



Standing Committee Meeting

Monday, November 25, 2024

Trustee Board Room

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

20 Education Court, P.O. Box 2558

Hamilton, ON L8N 3L1

AGENDA: Immediately following Board Meeting

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement
2. Meeting Roll Call
3. Approval of the Agenda
4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

Reports from Staff:

5. [School Year Calendar 2025-2026 \(draft for consultation\)](#)
6. [HWSTS Transportation Consortium Update](#)

7. Adjournment



STANDING COMMITTEE

November 25, 2024

2025-2026 Draft School Year Calendars

Submitted By: Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, Director of Education

Prepared By: Simon Goodacre, Superintendent of Equity and Student Achievement

Recommendation:

That the Draft 2025-2026 School Year Calendars be approved for public consultation.

Background:

The 2025-2026 School Year Calendars (Elementary and Secondary) have been prepared in consultation with the School Year Calendar Advisory Committee and endorsed by Executive Council.

The calendars comply with Ontario *Regulation 304, School Year Calendars and Professional Activity Days*. As of the date of this report, the Ministry of Education has not yet released detailed guidance regarding the requirements of Professional Activity Days for 2025-2026. When the HWDSB receives this information, it will be incorporated into the report where the School Year Calendar is brought back for final ratification before submission to the Ministry.

Public consultation will be undertaken from December 18, 2024, to January 13, 2025, to receive community feedback regarding the Draft Calendars.

Status:

Ontario Regulation 304, School Year Calendar, Professional Activity Days sets the requirements for preparation and submission of school year calendars to the Ministry of Education. This includes a minimum of 194 school days between September 1 and June 30. For the 2025-2026 calendar, all required days can occur after Labour Day (Monday, September 1st, 2025).

Regulation 304 establishes holidays for the school year that include a Winter Holiday Break (December 22nd, 2025, to January 2nd, 2026) and the March Break (March 16th, 2026, to March 20th, 2026). However, to accommodate local needs, school boards may request a modified school year calendar that is organized differently from the criteria outlined in Regulation 304. This year,

the Draft Calendars for the 2025-26 school year do not propose a modification from the Ministry's suggested calendar.

Development of the Draft 2025-2026 School Year Calendars has been undertaken in consultation with the School Year Calendar Advisory Committee which consists of members representing: Elementary and Secondary Principals (HWPC); Elementary and Secondary Teachers (HWETL, OSSTF, HWOTL); Parents (Hamilton-Wentworth Council of Home & School Associations; HWDSB Parent Involvement Committee); Educational Assistants and Child and Youth Care Practitioners (COPE), Early Childhood Educators (HWDECEL), ESL Instructors, Professional Student Services (PSSP), and School Office Assistants (OCTU).

The School Year Calendar Advisory Committee reviewed and provided feedback on the draft elementary and secondary calendars. The committee will meet again in January to review the results of the public consultation process and provide further input. The consultation process will also include discussions with the co-terminous board to align PA days wherever possible to reduce transportation costs and disruption.

For the 2025-2026 Secondary draft calendar, an instructional day has been positioned after the exam period and the end of semester Professional Activity Day. The inclusion of this day is in response to student and parent feedback regarding the benefit of a designated time to review the final assessment and evaluation of courses at the end of each semester with school-based staff.

Executive Council supports the Draft School Year Calendars ([Appendix A](#)) that include:

Elementary

Start and End Dates for Students	Tuesday September 2 nd , 2025 Thursday, June 25 th , 2026
Professional Activity Days	Friday, September 19 th , 2025 Monday, October 20 th , 2025 Friday, November 21 st , 2025 Friday, January 23 rd , 2026 Friday, March 6 th , 2026 Thursday June 4 th , 2026 Friday, June 26 th , 2026

Secondary

	<u>Semester 1</u>	<u>Semester 2</u>
Start and End Dates for Students	Tuesday, September 2 nd , 2025 Thursday, January 29 th , 2026	Friday, January 30 th , 2026 Thursday, June 25 th , 2026
Examination Days (5)	January 21 st - January 27 th , 2026	June 17 th - June 23 rd , 2026
Professional Activity Days	Friday, September 19 th , 2025 Monday, October 20 th , 2025 Friday, November 21 st , 2025 Wednesday, January 28 th , 2026	Friday, March 6 th , 2026 Wednesday, June 24 th , 2026 Friday, June 26 th , 2026

Professional Activity Days

The Ministry of Education requires school boards to arrange up to seven Professional Activity (PA) Days in the school year. The HWDSB is awaiting Ministry guidance on requirements related to the content of PA Days.

