



BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Division of Business Services
Business Services Operations

Office of Transportation

Transportation Operating Procedures



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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Transportation is to provide safe and efficient school transportation services in an environment that fosters positive social interaction and allows students to be successful learners.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

The Office of Transportation is responsible for establishing and administering school bus transportation services for regular education programs, special education programs, magnet programs, and alternative programs.

The Office of Transportation is responsible for:

- Providing on-time transportation service to schools and school related activities.
- Determining students' transportation eligibility.
- Establishing school bus stops for each school.
- Establishing the opening and closing times for each school.

ROUTES AND SERVICES

School bus service will be provided consistent with distance eligibility criteria established in Board of Education Policy 3410 or for exceptions granted for walking conditions not meeting an acceptable level of safety. Service shall be provided within the parameters of acceptable levels of safety, program efficiency, economy of operations, and equity of service; however, safety shall be the primary consideration.

Bus schedules shall be established to fully utilize all buses. In establishing bus stops, the safety of students presently on the bus, the safety of students boarding or leaving the bus, and the safety of other motorists shall all be considered.

Before schools open each year and at various times during the year, bus routes, stops and schedules shall be reviewed to determine means of improving safety and efficiency of the operation.

Regular routes shall be established in the interest of safety with the following factors given consideration:

1. Students' eligibility for bus service within the school boundary
2. Location of students' homes and number of students in areas to be served
3. Availability of buses for routes.
4. Road and student walking conditions
5. Students may be expected to walk as far to get to a bus stop as other students of the same level, who are not eligible for transportation, are asked to walk to school.
6. Students may use a different bus stop in the morning and afternoon, but those stops must be the same Monday through Friday.

The Office of Transportation is responsible for establishing school opening and closing hours. Bus arrivals will be scheduled within 15 minutes of opening and closing times at middle and elementary schools. At high schools, buses will arrive within 30 minutes of the opening time.

ELIGIBILITY FOR SERVICE

School bus transportation is provided under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for elementary and middle school students who must walk more than one (1) mile to the assigned school. School bus transportation is provided under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for high school students who must walk more than one-and-one-half (1/1/2) miles to the assigned school.

The preceding statements of policy concerning walking distances of students to school shall be adhered to except when circumstances and surrounding road conditions necessitate a change. In these cases, some few students may be required to walk a distance in excess of the stated limits, or others who live within the limits may be transported. The Superintendent of Schools and the staff will individually consider cases.

Occasionally, students eligible for bus service may be required by the Board of Education to use public transportation servicing their area. This service is paid for by the Board of Education.

DISTANCE MEASUREMENTS

The residence of the parent/guardian will be used to determine eligibility for transportation. For the purposes of establishing school bus service, day care centers will be treated as individual residential addresses.

- A. Measurements will be from the residence property line to the nearest available door of the school.
- B. Measurements from apartment complexes, condominiums, and townhouses will be from the property line of the unit or the apartment or condominium building entrance to the closest available door of the school.
- C. Measurements will be made using road shoulders, pathways, right-of-ways, sidewalks or other surfaces which students can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles unless:
 - 1. It is a residential street in a community with little or no transient traffic;
 - 2. Roads/streets with speed limits of 30 miles per hour or less.
- D. Measurements will be made using suitable crossings which are defined as:
 - 1. Where students are not required to walk across railroads, bridges, tunnels or overpasses unless they have adequate pedestrian walkways.
 - 2. Where students are not required to cross a principal arterial or freeway unless a grade separated crossing is provided.

3. Where students are not required to cross a proliferation of business/commercial district entrances when using road shoulders or right-of-ways as a walkway.
4. Where adequate sight distance, line striping and crosswalk signing exists when warranted.
5. Adequate sight distance as referenced above is defined as follows:
 - 25 mph – 250 feet
 - 30 mph – 300 feet
 - 35 mph – 350 feet

ESTABLISHING SCHOOL BUS STOPS/ROUTES

In the case of regular education, neighborhood bus stops are provided in accordance with the walking boundaries established in policy 3410. In the case of magnet and alternative programs, centralized pick-up points are established, and typically these are located at one or more neighborhood schools. In the case of special education programs, bus service is arranged in accordance with a student's Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

- School bus stops will be established considering safety, efficiency, economy, and equity and should be at least one-quarter (1/4) mile apart. Stops may be made closer for reasons of safety.
- Bus stops will be established for eligible elementary students in regular and special education programs on both sides of any roadway with a posted speed limit of over 35 miles per hour.
- Bus stops will be established for eligible secondary students in regular and special education programs on both sides of any roadway with a posted speed limit of over 40 miles per hour.
- Buses will not be routed into a dead-end cul-de-sac or other street that requires a three-point turn or a backing maneuver to exit unless the alternative bus stop would present an unusual safety hazard.
- Buses will not be routed on private roadways or on roads not maintained by the county or state governments.
- Bus stops shall be at the same location 5 days a week.

