

Technical Guide: FY24 IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement

Tennessee Department of Education | June 2024

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Introduction

State Special Schools Transportation Reimbursement Request amounts vary annually based on funding availability, Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) flowthrough, discretionary carry-over, and other funding sources made available to LEAs.

IDEA State Special Schools Transportation Reimbursement Requests will be reimbursed as funding is available. For the school year 2023-24 (SY 2023-24), the department will reimburse approved requests at a percentage until funds are exhausted. This reimbursement request is not considered IDEA High Cost.

If an individual student reimbursement request meets the federal definition of IDEA High Cost, the LEA should utilize that reimbursement application. If requesting reimbursement, the LEA must choose either the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement Request or IDEA Part B High Cost Reimbursement Request for the special needs student, with assurances that only one application is being utilized for SY 2023-24.

IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursements for these general purpose special education expenditures will affect the LEA's Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and this impact <u>must be considered by the LEA before applying</u>. Each LEA must ensure they have enough special education expenditures for SY 2023-24 without the application's expenditure amount being requested through the State Special Schools reimbursements request process.

The State Special Education Expenditure Report (SSEER) cannot include transportation expenditures that have been reimbursed from IDEA funds. If the LEA's total state and local special education expenditures after deducting the potential reimbursement amount is not enough to meet the MOE compliance test, the LEA should not apply for transportation reimbursement.

For example, if the LEA's FY2024 SSEER expenditures will be \$2,500,000 before the transportation reimbursement, and their FY2023 MOE expenditure total was \$2,250,000, then the LEA could not submit more than \$250,000 special education transportation expenses for reimbursement.

The Tennessee State Special Schools are the West Tennessee School for the Deaf in Jackson, Tennessee School for the Blind in Nashville, and the Tennessee School for the Deaf locations. Students attend State Special Schools by placement via Individual Education Program (IEP) team decisions. The LEA is responsible for the cost of transportation for the student to attend these schools. These costs may include bus transportation, transportation by parent, and associated costs of transportation by general purpose funds and not already paid for by an existing TDOE contract.

The percentage of reimbursement for IDEA State Special School Transportation will be determined based on the available money in the state set-aside discretionary pool for the respective school year and the total amount approved by all LEAs for this request. Approval will be determined after a review of the IEP(s) and the required supporting documentation for eligible transportation expenditures.

The FY24 State Special School (SSS) Transportation Reimbursement tool can be accessed through the Tennessee Department of Education's online grants management platform, <u>ePlan.tn.gov</u>.

ePlan User Access

All users must have the correct ePlan user access role to access and complete the FY24 IDEA SSS Transportation tool. Users with existing ePlan access can verify current user access roles in the Address Book. To view existing access, visit <u>ePlan</u> and navigate to the **Address Book** and **LEA Role**.

New ePlan users and existing ePlan users who need to request a User Access role must request the additional role using the appropriate *ePlan User Access Form*. Access the form by navigating to <u>ePlan > TDOE Resources</u> > 1. User Access Forms and select the correct form according to organization type, or click on the link below:

ePlan User Access Form for LEAs

Users do not need to log in to ePlan to access *TDOE Resources* in ePlan. Follow the instructions on the *User Access Form*, then email the completed form to ePlan.Help@tn.gov to request additional access roles. User access requests may take up to two business days to process. Users will receive an email reply when access has been granted.

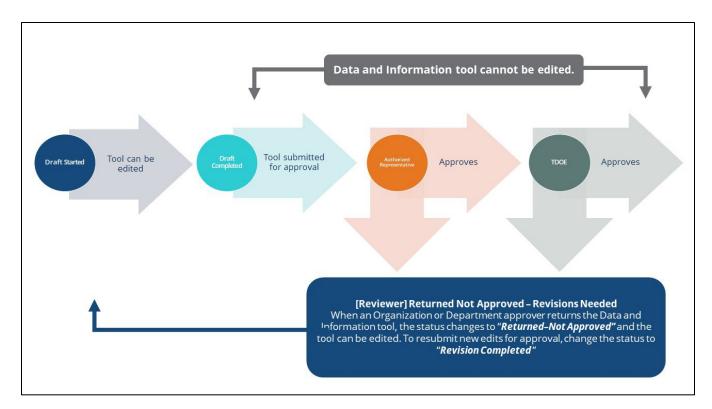
IDEA Directors who had existing roles in ePlan prior to July 2024 were grandfathered in with the new IDEA High-Cost role.