For the 2025-2026 school year, the Ministry of Education has communicated to school boards the pre-determined election dates for the federal and provincial elections. The dates for these elections are October 20th, 2025, and June 4th, 2026, respectively. The Ministry of Education has asked school boards to schedule a Professional Activity Day on these dates where feasible. If these election dates change, school boards have a process to reschedule the Professional Activity Day if desired.

The specific topics for the PA Days will be brought forward later in the report seeking final ratification before submission to the Ministry. In our current planning, the PA Day scheduled for Friday, November 21st, 2025, in the Elementary draft calendar will be for family, caregiver, and guardian interviews.

Public Consultation & Next Steps

The Draft 2025-26 School Year Calendars will be posted on the HWDSB Engage platform from (December 18, 2024 – January 13th, 2025) for public feedback. The consultation will utilize the Engage platform and an online survey. The results of the consultation will be analyzed by HWDSB Research & Analytics Department and provided for review by Executive Council, the School Year Calendar Advisory Committee, and the Board of Trustees prior to the final ratification of the calendars for submission to the Ministry of Education by March 1st, 2025. The Ministry of Education provides final approval of the school year calendars.

Financial Implications:

There is an additional cost to the HWDSB when Professional Activity Days differ between co-terminus school boards. Consultation between co-terminus boards occurs in an attempt to align as many Professional Activity Days as possible to minimize increases in transportation costs.

For the proposed 2025/2026 school year calendar, HWDSB will incur approximately \$75,000 in additional transportation costs due to Professional Activity Days that do not fully align.

Strategic Directions:

Providing Equitable Quality Education

We will offer equitable quality educational opportunities to improve student engagement, learning and achievement for future-readiness.

Collaborating with Students, Families & Communities

We will build reciprocal relationships and partnerships to enhance access and engagement for students, families, and communities.

Ministry of Education School Year Calendar 2025 – 2026 (Elem)

Legend ↓ **H-** Statutory Holiday **E** Scheduled Examination Day **P** Professional Activity Day **B-** Board Designated Holiday Half Day



Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1 st Week					2 nd Week					3 rd Week					4 th Week					5 th Week									
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					
August 2025								1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29					
September 2025	20	1		1	2	3	4	5	H																								
October 2025	21	1				1	2	3																									
November 2025	19	1		3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28										
December 2025	15			1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31							
January 2026	19	1					1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30					
February 2026	19			2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27										
March 2026	16	1		2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30	31								
April 2026	20					1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30						
May 2026	20							1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29					
June 2026	18	2		1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30								
July 2026						1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31					
TOTAL	187	7		<p>Note: The 2025-2026 calendar provides for 196 possible school days between September 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days</p>																													

School Year Calendar 2025 – 2026 (Sec)

Legend ↓ **H-** Statutory Holiday **E** Scheduled Examination Day **P** Professional Activity Day **B-** Board Designated Holiday Half Day



Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1 st Week					2 nd Week					3 rd Week					4 th Week					5 th Week									
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					
August 2025								1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29					
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October 2025	21	1				1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31					
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December 2025	15			1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31							
January 2026	14	1	5				1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30					
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June 2026	13	2	5	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30								
July 2026						1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31					
TOTAL	177	7	10	<p>Note: The 2025-2026 calendar provides for 196 possible school days between September 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days</p>																													



STANDING COMMITTEE

November 25, 2024

Transportation Consortium Update

Submitted By: Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, Director of Education

Prepared By: Matthew Gerard, Associate Director, Business Services and Treasurer
Sherry Roswell, General Manager, HWSTS

Recommendation:

That the Transportation Consortium Update be received.

Background:

On an annual basis, Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS) Provides an annual report to its member boards. The full HWSTS 2023-2024 Annual Report can be found in [Appendix A](#) and the highlights of the Annual report have been included in this report. The report serves as a communication tool to enhance an understanding of our current transportation status and insights that may influence future services.