CROSSING PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

Taking into consideration that motorists all too frequently ignore a school bus's flashing red lights, the following crossing procedures have been established in the interest of safety:

- Students are to be at their designated bus stops and on the side of the road of the bus pickup five (5) minutes before the bus arrives.
- Except at specifically designated bus stops, the students are not to wait until the bus stops and then cross the road to board the bus
- Students getting off the bus are to wait on the side of the road where they get off.
- Students must stand away from the side of the bus until the bus pulls away, leaving better clearance for vision in both directions.
- When traffic is cleared and it is safe to cross, the students proceed to the other side of the road.

School administrators and parents should reinforce the crossing procedures continually. Information regarding crossing procedures is included in the School Bus Safety curriculum guide.

SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION

The Office of Transportation is an integral partner in the delivery of educational services for students with special needs. Parents, the Office of Special Education and/or the IEP chairperson should request that a representative from the Office of Transportation attend the IEP meeting to address concerns and/or issues. The Office of Transportation must be consulted and/or represented at any IEP meeting where transportation services are included in the IEP.

If a student requires special equipment on the bus, that information should be included in the IEP. The Office of Transportation will work closely with the school, parents and IEP team to provide the approved equipment including occupant restraints or support devices, as required for individual students.

Bus attendants shall be assigned to buses serving students with special needs. The attendant's role is to assist with student loading and unloading, and with the care of students while on the bus, including the use of any required special equipment.

Although school bus drivers and attendants are required to attend annual training sessions developed by the Office of Transportation, schools are also strongly encouraged to provide supplemental training on topics including but not limited to techniques in positive behavior management and/or other disability-specific issues.

Drivers and attendants are available to meet at the school with parents, the school nurse, or IEP team members to discuss specific considerations or concerns as they relate to individual students.

Bus Stop Location

- Whenever feasible, service for students with special needs is provided to the home address; however, there are many courts and dead-end streets that buses cannot safely negotiate. In these cases, parents/guardians or child care providers are responsible for meeting the bus at the nearest safe location as determined by the Office of Transportation.

Loading and Unloading Procedures

- All students must be ready to board the bus at least five (5) minutes before the scheduled time.
- All students with special needs must be accompanied to and from the approved bus stop by a parent or guardian unless the parents/guardians have provided prior written authorization for students to be picked up by and discharged from the bus without someone to receive them.
- If no one is at the approved bus stop to receive a student, the driver will contact the Office of Transportation to receive further direction. The driver may return to the bus stop after completing the route, or return the student to school.

Length of Ride

- Every effort is made to provide the shortest and safest ride for all students; however, because of the individualized nature of special needs bus service and the distance from students' homes to their school placements, student ride times may vary significantly.
- Changes in the student population throughout the year require frequent route changes and will also alter the length of the bus ride.

TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES FOR ELEMENTARY, K, AND PRE-K STUDENTS

Bus drivers are responsible for students from the time they enter the bus until the time they exit the bus. Drivers should only load and unload students at the bus stops to which they are assigned. Elementary students may use a different pick-up and discharge bus stop, but each shall be at the same location 5 days a week.

In the afternoon, elementary students will be discharged at the bus stop when the bus driver is sure that it is the student's assigned bus stop. A parent/guardian does not have to be present at the bus stop. However, when the bus driver is not sure whether the stop is the correct bus stop or is concerned for the safety of the student for any reason, the driver shall complete the route and then return the student to school. When the driver makes the decision to return a student to school, the driver should immediately notify the Office of Transportation.

The bus drivers and the schools should work cooperatively to see that kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students are seated in the front of the bus both on the ride into school and on the bus ride home.

Mid-day Dismissal Service for Pre-Kindergarten Students

Morning pre-kindergarten students must be met by a responsible, authorized person at each mid-day stop. If a student is not met, the driver shall complete the route and return the student to school. The driver shall immediately notify the Office of Transportation when a student is not met.