Workflows

Below are the roles and the order of the workflow steps for the data and information process. These roles and the workflow may vary slightly for specific programs.

ePlan Role	ePlan Function
LEA IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement Director	Click Draft Started (or Revision Started for revisions) Respond to questions, upload files, etc.
LEA IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement Director	Click Draft Completed (or Revision Completed for revisions)
LEA Authorized Representative	Click LEA Authorized Representative Approved
(Director of Schools)	(or LEA Authorized Representative Not Approved)
TDOE IDEA State Special School	Click TDOE IDEA State Special School Transportation
Transportation Reimbursement	Reimbursement Consultant Reviewed
Consultant Reviewed	(or TDOE IDEA State Special School Transportation
(Department project consultants)	Reimbursement Consultant Returned)
TDOE IDEA Transportation Reimbursement Director (Department project directors)	Click TDOE IDEA Transportation Reimbursement Director Approved (or TDOE IDEA Transportation Reimbursement Director Returned Not Approved)

After each status change, ePlan automatically sends a notification email to all users in the LEA who have the ePlan role in the next step in the process. High-Cost reimbursements cannot be allocated to the LEA until approval is received from the TDOE Program Director. This approval status means there is a potential to pay submissions requested by the LEA.



ePlan Data and Information Tool

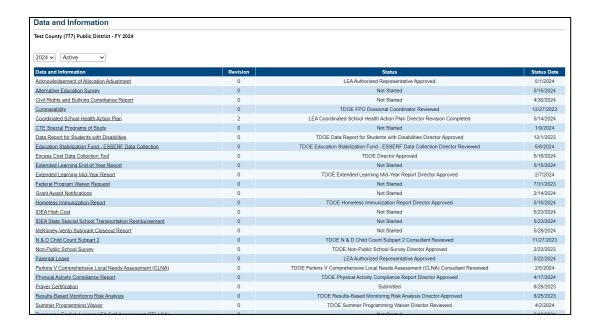
Accessing the Data and Information Tool

To navigate to applications from the ePlan homepage, click the **Data and Information** tab on the left menu bar.

NOTE: For users with ePlan roles for multiple organizations, return to ePlan home to select the correct organization before proceeding to Data and Information.



Select the desired fiscal year from the dropdown in the upper left corner of the screen. Data and information tools are stored in ePlan according to the state fiscal year (i.e., 2024 indicates the 2023–24 school year). Click on the <u>Data and Information</u> tool name link: **IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement** to access the tool. The **IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool will be in the Fiscal Year 2024.**

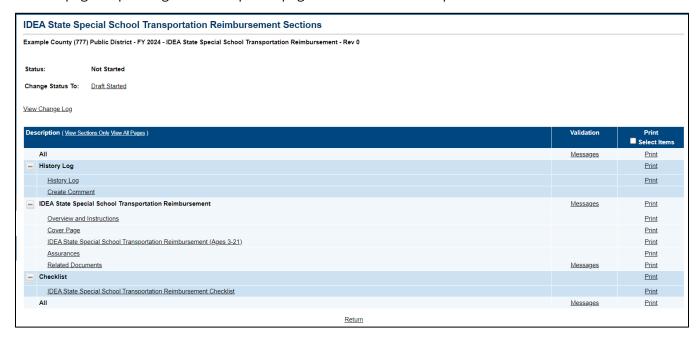


The IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool loads to the <u>Sections</u> page. To begin completing the tool, next to **Change Status To:** click on **Draft Started**.



IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement Section Pages

The <u>Sections</u> page lists all the available sections and pages within the FY24 IDEA SSS Transportation tool. The <u>Sections</u> page helps navigate to the specific pages which must be completed.



Change Log

The *Change Log* may be accessed on the main sections page of the IDEA High-Cost tool. It lists every change or update since the previous status. This helps users identify changes that have been made to the IDEA High-Cost tool since they last viewed it. More information about the *Change Log* is available in the ePlan User Manual.



History Log and Create Comment

The *History Log* contains a record of status changes and comments made on the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool. ePlan users may want or need to create a comment in an ePlan IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool for one of the following reasons:

- To explain a part of the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool history.
- To provide information that a user cannot add to the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool due to the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement current status (users can only edit data and information tools that are in a *Draft Started* or *Revision Started* status.)

ePlan creates a running record of all comments. Any comment created and saved in the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement will always be available as a part of its history log.

