

# PENN HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Transportation Guidelines: 2024-2025 School Year



### **Routing Parameters:**

Penn Hills public schools will be routed in a tiered fashion, using the same base group of buses to service the High School, Middle School, and Elementary School. Per contractual language, buses have up to 5.25 hours of availability each day before incurring additional charges.

Non-Public schools will be routed as efficiently as possible based on the student's location – in most cases from the most distant point of the first student stop and continuing to the school. Trips home from school will run in opposite order unless other efficiencies can be gained. Non-Public schools will be combined to make best use of vehicles and personnel while keeping student safety in mind.

In order to minimize ride times for all students, stop locations (sometimes called community stops) in neighborhoods or subdivisions will be moved toward primary and secondary roads for the 2018-2019 school year and moving forward. We will make best efforts to avoid scenarios where vehicles must use reverse before or after a student's stop, however, sometimes this may be required. Some routes for smaller vehicles (30 passenger or less) may require stops outside of these parameters for student safety and efficiency.

All students are assigned bus stops based on physical address unless a change for childcare has been requested. A student may have one morning stop and one evening stop. Stop and vehicle assignment are based on address, student need, vehicle availability and vehicle accessibility.

Goals: These are not hard and fast rules but parameters to work toward.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has determined that students in grades K-6 may walk up to 1.5 miles to school or bus stop and students in grades 7-12 may walk up to 2.0 miles to school or bus stop. The Penn Hills School District has determined that the following guidelines will be used when determining bus stop and routes:

- Student walking distances for elementary: .5 miles
- Student walking distance for non-elementary: .8 miles
- Public school route ride times: 37 minutes

### **Daycare Parameters:**

Daycare businesses must provide the following information to the School District Transportation office by the dates listed.

- June 26 – Copy of state and local licenses, student capacity and physical address
- June 26 – Typed roster with full names of attending children
- August 2 – Updated roster with full names of attending children
- Ongoing - Daycares must update student rosters with any changes as the school year progresses

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Using our discretion, we will provide a specific bus stop for the daycare facility based on the physical address.

We will only transport students who have a verified residence in Penn Hills and have registered with the Penn Hills Pupil Registration Office. If students from outside of Penn Hills are placed on our school vehicles by the daycare or non-public school, we will seek punitive action (from the daycare, school and possibly the parent/guardian) for theft of services and may discontinue rider privileges to that specific daycare stop.

*Transportation will be provided five (5) days a week to or from the same address in the morning and/or afternoon. The morning and afternoon addresses may be different, but the same set schedule must be followed every week.*

*If the student is scheduled to attend the day care less than five (5) days per week, on the days the student is not to be picked up or dropped off at the day care provider or facility, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide transportation to or from school.*

**Bus Stop Change Parameters:**

Bus stops are based on physical address and student need. To be granted ridership on district buses students must meet residency requirements and be registered with Penn Hills School District, (including students attending all non-public schools). Each student will be assigned one bus stop in the morning and one bus stop in the evening. Students must ride assigned buses and can't change bus vehicles without submitting a formal request and receiving written approval. Failure to do so may result in having ridership privileges revoked.

If a family believes an approved bus stop is better suited for their student(s), they will need to complete a [Specialized Transportation Request Form](#) (located on the Transportation webpage). We will investigate the request and follow up with the family. Curb-to-Curb bus stops will only be granted based on the needs of the student without consideration to the needs of the family, parent, or guardian. When siblings are placed at different stops Penn Hills will provide a one-stop solution, if possible.

[Specialized Transportation Request Form](#) (located on the Transportation webpage) must be returned, with a copy of parent/guardian photo ID, to [bus@phsd.k12.pa.us](mailto:bus@phsd.k12.pa.us) or simply drop-off in person to Krise Transportation, 7035 Saltsburg Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235. Student Registration offices in each of our three (3) schools can also accept the forms. Our staff will forward to routing for a decision on the request. Appeals will go to Transportation oversight.