Route and Vehicle Information

HWSTS has secured school transportation services for both member Boards from September 1, 2021, to August 31, 2029, with an option for a 2-year extension. Student transportation is provided through school buses, taxis, and public transit, covering a total of 472 routes managed by these service providers:

1. First Student ULC
2. Attridge Transportation Inc.
3. Sharp Bus Lines Ltd.

HWSTS has secured school transportation services for both member Boards for an initial three-year term, with the option of two one-year extensions through two local taxi companies. This contract, effective from September 2022 to June 2025, reflects our commitment to providing stable and reliable transportation solutions for students in the Hamilton region. Taxi service providers for HWSTS are:

1. Hamilton Cab
2. Blue Line

Status:

September 2024 Start Up

HWSTS continues to tackle the ongoing driver shortage, a challenge that has persisted for several years. The lack of reserve drivers complicates efforts to maintain full coverage. To address these operational disruptions, HWSTS actively communicates with bus operators and receives weekly driver status updates. This driver scarcity significantly affects service reliability, leading to delays impacting multiple schools. Addressing this issue remains a top priority for HWSTS as we strive to ensure optimal service delivery.

Figure 2 shows a decrease in the overall call volume this year, alongside a noted decrease in calls handled by HWSTS staff. Importantly, over half of the calls were successfully managed by the answering service.

	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	Comments
LATE BUS	198	204	223				Added 2022-2023
ADDRESS CHANGES	205	134	115				Added 2022-2023
COURTESY/EMPTY SEAT	133	188	200	81	57	307	
STOP CONCERNS	510	569	605	991	377	575	
GENERAL INQUIRIES	476	390	451	638	878	1,135	
PARENT PORTAL QUESTIONS	337	530	591	209	319	107	Login inquiries
SERVICE COMPLAINTS	629	1,074	1,432	1,581	2,092	1,788	Delays, Complaints
OTHER	91	55	71	40	47	53	
TOTAL HWSTS ISSUES	2,579	3,144	3,688	3,540	3,770	3,965	Calls managed directly by HWSTS Staff
TOTAL CALLS	6,382	8,658	7,699	8,584	9,530	9,053	Calls handled by Answering Service

Figure 2 – Categorized phone call volume

Annual Reported Run Delay Posting Comparison for First Full Month of School

**A bus run is a portion of a school bus route. A school bus route may contain between 2-8 bus runs daily.*

The primary causes of delays are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Date	Avg Delay (Min)	Mechanical Break Down	Driver Coverage Late	Driver Assisting with another Route	Other /Misc	Student Issue	Traffic	Driver Absence	Other	Total Delays
20-Sep	37	77	2,144		535	5	14			2,777
21-Sep	16	107	594		117	20	326			1,164
22-Sep	21	68	1,980		32	9	227	395	73	2,784
23-Sep	21	98	210	396	52	15	451	527	77	1,826
24-Sep	24	145	387	561	95	19	509	693	119	2,528

Figure 3 – Bus run delays categorized by “Reason”

HWSTS Transported Students

Figure 4 compares the number of eligible riders and courtesy riders at the end of the 2023-24 school year, highlighting trends in ridership patterns over the academic years.

Each year, students can apply for courtesy transportation. Due to the high volume of requests in September, HWSTS processes these applications by the end of October. Courtesy transportation is granted annually on available capacity on school buses.

HWSTS Transported Students		
Date	Eligible Riders	Courtesy Riders
June 1, 2024	32,908	1,590
June 1, 2023	29,823	1,752
June 1, 2022	29,208	1,270
June 1, 2021*	18,923	29
June 1, 2020	29,119	1,799
June 1, 2019	27,817	2,018

Figure 4 – Breakdown of ridership

	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
First Rider program for Kindergarten students and parents/guardians/care givers	431 students	300 students	0 students	0 students	372 students	360 students	336 students	483 students	487 students	375 students
On-site bus safety training sessions at HWDSB elementary schools	196 sessions	182 sessions	162 sessions	134 sessions	180 sessions	221 sessions	173 sessions	165 sessions	181 sessions	195 sessions
In collaboration with Hamilton Police Services, conducted CAA School Safety Patroller training	0 students	0 students	0 students	0 students	534 students	582 students	649 students	760 students	472 students	846 students
Identification tags to Kindergarten students	3770	3919	3457	3501	4180	4130	4260	4170	4,200	4,200

Figure 5 – Summary of safety initiatives and activities

Financial Implications:

In 2023-2024, the HWSTS spent \$19,552,843 on behalf of the HWDSB to support the transportation of HWDSB students.

Strategic Directions:

Building a sustainable Education system.

We will adapt to a rapidly changing world through responsible fiscal management, investing equitably in accessible and sustainable facilities, and supporting a robust workforce.



Annual Report

2023-24



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Introduction

Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services (HWSTS) is a transportation consortium formed by the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. HWSTS is responsible for the provision of Safe, Effective and Efficient transportation services to eligible students for both Partner Boards.

