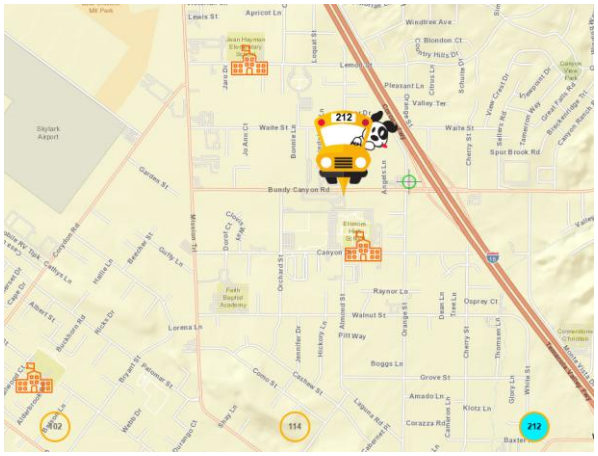
2026
TRANSPORTATION
PLAN





Updated January 2026

OVERVIEW

Lake Elsinore Unified School District (LEUSD) boundaries stretch over 150 square miles through Southwest Riverside County, serving families in Lake Elsinore, Canyon Lake, and Wildomar, and several unincorporated Riverside County communities, including Lakeland Village and Horsethief Canyon.

Our earliest schools began serving the valley during the 1880s, a few years before the City of Lake Elsinore's incorporation (1888). In 1988, Elsinore Union High School District unified with the Elsinore Elementary District (K-8) to form LEUSD. Over 140 years later, the legacy of education at LEUSD continues serving over 21 000 TK- 12th-grade students district at 25 schools, including alternative education programs.

Working collaboratively, our team of nearly 2,500 classified and certificated staff, families, and educational partners strive to prepare students for college and career success. Our schools engage students in innovative and diverse ways, including dual immersion, AVID, STEAM, visual and performing arts, Career and Technical education, advanced placement, and much more.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

In accordance with Education Code 39800.1, the District shall develop a plan describing the transportation services it will offer to its pupils and how it will prioritize planned transportation services for pupils in transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, and any of grades 1 to 6, inclusive, and pupils who are low income. The plan shall be adopted by the local educational agency's governing board on or before April 1, 2023, and updated by April 1 each year thereafter.

LEUSD’s Pupil Transportation Plan is designed to provide safe and consistent transportation services for our families, specifically emphasizing our general education and special needs students.

The additional anticipated home to school revenue should come in at about one million dollars. Capital Outlay, Non-Agency expenditures and Home to

School Transportation Add-On Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) have been deducted from the projected revenue.

The District owns and operates its school bus service consisting of 20 general education bus routes and 30 special needs bus routes servicing over 2,400 students. LEUSD bus drivers log nearly 1 million miles per year. Forty-Six (46) percent of the fleet is low emission Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses. In December 2024, LEUSD received a delivery of 32 new Special Needs buses and 10 new Gen Ed buses reducing the average age of Lake Elsinore's bus fleet from 18 years to 7 years. In addition to our primary service, LEUSD also has agreements with outside services to help augment the district's alternative transportation support for non-public schools, McKinney/Vento, and Foster Care requirements.

Although Lake Elsinore USD has been significantly impacted by the nationwide shortage of school bus drivers, we continue to develop creative options to provide transportation services to students. LEUSD provides transportation services to three (3) high schools, four (4) middle schools, two (2) K-8 schools, ten (10) elementary schools within the District, and thirteen (13) Non-Public School sites.

General Education Transportation

The Lake Elsinore Unified School District Board of Education policy provides that students, grades TK through 12th residing in designated transportation zones based on geographic location and distance from the school shall be eligible for general education transportation to and from school. LEUSD transports approximately 2,000 students per year.

LEUSD has established parent pay transportation for students who are eligible to ride the bus. The District offers free and reduced transportation to low-income families and other unduplicated categories. Parents who opt out of transportation for their child can obtain free transit passes from the Riverside Transit Authority (RTA). The District may authorize transportation service within the minimum distance when special circumstances,

problems, or hazards exist. The District will establish routes for schools that may be experiencing a high percentage of chronic absenteeism among their students; which may alleviate the barrier of getting to and from school.

Student Eligibility – Students With Disabilities

The District desires to meet the transportation needs of students with disabilities to enable them to benefit from special education and related services. Therefore, the District shall provide appropriate transportation services, at no cost, for a student with disabilities when the district is the student's district of residence and the transportation services are required by his/her Individualized Education Program (IEP) or qualifying Section 504 accommodation plan. The Special Education Office handles the placement of students of special needs who require transportation and works with the Transportation Department to coordinate the best possible transportation solution for students. LEUSD transports approximately 500 special needs students per year.

McKinney/Vento & Foster Care Students

Requests for McKinney/Vento and Foster Care students go through the Student Support Services Office. Through collaborative dialogue with other education partners and the county, a transportation plan is created that is best suited for the needs of the student and based on the transportation options available. LEUSD transports approximately 30 McKinney/Vento and foster care students per year.

How Routes Are Established

Bus routes are created incorporating a multi-use trip model where buses are used multiple times within the school bell schedules for the morning trip and afternoon trip for primary, secondary, and special needs students. Students are picked up from transportation zones established in 2013. There is also a 5-mile “no transportation” zone (or radius) for the high schools, a 3-mile radius for middle schools and a 2-mile radius for elementary schools. Multiple grade levels and schools ride to and from school on the same bus.

Maximum ride times are established for general education routes and special needs routes. In general, special needs routes are established with a maximum ride time of 90 minutes and general ed routes are established at 75 minutes respectively. The overall average ride time for students is 60 minutes. In general, pick up times for secondary schools are established no earlier than 6:30 am and elementary pick-ups start no earlier than 7:00 am. Exceptions to this may be due to distance from school for McKinney/Vento & Foster Care situations, multi-use routes where elementary and secondary students ride the same bus, or other special circumstances.

To maximize seating capacity and utilization on general education routes, the following bus load parameters have been created:

- Elementary Students 78 passengers per bus.
- Middle School Students 65 passengers per bus.
- High School Students 52 passengers per bus.

For special needs routes, maximum loads are based on size and type of bus being used. Buses equipped with wheelchair spaces generally have less seating capacity for ambulatory students.

Enhancements To Improve Service

Lake Elsinore USD has integrated routing software and global positioning systems into its operation to develop more efficient bus routes and to track student riders. Parents also have the ability to track their student's bus route using a smartphone app. These enhancements provide the District with a robust transportation-based student information system and the ability to know which students are riding the bus at any given time. To improve communications for route delays and other notifications, Transportation uses Parent Square to send emails, text and phone messages to parents.

Challenges

The bus driver shortage and employee turnover due to retirements are two of the biggest challenges that continue to impact LEUSD today. The increase in McKinney/Vento and special need placements put great stress on the transportation operation due to the geographically remote locations these students come from. This makes it more difficult to accommodate requests in a timely manner since they usually require adding a new driver to satisfy the request. LEUSD is addressing these structural challenges by continuing to refine the training process to onboard new school bus drivers, improving our strategies to hire drivers from outside the district, and expanding our alternative transportation fleet and staff.

In all, Lake Elsinore USD is providing a flexible set of transportation solutions for the students it serves and will continue to strive to provide a safe, cost effective and efficient service as staff shortages continue.