

RFT FAQs

These are some of the most commonly asked questions regarding the RFT process utilized to receive transportation Services from Akron Public Schools. Please provide this information to your parents.

WHAT IS AN RFT?

An RFT is a Request For Transportation form **for the consideration of transportation services** to an educational facility. This form is for students attending **approved** Charter, Parochial, and Non-Public Schools in grades KG – 8th. This form **should not** be completed for students attending Akron Public Schools, including high schools. Schools are required to contact Akron Public Schools 1 year prior to a school year if requesting transportation services. Schools must request transportation services be provided by Akron Public Schools. Parents may not request transportation services on a school's behalf. Per the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce, ORC 3327.016, Schools wanting to be considered for transportation services must send a letter to the Superintendent, Director of Transportation, and Director of Business Affairs requesting consideration. Requests for transportation services to an educating entity must be received by January 30th of the current school year for consideration for transportation services for the next school year. **Requests for transportation services may not be honored for the same school year of request.** For example, a school cannot request transportation services during May – September and expect to receive transportation services for that current school year.

The RFT is considered legal contract/application for consideration of transportation services between a guardian and Akron Public Schools. Per Ohio Department of Education & Workforce, 3327.01, a legal guardian must request transportation services from the public school district of residence. The RFT must be completed and signed by a legal guardian.

All RFT requests are required to be submitted to Akron Public Schools in a timely manner. Requests for the following school year should be **submitted prior to June 15th of the current year**/no later than 4 weeks before school of attendance is due to start. Failure to provide necessary documentation and/or submitting a request prior to school starting could result in a denial and/or delay of transportation service. Please be aware that the closer to school starting an application is submitted may result in a **10-14 business day delay** before a student may be routed provided all necessary documentation was also submitted.

Please be aware that Akron Public Schools does not assume that your student requires transportation services. Therefore, an RFT is required every school year, every time you move, change schools, and/or guardianship changes.

MY STUDENT ATTENDS AKRON PUBLIC SCHOOLS; DO THEY QUALIFY?

Students attending an Akron Public School have their transportation request automatically sent to the Transportation Department. Certain APS schools are deemed as being ineligible for transportation services as they reside in a “walk-zone” which is under 2.0 miles from the school. Any student attending an Akron Public School through an open enrollment or school choice is not eligible to receive transportation services due to attending a school out of the residential district cluster. **An RFT may not be completed for any student attending an Akron Public School regardless of grade level.**

DO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS QUALIFY FOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES?

High school, grades 9 – 12, attending Akron Public Schools, Charter, Parochial, and/or Non-Public Schools do not receive physical yellow bus transportation services from Akron Public Schools. A student that is attending any of these approved school types would be required to apply for a free Metro bus pass that is usable for anytime Metro is in service. This bus pass is able to be used throughout the student's entire high school academic career until such time they would move out of the Akron Public School district, transfer to a non-eligible school, and/or become expelled from an educational facility. Please contact Merge Freeman (mfreeman@apslearns.org or 330-761-2961) for a high school Metro bus pass form that allows the student to receive a Metro bus pass.

Submission of the completed application, current proof of residency visibly dated within 60 days in the parent/guardian/s name, and the student physically present are required at the time of the appointment for processing. The student must be accompanied by a parent/guardian so that the student may have their picture taken for a photo id that will be put on the bus pass. Replacement bus passes are available at an additional cost as long as a letter from the school principal is received with the application process.

HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES?

You and your student/s must legally reside within the Akron School District. A legal guardian must have a student attending a qualifying Charter, Parochial, or Non-Public school that has requested transportation services from Akron Public Schools. The school of attendance must be over 2.0 miles from the residence. School of attendance must be under 30 minutes direct travel time during

normal school day travel time hours. Akron Public Schools must have received a completed RFT with all necessary documentation in order to process your request for transportation consideration.

Please note, if a student **has an IEP** that **requires** transportation services, **the school of attendance/educating entity must provide the transportation services** – not Akron Public Schools. All students must be able to ride, unaided, without an assistant or special equipment, on a yellow school bus to receive transportation services.