During the 2023-24 school year, HWSTS provided student transportation services to more than 30,000 students attending 170 individual schools throughout the district. A number of transportation modes are utilized including traditional yellow-and-black school buses, school purpose vans, Taxi cabs and the Hamilton Street Railway Transit. Our school-purpose routes total approximately 470 and the vehicles covering these routes travel approximately 39,000 kilometres daily during the school year.

About Us

HWSTS consists of 9 staff members from both the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Our staff administer the transportation policies, procedures and guidelines of the member boards. Throughout the school year, HWSTS reports to a Governance Committee a minimum of five times per year and to an Administrative Team monthly.

Our Governance Committee is comprised of:

- Chair of the Board, Patrick Daly, HWCDSB
- Chair of the Board, Maria Felix Miller, HWDSB
- Director of Education, David Hansen, HWCDSB
- Director of Education, Sheryl Robinson Petrazzini, HWDSB

Our Administrative Team includes:

- General Manager, Sherry Roswell, HWSTS
- Associate Director of Corporate Services & Board Treasurer, Paola Pace-Gubekjian, HWCDSB
- Associate Director of Business Services & Board Treasurer, Matthew Gerard, HWDSB
- Manager of Real Estate, Community Partnerships & Transportation, Vince Ramelli, HWCDSB
- Superintendent of Equity and Student Achievement K-12, Adnan Shahbaz, HWDSB

In addition to the valuable support provided by our Member School Boards, HWSTS has contract services with the following three bus operators:

- Attridge Transportation Inc.
- First Student Canada ULC
- Sharp Bus Lines Ltd.

2023-24 School Year Highlights

A few highlights from our 2023-2024 school year include:

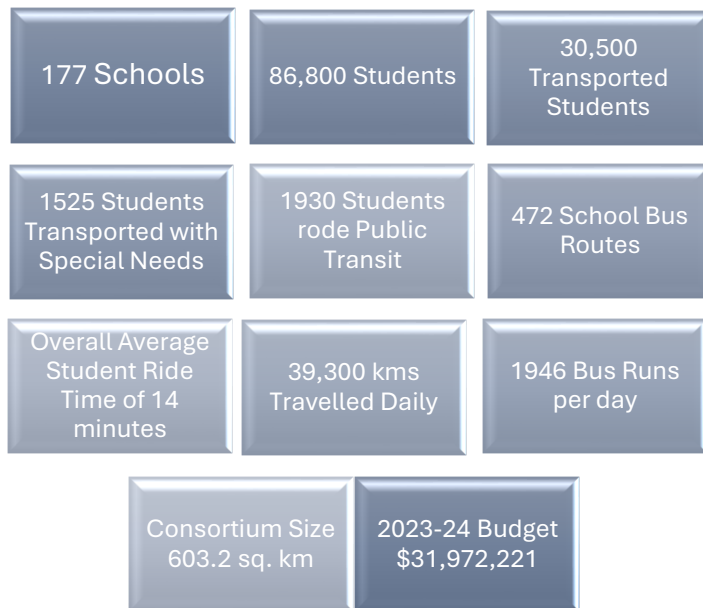
- Routing and Technology continued to advance with the use of BusPlanner Pro, a route planning application. BusPlanner's efficient routing solutions allow the staff at HWSTS to enhance and adapt to the growing population in the Hamilton region.
- Despite ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining drivers, HWSTS collaborated with bus operators to identify areas needing improvement and adjusted routes to minimize delays.
- HWSTS maintained a strong focus on school bus safety, conducting enhanced safety reviews of bus stop locations, operational practices, roadway conditions and traffic assessments across the region.
- Several pilot projects were conducted to test school bus tracking apps for parents.

Focusing on student safety, HWSTS also provided the following Safety Initiatives:

- First Rider program for kindergarten students resumed with in-person sessions.
- Intertrain School Bus safety programs for Elementary students.
- Bus Driver In-Service/Driver Appreciation Professional development sessions.