Typically, bus attendants are not assigned to mid-day routes; however, the Senior Operations Supervisor (SOS) for the Office of Transportation is responsible for identifying situations that may warrant assigning an attendant to a mid-day route either permanently or temporarily.

Schools are responsible for seeing that all kindergarten and pre-kindergarten students board the bus from school wearing a prominently placed I.D. badge/tag with the following information:

- School Name
- Student Name
- Home Address
- Home & emergency phone numbers
- Bus Stop
- Applicable day care Information (provider name, address, phone number)
- Picture I.D. or tag color-coded with the bus name/color preferred

Schools shall inform parents of the requirement for afternoon pre-kindergarten students to wear an I.D. tag/badge when boarding the bus from home.

Mid-day Bus Stops

- Mid-day bus stops for pre-kindergarten students will generally be established at the student's home or the nearest corner to the home.
- Group stops will be established in apartment complexes or when houses are so close together that individual stops at each address cannot be made safely.

End of the Day Stops

- Afternoon pre-kindergarten students will use the regular bus stops established for full-day students.
- When elementary schools close early (either scheduled early dismissals or emergency early dismissals), all students will use the bus stops established for full-day students.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO CHILD CARE FACILITIES

Baltimore County Public Schools will provide transportation from a child care provider to a public school providing the child care facility is within the boundaries of the school district and the transported area of the school.

Children who have transferred to a public elementary school under existing transfer policies and are attending a child care facility within the boundaries of the school district and the transported area to which the child has transferred will likewise be provided transportation from the child care facility to the public school.

Children attending child care facilities that are within the non-transported area of an assigned school will not be provided transportation, unless the walking conditions, as determined by the Office of Transportation, are unsafe.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR MAGNET SCHOOLS

Elementary Schools

Baltimore County Public Schools provides transportation to and from elementary magnet programs for students who reside within the established transportation zone of the magnet program. Some transportation is arranged as shuttle service from the home school location. This may require students to ride the regular neighborhood bus or to walk to the home school where they are picked up as a group and then transported to the magnet program.

Magnet schools will notify parents/guardians of specific transportation provisions prior to the opening of school.

Secondary Schools

Baltimore County Public Schools provides transportation to and from magnet programs in secondary schools for students who reside within the established transportation zone of the magnet program. Transportation is provided from a limited number of pick-up points located at designated school sites in each of the five geographic areas of the county. Parents/guardians are responsible for providing transportation for their students to and from their designated pick-up point.

Magnet schools will notify parents/guardians of the respective pick-up points prior to the opening of school for the upcoming year. Magnet school stops and pick-up points do not fall under the same guidelines as regular bus stops with regard to distance and walking conditions. Supervision of the students at the magnet school stops and pick-up points is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Transportation is not provided for students who reside outside of the established transportation zone of a magnet program.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR PRIVATE/NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Children who attend private schools in Baltimore County may be eligible for school bus transportation on established school bus routes provided by the Board from a point on public roadways nearest or most accessible to their respective homes, to a point on public roadways nearest or most accessible to their respective schools, without changing the route of the bus in question. These students shall be expected to conform to the same rules and regulations that apply to public school students.

DISCONTINUATION OF SERVICE

Once bus service has been authorized and initiated by the Office of Transportation, that service will not be discontinued unless written notice from the school to the parents of the students affected has been provided. The elimination of service will typically coincide with the opening of a new school year unless safety considerations warrant immediate termination.

APPEALS

Appeals of the decisions made by the Office of Transportation regarding bus stops, walking conditions, or eligibility for bus service may be directed to the Executive Director, Business Services Operations. The Executive Director may refer appeals to the Transportation Advisory Committee. The Transportation Advisory Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Superintendent of Schools.

The Transportation Advisory Committee is composed of:

- Two parent representatives
- A representative from the Baltimore County Police Department
- A representative from the Baltimore County Highways Department
- A representative from the Baltimore County Traffic Engineering Department
- A representative from the State Highway Administration

The Transportation Advisory Committee will conduct an on-site assessment of the concerns identified in the appeal and provide its findings and recommendations in writing to the Executive Director, Business Services Operations. The Superintendent will review the committee's findings and recommendations and make a final determination on the appeal.

An appeal of the Superintendent's decision may be made by filing a written appeal to the Chair of the Board of Education.

