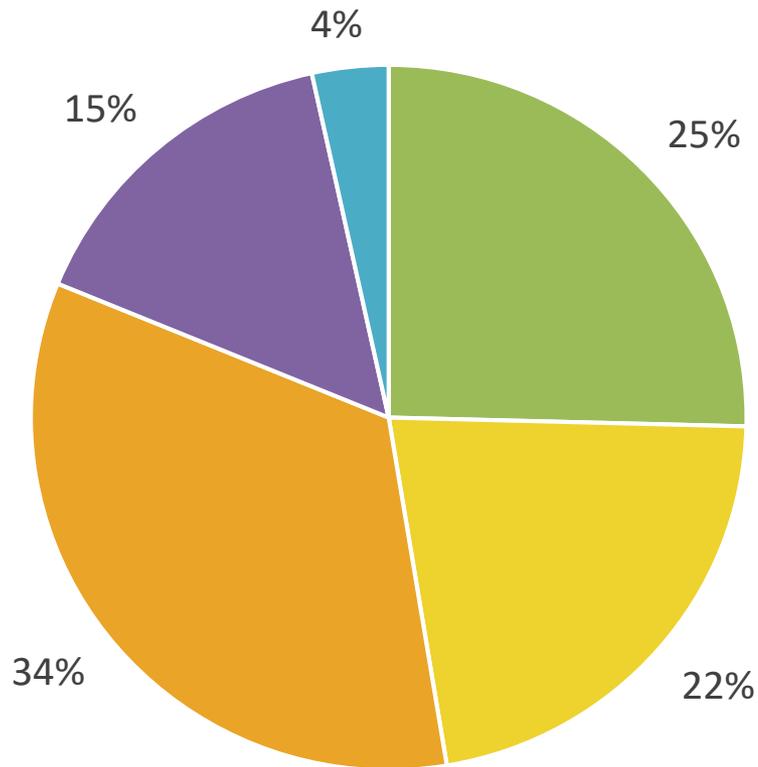
Student Transportation Review

What We've Heard So Far

- Input is still being gathered
- This presentation reflects approximately 8,000 responses to the online survey
- Some themes have emerged:
 - Desire to decrease distance for younger children
 - Student safety is a central concern
 - Willingness to pay fees for a higher service level
 - Interest in treating transportation to French immersion the same as to a student's designated school
 - Acknowledgment that one-size approach does not fit all, given different issues in rural and urban transportation settings

Student Transportation Review

What Should the Student Transportation System Look Like?