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**Alternative Bus Stops:**

PHSD recognizes families in the district are faced with work, childcare and custody constraints, and will consider written requests for an individual stop alternative for these reasons. Each student will be assigned one bus stop in the morning and one bus stop in the evening. Students must ride assigned buses and cannot change bus vehicles without submitting a formal request and receiving written approval. Failure to do so may result in having ridership privileges revoked.

Requests will only be granted under the exceptions discussed above and will be subject to the following limitations:

- No more than one alternative stop will be allowed.
- The schedule must be the same set schedule every week (no variations from week to week).
- Custody arrangements must be supported by a written custody agreement (copy provided to the Transportation Department and the school the child attends).
- There must be available capacity on the bus that the alternate request is being made.
- The alternate stop must be on an existing route and must be an approved community stop. We will not alter the existing bus route to accommodate the request.
- Daily Bus Passes will not be issued by transportation prior to a routing determination.

**Daily Bus Passes:**

Daily Bus Passes are available to students that need to change a bus stop for an occasional instance (family emergency, etc.) and the request is made in writing to the principal by 9:30 a.m. before or on the day of the request. Phone calls will only be accepted in emergencies and will not be accepted in non-emergency situations. These passes will only be approved for existing community stops on existing routes and if there is available capacity on the bus. Penn Hills is not responsible to transport students to alternate stops for sleepovers, birthday parties, provide transportation to work, etc.

**Student Ridership:**

Riding a bus is a privilege; student behavior is defined in the **online student manual** (located on your school's webpage). Unsafe or egregious acts can result in the loss or change of riding arrangements. In some cases, families will be asked to provide transport at a reimbursed level based on legislative guidelines for mileage reimbursement.

Kindergarten students must be escorted to the bus stop and met at the bus stop in the afternoon. If there is no one at the stop to receive a child, the bus will continue on its route dropping off the remaining students. The bus will return to the stop and if there still is no one

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there, the child will be returned to the home school or police will be notified. Parents may waive this requirement and have their child dropped off without an adult/older sibling present by writing and submitting a letter to the district transportation provider. The letter will be scanned into the program. Families should have a safety plan in place in case of emergency.

Families are responsible for student's behavior to and from the bus stop and while at the bus stop. This is not the responsibility of the bus contractor or school district.

Students should be reminded to wait for the bus at the stop, not in a car or house, and be present 10 minutes before scheduled pickup. Be mindful of private property at the bus stop. Parents/Guardians are financially responsible if their child causes damage to private property.

#### **Distances:**

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PDE) has determined that students in grades K-6 may walk up to 1.5 miles to school and students in grades 7-12 may walk up to 2.0 miles to school. Penn Hills School District may provide transportation for students who live closer than the parameters determined by the PDE, if they walk along or cross a roadway that has been designated a hazardous walk zone or roadway by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

#### **Carry-On Policy:**

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation mandates that the interior of a school bus must be free of any objects that could cause injury. All objects must be secured and the aisles, emergency exits, and the driver's compartment must be free and clear of any object.

The following rules must be adhered to at all times:

- Any object, in the opinion of the bus driver, that may endanger other students or limit driver visibility may not be permitted on the bus by the driver.
- Students may not bring skate boards or any live animals (including animals for class projects) on board the buses. Guide or trained companion dogs are the only exception, with notification to transportation provider.
- Students may not bring an inflated balloon onto the bus.
- Students may not bring any suitcase, book bag, school class project or any other object unless it can be held on their lap or placed under the seat.
- Musical instruments may be brought on board if it can be held on their lap. If it does not fit on their lap, provided there is room, a student may place the instrument on the seat or on the floor between them and the window.

