



STUDENT TRANSPORTATION OF EASTERN ONTARIO

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO) plays a vital role in ensuring the safe and efficient transportation of students across our region.

Beginning in 2006, the Ministry of Education began a process of reforming student transportation services, including a requirement for consortium delivery among school boards with shared geographies. Since then, STEO has been part of a strong, collaborative system, supported by dedicated drivers, transportation providers, and school boards working together to deliver efficient student transportation solutions.

The establishment of consortia remains a best practice. Consortia operations have been addressed by the Auditor General of Ontario a number of times, most recently in 2017, and the focus has been on integration of services in order to achieve efficiencies.

Recently, the Ministry of Education has implemented standardized criteria for student transportation across the province. Related funding changes, set to be fully implemented by the 2027–2028 school year, present both opportunities and challenges for STEO. Key concerns and current operational challenges include disparities in transportation experiences between rural and urban areas, rising operational costs, and ongoing vehicle and driver shortages.

In response to the Ministry’s transportation funding formula and the evolving landscape, we must adopt a fresh strategic approach to navigate these shifts. By revisiting our mission, vision, values, strategic, and operational priorities, we aim to solidify our role as a transparent, accountable, and efficient provider of student transportation services.

STEO’S STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

As STEO looks ahead, its Strategic Plan 2025-2028 lays the foundation for a forward-thinking approach to student transportation, ensuring services evolve to meet the changing needs of students, families, partners and our communities across Eastern Ontario. This plan will address the following priorities, which guide STEO’s commitment to delivering exceptional transportation services.



STEO is committed to ensuring the highest standard of student transportation services, fostering safety, excellence, and equitable access for eligible students across Eastern Ontario.

STEO'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028 PRIORITIES

This plan will address the following priorities, which guide STEO's commitment to delivering exceptional transportation services.



STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

Placing the safety and security of students at the core of all operations.



OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Driving efficiency, reliability, and innovation in service delivery.



SUSTAINABILITY

Incorporating responsible resource management to ensure a sustainable future for student transportation.



EQUITABLE ACCESS & INCLUSIVITY:

Ensuring transportation services are inclusive and accessible to all students while aiming to create a more inclusive, responsive, and community-oriented transportation service that reflects the unique needs of students across Eastern Ontario.



STUDENT WELL-BEING

Supporting the overall physical, emotional, and academic well-being of students.

This plan, developed collaboratively with our Task Force Team, including Board Trustees, is informed by a comprehensive landscape assessment, partner feedback, and environmental scanning. It serves as a roadmap for continuous improvement, innovation, and collaboration. By aligning with community needs and industry trends, STEO aspires to remain a leader in student transportation, fostering accountability, sustainability, transparency, and a high-quality experience for students and families.

FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION INTO OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND VISION

STEO's Strategic Plan 2025–2028 was developed through an inclusive and collaborative process, reflecting our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We recognized that the voices and perspectives of a broad range of collaborators were essential to crafting a strategic plan that is truly reflective of the community we serve. To this end, we actively engaged multiple groups, including school boards, transportation providers, community partners such as the Health Unit, the Diversity Advisory Coalition, and Green Communities, as well as students and families.

Our strategic planning process featured planning sessions with community partners, a public survey to gather feedback, and consultations with community partners. This inclusive approach ensured that our strategies not only address operational needs but also incorporate diverse perspectives, fostering equitable access to transportation services for services for eligible students, regardless of background or circumstance.

By integrating DEI principles into our planning, framework, and vision, we ensure that the implementation of our strategic goals remains focused on delivering inclusive and equitable services that meet the needs of every student in our care.









STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE TEAM

To ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to the development of the Strategic Plan 2025–2028, STEO formed a dedicated Strategic Planning Task Force Team. This task force was created specifically to lead and guide the strategic planning process, ensuring the alignment of organizational goals with the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

The team is composed of key members from both the STEO Team and the Board of Directors, representing a broad range of perspectives and expertise. By including these individuals in the task force, STEO was able to leverage deep operational knowledge, alongside strategic governance insights, ensuring a balanced and informed approach to decision-making throughout the planning process.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- 
Conducting a thorough review of STEO's mission, vision, values, and strategic focus areas
- 
Leading discussions on the implications of the new funding formula
- 
Collaborating with external partners, including community collaborators and consultants
- 
Ensuring transparency and accountability through engagement with the public and other key collaborators

Through their leadership, this task force played a critical role in guiding STEO toward a strategic plan that is both forward-thinking and grounded in the realities of our current operational environment.

WHO WE ARE



ABOUT STEO

Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO) is a transportation consortium whose member boards are the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO) and the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB). STEO is responsible for providing the safe, efficient and effective delivery of student transportation services to support the education of students in Ontario. STEO officially came together as a consortium on February 2, 2012.



SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

STEO provides transportation for approximately 30,000 students on over 600 vehicles, travelling over 100,000 kms daily, to over 150 sites and schools across Eastern Ontario.

- Strategic routing and bus stop allocation
- Hazard reviews
- Driver training initiatives
- Driver engagement strategies
- Student safety training
- Community safety awareness
- Route audits
- GPS and Mapping initiatives
- Contract and performance management



OUR COMMITMENT

We are a diverse group of collaborators, uniting to make a difference to families through heart-driven school transportation solutions. Our priority? Making sure that every child arrives at school safely.

OUR TRANSPORTATION TEAM ALSO COMMITS TO:

- Placing students and families at the heart of our services, prioritizing their well-being
- Adopting innovative approaches to improve processes and achieve better outcomes
- Embracing challenges with optimism and creativity
- Guiding our partners and communities as we navigate through change together
- Creating a happy place to come to work
- Doing what we say we are going to do, when we are going to do it
- Owning our mistakes and being accountable
- Ensuring that transportation solutions are fiscally responsible and support sustainability

STEO'S SERVICE MODEL

At the heart of STEO's story, are humans coming together for a common purpose. Back in 2012, transportation staff from CDSBEO and UCDSB came together through the creation of a unified consortium for the purpose of delivering efficient student transportation solutions for its coterminous school boards.

But something magical happens when humans join together to support families and to create safe spaces for students. STEO's original driving goals of safety and efficiency expanded and evolved, and a passion for meaningful service was born.

In 2024, STEO celebrated 12 years of creating safe spaces for students, employees, and the community. In that time, STEO has clarified our sense of purpose. With service and efficiency remaining the key underpinnings of our work, our vision has grown to the provision of a transportation service that keeps our most treasured resources safe, so that they may one day change the world with their stories.

This second chapter of STEO's story embraces our own unique identity while ensuring that the needs of our students, funders, and partners remain at the heart of our service.

STEO is an example of the power of a common purpose to unite people in the creation of a reality that exceeds its vision; to finding meaning in the mundane and creating magic in the everyday.



Working Together to Drive the Future

STEO'S SERVICE MODEL ROADMAP

STEO's service vision exemplifies the strength of collaboration to deliver impactful transportation solutions. By working closely together, we support students, families, and communities, transforming everyday moments into meaningful connections while ensuring safe and equitable transportation that keeps all collaborators engaged..



STEO'S VISION, MISSION, CORE VALUES AND STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS



CHARTING A NEW COURSE: REDEFINING STEO'S VISION, MISSION, AND CORE VALUES

Following a comprehensive analysis by our Task Force Team, STEO identified that our current mission, vision, and values statements do not fully align with the evolving funding and service model. Recognizing the importance of these foundational elements, we prioritized the review and update process to ensure our guiding statements accurately reflect STEO's updated goals and commitment to our community.

In early October 2024, we held a two-day work session dedicated to crafting the vision, mission, and core values that would best support our strategic objectives. This provided an invaluable opportunity to collaboratively examine and refine these statements, involving the feedback of key collaborators, team members and Board Trustees, in shaping an updated strategic direction for STEO. The result is a set of values and aspirations that align with the vision of the new funding model and underscore our commitment to high-quality transportation service delivery.