To add a Comment in the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool:

- 1. Navigate to the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement's main <u>Sections</u> page.
 - To navigate to the main IDEA High-Cost tool page from other pages in the IDEA SSS
 Transportation Reimbursement tool, click **Go To** and **Sections** as shown and highlighted below
- 2. Select **Create Comment** from under the *History Log* on the main section page as highlighted in the screenshot below to navigate to the *Create Comment* page.
- 3. On the *Create Comment* page, type your comment in the box.
- 4. If desired, a hyperlink can be inserted in a comment by clicking the hyperlink icon.
- 5. To send an email notification of this comment to recipients, check the box next to **Send Email to ePlan Contacts** below the main comment box.
 - Sending an email notification is not required to create the comment.
 - If no email notification is needed, click **Save and Go To** to exit the page. The comment is now a part of the IDEA High-Cost tool *History Log* for everyone to view.
- 6. **To send an email notification:** Select the recipients to receive notification of the comment from the lists provided and then click **Add**.

Available Contact Groups

LEA Contacts by Funding Application

Available if a contact is selected on the application's contact page. Not all funding applications have contacts on the contact page.

LEA Contacts by Role	Current users with the applicable role
Other LEA Contacts	Additional contacts for an LEA
TDOE Contacts	State users that can complete various ePlan functions.
TDOE Miscellaneous Contacts	Lists every State ePlan User by name
Additional Recipients	Allows you to type in any additional email addresses manually

- It is a good practice to send a copy of your comment to yourself to let you know when the message has been delivered.
- 7. The *Recipient Summary* shows who will receive the email.
- 8. Clicking **Save And Go To** will send the comment notification.
- 9. Comments with email notifications can be accessed from the *Inbox* on your ePlan tab in addition to the *History Log* of the IDEA High-Cost tool. Additional information about Inbox functionality in ePlan is available in Troubleshooting, *Inbox*.

Overview and Instructions

The overview and instructions page explains the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement process and provides instructions for completing the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement in ePlan.

IDEA State Special Schools Transportation Reimbursement Reguest 2023-24

State Special Schools Transportation Reimbursement Request amounts vary annually based on funding availability, LEA flowthrough, discretionary carry-over, and other funding sources made available to LEAs.

The disbursement of IDEA State Special Schools Transportation Reimbursement Requests will be reimbursed as funding is available. For the school year 2023-24, the department will reimburse approved requests at a percentage until funds are exhausted.

This reimbursement request is not considered IDEA High Cost. If an individual student reimbursement request meets the federal definition of IDEA High Cost, the LEA should utilize that reimbursement application. The LEA must choose either the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement Request or IDEA Part B High Cost Reimbursement Request for the special needs student with assurances that only one application is being utilized for SY 2023-24.

IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursements for these general purpose special education expenditures will affect LEA maintenance of effort and must be considered by the LEA before applying. The LEA will need to assure they have enough special education expenditures for SY 2023-24 without the application's expenditure amount.

Eligible Category Defined

The Tennessee State Special Schools are the West Tennessee School for the Deaf in Jackson, Tennessee School for the Blind in Nashville, and the Tennessee School for the Deaf locations. Students attend State Special Schools by placement via Individual Education Program (IEP) team decisions. The LEA is responsible for the cost of transportation for the student to attend these schools. These costs may include bus transportation, transportation by parent, and associated costs of transportation paid by general purpose funds and not already paid for by an existing TDOE contract.

The percentage of reimbursement for IDEA State Special School Transportation will be determined based on the available money in the state set-aside discretionary pool for the respective school year and the total amount approved by all LEAs for this request. Approval will be determined after a review of the IEP(s) and the required supporting documentation for eligible transportation expenditures.

Resources

Click here to open the technical guide.

Cover Page

The <u>Cover Page</u> requires LEAs to enter general organization information and contact information for the IDEA High-Cost program points of contact. Once all fields are complete, hover over the **Save And Go To** button and click on **Sections** to return to the <u>Sections</u> page.