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- Driver discretion will be used for safety concerns

**Delays and Closures:**

The process for determining a district delay or a closing begins the night before with a close monitoring of weather predictions. The process continues the following morning around 4:00 AM, when district representatives begin driving Penn Hills roads, to confirm conditions. The representatives confer with township road departments and Penn Dot regarding the timing of plowing and salt treatments and the condition of primary, secondary, and back roads. This information is then called into the Superintendent between 4:30 AM and 5:00 AM. At the same time, the Superintendent confers with other local Superintendents in Allegheny County to discuss their findings and conclusions. Between 5:00 AM and 5:30 AM, the Superintendent makes an informed decision for Penn Hills as to whether or not a closing or delay is warranted, the announcement is made through the district’s emergency notification system (School Messenger), the district’s website, and media outlets. A review process continues throughout the morning in which real-time weather conditions are monitored and the transportation company is consulted on updates to road conditions – this enables the district to assess the effectiveness of its decision. In the event of a cancellation, delay or early dismissal, the school district will post this information to the Penn Hills School District website at [www.phsd.k12.pa.us](http://www.phsd.k12.pa.us). The following media outlets will also make the announcements:

Radio Stations:	KDKA, WTAE
TV Stations:	KDKA, WTAE, WPXI
Websites:	<a href="http://www.kdka.com">www.kdka.com</a> , <a href="http://www.wtae.com">www.wtae.com</a> , <a href="http://www.wpxi.com">www.wpxi.com</a>
Social Media:	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/PennHillsSD">@PennHillsSD</a> ; <a href="https://www.facebook.com/PennHillsSD">Facebook.com/PennHillsSD</a>

Parents and guardians are encouraged to have an emergency plan in place to care for their children in the event of unforeseen circumstances such as delays, cancellations, or early dismissals.

**Non-Public or Charter Schools:**

There may be times when non-public or charter schools choose to go with a delayed opening and Penn Hills School District does not. When that happens, non-public and charter school students will be transported according to the Penn Hills School District’s schedule, since the district does not have enough buses to run two separate schedules.

This means those students must still report to their bus stops at the regularly scheduled time and their schools must plan for accepting and supervising them at regular arrival times even though they may not start school until later.

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The parent/guardian may choose to provide their own transportation to school following the non-public or charter school delayed opening announcement.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to have an emergency plan in place to care for their children in the event of unforeseen circumstances such as delays, cancellations, or early dismissals.

In the case of an emergency or unscheduled event, Non-Public or Charter schools will be responsible to provide all direct communications to families. Transportation will provide all possible support for students whom we transport following confirmation from non-public or charter school officials that an emergency response is being implemented at the school level.

**FAQ:**

**How long does my child have to wait at the bus stop?**

Student should be at the bus stop 10 minutes before their scheduled pickup time and wait at least 10 minutes after their pickup time. Delays in pickups may be caused by factors outside the control of the district or the contractor and should be taken into consideration when deciding how long to wait.

**Who do I contact when my child's bus is late or misses my child?**

Krise Transportation at 412-573-1224

**Who do I contact if my child leaves something on the bus?**

Krise Transportation at 412-573-1224

**What if I need my child to ride a different bus in the event of an emergency?**

Daily Bus Passes are available to students that need to change a bus stop for an occasional instance (family emergency, etc.) and the request is made in writing to the principal by 9:30 a.m. before or on the day of the request.

**The bus drives right past my house. Why can't it stop at my house?**

Bus stops are centrally located for all students. Higher frequency of stops makes the motoring public impatient. This results in people driving around the bus and compromising safety. It also delays the bus by increasing the number of stops and making the students' ride time longer.

**I leave for work early and can't watch my child get on the bus. Can the stop be at my house?**

Penn Hills School District cannot establish bus stops based on personal circumstances. Bus stops are centrally located for all students. Higher frequency of stops makes the motoring public impatient. This results in people driving around the bus and compromising safety. It also delays the bus by increasing the number of stops and making the students' ride time longer.



**I can't see the bus stop from my house.**

Penn Hills School District provides transportation to over 4,500 children to school each day. It is not possible to put all stops within sight range. Parents should use good judgment by either going to the stop with the child or work with other families in the neighborhood to support safety.

