STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The Loudoun County School Board shall provide transportation to students and maximize school walk zones in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Rules and Regulations of the State Board of Education, and the guidelines established within this policy. All decisions regarding student transportation are vested with the school division but may be appealed to a committee of the School Board.

A. Eligibility for Student Transportation - Eligible Riders. Transportation services shall be provided for elementary students living more than one (1.0) mile and middle and high school students living more than one and one-quarter (1.25) miles from the front door of their regular schools of assignment. Elementary students eligible for transportation may be required to walk up to one (1.0) mile to reach a bus stop. Middle and high school students eligible for transportation may be required to walk up to one and one-quarter (1.25) miles to a bus stop. Students also may be provided transportation services for scholastic and/or co-curricular activities (i.e. student field trips, practices and/or competitions) at the discretion of the school division and/or in compliance with their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

B. Walk Route Distance Criteria. Recommended school walking routes will be measured up to one (1.0) mile walking distance to the front door entrance of an elementary school and up to one and one-quarter (1.25) miles walking distance to the front door entrance of a secondary (middle and high) school. Additionally, elementary students residing up to one-tenth (0.1) or secondary students residing up to two-tenths (0.2) of a mile beyond a designated walk route distance may also be incorporated into that walk route distance, if doing so is considered particularly cost effective and/or efficient for the school division (such as extending the walk route distance to the end of a street or eliminating a relatively isolated bus stop) and would not require a school reassignment.

C. Special Safety Exceptions. Regardless of the distance from home to school, bus transportation shall be provided, if, in the judgement of the Division Superintendent, or his/her designee, there is not a walking route free of unusual safety hazards. Paved walk route surfaces are not required.

D. School Walk Routes and Distances Review and Modification. Recommended school walk routes and distances will be reviewed annually and any modification vetted through an appropriate committee of the School Board. Households deemed ineligible for transportation, as a result of the annual review of recommended school walk routes and distances, will be provided notification no later than June 1st of the current school year. Recommended school walk route maps will be posted to school website.

E. Right of Appeal. Ridership eligibility and walk route distance decisions of the school division may be appealed, in writing, to the Superintendent Chief Operations Officer, or his/her designee, within thirty (30) calendar days of notification of their establishment. The Superintendent Chief Operations Officer, or his/her designee, should respond to the appeal within fifteen (15) working days. The decision of the
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Superintendent/Chief Operations Officer, or his/her designee, may be appealed to a committee of the School Board under Policy 2350 “Appeal of Administrative Decisions.” Bus route stops constantly change and are not subject to appeal. Appeal of administrative decisions not related to the annual establishment of new walk zones or bus stop locations may be submitted at any time under Policy 2350 “Appeal of Administrative Decisions.”

F. Bus Runs. The school division is responsible for establishing bus runs to transport students safely, effectively and efficiently to and from school and approved school activities. Bus runs may have the following characteristics:

1. **Mixed Loads.** Establish mixed loads of middle and high school students in order to facilitate bus runs where deemed appropriate.

2. **Bus Routes.** Routes should be designed to ensure the safety of students as a priority. Route design should also be based upon achieving the greatest possible efficiencies and effectiveness. Efficiency speaks to the amount of time and number of miles required to accomplish the route; effectiveness speaks to ensuring students arrive safely at their destinations on time.

3. **Centralized Bus Stops/Student Collection Points.** Feature centralized collection points (bus stops) that are up to one (1.0) mile walking distance for elementary students and up to one and one-quarter (1.25) miles walking distance for secondary school students.

4. **Elimination of Established Bus Stops.** If an established bus stop is not used during a 15-day period, the stop may be removed and the riders will be required to utilize another established bus stop. The Superintendent has the discretion to discontinue previously established bus stops that are not used for 15-consecutive school days. In such instances, riders will be required to utilize another established bus stop.

5. **Restrictions.** Bus routes shall not be established using roads that are otherwise inappropriate for school bus travel. Bus routes shall not be established appropriately and efficiently to allow for the purpose of transporting students to and from their individual residences; buses shall to stop at designated loading and unloading locations and may not be designed to stop at each individual residence. Routes will strive to be scheduled to be less than one hour in duration, except for runs where less than 50% of the manufacturer’s recommended student capacity is utilized or special programs located other than at the student’s home school, certain special education runs within and without Loudoun County and destinations outside of Loudoun County (such as to Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology). Seating on secondary school routes shall be established or planned to generally accommodate 65% to 75% of the manufacturer’s recommended student capacity to avoid seating secondary students more than two to a seat whenever...
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Conditions falling outside of the seating capacity and length-of-run parameters for a period of at least 30 days will be revisited and re-routed contingent on available resources for bus vehicles and drivers. The Department of Support Services will report to the Finance & Operations Committee at least annually on the number of bus routes exceeding one hour in length and the number of bus routes exceeding the student capacity restrictions detailed above.

G. Exceptions. There are a number of exceptions regarding the eligibility of students for transportation services outlined above. These exceptions may be granted by the school division upon appropriate petition of the student’s parent or legal guardian or by reasonable notification by the school division. These exceptions include:

1. Non-Voluntary Reassignments. Students who are assigned to a school other than their regular school of assignment by the school division based upon the requirements of their educational program and/or the lack of facility capacity (overflow regional assignment) shall be provided transportation services unless they reside within the walk route distance of the school to which they are reassigned.

2. Homeless Students. Students who are classified as “homeless” shall be provided transportation to and from the school of origin (the school the student attended when last permanently housed or the school the student was last enrolled) when in the best interest of the student. If the homeless student continues to live in Loudoun County, the student’s transportation to and from the school of origin shall be provided or arranged by Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS). If the homeless student’s living arrangements in Loudoun County terminate, but the student continues to attend his or her school of origin while living in another school jurisdiction, LCPS and the division in which the homeless student is living shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the student with transportation to and from the school of origin when in the best interest of the student. If the divisions are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.

3. Temporary Disability. Students suffering temporary disability living within a designated walk route distance may be provided transportation for the term of the temporary disability and based upon availability of transportation equipment.

4. At No Cost. Students who are not otherwise eligible to ride the bus but who are determined by the school division to be able to benefit from transportation without appreciable additional cost to the school division and within the legal load capacity of each bus may, upon request, be allowed to ride the bus. The school division shall provide reasonable advance notice of the termination of such service once circumstances change.

5. Disciplinary Action. Students may be denied transportation services by the school division for disciplinary reasons.
H. Parent Responsibility. Student safety is ultimately the responsibility of the student’s parent(s)/legal guardian when students are en route to and from school routes to and from bus stops, schools, and home. Parents are also responsible for providing supervision that is appropriate for the student's age, maturity and conditions of the chosen route. Parents/legal guardians should report any concerns or issues, including those related to walk routes, to the school division’s transportation division, via its online Concern Registry, or via telephone.

[Former Policy 6-21]
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Cross Refs: Policy 2350, Policy 6205