



2025-2026

# Transportation Accountability Report



Report to the Board of Education  
School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay)  
Reviewed and Approved March 10, 2026



# School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) Transportation Accountability Report 2025-2026

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# School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) Transportation Accountability Report 2025-2026

## District Information

School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) (the “District”) respectfully honours and acknowledges that we live, work, and learn on the traditional territories of the Ktunaxa peoples and the chosen home of the Rocky Mountain Métis. The footprint of our School District is fully contained within the Ktunaxa Nation, including the communities of ʔaq'am and Yaq'it ʔa·knuq'i'it.

The District is located in the southeast corner of the province of British Columbia. Our region features spectacular mountain scenery, clean lakes, forested hillsides, and an abundance of wildlife. With an approximate population of 36,000, most people live in the communities of Cranbrook, South Country (Baynes Lake, Grasmere, Elko, Galloway and Jaffray), Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford.

The District serves approximately 5,900 students in 16 neighbourhood schools (10 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 4 secondary schools); Kootenay Discovery School (KDS); Kootenay Education Services (KES); and the Kootenay Learning Campus (KLC), the Continuing Education program. Approximately 2,517 students are transported on 25 bus routes.

The Transportation Department provides financial transportation assistance to parents, whose children are eligible to receive transportation, where bussing is not available. This enhances the connection to these families' schools and to the District. The District also strives to create a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment and currently has two accessible bus routes in Cranbrook and one accessible route in the Elk Valley.

A transportation agreement has been developed in collaboration with both of our Indigenous communities to adjust our school bus routes to enhance the service level for our Indigenous students. The Transportation Department is active in the creation and implementation of the transportation plan with respect to the BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), providing extracurricular access to our on-reserve Indigenous students.

As part of the District's commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, the District fleet includes four electric buses.

The Transportation Department's priorities are student safety, fiscal responsibility, ridership, school viability and parent satisfaction.

The Transportation Department is guided by the District's Mission Statement which is to empower every student to graduate with dignity, purpose and options as stated in the [Strategic Plan 2024-2028](#). The Transportation Department is also specifically guided by the [Board Policy Handbook and Administrative Procedures](#).



## Transportation Highlights

-  All bus drivers have Level One (1) first aid certification (renewed every three years);
-  The District had purchased [Transfinder](#) software, however, this project has been halted, and Canadian-based options are being reviewed to best modernize the Transportation Department processes.
-  The District operates 25 bus routes (12 in the Cranbrook Area, 13 in the Elk Valley) that carry 2,517 students (2023/24 – 2,425) safely over 2,652 kilometers each day with an average one-way rider time of 56.5 minutes. The District also carries 29 Students from School District No. 93 (Conseil Scolaire Francophone);
-  Communication regarding bus route changes, delays or cancellations is done through School Messenger. School Messenger is an effective communication tool that allows the District to send emails and SMS messages directly to parents for real-time transportation updates.

## Transportation Data

The following tables provide valuable information on the District's overall transportation operations:

<b>Transportation Fact Summary</b>	<b>Elk Valley</b>	<b>Cranbrook</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of students transported	1,447	1,070	2,517
Number of transportation routes	13	12	25
Number of buses (including spares)	20	16	36
Route kilometres traveled each day	1,416	1,341	2,757
Number of field trips per year (2023/24)	704	1,156	1,860
Number of field trips per year (2024/25)	816	1,409	2,225
Fuel costs per kilometre (\$/km)	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.75
Bus Field Trip Charge Back	\$34.00/Hr	\$34.00/Hr	\$34.00/Hr

*Table 1-Fact Summary*

<b>Transportation Department Staff</b>	<b>Elk Valley</b>	<b>Cranbrook</b>	<b>Total</b>
Director of Operations	-	-	1
Assistant Managers of Operations	1	1	2
CUPE Support Staff (10 hours/week)	1	1	2
CUPE Mechanics (including Apprentices)	2	2	4
CUPE Regular Bus Drivers	13	12	25
CUPE Spare Bus Drivers	6	8	14

*Table 2-Staffing*



## Fleet Management and Operations

The Board of Education of School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay) continues to apply for provincial grants for new buses each year. The current fleet is comprised of 32 diesel buses and 4 electric buses. The electric buses are being utilized on longer bus routes to reduce fuel costs.

The District has joined the Association of School Transportation Services of British Columbia (ASTSBC) group to help sell generated Carbon Tax credits. The District generated 18 carbon credits in 2024. ASTSBC has been able to function as an aggregator on behalf of all BC schools and school districts operating electric buses. This has allowed ASTSBC to manage the data input, collection and selling of credits. The District has saved approximately \$31,950 in diesel, and 60,153 kg in CO2 emissions with the 4 electric buses (when compared to 4 diesel buses).