INTRODUCING STEO'S NEW VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES

We are proud to introduce STEO's newly defined vision, mission, and core values as part of our strategic plan. Our updated vision encapsulates our commitment to driving positive impact for our community, while our mission underscores our dedication to delivering exceptional, safe and efficient transportation services. Our core values, carefully crafted through collaboration, reflect the principles that guide our actions and decisions, ensuring that STEO remains aligned with the needs and aspirations of those we serve.

VISION

We strive to deliver sustainable services where innovation, transparency, and equity converge to ensure safe transportation, with students' well-being at the heart of every decision.

MISSION

We work together to support educational opportunities by providing safe, accessible, and reliable transportation solutions. Through our commitment to efficiency, equity, and innovation, we provide accountable transportation experiences while keeping families, schools, drivers, and the community informed and engaged.



CORE VALUES

- Open-Mindedness
- Creativity & Innovation
- Kindness & DEI
- Collaboration & Teamwork
- Transparency, Communication & Accountability
- Continuous Improvement & Service-Driven



STEO'S STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS:

The STEO Strategic Plan 2025-2028 outlines our vision for the future of student transportation in Eastern Ontario, anchored by four key strategic focus areas that serve as our guiding principles. These focus areas act as the guiding principles for our strategic objectives, aligning and guiding our actions and decisions as we prioritize students' needs, foster innovation, and collaborate with partners. Together, they lead us toward a more efficient and resilient transportation model that keeps students' well-being at the centre of every decision.



1. SAFETY

Upholding the highest standards, we prioritize the physical and emotional well-being of students and our community through the provision of safe spaces.



2. TRANSPARENCY

We strive to build trust through clear, open, and accessible communication and decision-making, ensuring our communities are informed and engaged.



3. INNOVATION

By embracing new ideas and technologies, we drive continuous improvement to enhance service quality, efficiency, and safety, with consideration to all collaborators.



4. SUSTAINABILITY

We are committed to responsible practices and resource management, fostering long-term resilience in student transportation services.

STEO'S STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



INTRODUCTION

As part of our strategic planning process and landscape assessment, STEO conducted extensive research to ensure our strategies are data-driven and aligned with current trends and needs. This research included a thorough analysis of industry benchmarks, emerging best practices, and relevant policy updates; partner engagement with school boards, transportation providers, and community partners for valuable insights and feedback; and a review of data on operational performance, financial trends, and community demographics to pinpoint key opportunities and challenges.

We employed a range of assessment tools, including SWOT Analysis, PEST Analysis, Public & Community Partners Survey, Environmental Changes Assessment, and Competitive Analysis, to gain comprehensive insights into our internal and external landscape.

The findings and recommendations in this strategic plan are grounded in this robust data, providing a solid foundation for strategic decisions that are forward-looking and responsive to the evolving needs of our collaborators and the communities we serve.

Below is an overview of the key research conducted for this strategic plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES ASSESSMENT

The research conducted by the Task Force Team on Environmental Changes Assessments highlighted key factors impacting both internal and external operational landscapes. Through a structured analysis, the team identified various challenges and opportunities influencing strategic decision-making. Internally, shifts in staffing, budget allocations, and technology upgrades were identified as areas requiring attention. Externally, the evolving regulatory environment, supply chain disruptions, and changes in industry standards were examined. The assessment underscores the need for proactive responses to ensure continued alignment with organizational goals and market conditions.

To view the results and data compiled from this research, please visit the following link: [\(web link here\)](#)



SWOT ANALYSIS & ASSESSMENT

The Task Force Team conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis to assess internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats.

This analysis provided a clearer understanding of key operational areas that could drive or hinder organizational success. Internally, the team examined factors such as service quality, staff expertise, and technological adaptability, identifying areas for improvement such as communication and succession planning.

Externally, the analysis highlighted both opportunities for innovation and partnerships, as well as potential risks, including resource limitations and regulatory changes. This SWOT framework enabled the team to align strategic priorities with both internal capabilities and external challenges.

