

Paula Blamey

Presentation for School District Public Opinion meeting:

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Paula Blamey and I am a PAC mom from Websters Corners Elementary School here in Maple Ridge. We currently have 57 riders in this school that take the school bus in from up to 10 km away, due to our large catchment. When I found out the severity of how crippling this would be for our school, considering 27% of our school depends heavily on this service, I started collecting stories. These particular families that use this bus service are full time working families, some with only one income, others with low income or disability that leaves them unable to drive their children in to school everyday. The more and more I looked into what type of impact cancelling the school buses involved, the more severe I realized it was. Some of our families forced to quit their jobs, up and move and others, well they only have one choice, and that is to send their children on a 2 hour walk to school. The biggest concern of all is the safety concern, our East end does not house proper side walks, and is regularly visited by dangerous wild life.

My question to you is, would you feel comfortable having your children as young as 7 walk to school in these conditions? Really ask yourself what options or choices these families have been given to keep their kids safe while accessing public education. There has been no conducive alternate arrangements made to help service this critical need, and while we all understand budget conditions are severe, taking away school buses in Maple Ridge due to our rural population even if small is taking away accessibility to education for these families. In one month time I have now collected 25 impact statements, stories, letters from our Maple Ridge families explaining the desperate circumstances that this decision will create for them. This is our families, our children, the future of our city, these concerns need to be addressed, and options created. The current busing system was costly and I believe we all can agree were run inefficiently here in Maple Ridge, so here I am pleading with you to please come together to create affordable options for these families. We need to know alternatively how much your willing to negotiate per child to subsidize to create a sustainable school busing system here in our district. The poll recently sent was a shock to parents given the raw costs of this service, this was even more disheartening because it is after tax dollars potentially spent on accessing public education, where no alternatives are available. Our rural residents pay taxes, but do not have the luxuries of city accessibility due to no viable transit, there needs to be a service to provide at the least access to their children s education.

I have made a copy of each of the impact statements I have collected, please take a moment to read through each of these families stories and concerns.