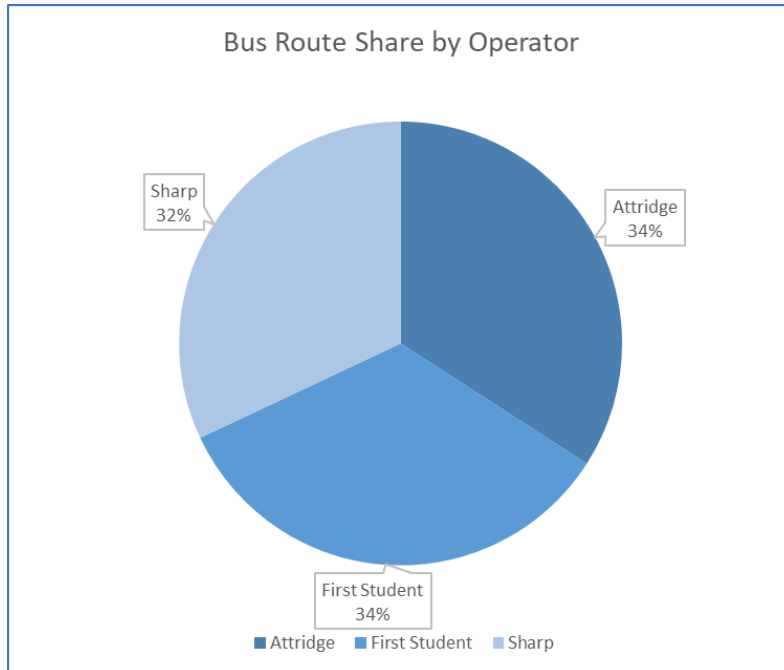
Operational Quick Facts

The illustration below offers a comprehensive overview of student transportation within our system. It highlights key statistics about schools and students and provides details on school bus utilization. The diagram effectively captures the logistics involved in student transportation during the 2023-24 school year.



Route/Operator Statistics

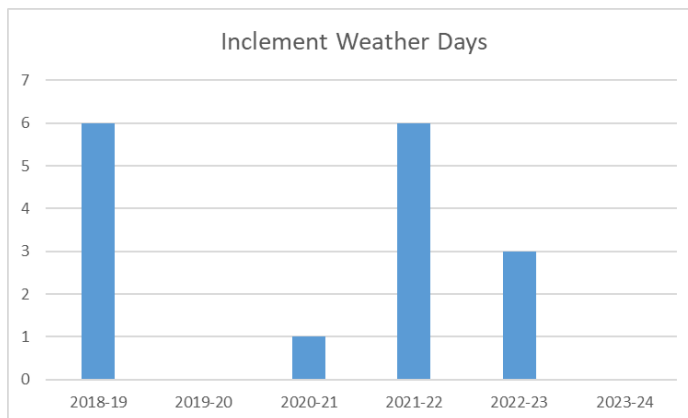
HWSTS has contracted with three school bus operator companies, managing a total of 472 school bus routes in our region. The diagram below demonstrates the distribution of these routes among the bus carriers.



Inclement Weather Cancellations

Depending on the location and type of weather occurrence, student transportation can be cancelled. In the event of anticipated inclement weather, HWSTS requests contracted service providers to drive predetermined routes to assess the condition of the roads. This is done prior to 5:00 a.m. The drivers report back to the carriers and HWSTS begins to receive reports by 6:00 a.m.

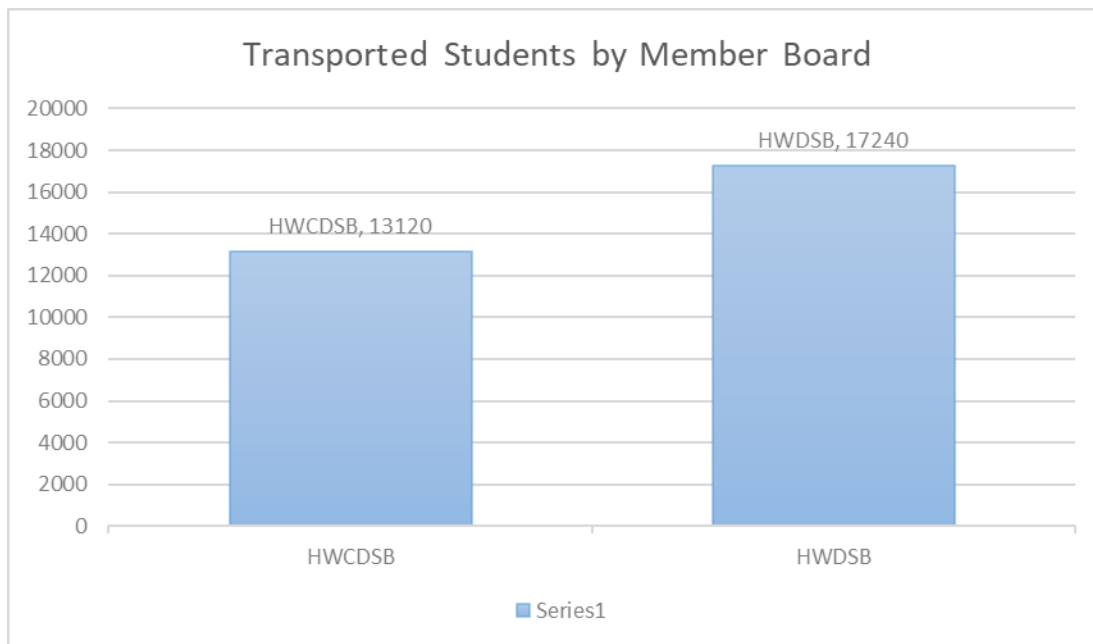
When buses are canceled or schools are closed due to extreme weather, details will be announced through Hamilton and area media outlets. Additionally, all cancellation information is posted on the HWSTS and School Board websites. You will note that there were no inclement weather cancellations in 2023/24.