IN ADDITION TO THE SWOT ANALYSIS, A DETAILED ASSESSMENT WAS CONDUCTED TO SYNTHESIZE THE ORGANIZATION'S STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS.

This assessment focused on identifying competitive advantages, addressing internal and external challenges, and highlighting key areas for improvement and innovation. By grouping similar themes across weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the Task Force Team was able to distill these findings into actionable insights. This comprehensive approach, building on both internal capabilities and external pressures, lays the groundwork for developing strategic goals aimed at addressing the organization's most pressing needs while leveraging its core strengths.

To view the results and data compiled from this research, please visit the following link: [\(web link here\)](#)



PEST ANALYSIS

As part of STEO's strategic planning process, the Strategic Focus Group Team conducted a comprehensive PEST (Political, Economic, Social, and Technological) analysis to better understand the external factors influencing student transportation. Politically, the team examined the impact of government policies, funding structures, and regulatory changes, particularly the Ministry of Education's new criteria for transportation.

ECONOMIC FACTORS INCLUDED RISING OPERATIONAL COSTS, FUEL PRICES, AND FUNDING DISPARITIES BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS.

The social dimension focused on demographic shifts, equity in access to transportation, and community expectations for safety and service quality. Lastly, the technological aspect assessed advancements in transportation technologies, including route optimization software, fleet modernization, and potential AI-driven innovations. This research provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities ahead, shaping STEO's forward-thinking and adaptable strategy.

To view the results and data compiled from this research, please visit the following link: [\(web link here\)](#)

REFERENCE COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

As part of STEO's strategic planning process, a reference competitors' analysis was conducted to benchmark our services against comparable organizations within the student transportation industry. A reference competitor refers to an organization that operates in a similar sector, facing comparable challenges, but may not be a direct competitor.

THIS ALLOWS FOR INSIGHTS INTO BEST PRACTICES, INNOVATIONS, AND STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE ADAPTED TO OUR UNIQUE CONTEXT.

In STEO's case, the analysis focused on other student transportation consortia, School Boards and the bus providers across the province, evaluating their approaches to operational efficiency, cost management, safety standards, and technological integration.

By understanding how these reference competitors address challenges such as driver shortages, route optimization, and funding changes, STEO is able to identify key opportunities for improvement and innovation, helping to shape a more competitive and forward-thinking strategy.

To view the full report and data from this research, please visit the following link: [\(web link here\)](#)

PUBLIC & COMMUNITY PARTNERS SURVEY

The public and stakeholder survey summarized in the report provided critical insights for strategic planning, particularly for the 2025-2028 period.



The survey was designed to gather feedback from key collaborators, including students, parents, school staff, bus company personnel, and community members, to better understand their experiences with the transportation services.

It focused on identifying challenges, opportunities for improvement, and potential areas for new initiatives. By analyzing themes such as safety, communication, reliability, and driver shortages, the survey data served as a foundational tool for establishing strategic objectives. These objectives aim to address partner concerns, improve service efficiency, and guide decision-making for enhancing school transportation services in the future.

To view the full report and data from this survey, please visit the following link: [\(web link here\)](#)



STEO'S 2025-2028 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



INTRODUCTION

The STEO 2025-2028 strategic objectives were developed based on comprehensive research data compiled in the landscaping assessment. These objectives are crafted to directly support our mission, vision, and strategic focus areas, aligning with STEO's commitment to advancing safety, service reliability, and community engagement. By addressing key operational priorities, these objectives will guide our efforts for the next three years to continuously improve transportation services while upholding our dedication to student well-being and as well as the satisfaction of our collaborators and community members.

Additionally, these objectives will serve as the foundation for establishing our business plan, defining tactics, and setting KPIs, ensuring that our strategic goals are effectively translated into measurable actions and outcomes.

Outlined below are the strategic objectives that will drive this commitment forward.



OBJECTIVE #1 FINANCIAL

Develop a comprehensive strategy and financial model to bridge the gap between Ministry funding and home-to-school transportation expenditures.