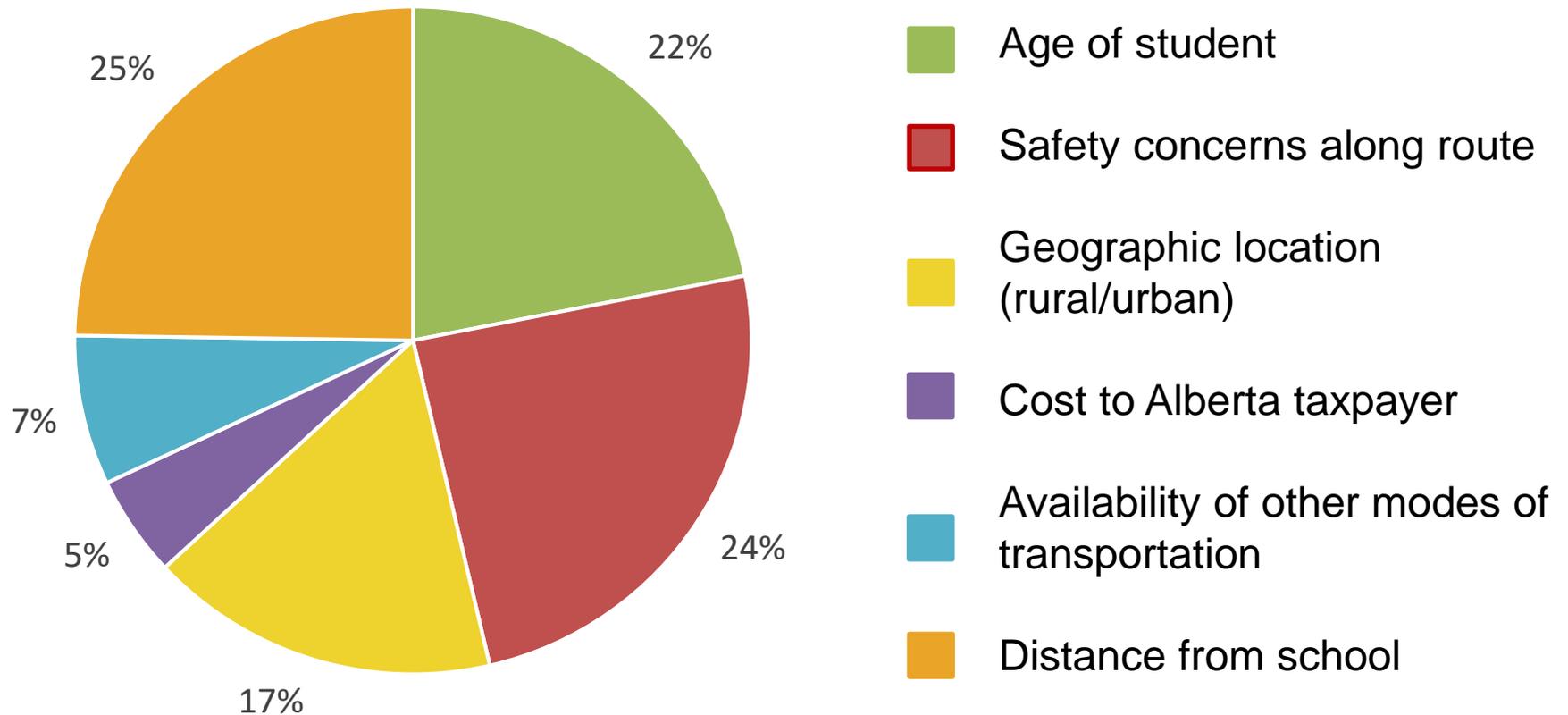


- Available to all (no fees or eligibility criteria)
- Available based on distance only
- Available based on eligibility criteria including distance, age, safety and region (rural/urban)
- Available based on eligibility criteria determined by local authorities
- No system at all – parents responsible for transportation
- Available based on eligibility criteria

**Note that all results are preliminary and subject to change, as the survey is still underway*

Student Transportation Review

What Are the Most Important Factors for Determining Transportation Eligibility?

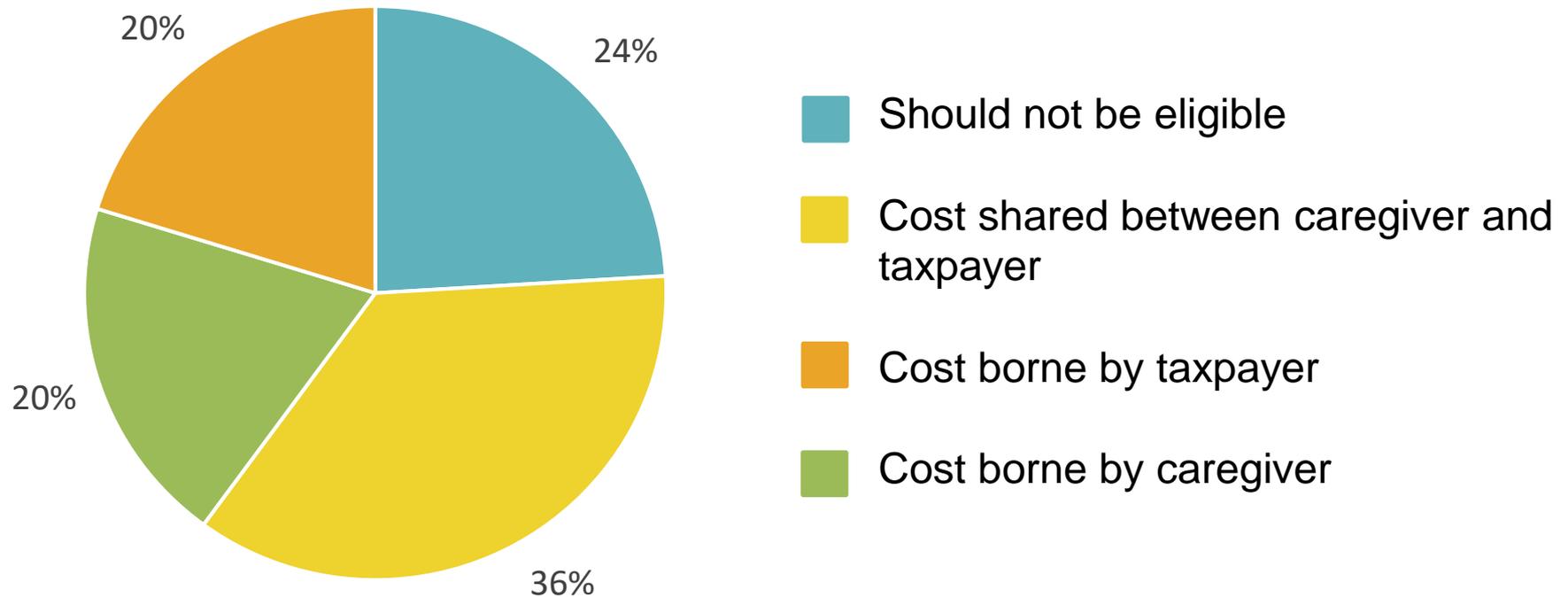


**Note that all results are preliminary and subject to change, as the survey is still underway*



Student Transportation Review

Should Students Enrolled in Bilingual or French Immersion Programs Be Eligible for Transportation? If So, Who Should Pay?