Local Educational Agency Details
* LEA Number
* LEA Name
IDEA State School Special Transportation Reimbursement Point of Contact
* IDEA State School Special Transportation Reimbursement Point of Contact Name
* IDEA State School Special Transportation Reimbursement Point of Contact Email Address
* IDEA State School Special Transportation Reimbursement Point of Contact Phone Number
Resources
Click here to open the technical guide.

IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement (Ages 3-21) Page

When applying for State Special Schools Transportation reimbursement, LEAs will utilize the application in ePlan and provide all documentation to support the reimbursement request.

Allowable expenditures for determining reimbursement for State Special Schools Transportation must be found in the IEP for the school year date range:

• Special transportation to/from a Tennessee State Special School

Tennessee Department of Education State Special Schools include Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB), Tennessee School for the Deaf (TSD), and West Tennessee School for the Deaf (WTSD).

Non-allowable expenditures for the FY24 State Special Schools Transportation Reimbursement Request:

Expenditures for expenses other than those related to transportation cost

If there are considerable costs other than transportation when submitting the student and can be directly attributable, then it may be better to seek reimbursement outside this application. LEAs can request IDEA high-cost reimbursement for these IEP placed students if the student also meets having enough direct general purpose expenditures of three times the state's average per pupil expenditures of \$35,400.24. These must be costs associated with the students placed in state special schools not already paid by the state. If requesting reimbursement, the LEA must choose either the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement Request or the IDEA Part B High Cost Reimbursement Request for the special needs student, with assurances that only one application is being utilized for the high-need student for SY2023-24. Disapproval of the submission will occur if this student is also in the IDEA High-Cost FY24 application.

When applying SSS Transportation Reimbursement, LEAs will be not be capped at the number of student submissions. The reimbursement percentage amount paid for the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement will be determined based on the available money in the state set-aside discretionary pool for the respective school year and the total amount approved by all LEAs requesting approvable amount. Approval will be determined after a review of the IEP(s) and the required supporting documentation for eligible transportation expenditures.

For each IDEA Special State School student, provide the following:

- State Student ID
- Student DOB
- State Special School
- The Disability/ies documented on the student's IEP
- The IEP date(s) for the services provided in Related Documents
- Documentation of total General Purpose expenditures incurred by the LEA (for up to five services)
 - The Service types
 - The Service frequency
 - o The Service time period
 - The Service expenditure

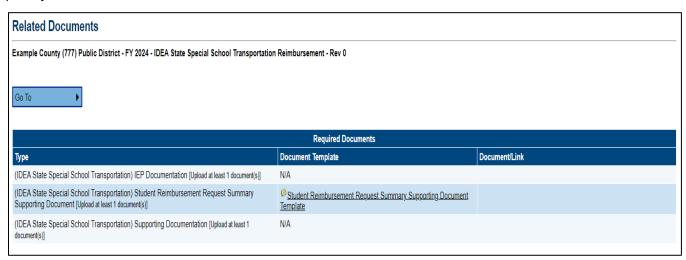
Please enter what is the most appropriate expense type by travel expense description. Then enter the expenditure amount for each student for each type.

For the supporting documentation template page that summarizes the general purpose direct expenditures, the LEA must use the appropriate provided tab (SSS Transportation Request) to help summarize their supporting financial documentation. Fill out the tab to help summarize the associated direct transportation costs for the student submission. The template provides examples of how it can be filled out. After submission, a review will be done utilizing the IEP(s), Supporting Document Template Page, and Supporting Documentation in order to verify all requested reimbursements for expenditures. Failure to provide adequate documentation can result in denial or partial award of a LEA's qualifying reimbursement amount for the high-cost student.

Note: There should be three uploads for each student submission in the related documents.

Related Documents

The **Related Documents** pages allow users to upload external related documents. For each priority category where the LEA seeks reimbursement, the LEA must upload supporting documentation for each service for each student. *Include the IEP service page(s), with personal identifiable information (PII) redacted, as part of the documentation submitted.*



A Student Reimbursement Request Supporting Document Template is provided on this page.

• Download this template to use for each LEA student submission.

For each state special school transportation reimbursement student, submit the following:

- One (1) pdf document for IEP Documentation to include all of the following, in this order:
 - o IEP(s) cover page- personal identifiable information (PII) redacted and state student ID included
 - o IEP(s) services pages- covering the entire school year; PII redacted and state student ID included on each page; if there are multiple IEPs, include them, in chronological order.
- One (1) document utilizing the IDEA Reimbursement Request Supporting Document Template provided:
 - One template per student must be provided with the summary of the general purpose direct expenditures found in the financial supporting documentation.
- One (1) pdf document for Supporting Documentation to include:
 - o Financial supporting documentation with student PII redacted and state student ID included on each page.

