

2026-27 Bus Pass Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



2026-27 School Busing Updates

How do you apply for a bus pass?

The District will be accepting bus applications starting on March 24, 2026 and are due by **May 15, 2026**. Every family must register for a bus pass for each child. An individual bus pass is $550 and the family cap is $900 for the 2026-27 school year.

We will continue to have the Middle and High School bus runs be combined however, every effort will be made to have the younger children in grades 6 and 7 sit at the front of the bus, and older children in grades 11 and 12 will be seated towards the rear of the bus.

Space may be limited on certain bus runs depending on bus enrollment. The District will have a first come, first serve wait list for those buses that are full. We will make every effort possible to avoid a waitlist and to try to accommodate all families, however, please keep in mind that this could be a possibility. Should space open up, we will contact the families on the waitlist.

The District will be monitoring the timing of bus routes during the first week of school and may need to adjust, if needed.

Who is eligible for free busing?

Bus privileges are provided free of charge to the following populations:

- Students in grades K-6 who live more than 2 miles from their school.
- Students who are eligible for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program and complete the required Sharing of Information form. **Families must apply for this program every year.**
- Students whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) include free busing.

Please note that even students who receive free busing must apply for and display their bus pass to the bus driver.

How is the 2.0 mile distance determined for students in grades K-6?

It is measured by using the shortest most commonly travelled route from the public way in front of a student's home and nearest entranceway of the school. The District works with the Town GIS Coordinator to measure and calculate this distance each year.

If I am not eligible for free busing how do I purchase a bus pass?

During the Springtime, an email goes out to all families with information on how to purchase a bus pass. This year, online applications are available by visiting Family ID which can be accessed via the school District website at http://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us.

How much does the bus pass cost and how can I pay?
A discount is applied for passes acquired prior to **May 15th.** The pre-**May 15, 2026** cost for individual bus passes is $550 per year, with a family maximum of $900. Payments received after **May 15th** requires a payment of $575 (family maximum of $925). You may pay by check or money order. Payments can also be made via credit card or ACH online. The online payment link for Unibank can be found on the District website under "online payments". A small additional fee will be charged for online credit card payments.

Why do I have to register by May 15th?
The bus stops and routes cannot be finalized until we know who is riding the busses. The registration window for the following year was moved up to ensure the District has adequate time to review student's enrollment and thus have more time to develop and prepare bus routes for the following year in an effort to improve services. As seats tend to fill up quick, especially for the Middle School/High School buses, it is at a first come, first served basis. A waitlist may be needed if these buses reach their seating capacity.

Are there one-way passes or monthly passes available for purchase?
No. We contract for buses for the school year. Bus passes allow for service for the entire year.

Can I schedule monthly payments for my bus pass?
No. In order to keep the administrative costs down for bus passes we cannot schedule individual payment plans. Instead, we send out bus pass information very early in order to provide additional time for families to budget their finances. We do accept online payments and through this service you may make payment with your credit card. An additional fee will apply if you use a credit card.

Is there financial aid available?
If your family is eligible for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program you may have your bus fee waived. Applications are available starting in the month of June for the following school year at every school, at the School Business Office or online at: https://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us/departments/food-services/free-reduced-lunch. Please do not complete a 2025-26 form for the 2026-27 school year as they will not be accepted.

Along with the Free or Reduced Lunch Program, the North Reading School Committee has authorized the implementation of a district-wide user fee universal cap for all North Reading families with student(s) participating in the following programs: athletics, extra-curricular clubs and activities, performing arts programs and busing. This program institutes a family annual user fee cap of $1,800 for these programs with School Committee approved fees. The cap will be reviewed on an annual basis. Families must complete an application to be considered for the universal user fee cap, and if approved, will receive a break on the above applicable fees. Information on the new User Fee Cap Program can be found on the District website at: https://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us/departments/finance-operations/other-information. Families seeking financial assistance are encouraged to first complete the Free and Reduced Lunch Application along with the Sharing of Information Waiver Form.

Does everyone need a bus pass?
Yes, every rider must have a bus pass. **There are no exceptions**. In addition, students will be assigned a specific bus number which will be printed on the back of their bus pass. Students must ride the bus they are assigned to each day. Students will not be permitted to ride on a different bus unless they

have received permission from the School Principal's Office. This will only be permitted in rare circumstances and if there are seats available.

Will students be required to wear a mask while riding the bus?
Currently, as of February 28, 2022, there is no state or federal mandate requiring masks to be worn on school buses.

I lost my bus pass. What should I do?
Replacement passes are sold in the School Business Office for a $15 fee. We only accept checks or money order.