Also, if your student is attending a school under the auspices of a scholarship program (Ed Choice, Autism/Jon Peterson and/or Cleveland Scholarship) or FAPE, Akron Public Schools is not required to provide transportation. Per FAPE, you have chosen to forgo transportation services in lieu of receiving the scholarship to the school of choice. You may request a portion of the scholarship monies go towards transportation services of your choice. Akron Public Schools does not provide transportation-for-hire services.

WHAT TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES ARE OFFERED?

An eligible, qualifying student will receive one of the varying types of Transportation services available – A yellow Akron Public Schools bus, a contracted service provider bus (i.e. Petermann, First Student, etc.), or payment-in-lieu for transportation services. This **does not** include a van or special education services. Payment-in-Lieu is a stipend given at the end of the school year to a parent/guardian for transporting their child should the student qualify for transportation services but physical bus transportation service is unavailable due to a variety of reasons (per ORC code 3327.01). Akron Public Schools solely determines who is eligible for payment-in-lieu. A parent/guardian cannot arbitrarily choose payment-in-lieu should physical bus transportation be available. Should a student have an IEP that states transportation services must be provided, it is up to the school of attendance/educating entity to provide such transportation services.

WHERE DO I GET THE RFT FORM?

All qualifying schools have received a copy of the form for distribution to their parents no later than April 1st of the previous school year. You may go to the school directly, to Akron Public Schools Administration Building located at 10 N. Main Street, Akron, OH 44308, online at www.akronschools.com – Departments > Business Affairs > Important Forms and Information > Request For Transportation > Universal Request for Transportation Form, or you may call (330) 761-2738 and request a form be emailed to you. Should you go online, please be sure that you are selecting the correct school year. During the months of March – June, there will be the current year and upcoming year RFT forms available on the online site. We can physically mail a form to you, however, due to postal services, it can take up to 15 days to arrive.

The school of attendance may also choose to put the form on their website for downloading. Please ask your school if they do this. You may also come to the Akron Public Schools, Sylvester Small Administration Building, 10 N. Main Street, Akron, OH 44308, Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm to complete an RFT. Please bring all necessary documentation with you (i.e. proof of residency, proof of custody, and/or birth certificate/s of student/s) to ensure quick processing of your request. On the back of the RFT form is a list of acceptable proof of residency items.

WHEN MUST AN RFT BE COMPLETED?

Any time there is a need for transportation services, change in address, school, guardianship, at the time of the new school year, and throughout the year if you wish to start and/or change transportation services. An RFT **must** be completed every school year. **We do not assume** a student will be attending the same school at the same residence with no changes in guardianship. **RFT's can be submitted at any time during the school year**. However, it is best to return **all RFT and supporting documentation to Akron Public Schools by June 15th of the current year, for the upcoming school year, in order to have students processed in a timely manner to be considered for routing before school starts in August**. *In order to receive transportation consideration for the new/next upcoming school year, the latest all requests should be in is 4 weeks prior to school starting* (approximately July 20th of the current year) in order to be processed before school is in session.

Any requests turned in after July 20th are subject to a 10-14 business day delay in being processed. This time does not include holidays and weekends in the 10-14 delay time. Akron Public Schools will not accept any change of address, school, and/or guardianship information over the phone or via email (unless proper paperwork is included in the email). No transportation service will be considered until Akron Public Schools has received a completed RFT with necessary supporting documentation. The completed RFT and supporting documentation must be turned into Akron Public Schools by the parent/guardian. Schools are not required to provide Akron Public Schools with requests for transportation consideration. This remains the sole responsibility of the parent.

Please be aware that if your student attends a **school that receives payment-in-lieu** instead of physical bus transportation, your requests must be turned in to the Akron Public Schools no later than **November 4th** in order to receive a full stipend per child per the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce Guidelines. After November 4th, it is up to the discretion of Akron Public Schools to

accept your request and to provide payment-in-lieu in full and/or a pro-rated partial stipend. The only stipulation to receiving a possible pro-rated stipend is if you enroll your student in a payment-in-lieu school after November 4th and/or if Akron Public Schools changes the eligible transportation type to payment-in-lieu following the ORC 3327.01 guidelines provided.