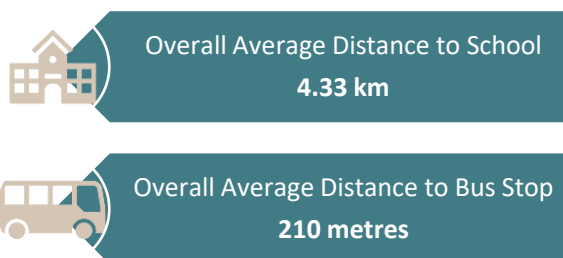
Performance Measurements

a) Transported Students by Board

In the 2023-2024 school year, HWSTS transported a total of 30,360 students. The chart below outlines the number of students transported by member school board.



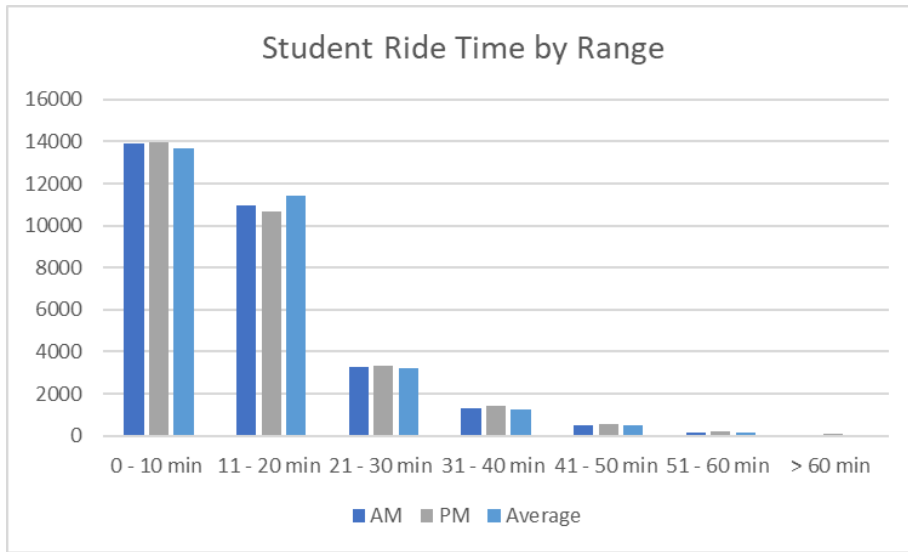
b) Average Distance:



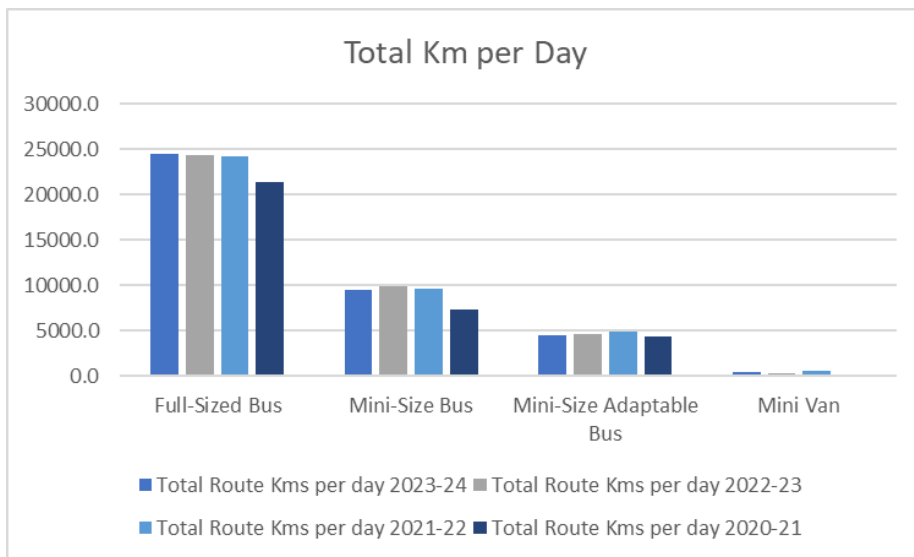
This table represents the average distance to school and to the bus stop by member board:

