

Frequently Asked Student Transportation Questions

1. How Far must children live from school before the school district is required to transport them?

Generally, children must live two miles or more from their assigned school before a school district is required to transport them to and from school. It is a local school board decision on whether to transport children who live less than two miles. Because of the many unique programs and situations that may exist, it is recommended that parents contact their local school district to obtain information on the transportation services that may be available.

2. What is the “walking zone” for Sauk Centre Schools?

The “walking zone” or area from which children are generally not transported is defined with:

- Sauk River on the East
- 12th Street South on the South
- Main Street (Hwy71) on the West
- The “river dam” on the North.

3. What determines a bus stop?

Our goal is to consistently identify bus stops in neighborhoods and rural areas on the consideration of safety, efficiency, least cost, and shortest over-all ride times. Bus stops are central to where all of the students are coming from. Some house stops are made on very busy roads. We generally do not send busses into cul-de-sacs or dead end roads because of lack of safe access or the ability of the bus to turn around.

4. How does a district measure the distance between a child’s home and the school?

The walking distance is measured on public roadways or walkways using the most direct, safe route. There is nothing in state law or rule that specifies at what point the measurement must start and end. Each school district should have a method on how the measurement is made for the schools within its district.

5. Who or what determines walking distance to a school?

Walking areas are determined in compliance with State laws/rules, typically using the shortest distance from a student’s residence (end of driveway), by reasonably safe walkways, to the school. Our walking area has been set by Board policy.

6. Is there a law or rule that limits the amount of time a child can spend on the school bus?

There is nothing in state law or rule that sets a maximum amount of time a child can spend on the school bus. We strive to establish route times so that no student will have to be picked up before 7:00 a.m. and that all students are returned home not later than 4:15 p.m. Unfortunately, we cannot always guarantee this will happen.

7. How far can a school district require a child to walk to a bus stop?

There is nothing in law or rule about the distance between the child's home and the bus stop. This is true for all age and grade levels. Many factors are considered as bus stops are determined.

8. Who has the authority to change my bus stop or route?

The school district's Transportation Coordinator, in consultation with the Superintendent, are the only authority to make changes to bus routes and stops. It is actually against the law for a school bus driver to make unauthorized changes to a bus route or student pickup/drop off location.

9. What should I do if the bus doesn't show up?

Pick up and drop off times will not vary to any great extent on a normal basis after the first two weeks of school. Circumstances beyond our control could make the bus late occasionally. Vehicle breakdowns, impassable roads, emergencies, or drivers becoming ill are just a few reasons that could make the bus late. If a route must be adjusted during the school year, every effort is made to contact all affected households to allow for planning. If you have a concern, please call the transportation office at 320-351-5802 or your student's school office.

10. Can my child lose bus riding privileges?

Yes. In Minnesota, riding a school bus is a privilege and not a right. Each local school district has adopted rules of conduct for waiting at the bus stop and for riding the school bus. If your child does not follow the rules, your child could lose his/her bus riding privileges for the entire school year.

11. Will my child receive school bus safety training at school?

Yes. Children grades kindergarten through tenth must receive school bus safety training during the first few weeks of school. It is recommended that parents review the school bus safety rules with younger children throughout the school year.

12. Do students practice emergency evacuations from the school bus?

Yes. By law it is required on an annual basis that students grades K-10 be instructed in the proper way to evacuate a school bus in an emergency situation. Drills are performed on each route in the early fall of each school year. Drivers are trained in the proper use of emergency exits and procedures.

13. Are there any laws and rules that limit the passenger seating on a school bus?

Yes. The number of children on the school bus cannot be more than the number of passengers that can be fully seated. The seating capacity must be adjusted according to each passenger's individual physical size but cannot be more than the manufacturer's rated seating capacity for the bus. No child is allowed to stand while the bus is in motion.

14. Must a school district transport children who live less than two miles from school if there is a hazard between the home and the school?

No. A school district may transport children who would encounter an extraordinary traffic, drug or crime hazard if they walked, but the school district is not required to provide transportation.

15. Who determines what conditions are extraordinary traffic, drug or crime hazards?

The school district would determine what conditions would be considered hazardous.

16. If I am registering or moving in August or September, just before school starts, do I need to call the transportation office?

The planning for and revising of bus routes occurs throughout the summer months. The sooner our transportation staff knows of any move the better in order to provide the safest and most timely routing for all students.

17. My child is a special education student. Who do I contact to arrange transportation?

Please contact the principal of the school your child is or will be attending.

18. My child goes to daycare; can they get busing to/from the daycare?

Yes, as long as the daycare is located inside that school's attendance and geographical bussing area. Students would need to always be picked up in the same location and also dropped off in

the same location. The pickup and drop off locations may be different from each other, but need to be the same location each day.