WHO NEEDS TO COMPLETE AN RFT?

Any legal guardian requesting transportation services for their student/s attending an approved charter, parochial, or non-public school – including payment-in-lieu services. A school should not be completing and/or signing the form for the guardian. It is not the school requesting the transportation services, it is the guardian.

A school is not required to collect nor return the completed RFT with necessary paperwork to Akron Public Schools. As the guardian is responsible for requesting transportation services for their student; it is the solely the guardian's responsibility to return the completed RFT with necessary paperwork to Akron Public Schools.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF REQUEST FOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES?

Yes! In order to assist our community, we have created a form that lists 2 distinct choices of transportation service request on the same form – **Updated/New Student** and **Renewal with No Changes**. Simply mark the appropriate box to show the style of form you need. There is a brief synopsis located towards the top of the form in the middle to alert you as to what form type you need to mark. Located on the left hand side is the types of form and documentation that is required to accompany each style marked. **You may only mark one type of form and school of attendance per RFT.** Please note that only one school may be marked, also, as all transportation services are processed via the school IRN number. **An RFT with more than one school marked will be denied for transportation consideration.** Akron Public Schools does not assume what school a student attends.

WHICH CHOICE OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICE REQUEST SHOULD I MARK?

Updated/New Student – This is the choice most generally used. Please note that everyone is considered “new to transportation services” every school year as it is a new school year. This is the form that is also used if the student is new to a school, has moved, had a change of guardianship (custody documentation will be required), a disruption in transportation services of over 10 days, and/or a change in school. If a student transfers to another school and then returns to the former school during the course of the school year, they are considered new to transportation services for the new school and are required to complete a new RFT with supporting documentation.

Also, if you requested transportation services one year and then skipped a year and/or portion of a year, you are considered new to transportation services. As such, you will be required to submit a completed RFT with supporting documentation. If you are **transferring from Akron Public Schools** to a charter, Parochial, and/or Non-Public school, **your student is considered new to transportation services.** Anyone marking this area of the form is required to have current proof of residency (visibly dated within the last 60 days). It is **highly suggested** that if your student/s has never attended Akron Public Schools and/or is totally new to the school of attendance, that a copy of the student/s birth certificate be provided. Providing POR and/or birth certificate will prevent delaying transportation services from being offered.

Renewal With No Changes – This choice is only to be marked if there are absolutely no changes of any kind. This means the student **HAS NOT** moved, **HAS NOT** changed schools, and **HAS NOT** changed guardian, **AND** received transportation services for the entire previous school year from the same school, address, and same guardian. This is only for students attending the same school they attended in the previous school and still reside at the same address with the same guardian. If there is any gap in transportation services due to non-ridership, moving, changing schools, etc. then you cannot mark renewal. This student would be considered new to transportation services.

WHAT IF I DO NOT WANT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES?

Akron Public Schools is required to provide transportation services to Charter, Parochial, and Non-Public schools that have requested transportation services. In order to maintain compliance with Ohio Department of Education & Workforce standards, we are required to show that you were offered the service. You will need to complete an RFT **and** initial or make a checkmark next to the **REFUSAL OF ALL TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES** box. By refusing transportation services and marking this box, it means that you will not receive any type of physical transportation services, along with you will also not be eligible for payment-in-lieu service, meaning you **will not** receive a stipend check even if you qualify for such.

Should you change your mind during the course of the school year, you may always re-apply for transportation services. If you choose to re-apply, you will need to complete a new RFT and submit it to Akron Public Schools Transportation Services with any necessary required supporting documentation.

WILL I REQUIRE OTHER DOCUMENTATION BESIDES THE RFT?