**Why can't you come further into my subdivision or cul-de-sac?**

Buses are not routed into subdivisions or cul-de-sacs for safety reasons. A few safety concerns are: different styles and sizes of buses makes maneuvering in a cul-de-sac or narrow roads difficult, backing up a bus is avoided when possible and parked cars and other obstacles create road hazards that may not be seen until after entering the cul-de-sac or subdivision.

**My child is starting Kindergarten. Will the bus pick my child up in front of the house?**

There are no special laws or requirements for transporting students enrolled in kindergarten. Bus stops are school board approved stops thought to be in a safe place for all students, grades K – 12. Kindergarten students must be escorted to the bus stop and met at the bus stop in the afternoon.

**Why can't my child get off wherever he/she wants in the afternoon?**

The safety and security of our students is of the utmost importance. In case of an emergency, it is imperative that the district and the transportation contractor know who is on the bus, and when and where they got on/off the bus. Phone calls will only be accepted in emergencies and will not be accepted in non-emergency situations. Passes will only be approved for existing community stops on existing routes and if there is available capacity on the bus. Penn Hills is not responsible to transport students to alternate stops for sleepovers, birthday parties, provide transportation to work, etc.

**Who is responsible for student behavior at bus stops?**

Families are responsible for their child's behavior to and from the bus stop and while at the stop. If inappropriate behavior is reported to the bus driver, they will turn this information over to the school for investigation. Families are financially responsible if their child causes damage to private property.

**Why did you suspend my child from riding the bus?**

The behavioral expectations on the bus revolve around the individual rights of every person on the bus, including the driver and the collective rights of students and the driver as they pertain to safety. Anything that jeopardizes the safety of individuals is viewed as serious. When there is a bus infraction, a bus incident report is turned in to PHSD administration. Buses have video cameras, which can be used to verify incidents. Our goal is not to deny any student

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transportation to and from school, but we must maintain safety for all students, the driver and other motorists.

**Can I reach someone in the Transportation Department before 7:00 AM?**

Krise Transportation office hours are 5:00 AM – 5:00 PM. They can be reached at 412-573-1224.

**How do I file a complaint regarding my child’s bus stop or other transportation matter?**

Complaints can be submitted by filling out a [Parental Concern Form](#) which can be found on the PHSD website, under the Transportation section. The completed form can be emailed to [bus@phsd.k12.pa.us](mailto:bus@phsd.k12.pa.us) or faxed to 412-573-1227.

**Glossary:**

**Community Stop:** A school board approved stop thought to be in a safe place for students to board a school vehicle. These stops will be used for all students, Public, Non-Public and Charter, grades K - 12. Elementary School stops may vary at our discretion.

**Centralized Community Stop:** A school board approved stop that is located in a central area or near where buses leave/enter the school district traveling to/from school. These stops are included on the school bus route for buses that travel to some Non-Public or Charter Schools outside the school district. Students can use these stops to shorten bus rides. If a student selects this stop it will be assigned as their daily stop and the Community Stop will be removed from their transportation record.

**Curb-to-Curb Stop:** Curb-to-Curb implies the student should be ready and waiting on the curb for the vehicle, 10 minutes before and after the assigned time. The vehicle would remain on the street and not enter the property unless individual circumstances are required for the student. Students would be instructed to be on the curb waiting for the school vehicle. The driver will be instructed to leave the stop after an appropriate wait and notifying dispatch. This should reduce route times for transportation.

**Ride Time:** Length of time from first/last student on bus to arrival/departure from school to last student stop.

**Length of Route:** Public school routes average 9.5 miles from 1<sup>st</sup> stop to destination and ride times usually average 34 minutes. There are no time limits set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the length of a bus ride. The district makes every effort to adhere to a limit of 60 minutes to transport within district boundaries. Any additional time spent on the bus due to transporting a student outside of district boundaries is considered allowable and may exceed 60 minutes.



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NOTE: These pages are considered operating procedures and may be updated as needed to promote student safety and efficiency in transporting students to and from school.