Documents should be saved as

o [Student's Initials][State Student ID number][School Year][IEP]

Example: "BP 1234567 2023-2024 IEP"

o [Student's Initials][State Student ID number][School Year][SUMMARY] Example: "BP 1234567 2023-2024 SUMMARY"

o [Student's Initials][State Student ID number][School Year][SUPDOC] Example: "BP 1234567 2023-2024 SUPDOC"

To upload Related Documents:

- Click the **Upload New** link to begin the upload.
- Click the **Choose File** button to browse for the document.
- **Upload** the document and enter a specific name for the document.
- Click **Create** to upload the document.

Assurances

Users must review all program assurances thoroughly. All items specified are requirements of the program, legislation, or regulation. By checking the assurance check box, the user affirms that they have read and understand all requirements and that the user assures the state education agency (SEA) that the user meets each of the conditions detailed in the Assurances.

Assurances The Local Educational Agency (LEA) hereby assures the State Educational Agency (SEA) that: 1. The information provided in this request for additional funds is accurate, and each student's evaluation, eligibility, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) are current. 2. Only students with federally recognized disability categories have been included in this request. 3. State and local funds expended for this special education program are expenditures that are not counted towards maintenance of effort, they are not allowed for allowable exceptions such as for high-cost students. 4. The LEA must be able to meet maintenance of effort without these expenditures to qualify for any State Special School Transportation Reimbursement. 5. Documentation is available in the LEA to support these expenditures from General Purpose funds and kept accessible for future audits and reviews. Failure to provide this can result in revocation of approval and payback. 6. All reimbursements will be budgeted and expended as General Purpose funds in the special education account series including 72710 for special education transportation.

Checklist

During the department's review of the SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool, the SSS Transportation Reimbursement *Checklist* is used to provide feedback to users and communicate corrections that must be made to the SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool before it can be approved.

After submission, the department reviews the SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool and marks each section as **OK**, **Not Applicable**, or **Attention Needed**. If the SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool contains no items that are marked as **Attention Needed**, the SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool is approvable.

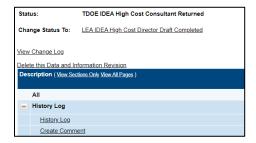
Each section is designated with one of these statuses:

- Not Reviewed: No review occurred.
- **OK:** The section has no corrections and is approvable.
- Coordinator Reviewed: The section has been reviewed by the coordinator.
- Attention Needed: The section has items that need to have corrections completed.
- **N/A:** The section has no items that have to be reviewed.

Users should review the <u>Checklist</u> for comments from each SSS Transportation Reimbursement Consultant reviewer, if applicable, and for the program section.

If the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool contains items that are marked as **Attention Needed**, the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool will be returned to the user with a status of **TDOE IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement Consultant Returned.** The user must review the checklist for items that are marked **Attention Needed** and make the necessary changes to those items. Only

the checked items in the areas marked **Attention Needed** need correction. Each section marked **Attention Needed** includes notes to explain items needing attention. The user should check for notes and additional comments.

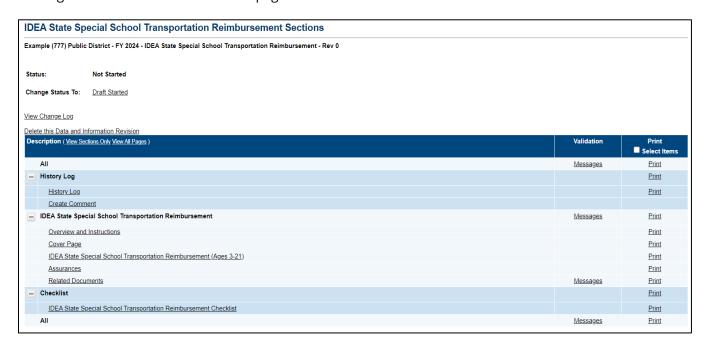


Once the user has made the necessary adjustments, the user resubmits the IDEA High-Cost tool for approval. If the department determines that the area is corrected, **Attention Needed** will be changed to **OK** by department leadership. If the items needing attention still have not been corrected, the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool will be returned with a status of **Not Approved**.