Yes! Please see below what you will need:

POR (Proof of Residency) – Proof of residency must be considered current, meaning **it has a visible statement or process date** within the last 60 days. **Due dates are not eligible** as a valid date as these may be 3-4 weeks off from the statement date. Proof of residency can be a bank statement, paystub, letter from a government agency, computerized billing or rental statement, utility bill or turn-on notification, closing documentation, current lease signed by **both tenant and landlord**, and/or U. S. Postal service change of address confirmation letter. A **residency affidavit must be notarized** and include a copy of proof of residency for the residential party should you be using a verification of residency form or other residency affidavit. Month-to-Month leases must be current within the date requesting transportation services and include a computerized rental receipt. A month-to-month lease that is not for the current month will be denied. All leases must be current with visible tenant name, address, dates of service, and signed by BOTH tenant and landlord in order to be considered valid proof of residency.

Birth Certificate – This is **highly suggested** for a student that is new to the school of attendance and/or has never attended an Akron Public School. Please note that Head Start is not considered an Akron Public School. The student is entered into an electronic database utilized by the transportation routing system. A birth certificate assures that we are routing the correct student and have all legally identifiable information needed. Ohio Department of Education & Workforce requires Akron Public Schools to provide accurate, legal information on all Akron residential students when audited.

Proof of Custody – This is required for any student who is not residing with the legal birth parent and/or guardian, including agency/court placed students and/or divorced parents. Per Ohio law, a woman who is unmarried at time of the child's birth is considered the sole legal guardian until a court of law deems otherwise. If there is a divorce, you must submit **the entire divorce decree** as proof of custody. Akron Public Schools cannot accept a single page and/or entry regarding custody. Should you reside in Summit County and require a copy of your divorce decree you may contact the Clerk of Courts. Documentation is available online to be downloaded. As of 2019, the price was \$0.10 per page.

Custody must have a court stamp and judge signature. *A notarized statement does not give custody to another individual; it only shows that the notary witnessed the document being signed.* Grandparent Affidavits and Temporary Custody Agreements, once notarized, **must be taken to Summit County Juvenile Court.** Summit County Juvenile Court, located at 650 Dan Street, Akron, OH 44305, offers free legal services via an attorney help desk every Wednesday, from 9 am to 12 noon by appointment only. The last appointment will be taken at 11:30 am. Appointments can be in person or held over a Zoom meeting. More information can be obtained by going to the Summit County Juvenile Court Help Desk website at <https://juvenilecourt.summitoh.net/pages/Attorney-Help-Desk.html>.

WHAT CANNOT BE USED FOR PROOF OF RESIDENCY?

Akron Public Schools will not accept the following items for POR (Proof of Residency):

Incomplete, illegible, or business name and/or address information on proof of residency, any type of tax statement/billing/filing to any State, Local, or Federal Government Agency, property tax bills, W-2's, Driver's License, Social Security Card, Checks, Junk Mail, Sales Flyers, Pre-Approved credit/debit/Snap/Ohio Direction/Netspend card forms or flyer that the card comes with, applications that require being filled out (generic forms), renewal notices, offers of credit, Voter's registration cards, application for approval for housing, incomplete lease that does not list tenant name, dates of service, address of occupancy (must match physical location), and does not have BOTH tenant AND landlord signatures, student report cards, any mail without a visible statement or process date, any mail addressed to "parent or guardian of", "current resident", "occupant" or a business name and/or in the student's name. **Proof of Residency must be computerized or typewritten.** Akron Public Schools does not accept any handwritten mail as proof of residency.

All Proof of Residency must be in an individual's name and have a visible statement date on it – due date is not the same as the statement date. All proof of residency must be current, within the last 60 days, from the date of request of service. Exception to this rule is a valid lease, which must be current within time of request, and requests for transportation services for the next school year. These requests are accepted as of March 1st of the current school year for the following school year starting in August of the current year. Requests for the next school year being turned in during March to May must have proof of residency visibly dated AFTER March 1st of the current school year. Anything dated prior to the March 1st date will be denied. After May 30th, all proof of residency must be dated within 60 days of the request of service. For example, if requesting service in August, proof of residency must be dated after June 1st.