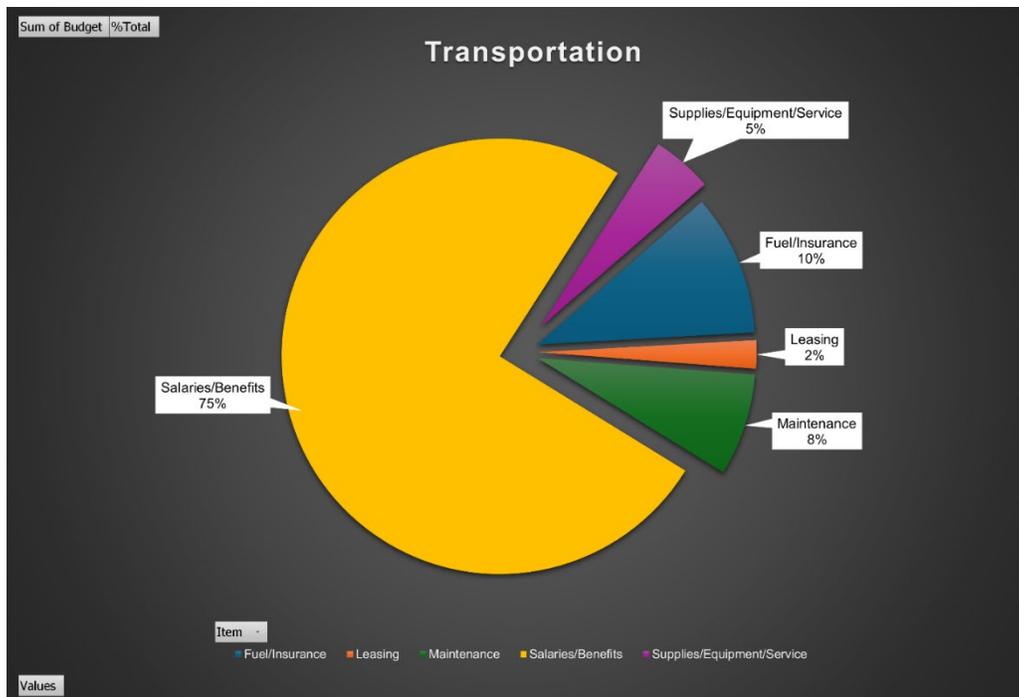
The electrical infrastructure upgrade at the Cranbrook Bus Shop will be completed in summer of 2026. This will help accommodate more electric and hybrid vehicles. The District has been approved for rebates from Hydro and ZETF funding. Funding has also been approved for the Elk Valley electrical vehicle infrastructure upgrade at the Fernie Maintenance Shop which is under way.

## Fleet Maintenance

District CUPE Mechanics perform the bus fleet maintenance. Scheduled maintenance includes lube and inspection every 1,500 kilometers and oil changes every 10,000 kilometers.

## Transportation Budget

The total Transportation Department budget for 2024/25 was \$2,369,560 (2023/24 - \$2,336,782). The breakdown of budget expenditures is shown in the chart below:





*Chart 1-Transportation Budget*

## District Transportation Challenges

The disruption to Amy Woodland Elementary School after the fire on June 30, 2024, continues to have a significant impact on students and staff in Cranbrook. There were over 240 students in the Amy Woodland Elementary catchment area that were displaced due to the fire in addition to a total of 40 teaching, exempt, and CUPE staff. This created increased barriers for these students now requiring transportation to school and after-school child care.

The District continues to work closely with the Ministry on possible solutions and next steps to ensure the future needs of Cranbrook students are met. The Transportation Department remains committed to providing transportation to the impacted students in this area, where required.

The District previously faced financial challenges in managing transportation expenses (capital, fuel, and maintenance costs). For example, a standard diesel bus tailored to our needs in our geographic region, had an average cost of approximately \$335,000 whereas electric buses cost approximately \$520,000 (\$381,000 after ZETF grants) that were significantly in excess of Provincial funding amounts received to purchase buses. However, starting in 2024/25, the Ministry of Infrastructure will be providing full funding for all new Type C bus purchases which will alleviate significant capital cost pressures the District was facing when purchasing new buses.

It is important to note that the District lost four buses due to cracked frames as part of annual inspections completed near the end of the 2024/25 school year. The District was required to lease four buses to replace these at an annual cost of approximately \$150,000. These costs are required to be expended out of general operating funds and are not funded from the Provincial capital funds.

The Transportation Department continues to review school charge costs for transportation requests. Currently, fuel and driver's time is being accounted for but maintenance costs are not. The impacts of this change are being considered at a District level to avoid any unintended consequences, such as reducing a school's ability to provide transportation for field trips.

Accommodating student accessibility is a priority for the Transportation Department, however this is an ongoing challenge in the Elk Valley. As part of the 2023/24 minor capital plan, the District applied for funding for an Accessible Bus in the Elk Valley. This accessible bus is now operating in Elkford and supports other accessibility requests in the Elk Valley.

The driver recruitment plan launched in 2023, continues to be successful, resulting in an adequate number of available drivers (full time and casual).

## Summary

The Transportation Department of the District continue to support the Priorities identified in the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning and the Strategic Plan through the transparent allocation of resources for instruction, efficient and effective communication, and understanding that all employees of the District are responsible for the success of students.