**Note that all results are preliminary and subject to change, as the survey is still underway*



Developing Options

- Given some of the themes that have emerged from parent and stakeholder engagement, today's discussion will focus on identifying viable options to move transportation policy forward
- The key issues include:
 - Eligibility distance by age
 - Incorporating safety criteria
 - Fees

Developing Options

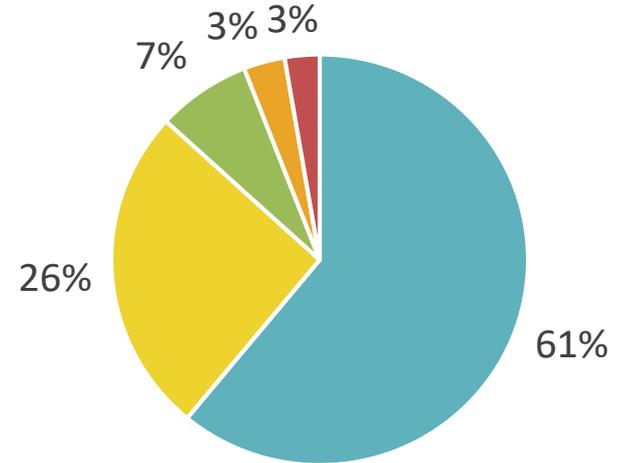
Key Issue: Eligibility Distance By Age

- What we've heard:
 - 2.4 km is too far for younger children to walk
 - Preference for 1.2 km for Grades 1 to 6
 - 2.4 km is an acceptable distance for older students
- Considerations:
 - Moving to 1.2 km would have significant financial implications for government and boards
 - 1.6 km is used by some other provinces (MB, NL) and a variety of school boards

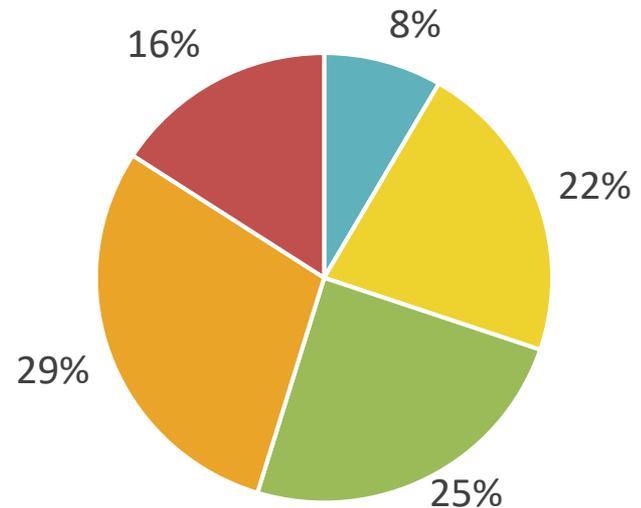
What Should the Eligibility Distance Be?

- More than 1.2 km/15 minutes
- More than 1.6 km/20 minutes
- More than 2.0 km/25 minutes
- More than 2.4 km/30 minutes
- More than 3.0 km/36 minutes

Kindergarten to Grade 6



Grade 7 to 12



**Note that all results are preliminary and subject to change, as the survey is still underway*

Developing Options

Key Issue: Eligibility Distance By Age

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
1.2 km for K-6 2.4 km for 7-12	1.6 km for K-6 2.4 km for 7-12	Maintain 2.4 km for all age levels

For discussion:

- Given fiscal constraints, is an eligibility distance of 1.6 km for younger students (K-6) a reasonable compromise?
- What would you anticipate to be the spin-off effects of lowering the distance for younger students?