District ID	Average Distance to School (km)	Average Distance to Stop (km)
HWCDSB	4.51	0.25
HWDSB	4.19	0.19

c) Student Ride Time (minutes)



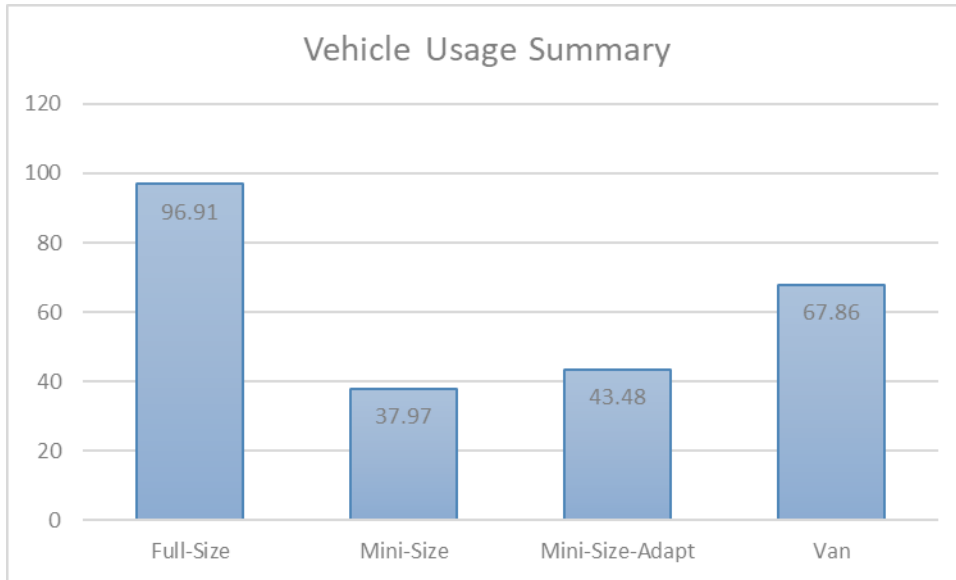
Route Distance Summary



Vehicle Utilization

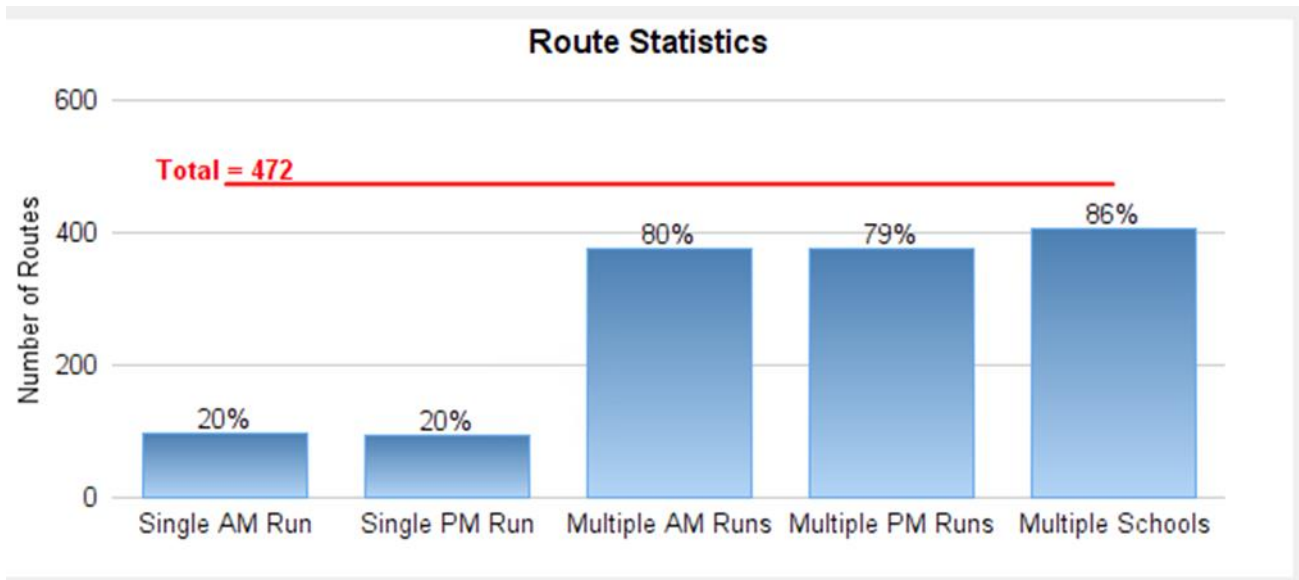
The vehicle utilization percentage indicates how efficiently each vehicle type is used. Full-sized buses continue to be leveraged for multiple schools, which promotes efficiency. Utilization rates on the other types of vehicles is lower due to the distance travelled to the program and/or the needs of the students.