19. My child is not eligible for transportation but attends a daycare in an area that is eligible for transportation. Is my child eligible to ride to and from the daycare?

The student would be allowed to ride to and from the daycare, provide this is a consistent location each day.

20. We live on a cul-de-sac. Will the bus come down our street?

Except to transport special education students, buses generally are not routed down cul-de-sacs because of the danger to small children and property while the bus is turning around or backing up in the small area.

21. What is allowed on a bus?

Questions arise from time to time about what students may bring with them on the school bus. The Transportation Department tries to accommodate student's needs whenever possible. The department's rule of thumb is that students may bring items such as musical instruments that they can hold on their laps or between their legs during the bus ride. Objects like toys may be carried on the bus only if they are kept in a student's backpack and are not brought out during the ride to or from school.

Some objects are never allowed on the route buses. These objects include:

- Guns including play guns
- Knives or other sharp objects
- Gasoline engines or cans
- Animals, insects or fish
- Matches, lighters
- Glass items, aerosol products
- Laser pens
- Skis, ski poles, hockey sticks
- Skateboards, scooters
- Golf clubs, lacrosse sticks, baseball bats
- Balloons
- Any items of dangerous or objectionable nature determined by the Transportation Department.

Our goal is for students to have a safe and respectful ride to and from school. We appreciate your cooperation.

22. Why do some buses look empty?

Transportation Services makes every effort to fully maximize bus capacities. On occasion, buses may not be fully utilized due to the nature of transportation, Special Education, ELL, and other specific programming needs.

23. What happens if my child loses something on the bus?

Drivers inspect the interior of the bus after each route. Drivers are instructed to keep all found articles of unknown origin on board the bus at least one day. Articles may be claimed directly from the driver or you may contact the district bus garage. Unclaimed articles are kept in our "lost and found" for a few weeks.

24. The bus goes right by my house. Why can't it stop here?

School bus stops are placed in central locations to shorten route length and times. Transportation services make every effort to see that these stops are safe and have appropriate walking routes to them. By law, school buses must also have at least one to three hundred feet between stops (determined by a road's speed limit). The higher frequency of stops made by the bus increases the danger for an accident because of impatient motorists and increasing the number of stops, makes the student ride time longer.

25. Why can I not see the bus stop from my house?

The school district provides transportation for about 950 students to and from school each day. We are not able to position bus stops so that all parents or daycare providers are able to see the stop from their home. It is the responsibility of the parents, guardian, or daycare provider to ensure that their child arrives safely at the bus stop.

26. Why do some children have to cross the street to board the school bus?

While every effort is made to minimize student's crossing the street/road, it is not realistically possible to route busses for all children to board on the door side.

27. My child carries a large musical instrument and /or a heavy backpack; he/she is the only student using the bus stop, can the stop be closer to our home?

Generally, bus stops are centrally located for all students. Bus stops are not changed to accommodate one or more students because that may displace other students further from

their home. A central bus stop is necessary because other students may begin riding the bus or new families may move into the neighborhood. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their child arrives safely at the bus stop.

28. I own a daycare and need the stop at my house because the state requires me to see the students at all times. Why can't the bus stop be located at my house?

As noted above, bus stops are centrally located. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the daycare provider to get the students to the bus stop.

29. I have young children at home and/or I leave home because of work.

In order to be consistent and fair in placement of bus stops, the school district is not able to establish stops based on personal circumstances.

30. Are seat belts required on school buses?

Seat belts on school buses are not required equipment for most school busses. School buses utilize the "compartmentalization" concept to insure student safety. Since the mid – 70's the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has determined that this approach to student safety is the most practical for school buses. Compartmentalization is an arrangement whereby seats are placed close together to absorb the energy of a child's body thrown against it. Additional padding, higher seat backs frame construction, and anchoring requirements make compartmentalization the accepted choice of, and the industry standard. Efforts are currently underway to revisit the seat belt issued on a national scale. Testing is currently being done to determine what the next generation of "child restraints" for school buses might be. The outcome of this testing will be reported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration before the determining if viable options exist and are necessary for changes.

31. Do you need a special license to drive a school bus?

Yes. All drivers are required to maintain in good standing a class B commercial drivers license (CDL) with a School Bus and Passenger endorsements. All drivers are subject to drug and alcohol testing and a criminal background check. They also need to pass a physical every one or two years. Drivers receive 20-30 hours of initial training and driver's licenses are also reviewed twice annually with State records.

32. If I have a concern or complaint about a transportation issue, who do I talk to about the issue?

Call **Chad Gamradt, Transportation Director**, at **320-351-5802** or 320-352-2284, ext. 4008.