

# RENFREW COUNTY JOINT TRANSPORTATION CONSORTIUM

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To all concerned;

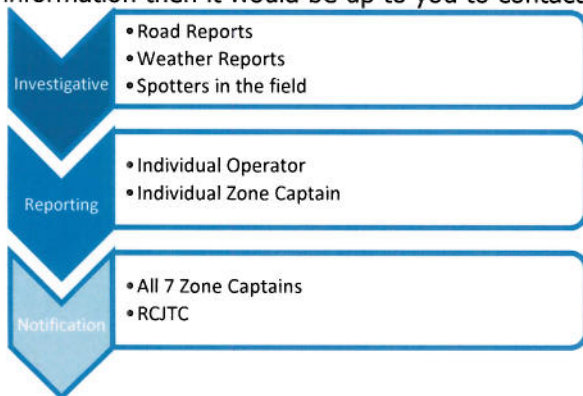
**Re:** Cancelling buses a judgement call.....

As residents of Canada, especially here in Eastern Ontario, I believe the single most talked about subject is the weather. A favorite saying amongst Canadians is: If you don't like the weather, don't complain. Wait 15 minutes and it will change.

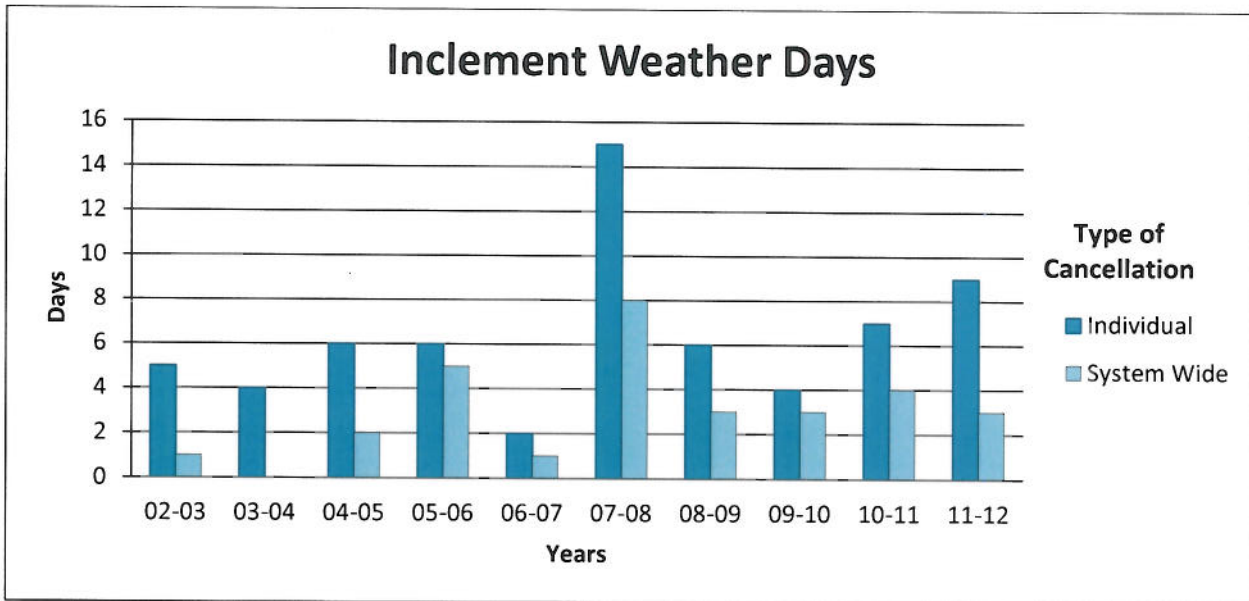
If you agree with me, you can appreciate the dilemma that the Renfrew County Joint Transportation Consortium faces every winter. Add to this the vast area the Consortium services and it becomes very clear that there is no "one size fits all" solution when it comes to weather conditions and their impact on school transportation. That is why on any given day, the bussing of students in Zone 1 Deep River may or may not be the same as the bussing of students in Zone 7 Arnprior, or any point in between. Given that the road conditions vary within each of the zones as there are various types of roads maintained at differing levels as well as response times, continually adds to the dilemma.

In fact, there is only one constant that is consistent throughout the Renfrew County Joint Transportation Consortium's jurisdiction - and that is our focus on SAFETY. We often claim we would err on the side of safety than push the envelope. We had always hoped that most parents would understand and appreciate the dilemma of making that decision. But, this has always brought about discussions as to what is or is not safe and is it a constant. It is a very real fact that our weather is so changeable that it makes it very difficult to predict. The weather we are facing right now can be different than what we might face 15 minutes from now, let alone predicting what may or may not happen 3 to 4 hours from now just for the morning routes alone.

The final decision to bus or not to bus is usually made shortly after 5:30am and every effort to have the notice posted to the web page before 6:00am. This usually allows stakeholders the time necessary to get the information and make appropriate plans. Does this always happen; No. Unfortunately due to the changing weather we sometimes have to make changes to our initial decision once we have had additional information or that information has changed entirely. So between 4:30am and 5:30am the operators take into consideration a variety of factors; weather reports from Environment Canada, road reports from Ministry of Transportation and local road crews and other key individuals living in those more remote areas giving timely firsthand accounts. When we post the information to our web site this allows all stakeholders (parents, schools, media, etc.) to get one consistent message. If your favorite media station is not broadcasting this information then it would be up to you to contact them and request they broadcast it.



History has shown us that once the decision to cancel has been made, it must remain in effect. Altering with that in any way is fraught with miscommunication and people not knowing what will or will not happen that morning and following into the afternoon. Hence why we continue to do this to this day and state that if transportation is cancelled it is cancelled for the whole day. We truly do recognize, although the students usually are very happy when a "snow day" is announced, parents are still in the throes of getting the family up and ready along with themselves fully realizing they must still go to work. Parents who choose to transport their children to and from school are still able to do so. Even when transportation is cancelled for the day, schools remain open and staff are still expected to report to work. If you choose to bring your child/children into school, you will be responsible for their return home after school. Additionally, when a decision to cancel is made, it will generally apply to all school transportation routes in the individual zone area. Hence why you may see some Zone 3 routes cancelled because they start out in Zone 4 and everything in Zone 4 is cancelled as an example. On average we have 6 Individual Zone cancellations every year and 3 System Wide cancellations each year.



-current as of January 31, 2012

To bus or not to bus? We will be faced with this question many more times in the future not only for this year but for the years to come. The decision, in most cases, will be a judgement call based on the best information at that time with input from a number of sources. No matter what the decision is, there will always be some who do not agree. What we hope we can agree on is that the decision was made with the safety of all the students in mind throughout this vast jurisdiction.

Respectfully,

Robert B. White  
General Manager