STRATEGY #1

Analyze and identify discrepancies between STEO and the Ministry of Education (MOE) funding formulas to ensure financial understanding. Collaborate closely with the MOE to navigate and adapt to the new funding model.

STRATEGY #3

Create and implement internal procurement processes that maximize resource efficiency, reduce waste, and support the transition to public procurement under the new funding model.

STRATEGY #2

Develop a comprehensive roadmap to help transition to a competitive procurement model for home to school transportation by the 2027/28 school year.

STRATEGY #4

Establish a comprehensive budget management strategy to optimize all operational and administrative costs at STEO, ensuring fiscal responsibility with the new funding model while supporting long-term sustainability.



OBJECTIVE #2

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Foster stronger public and family engagement by rolling out a clear and transparent communication strategy.

STRATEGY #1

Develop and execute a three-year communication and branding plan that prioritizes transparency making information accessible, as well as easy to understand and navigate.

STRATEGY #3

Collaborate with DEI partners to implement inclusive engagement strategies and ensure diverse representation for STEO's community members and families.

STRATEGY #2

Develop a roadmap that aligns with STEO's Service Model Philosophy as well as clearly define the role each partner plays in STEO's service delivery.

STRATEGY #4

Develop, monitor, and transparently share key performance indicators that demonstrate STEO's dedication to its service model roadmap and strengthen engagement among its collaborators.



OBJECTIVE #3

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

Strengthen leadership initiatives to maintain a consistent long-term vision and ensure a cohesive governance strategy.

STRATEGY #1

Identify clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability measures such as KPIs to drive effective execution of the strategic plan.

STRATEGY #3

Enhance transparent decision-making through direct communication between leadership and the Board while measuring progress with quarterly updates on implementation of strategic objectives.

STRATEGY #2

Develop a standardized and comprehensive onboarding process for new Directors that aligns with and supports the strategic plan.

STRATEGY #4

Develop and implement a governance strategy that strengthens Board collaboration, clarifies decision-making processes, incorporates regular policy reviews, and establishes clear protocols by 2028.



OBJECTIVE #4

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE & OPTIMIZATION

Optimize routing efficiency, reduce service disruptions, and address driver shortages through the implementation of solutions that support service continuity.

STRATEGY #1

Outline key milestones for addressing driver shortages while monitoring progress quarterly.

STRATEGY #3

Establish and form an Optimization Working Group with neighbouring consortia to identify and implement best practices in routing strategies and explore strategic partnership opportunities.

STRATEGY #2

Research and adopt optimization strategies to develop and implement innovative routing methods, aiming to improve routing efficiency and effectiveness.

STRATEGY #4

Develop key performance indicators to be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure continuous improvement. Implement corrective actions as needed to ensure sustained performance enhancements and achieve targeted goals.



OBJECTIVE #5

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY

Evaluate and integrate innovative technologies to enhance student safety protocols, improve bus route efficiency, and optimize operational performance.

STRATEGY #1

Build a culture of innovation by identifying and integrating cutting-edge strategies for student transportation.

STRATEGY #3

Collaborate with STEO partners to utilize data analysis and forecasting tools to support the planning and monitoring of transportation safety initiatives.

STRATEGY #2

Evaluate and launch pilot projects to test new technologies in safety, service, and route optimization.

STRATEGY #4

Launch a series of innovation workshops for STEO team members to generate new ideas and implement at least three strategies for routing effectiveness and safety by 2028.



OBJECTIVE #6

LEARNING & GROWTH

Design and implement a comprehensive learning and development strategy to engage and support STEO staff, bus companies and drivers.

STRATEGY #1

Build a culture of collaboration and learning by actively sharing best practices with other consortia to implement leading practices in student transportation.

STRATEGY #3

Identify and implement regular training opportunities for STEO staff; bus companies and drivers in service excellence and students' well-being.

STRATEGY #2

Strengthen community partnerships and collaboration by participating in training opportunities from existing partners.

STRATEGY #4

Provide ongoing DEI training to foster a culture of belonging, enhance representation, and reduce systemic barriers across the organization.



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