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April 12, 2024

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
5th Flr, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8
Via email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Lecce,

I am writing on behalf of the Thames Valley District School Board to request Province of Ontario Education funding for one or both public transportation pilot projects the board has been exploring with the City of London and the City of St. Thomas.

Student access to municipal transportation has many potential benefits. Students would experience greater independence and increased access to cooperative education locations, employment and volunteer opportunities, as well as extracurricular experiences before and after school. Moreover, we believe these projects could boost secondary school attendance, thereby increasing credit accumulation, student achievement and graduation rates – all goals of our Student Achievement Plan.

As you know, this is a particularly challenging budget year for TVDSB. We have explored funding options with our municipal partners and we know that additional funding is necessary to pursue one or more of the above projects.

We are optimistic that our goal to establish one or more pilot projects to make best use of resources is one that you support and that there are options at the province's disposal to support the implementation of one or both viable pilot projects this year.

The Board is eager to continue conversations about these exciting opportunities with you and/or your Ministry of Transportation colleagues. At the time of this letter, we have also reached out to our municipal partners with the proposals, outlined in brief below, for their consideration.

Proposal 1 – City of London Municipal Transit Pilot Project

This project would provide City of London bus passes at no cost to students of Clarke Road Secondary School entering Grade 9. These passes would be effective September 2024 and be provided for two school years.

The cost provided by London Transit Commission (LTC) to run this pilot would be approximately \$164,000 per school year (or ten months) at the regular student transit rate. This is the cost of buying bus passes for all Grade 9 students at Clarke Road Secondary School.

Proposal 2 – City of St. Thomas Municipal Transit Pilot Project

The second pilot project would provide students entering grade nine at all TVDSB St. Thomas high schools with a municipal bus pass at no additional cost to students. These passes would also be effective September 2024 and provided for two school years.

St. Thomas – Railway City Transit (RCT) has analysed the data and projects the cost to be approximately \$300,000. This is because RCT requires additional buses to provide this service.

We look forward to speaking with you further about these initiatives and how we can best support student success in new, innovative, effective, and efficient ways.



Beth Mai
Chair of the Board
Thames Valley District School Board

cc: Mark Fisher, Director Fisher Trustees
Student Trustees
City of London Mayor Josh Morgan
City of St. Thomas Mayor Joe Preston