



# Renfrew County Joint Transportation Consortium

## Bus News

Winter 2010

Welcome to the second edition of the RCJTC "Bus Stop News". This newsletter is intended to keep stakeholders informed of all ongoing or upcoming operational items.

### **Staggered Bell Pilot Program**

Overall, September start up went well, with very few concerns expressed by stakeholders considering the magnitude of change in the Pembroke, Petawawa, and Deep River schools. There have been a few modifications, five minutes either way to the bell times at the school, to original start/end times. Thank you to all of the Pilot area stakeholders for your cooperation with this successful implementation.

In order to evaluate the pilot program, the RCJTC Governance Committee has developing criteria to be used to provide a report to the respective Boards in March, 2010. The decision is likely to be released in late April, 2010 of whether to extend the staggered bell program.

### **Cell phones (Ontario Regulation 366/09 made under the Highway Traffic Act)**

It's now the law - the use of hand-held cell phones and other wireless devices while driving is prohibited in Ontario. The new distracted driving law makes it illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cell phones and other hand-held communications and entertainment devices. Hands-free use of these devices will still be permitted.

Ontario's ban on hand-held devices while driving has taken effect on October 26, 2009.

The new law will make it illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cell phones and other hand-held communications and entertainment devices.

Please ensure all drivers are using hands free devices while using cell phones. If you are driving with students in the vehicle and need to place or receive an emergency call while using your hands free device it is strongly recommended that you still need to pull over where it is safe and then send or receive that call.

Using a hands-free device is permitted as long as the device is: placed securely in or mounted to the motor vehicle so that it does not move while the vehicle is in motion and the driver can see it at a quick glance and easily reach it without adjusting his or her driving position. For example, it could be secured in a cell phone holster, placed in the vehicle's cup holder, or fastened to the dashboard. It should not be sitting unsecured on the passenger seat or dash.

Drivers caught using a hand-held device will be issued a \$155 ticket.

By January 1, 2013 drivers of commercial motor vehicles (school bus and taxi drivers), while engaged in the performance of their duties, while using a two-way radio will be under the same legislation. Therefore by January 1,



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2013, all operations must have a hands free application as outlined in the act or unless otherwise directed or subject to legislative change.

### **VIRGINIA TECH TEXTING STUDY VALIDATES SAFETY CONCERNS**

The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) just completed a study of truck drivers and light vehicle drivers as they drove, while texting, over nine million kilometers during an 18-month period. They discovered that while talking and listening *is* a distraction and an increased risk, texting increases the risk of an accident or near-accident by **23 times** over a non-distracted driver. Dialing, another significant distraction, registered 6 times more likely to cause an accident when compared with a non-distracted driver. The overarching conclusion is this: because driving is a visual task, anything that takes your eyes off the road increases the likelihood of an incident. Texting, the most egregious distraction, requires that individuals look at their phone for an average of 4.5 to 6 seconds. **In that time, driving at 80 kilometers per hour, a driver can travel the length of a football field (100m).**

Rich Hanowski, supervisor of the study, stated, "Compared with other sources of driver distraction, texting is in its own universe of risk."

And, texting has risen exponentially. A cell phone industry group reported that in December alone, 110 billion messages were sent by phone users. The danger of texting has been widely discussed and is increasingly regulated. Currently, 14 states ban texting, including California, Louisiana, Alaska and New Jersey.

Given the results of the study, VTTI recommends:

- Texting should be banned in moving vehicles for all drivers
- Because dialing, answering and other related tasks remove drivers eyes from the road, there is no substantial gain from using a headset cell phone over a hand held device. Only "voice activation" phone use is less risky than either of the other two.
- Cell phone use should be illegal for newly-licensed teenage drivers. VTTI asserts that according to their studies, teenage drivers are 4 times more likely to get into an accident.

### **Bill 157**

On June 1, 2009, the Ontario government passed Bill 157, the *Education Amendment Act (Keeping Our Kids Safe at School) 2009* which amends Part XIII (Behaviour, Discipline and Safety) of the *Education Act*. The Bill 157 provisions are scheduled to come into force on February 1, 2010. The Legislature's stated objective is to address reporting gaps between teachers, principals and parents about serious student incidents that could lead to suspension or expulsion. The Bill 157 amendments will make it mandatory to report violent incidents to the school principal. School principals will be required to notify the parents of students who are victims of serious incidents. The new provisions are the first of their kind in Canada and follow in the wake of a study from the Safe Schools Task Force which investigated gender-based violence, homophobia, and sexual harassment in Ontario schools.

### **REPORTING TO THE PRINCIPAL**

Under Bill 157, school bus drivers will be required to report to the principal, as soon as is reasonably possible, after becoming aware that a student may have engaged in any of the activities listed in subsections 306(1) or 310(1) of Part XIII of the *Education Act*. These activities, listed below, are those that result in a possible suspension or a possible expulsion, respectively.



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**Subsection 306(1) of the *Education Act*  
Activities leading to possible suspension**

- Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person.
- Possessing alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Being under the influence of alcohol.
- Swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority.
- Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the pupil's school or to property located on the premises of the pupil's school.
- Bullying.
- Any other activity that is an activity for which a principal may suspend a pupil under a policy of the board.

**Subsection 310(1) of the *Education Act*  
Activities leading to possible expulsion**

- Possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm.
- Using a weapon to cause or threaten bodily harm to another person.
- Committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring treatment by a medical practitioner.
- Committing sexual assault.
- Trafficking in weapons or in illegal drugs.
- Committing robbery.
- Giving alcohol to a minor.
- Any other activity that, under a policy of a board, is an activity for which a principal must suspend a pupil and, therefore in accordance with this Part, conduct an investigation to determine whether to recommend to the board that the pupil be expelled.

**School Bus Operators Association**

When or if the names and contact information for the committee members of the Renfrew County School Bus Operators Association change, the changes should be forwarded to Bob White at the RCJTC, 999 Cecelia St., Pembroke, ON K8B 1A4.



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