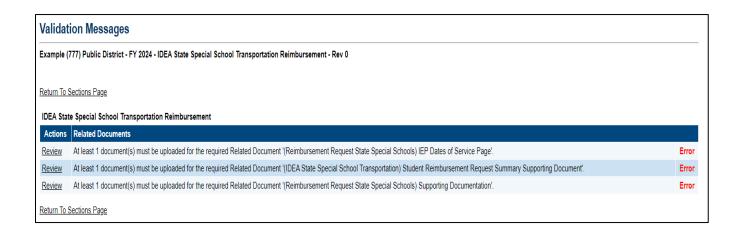
If the IDEA SSS Transportation Reimbursement tool contains no items that are marked **Attention Needed**, it can be approved. It may contain an amount that is lower as a result of being partially approved. This can be due to lack of supporting documentation and receiving partial credit for what was turned in to substantiate the requested amount.

Validations

ePlan runs IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool validations as checks to help users complete the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool correctly. Users can view validation messages from the <u>Sections</u> page, by clicking **Messages** in the Validation column. Users can view all validation messages in the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool or validation messages for the individual section or page.

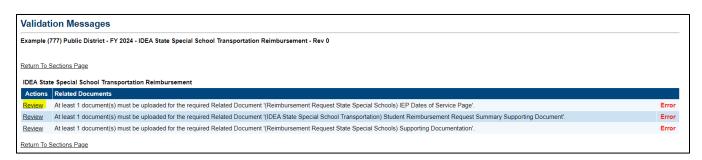


On the <u>Validation Messages</u> page, items marked **Warning** are validations that users are not required to address prior to submitting the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool. Examples of warnings are not uploading an optional related document for each submission.



Items marked *Error* are incorrect, and users must address each one before submitting the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool. Examples of errors are (1) not clicking an assurance box, or (2) not uploading necessary related documents.

If the user does not address all *Error* validations, ePlan will not allow a user to submit the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool. Click on the **Review** link to go to the identified page to make corrections.



Submission

When all IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool sections and pages are complete and any validation errors are cleared, the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool is ready for submission and the approval process. Refer to the *ePlan User Access* section of this guide or the individual IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool guide for the approval workflow.

To submit the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool for review, the user changes the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool status on the <u>Sections</u> page to **Draft Complete**. This generates an email to the next user in the approval workflow who must review the draft and click **Approved** (or **Not Approved**) at the top of the <u>Sections</u> page.

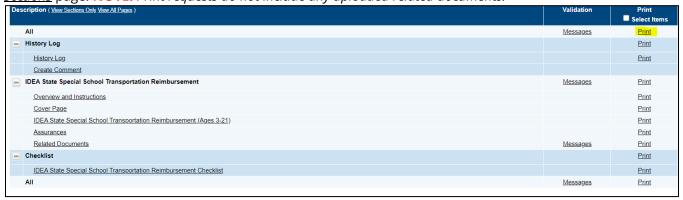
Once the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool receives approval from the TDOE Program Director, users will be paid electronically up to their approved amount. Payment will occur by

January 28th for those approved. An award notice will be created then. These amounts must be budgeted back in the special purpose general budget 71200, 72220, and 72710 account series. The payment amount will have to be reflected in the future special education expenditure report as a reduction to the total for maintenance of effort. As these expenditures are not considered IDEA High Cost, the SEER report would not count expenditures for gifted, functionally delayed, and state special school transportation reimbursed expenditures towards LEA MOE.

How to Print in ePlan

Users may print or download a PDF from the Sections page.

• To print the entire IDEA High-Cost tool, click the **Print** link across from the word "All" at the top of the <u>Sections</u> page. **NOTE**: Print requests do not include any uploaded related documents.



- To print an entire section, click on the **Print** link to the far right of the section name. In the example shown, the user is printing the entire *IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement* section.
- To print a single page, click on the **Print** link across from the name of the page.
- To choose multiple pages, check the **Print Select Items** box at the top of the print column to select
 more than one page. The **Print** links appear as checkboxes. Select all text boxes for the desired print
 request.
- Select the checkboxes and click **Print** at the top of the column.
- The **Print Request** screen pops up. Users may rename their print job here.
- Click Print.
- The *Generating Document* screen appears. The system takes 20–30 seconds to generate small print documents. For larger files, expect an email from the ePlan system when the file is ready to download.