NON-APPROVED RIDERS

The transportation of adults, except when they are acting in the capacity of chaperones on field trips, is prohibited. Children of adult chaperones who are not enrolled in Baltimore County Public Schools and non-participants in the scheduled event are also prohibited.

Parents may not ride school buses when they are being used to transport children to and from school on their regularly scheduled routes without prior approval of the Office of Transportation.

SCHOOL BUS EMERGENCY EVACUATION

In September and February, each school must conduct school bus emergency evacuation drills. Every precaution must be taken to see that the procedures and appropriate behavior for leaving a school bus in case of an emergency have been discussed and practiced with all students. Students must have practice in leaving the bus through the bus emergency door, as well as through the front door.

Such drills are to be conducted with the same seriousness as displayed during the monthly fire drills in the school building. Students should practice leaving the bus in an orderly manner without pausing to gather up books or personal belongings.

Emergency evacuations are to be conducted on the school grounds. It should be noted that in a true emergency many hazards would exist along a roadway that do not exist in a practice drill on the school grounds. Therefore, it is extremely important to stress that appropriate conduct is expected of students after they have left the bus.

The following recommendations are offered to school administrators for conducting these drills:

1. Plan the drills ahead of time.
2. Explain all details to students ahead of time and answer any questions. Do not plan a drill as a complete surprise.
3. Schedule drills when buses arrive in the morning or ahead of dismissal time in the afternoon.
4. Conduct drills at a safe place on the school grounds. Select a spot to the right and well away from the bus where the students are to assemble and await the "all clear" signal. Older students can help in providing supervision.
5. Provide opportunities for students to practice leaving the bus by the rear door only, as well as by both doors.
6. Instruct students that the bus driver may not be able to get to the rear door in an actual emergency. Use students to assist in opening the rear door and helping smaller children alight. Make sure the bus is empty.
7. Allow students to decide for themselves, if possible, how much assistance they will need and how they will go about jumping out of the rear door. Show the helping students how to offer a helping hand: palm up and avoid grasping other students' arms, or reaching up to pull them out. Try to let the students hold on as they are receiving help.
8. Time each drill. Announce the results to the riders. Strive to keep the evacuation time for each drill under two (2) minutes.

FIELD TRIPS

Availability of Board of Education Buses for Field Trips

Baltimore County Public School buses are generally available for authorized field trips. The Office of Transportation establishes procedures for the use of these buses and guidelines are published annually. If public school buses are not available, schools are required to use properly certified and insured contracted transportation.

Baltimore County Public School buses should be used for field trips throughout Baltimore County, Baltimore City and other nearby points when such trips can be made within the time limits of 9:30 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. As a result of the heavy demand for field trip buses, occasionally it is necessary for buses to begin and end from two different terminal locations.

Unforeseen circumstances and conditions may result in the need for the bus drivers to change the scheduled return time of a field trip. It is of utmost importance that they receive full cooperation from the teachers in charge. The 1:45 p.m. arrival at school is absolutely essential in order that there will be no interruption in the regular afternoon operation.

Field trip rates are set and updated by the Office of Transportation on an annual basis.

Procedures for Ordering Field Trips

When using Baltimore County Public School buses for field trips:

1. Field trips may be scheduled by contacting an area dispatch office. Requests should be made at least two (2) weeks prior to the trip date by completing a Request for Field Trip form. At that time each stop the bus will be required to make should be indicated.
2. Depending upon the availability of buses, the dispatcher will accept the request, answer questions, enter the trip into the database, and complete the transportation arrangements.
3. There are forms for school personnel to submit; however, for administrative control purposes, it is recommended that each school maintain its own internal Teacher-Principal request and approval procedure. It is helpful if each school's requests are coordinated and telephoned into the dispatcher by the same individual at that school.
4. A written confirmation of the trip, including an estimate will be provided within two (2) school days.
5. Upon completion of the trip, the teacher and the driver shall agree to the recorded mileage and time. Trips are charged on an hourly and per-mile basis. All trips except GRANT PAID will be billed to a school account number and a notice will be provided.

OTHER PERTINENT FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

- Regular transportation rules concerning pupil behavior on the bus will be in effect and should be enforced by the teacher in charge during all field trips.
- Buses will not depart unless every passenger has a seat. Standees are not allowed on field trips.
- In case of an accident or a breakdown while on the trip, the Office of Transportation is to be notified promptly. If the trip is scheduled on a weekend or during evening hours, the Office of Security should be notified.
- In the event the trip is canceled, the school shall notify the dispatcher promptly. The Office of Transportation staff will make every effort to nullify the trip by contacting the driver in advance. However, if this is not possible, it will be necessary to assess a minimum service charge of one hour.
- Toll facility fees will be handled by the bus driver.
- Parking fees are the responsibility of the school.