Should you happen to move during the summer or after you have already turned in a Request For Transportation (RFT) for transportation services for the next school year, you must complete a NEW RFT along with providing current, valid proof of residency in the parent/guardian name for the new address.

WHAT IS PAYMENT-IN-LIEU?

Payment-in-Lieu (PIL) is used when transportation may be deemed impractical for physical bus transportation services. This can be due to a variety of reasons including impracticality due to low number of students to transport, location issues, mileage issues, etc. A parent may not arbitrarily choose Payment-in-Lieu over physical bus transport if bussing is available. **Payment-in-Lieu is at the sole discretion of Akron Public Schools.** For a student that is deemed PIL eligible, the guardian will receive a stipend check for transporting their student for the school year once approved by the Board of Education and all proper contract documentation is received. The stipend check will not be issued without the return of the additional contract and not until the end of school year, normally by June 12th. **Akron Public Schools has the right to verify enrollment and attendance of any student receiving a Payment-In-Lieu stipend.**

To qualify, an RFT must be turned in with all necessary documentation. Akron Public Schools will review to see if a request meets transportation eligibility. Payment-In-Lieu is issued when it has been deemed impractical to provide physical bus transportation services for various reasons. If the documentation requirements are met and the student qualifies for transportation bus services, but is unable to be provided physical transportation services, the Payment-In-Lieu request will be presented at an Akron Public Schools board meeting and approved for payment. A contract will subsequently be sent out to be completed, signed, and returned to the Akron Public Schools Transportation Department once the Board of Education has agreed that the student is eligible for payment-in-lieu based upon the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce standards. The contracts are normally sent out at the end of November, January, and March during the course of the current school year. Should the student have been approved and the guardian has not received a contract by this time, it is recommended that the guardian contact the Akron Public Schools Transportation Department at (330) 761-1390 x 1. If the Payment-In-Lieu contract is **not completed and returned** to Akron Public Schools Transportation Department, **there will be no stipend check issued**, even if the transported student qualified for such. Stipend checks are mailed out at the end of the school year, around the second week in June.

Per the State of Ohio Department of Education & Workforce standards, **all requests** for transportation services, including payment-in-Lieu requests, **must be made prior to November 1st** of the current school year. **Ohio Department of Education & Workforce requires all Payment-in-Lieu requests to be made at the beginning of the school year prior to November 1st.** **Any RFT submitted after this date is subject to denial or proration of funding/stipend** at the discretion of Akron Public Schools per the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce guidelines. Many schools already know if their students are physical bus transportation service vs PIL. Changes in transportation type can occur requiring an eligible student to be made payment-in-lieu. Please contact Akron Public Schools Transportation Services at 330-761-2738 should you wish to verify possible transportation types provided for your school.

WHO SUBMITS THE COMPLETED RFT?

The completed RFT along with necessary documentation are to be submitted to Akron Public Schools Transportation Services located at the Akron Public Schools Administration Building, 10 N. Main Street, Akron, OH 44308. **It is up to the legal guardian to submit this paperwork** directly to Akron Public Schools as it is the guardian requesting transportation services for their student/s. **Schools are not responsible for the collection of nor required to submit the RFT with necessary documentation.** If a school chooses to do this, they are responsible for getting the RFT along with all necessary documentation to Akron Public Schools in a timely manner. Akron Public Schools is not responsible for late, incomplete, or misdirected RFT and documentation.

WHERE DO I SUBMIT MY COMPLETED RFT TO?

It is suggested that when submitting required information, **please include** the name of your student, date of birth, contact information, and school of attendance on item of documentation submitted. Failure to include this information could cause a delay in processing your request due to not knowing what student the submitted documentation would belong to. If you are choosing to deliver all documentation in person, please go to the Akron Public Schools Administration Building's Engagement Center between the hours of 8 am to 4 pm Monday – Friday during the year, barring federal holidays. Akron Public School's Administration Building is open year-round, barring federal holidays. Please be aware that due to postal regulation changes, it can easily take up to 2 weeks or more for Akron Public Schools to receive your documentation. Akron Public Schools is not responsible for lost, misdirected, or damaged mail.

