

School Bus Cancellations Due to Driver Shortages

Student Transportation Services of Thunder Bay (STSTB) understands the frustration and challenges that ongoing school bus cancellations create for students, families, and schools. We recognize the impact these disruptions have on daily routines, attendance, work schedules, and peace of mind, and we want to assure our school communities that restoring reliable transportation remains one of our highest priorities.

Like many student transportation authorities across Ontario and North America, STSTB continues to face an ongoing shortage of qualified school bus drivers. While there have been periods of improvement since the shortage first affected our region in 2020, recent increases in driver illnesses, medical leaves, retirements, and other absences have once again placed significant pressure on our transportation system.

STSTB works closely with our contracted school bus operators every day to minimize service disruptions. Together, we continue to invest in driver recruitment, paid training and licensing programs, retention initiatives, route optimization, and other strategies designed to improve service reliability. However, becoming a licensed school bus driver is a lengthy and highly regulated process involving medical examinations, background checks, training, testing, and licensing requirements. As a result, vacancies cannot always be filled quickly when drivers become unavailable.

Over the past several years, significant efforts have been made to reduce the number of drivers required by increasing routing efficiencies, consolidating routes where appropriate, and working collaboratively with operators to maximize available resources. Despite these efforts, there are often no additional drivers available when multiple absences occur at the same time. In some cases, route cancellations remain the only option until driver coverage can be secured.

We appreciate that cancelled bus service creates hardship for many families. Unfortunately, STSTB is generally unable to provide alternate transportation arrangements when a route is cancelled. Families should continue to have contingency plans available whenever possible and monitor transportation communications regularly for updates.

For the most current information regarding delays and cancellations, parents, guardians, students, and school staff are encouraged to use the Chipmunk or Delays App or visit the Delays and Cancellations section of the STSTB website. These tools provide the fastest and most reliable method of communicating service updates.

Please be assured that STSTB continues to closely monitor route serviceability, meet regularly with transportation providers, and actively pursue every reasonable opportunity to improve driver recruitment, retention, and route coverage. While the driver shortage remains a significant challenge, our commitment to providing safe, reliable, and consistent transportation for students remains unchanged.

We sincerely thank parents, guardians, school staff, and students for their patience, understanding, and continued support as we work together toward long-term improvements in student transportation service throughout our service area.

Craig Murphy
Consortium Manager
Student Transportation Services of Thunder Bay