The following graph outlines the vehicle usage categorized by each vehicle type:



Route Sharing and Vehicle Tiering

Tiering and route sharing are strategies used to optimize vehicle utilization by assigning a vehicle to multiple runs or sharing it across various school locations. The following graph shows the percentage of tiered or shared routes, comparing single dedicated routes to those servicing multiple schools.



Types of Vehicles Used

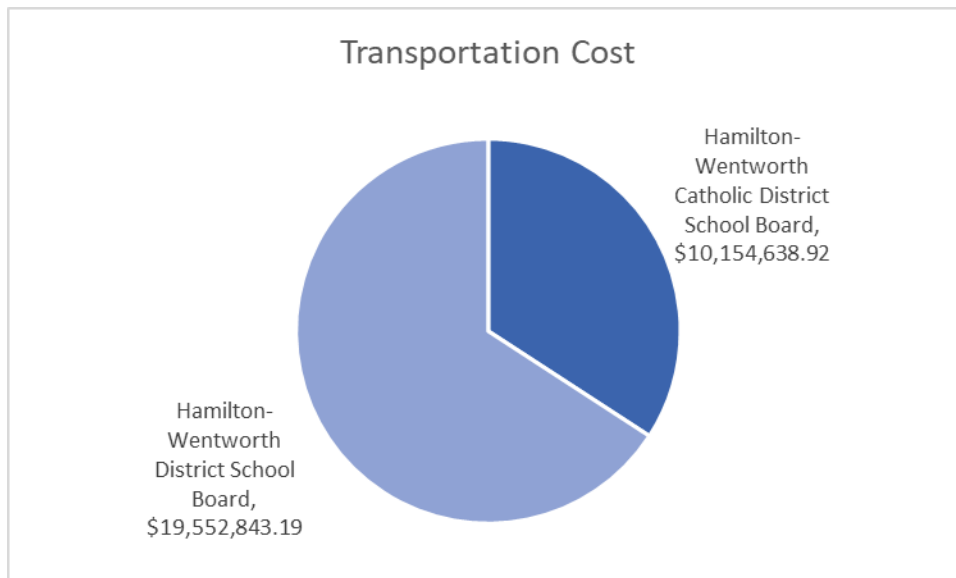
HWSTS utilizes a range of vehicle types to deliver effective and efficient student transportation while accommodating specialized solutions for students with unique needs. The vehicle classes may vary annually depending on the geographic distribution and requirements of students. Additionally, adjustments to the vehicle mix may be required during the school year to address evolving student needs.

Route Vehicle Class	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22
Full-Size	283	283	283
Mini-Size	113	113	115
Mini-Size-Adaptable	72	72	70
Mini-Van	4	4	4
	472	472	472

Transportation Costs per Board

The total cost of transportation, excluding any administration costs for 2023-24 was \$29,707,482.11

The chart below illustrates the 2023-24 costs per member board.



Objectives and Initiatives for 2024-25

During the upcoming 2024-25 school year, HWSTS anticipates continuing its commitment to delivering valuable support and services to both member Boards. While sustaining a dedicated focus on operational excellence, the HWSTS team will prioritize the following objectives:

- Piloting applications associated with GPS technology, including automated bus status/delays, parent applications, and student ridership tracking, among other functionalities.
- Work through new Ministry simulations and reporting.
- Collaborate with our schools and operators to develop effective strategies for student behaviour management.
- Continue to develop an Opt-In registration process.
- Preparing to reintroduce the CAA Safety Patroller program in the fall of 2025.
- Transition from paper-based incident/accident reports to digital, fillable forms online.
- Explore new safety initiatives aimed at ensuring the safest transportation for students in the Hamilton-Wentworth area.