

Transportation Safety Net Questions and Answers Guidance

The purpose of this document is to provide districts with our best thoughts regarding the implementation of language in section 507 of the 2023–25 biennial budget.

(9)(a) \$13,000,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$13,000,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the superintendent to provide transportation safety net funding to school districts with a demonstrated need for additional transportation funding for special passengers. Transportation safety net awards shall only be provided when a school district's allowable transportation expenditures attributable to serving special passengers exceeds the amount allocated under subsection 2(a) of this section and any excess transportation costs reimbursed by federal, state, tribal, or local child welfare agencies.

(b) To be eligible for additional transportation safety net award funding, the school district must report, in accordance with statewide accounting guidance, the amount of the excess costs and the specific activities or services provided to special passengers that created the excess costs. The office of the superintendent of public instruction must request from school districts an application for transportation safety net funding. The office must submit to the office of financial management, and to the education and fiscal committees of the legislature, the total demonstrated need and awards by school district.

Q1 What is the timeline for application, notification, and payment of funds, if eligible?

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will use revenue and expenditure data from the 2022–23 school year to determine eligibility. Therefore, the sequence of events will not start until after OSPI receives that data. The tentative timeline is as follows:

- Application becomes available to districts December 15, 2023
- Application due to OSPI January 31, 2024
- OSPI processes applications to determine eligible awards February 1 through February 15, 2024.
- OSPI publishes list of funding recipients and amounts no later than February 20, 2024.
- Payments of funds will be part of the February 2024 apportionment process.



Q2 What is the definition of special passengers?

Special passengers or “transported special program students” are defined as McKinney Vento students, foster care students, and students with disabilities (who have transportation specifically listed as a related service) within a valid IEP.

Q3 What is the definition of demonstrated need?

Demonstrated need for additional funding is defined as the fiscal impact of providing to/from transportation to special program students above the STARS funding allocation, as well as reimbursements by federal, state, tribal, or local child welfare agencies are considered.

Q4 What data should districts now track separately as evidence of demonstrated need?

Districts must track the number of transported special program students and the total cost of transporting special program students separately for each of the three special passenger groups that are currently counted for reimbursement through STARS identified in Q2 above. This information will not be collected in the F-196 but will be critical information to refer to while filling out the template to request funds.

Q5 What is the definition of allowable transportation expenditures?

The School District Accounting Manual defines allowable transportation expenditures as those incurred by transporting pupils to and from school, including between locations in the district, during the school year.

Q6 If the district includes in its request reimbursement for students with disabilities, can it also include those costs in the district’s special education safety net request?

No. Districts should only pursue reimbursement under one of the two potential pathways. Districts cannot receive reimbursement for the same costs through two different sources.

Q7 What happens if the request for funds exceeds the \$13,000,000 provided in the state budget for this purpose?

OSPI will prorate school district requests so that each receives a proportionate share of the \$13,000,000.

Q8 How will per student cost for special program students be calculated?

The template provided will calculate the per student costs for each of the special passenger groups based on the information provided by the district within the template. The student count will be calculated as the total average number of students reported in STARS for the 2022-23 school year divided by two.

Q9 How will per student cost for basic riders be calculated?

The basic rider cost per student is calculated as total program 99 expenditures in the 2022–23 F-196 divided by the student count calculation as described in Q8 above.

Q10 Is there a mathematical expression of how to identify excess costs?

Total excess cost is calculated separately for each special student group. Excess costs equal the total cost of special program students in a designated category less the per student state allocation calculated as the funding provided on the 1026-A divided by annual average passengers.

Q11 When will OSPI notify districts if their application is approved, as well as how much funding they will receive?

OSPI will post an Excel spreadsheet no later than February 20, 2024, showing how much will be paid to each district that applied for transportation safety net funding.

Q12 When will funds be paid to school districts?

Funds will be paid to school districts in the February 2024 apportionment payment. If necessary, adjustments will be made in March 2024.

Q13 Are summer excess costs eligible for reimbursement with these funds?

No. The budget language says that costs in the application must include estimates through the end of the current school year. OSPI interprets that to mean the 180-day regular school year.

Q14 What revenue code will be assigned to these funds?

These funds are State General Funds and will be paid in full in Revenue 419902.

Q15 How will the expenditures of these funds be reported to OSPI?

Since these funds are reimbursement for expenditures reported, there will be no additional expenditure reporting specific to these funds required.

Q16 Will carryover/recovery rules apply to these funds?

This revenue will not be subject to recovery and cannot be carried over since it is provided specifically for the reimbursement of prior expenditures. The purpose of recovery is to collect unspent revenue from districts. This rationale does not apply in this situation.

Questions

If you have questions that were not addressed in this document, please email T. J. Kelly at thomas.kelly@k12.wa.us.