The PDF generated by ePlan appears at the top of the page from the **TDOE Resources** menu item. The PDF link remains in **TDOE Resources** for five (5) days. Users may use the **Delete** links to remove any print jobs.



Troubleshooting

The following are answers to common questions about ePlan application functionality.

User Access

If an ePlan user is not able to work in the High-Cost tool, it is usually due to one of these three reasons:

- The user is not using the **Google Chrome** browser. For best results: always use Google Chrome to access ePlan. ePlan does not have the same functionality in other browsers.
- The tool is not in the right work step or status. Users can only edit the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool when it is in **Draft Started** or **Revision Started** status.
- The user does not have the right role to work on the IDEA State Special School Transportation
 Reimbursement tool. When hovering the cursor over **Change Status To** options, a tooltip appears
 that indicates the roles with access to make the status change. This tooltip lists the names of
 individual users associated with each permitted role. Users can also access the address book to see
 which roles an ePlan user has.

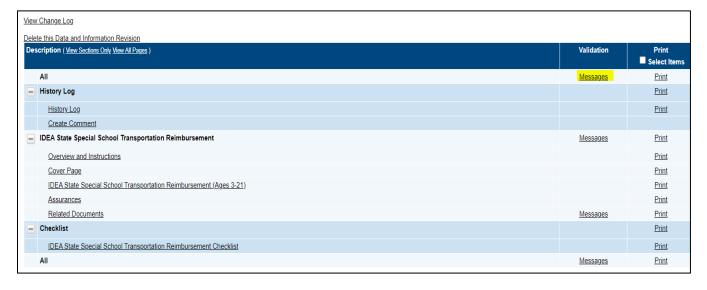
The ePlan address book for each organization contains a list of every user that has an ePlan role.

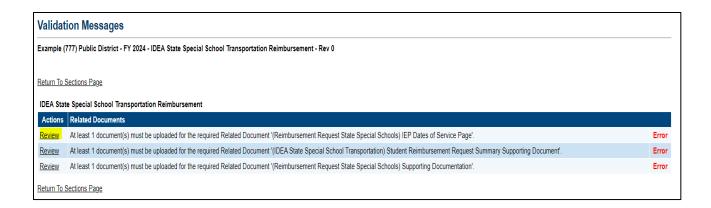
- The LEA Role Contacts list all the roles. If the role is not listed in the address book, no one has been assigned to that role.
- The LEA Funding Application contacts are contacts selected for a funding application.
 - o A contact is not the same as a role. A role assigns access to complete a task in ePlan.
- User Access forms are in ePlan TDOE Resources in the User Access Form folder.
 - Users do not need an ePlan role to access TDOE Resources.

See ePlan User Access for more information about the ePlan status workflow and user roles.

Validation Messages

- This feature shows any errors that will prevent an application from moving forward.
- Click the messages under *Validation* on the *Sections* page to see any errors or warnings.





Post-Submission

When users need to revise the IDEA High-Cost tool after changing the status to **Draft Completed** prior to the submission deadline, contact the next approver in the workflow and ask that they change the status to **Not Approved** to return the application access to the previous user in the workflow. If the tool has proceeded through the workflow to the TDOE Program Director, users can contact the program director or ePlan Help to request that the tool be returned to the previous step in the workflow.

A complete list of ePlan program contacts is available here.

Inbox

Several ePlan functions automatically generate emails that the system sends to users. The <u>Create Comment</u> function prompts ePlan to send an email message to the selected recipients. **System Notifications** are sent to users because of a **Status Change** to support <u>Workflows</u>.



All email messages sent or received by a user through ePlan can be accessed from the *Inbox*. The *Inbox* section of ePlan contains the *Email Message Archive* and *Items Awaiting Approval*. The *Email Message Archive* will contain all emails sent to or received from another ePlan user through the system. Users may select the time period to display. Messages received by the user will appear first; scroll down to the lower half of the page to view sent messages. Comments with email notifications can be accessed from the *Inbox* in addition to the *History Log* section of the IDEA State Special School Transportation Reimbursement tool.

When a **System Notification** is generated related to a **Status Change** that requires the user to complete an approval step, users will find these in **Items Awaiting Approval**.