To Mail or In Person

Akron Public Schools
ATTN: Transportation Services
10 North Main Street
Room 513
Akron, OH 44308

To Send as an Email:

transrft@apslearns.org

WHERE DO I SUBMIT MY UPDATED INFORMATION TO?

If you have received a denial letter requesting additional documentation, you may turn in the documentation via the same way as the original submission. Please note the information above as to where to turn in your updated information. It is suggested that when sending in your updated information, please be sure to **include** the name of your student, date of birth, contact information, **and** school of attendance on a separate cover sheet and/or on the documentation itself.

Any documentation received without this information will likely be denied due to inability to match with the necessary student/s. Please understand that there are thousands of applications processed for transportation services. Your student is as important to us as to you. We strive to assist everyone in a timely manner. Your assistance in this matter is truly helpful.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I WILL RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES?

The provider (Akron Public Schools and/or Contracted Company) is responsible for notifying the schools of routing information for students eligible to receive transportation services. This information is provided to each school via our Viewfinder program. **The schools are required to notify the guardian of all routing information including stop locations and times** prior to school being in session for the current school year and throughout the school year as changes arise. Providing a valid email address will allow the parent/guardian to view all routing and real-time bus travel information via our StopFinder app. **Please allow 48-72 hours after approval of submission/re-submission before requesting routing information. This time is to allow for updating our transportation program. Please be aware that the RFT is a request for consideration of transportation services. Submitting an RFT does not guarantee transportation services of any kind.** Akron Public Schools may have received a valid request for service, however, the student is still required to meet the minimum qualifications of residing over 2.0 miles from school of attendance and/or being under 30 minutes of direct travel time. Students that do not meet these qualifications will be denied service. There will be no routing information provided for these students.

Should there be a denial, **except for mileage**, a letter will be sent from Akron Public Schools to the address provided on the RFT form. This letter will state the reason for denial. If there is a denial due to grade level, mileage, time constraints and/or out-of-district residence, there can be no change in status. However, for other reasons of denial, please provide the requested necessary information for further review and processing. It is suggested that when sending in your updated information via email, mail, and/or in person, please be sure to include the name of your student, date of birth, contact information, and school of attendance on a separate cover sheet and on the documentation itself. This information shall help alleviate any question as to which student/s are requiring this information. Any documentation received without this information will likely be denied due to inability to match with the necessary student/s.

Should there be a denial due to grade level due to a student be in high school (grades 9-12), please contact Merge Freeman at mfreeman@apslearns.org or 330.761.2961 to schedule an appointment to apply for a Metro bus pass application. Akron Public Schools does not provide transportation for high school students. The only type of transportation provided is the free Metro bus pass. A parent/legal guardian will need to submit a completed Metro bus pass application along with supporting documentation. This must be physically submitted to Akron Public Schools at the Sylvester Small Administration Building, 10 N. Main Street, Akron, OH 44308.

The parent/guardian **must accompany the student** to the administration building. The student will need to have a photograph taken to put onto the Metro bus pass. The Metro bus pass is valid 365 days a year, any time Metro runs. This pass will stay valid until the student has withdrawn from their valid school of attendance, moved out of district, graduated, and/or been expelled. Should the Metro bus pass be lost, a replacement can be purchased for \$10 once a new Metro Bus Pass application has been completed. An appointment will need to be scheduled for the student. The parent/guardian should present the student along with all necessary forms, required documentation, and a letter from school administration is required stating that they are aware that the bus pass has been lost.

Akron Public Schools processes thousands of applications each year. We strive to provide services to all those who qualify in a quick and professional manner. We respectfully ask for your assistance so that we are able to provide such services to our families.

Akron Public Schools strives towards providing excellent service to our Community, Schools, and families.