APPROVED CONTRACTORS

The list of approved contractors is available on the Office of Transportation web-site at <http://www.bcps.org/offices/transportation/publications/>. Even with the Baltimore County Public Schools screening process, the final decision concerning the use of a particular bus or driver

lies with the school personnel. If a bus appears with unmistakable defects such as badly worn tires, defective exhaust system or extensive metal damage, it obviously should not be used. If the driver appears overly fatigued from working another job prior to driving the bus, he/she should not be used. When in doubt, ask questions of the driver or call the company.

VIDEO CAMERA PROCEDURES

The use of video technology on Baltimore County Public School buses is intended to support a safe and orderly environment while transporting students to and from school and school related activities.

Students shall be informed of the use of video technology on school buses via morning announcements at the opening of the school year and reinforced as appropriate during the school year, through school newsletters, and during annual review of the Student Behavior Handbook.

Parents shall be informed annually of the use of video technology on school buses [via the BCPS Student Handbook](#).

- Buses equipped with video technology shall display a notice indicating students may be videotaped.
- The installation and removal of all videotapes or digital data from the video unit is the responsibility of the Office of Transportation or the owner, manager, or supervisor of a contracted vehicle. The school bus driver is prohibited from installing or removing videotapes.
- The safekeeping of all video unit keys is the responsibility of the Office of Transportation supervisory personnel or the owner, manager, or supervisor of a contracted vehicle.
- Each videotape or data file will be labeled with the date, time, and bus number when removed from a video unit.
- Each videotape or data file removed for viewing shall remain in the possession of the Office of Transportation supervisory personnel or authorized School-Based personnel.
- The Office of Transportation and authorized school-based personnel shall determine when a videotape or data file removed for viewing shall be re-wound for re-use or when a digital data file shall be deleted.
- Videotapes and data files will be viewed by authorized Office of Transportation and school-based personnel. The confidentiality of all persons on videotape or data file shall be protected.
- Videotapes will be kept in a locked and secured location within the Office of Transportation for the duration of any appeals process.
- Digital data files will be kept in a password protected file within the Office of Transportation for the duration of any appeals process.
- Videotapes and data files will be viewed and used by appropriate central office

administrators as part of student and/or employee disciplinary hearings.

ACCIDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

Any accident that involves a Baltimore County Public Schools bus or a privately-owned school bus under contract to transport Baltimore County Public School students is reviewed by the Accident Review Committee (ARC) to determine whether or not the accident was preventable on the bus driver's part. The ARC exists in order to allow for a fair and impartial decision to be rendered by a peer group of drivers. Drivers' names and bus numbers remain anonymous during the reviewing of accidents so that personal feelings do not come into play. It is not the intention of the committee to persecute or intimidate any driver but to make them more aware of responsibilities and safe driving techniques.

The ARC consists of a chair, a driver trainer, two drivers from each of the five administrative areas, a representative from the Baltimore County Police Department, and a representative from the Maryland Associations of Boards of Education (MABE). The driver representatives are chosen for their ability to communicate their knowledge of safe driving and interest in the overall safety of Baltimore County Public School students. The drivers serve on a two-year rotating basis so that each year a new member will be chosen from each area.

Only the ten (10) drivers on the ARC vote on the preventability or non-preventability of each accident and the majority decision holds. The chair, the police representative, and the MABE representative act only as guides for the committee; they do not have voting privileges. In the event of a tie, the driver trainer will cast the deciding vote. Each driver having an accident reviewed will receive a letter from the chair indicating the decision of the committee.

An appeals process is available if a driver disagrees with the original review of an accident, and is as follows:

1. Drivers must notify the appropriate Senior Operations Supervisor (SOS) in writing within five (5) days of receiving a notification letter. The driver will be asked to attend the next monthly meeting of the ARC to provide additional information or a more detailed account of the accident.
2. If the ARC upholds the initial decision, the driver may file a further appeal by notifying the Director of Transportation in writing.
3. The second appeal will be heard by the Director and the supervisory staff of the Office of Transportation.
4. If the supervisory staff uphold the initial decision, the driver has the right to an administrative hearing.