How do I find out where and when the bus stops will be located?
Bus routes and stops will be published approximately 1 week prior to the start of school in the North Reading Transcript. The bus stops are also available at the North Reading District website that may be found at https://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us/departments/finance-operations/bus-transportation. Bus stops for elementary students are generally located at established neighborhood locations. Bus stops for middle and high school students tend to be outside of neighborhoods at major intersections. If you feel there is an extraordinary circumstance that would justify reevaluation of a bus stop location, please put your concern in writing. A few weeks after the bus routes have settled we will review your request.

Are the bus stops for Middle and High School at the same locations as they were for elementary School?
No. Bus stops will likely be farther from your house than they were for elementary school. The buses have to provide service to the entire town for middle and high school. It isn't possible to provide the same level of neighborhood service. Middle and High school students may be as far as 1 ½ miles from their bus stops.

Is bus service provided to all streets and neighborhoods?
The short answer is no. Streets that are not accepted by the Town of North Reading, unpaved roads and/or areas that buses cannot safely traverse are examples or areas that do not receive bus service. However, the School Department works closely with the Public Safety Department and the Safety Officer in these instances and reserves the right to provide bus service within these areas of Town at the School Department's discretion. In areas where bus service cannot be provided, buses will pick up and drop children off at the nearest bus stop. We encourage parents to participate in car pools in these instances.

Does the presence of sidewalks affect the bus stops?
Yes. Neighborhoods that have the benefit of sidewalks will have bus stops spread out farther. However, neighborhoods with no sidewalks will have bus stops situated in closer proximity.

The bus drives right passed my house. Why can't you add a stop, it will only take one minute?
Unfortunately, it would add a considerable amount of time to the bus routes if we agreed to such requests for everyone.

What time should I arrive at the bus stop?
Each route has an approximate time listed for the first pick-up. Please note that at the beginning of the school year this can vary by as much as 15 minutes. It is recommended that you arrive earlier than the average time listed (at least 10 to 15 minutes) until a time pattern is established.

What are the bus arrangements for Kindergarten students?
When possible, bus stops are provided close to kindergarteners' homes at the mid-day drop-off or mid-day pick-up. The morning pick-up and the afternoon drop-off are located at the normal neighborhood stops, along with children in grades 1 to 5. In order to benefit from the mid-day bus stop privileges you needed to have acquired your pass before **May 15, 2026**. Bus passes acquired after this date will result in delayed inclusion of your home on the specialized kindergarten route system. Please note that **full day** kindergartners do not have mid-day bus service, therefore, there is no "door-to-door" service. Parents must be present at bus stops for all kindergartners and are not to be left unattended when dropped off at home. If parents are not home, the students are to be returned to the school or the Central Office, located at 189 Park St.

Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns regarding my child's bus transportation?
Rosaly MacKillop is the designated Transportation Coordinator with the North Reading School District. Rosaly can be reached via telephone at 978-526-5252 or via email at rmackillop@nrpsk12.org. Ms. MacKillop logs each message and we will ensure each parent receives a response to their question or concern. In addition, parents may also contact Michael Connelly, the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, at 978-526-5270 or mconnelly@nrpsk12.org.

If there are behavior problems on the bus who can I report this to?
Behavioral or other school-related problems should be reported to the school Principal.

Can a student's conduct result in suspension from bus privileges?
Yes. Students are expected to behave in a manner which will provide for the optimum safety of the individual student as well as the other students riding the bus. When a student is reported for violating a safety rule in or around a school bus, school officials will review the situation with the student. Parents will be notified of the behavior. Depending on the situation the student can: receive a warning, receive a brief suspension from the bus or lose bus privileges for the balance of the school year. No bus user fees will be refunded in such an instance. Please review the bus pass rules and regulations with your child(ren) which can be found on the school District website.

What happens if a student has a medical need?
If a student has a medical need such as an allergy in which an epi-pen is needed, please inform the bus driver of where it is located. In the event that the student cannot administer it themselves, the drivers have been instructed to do what is necessary as part of their CPR/First Aid training.

What if I lost or forgot an item on the bus?
There is a lost and found on each bus. Please contact North Suburban or speak to the bus driver regarding the lost item.

What carry-on items are allowed and not allowed on the school bus?
Carry-on items such as instruments and sporting equipment must be small enough to fit on the student's lap. Items are not to be placed in the aisles or on the seat next to the child and must be small enough to be carried by the student alone. Items that cannot be securely held on a student's

lap (such as cellos, drums, guitars, large gym bags, etc.) are not allowed on the bus as it would present a safety hazard.

Is there a parent communication smart phone app available to monitor my child route to and from school?

Yes, the District has collaborated with a company known as BusRight to assist with bus routing, GPS tracking, and parent communication services all in an effort to enhance our bus operations and improve parent communication efforts in North Reading. The communication app will allow parents to follow their child's bus route to and from school in real time and receive notifications of when the bus begins and ends its route, and what the expected arrival times are at their child's designated bus stop. Questions or issues regarding use of the BusRight app should be directed to support@busright.com.