Developing Options

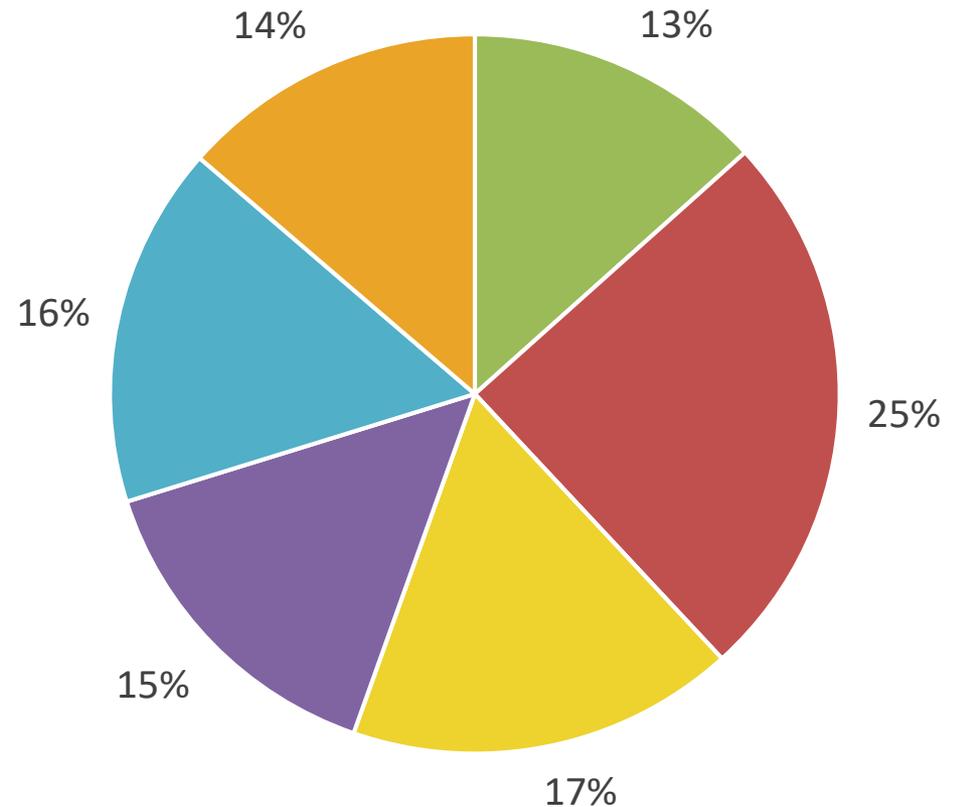
Key Issue: Incorporating Safety Criteria

- What we've heard:
 - Safety is a top concern for parents
- Considerations:
 - Safety considerations can vary significantly by community, and temporary hazards can arise due to construction, etc.
 - Perceptions of safety hazards can vary significantly based on age and abilities of student
 - Other provinces do not regulate safety criteria and leave it to individual boards to create policies on transportation safety

Student Transportation Review

What Is the Most Important Issue Facing Student Transportation?

- Minimize cost to taxpayers
- Introduce criteria to address safety hazards
- Introduce additional criteria to include students in program of choice
- Maximize parent/caregiver choice
- Offer everyone the same level of service
- Leave services as they are



**Note that all results are preliminary and subject to change, as the survey is still underway*

Developing Options

Key Issue: Incorporating Safety Criteria

Option 1	Option 2
Do not include safety criteria in regulation. Boards continue to provide transportation for safety concerns at their discretion.	Include specific parameters for safety in regulation (uncontrolled railway crossings, uncontrolled crosswalks on roads over 60 km/hour, lack of infrastructure such as sidewalks).

For discussion:

- Can/should safety be regulated at the provincial level? At the board level?
- Is it possible to determine safety criteria that is appropriate for all ages and location (urban vs rural)?
- How do we deal with temporary safety issues?

Developing Options

Key Issues: Funding Safety Criteria

- What we've heard:
 - Students should be eligible for safe transportation to school, regardless of the cost to taxpayers
 - Some respondents have indicated an interest in allowing parents greater flexibility to choose higher levels of service above the regulated criteria, if desired
- Considerations:
 - Including safety parameters may significantly increase the transportation cost to the province

Developing Options

Key issue: Funding safety criteria

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Safety considerations are regulated and students requiring transportation as a result of safety concerns (aligned with regulation) are fully funded by the province.	Safety considerations remain at the board level; boards receive a set funding amount to be used to address safety at their discretion.	Safety considerations remain at the board level; boards are permitted to charge fees for students who face a safety concern but are otherwise ineligible based on age/distance.

For discussion:

- Should safety criteria be funded?
- Are there less costly alternatives to using buses to deal with safety concerns (e.g. walking school bus, walking buddies etc)?

Student Transportation Review

Where to From Here?

- The online survey will be open until June 15
- Education staff will be consolidating and analyzing all of the feedback received and presenting options on potential amendments to transportation policy
- Any changes that are made would come into effect for the 2019/20 school year

Thank you for your feedback!



Have your voice heard
on **student transportation.**

Alberta 

Rick Grebenstein, BCom
Senior Manager, Transportation
Alberta Education
780-422-6018
rick.grebenstein@gov.ab.ca