

Bus Routes and Schedules

The Superintendent or his/her designee shall be responsible for scheduling bus transportation, including determination of routes and bus stops. Such routes are subject to the approval of the county transportation committee. The purpose of bus scheduling and routing is to achieve maximum service with a minimum fleet of buses insofar as this is consistent with rendering safe and reasonably equal service to all bus students.

In order to operate the transportation system as safely and efficiently as possible, the following factors shall be considered in establishing bus routes:

1. A school bus route shall be established with due consideration of the sum total of local conditions affecting the safety, economic soundness and convenience of its operation, including road conditions, condition of bridges and culverts, hazardous crossings, presence of railroad tracks and arterial highways, extreme weather conditions and variations, length of route, number of families and children to be serviced, availability of turn-around points, capacity of bus, and other related factors.
2. Bus routes shall be planned to eliminate overlapping and empty bus miles insofar as possible.
3. Where alternate routes are considered, preference shall be given to the route more directly serving the largest number of students.
4. Buses shall be routed so that they travel over graded, surfaced (asphalt, gravel) roads only. County maintained roads shall be used for bus routes. Private roads shall not be used for bus routes without prior approval from the Superintendent.
5. Buses shall be routed so as to pass as near to the residence of the majority of their passengers as good, safe, economical travel conditions will warrant.
6. Bus routes will not be approved to drive up to the house of each patron to pick up the children.
7. In exceptional cases, it may be advisable for the bus to leave the main route and the private lanes of individuals, e.g. in emergencies such as stormy weather, illness, to pick up handicapped children, or to turn around at the end of a route.
8. No school child attending an elementary school shall be required to ride the school bus under average road conditions more than one hour without consent of the child's parent or guardian.
9. School bus drivers are encouraged to make recommendations in regard to establishing or changing routes.
10. Parents should be referred to the Superintendent or Designee for any request of change in routes, stops, or schedules.

The Trustees reserve the right to change, alter, add or delete any route at such time that such changes are deemed in the best interest of the district.

Bus Stops

Buses should stop only at designated places approved by school authorities. Exceptions should be made only in cases of emergency, and inclement weather conditions.

Bus stops shall be chosen with the principle of safety in mind. Points shall be selected where motorists approaching from either direction will have a clear view of the bus for a distance of at least three hundred (300) to five hundred (500) feet. Stops should always be located at a distance from the crest of a hill or curve to allow motorists traveling at the posted speed to stop within the sight distance.

School loading and unloading zones are to be established and marked to provide safe and orderly loading and unloading of students. The principal of each building is responsible for the conduct of students waiting in loading zones.

Delay in Schedule

The driver is to notify the administration of a delay in schedule. the administration will notify parents on routes and radio station, if necessary.

Pupil Responsibilities

Proper pupil behavior is important. The distraction of the driver can contribute to accidents. Pupils and parents should be made aware of and abide by reasonable regulations to enhance safety. The consequences of unacceptable behavior should be clearly understood. The following will protect the pupil's rights and maintain order on the bus:

- Pupils must be aware that they are responsible for their actions and behavior.
- Pupils must know the rules and procedures and abide by them.
- Pupils must display respect for the rights and comfort of others.
- Pupils should realize that school bus transportation can be denied if they do not conduct themselves properly.
- Pupils should be aware that any driver distraction is potentially hazardous to their safety.
- Pupils should be aware of the dangers involved in and around loading and unloading zones, including the dangers of loose clothing, clothing accessories and other loose personal items.

Safety

The Superintendent shall develop written rules establishing the procedures for bus safety and emergency exit drills, and for student conduct while riding on buses.

The bus driver is responsible for the safety of his/her passengers, particularly for those who must cross a roadway prior to loading or after leaving the bus. Except in emergencies, no bus driver shall

order or allow a student to board or disembark at other than his/her assigned stop unless so authorized by the Administration. In order to assure the safety of all, the bus driver may hold students accountable for their conduct during the course of transportation and may recommend corrective action against a student. Bus drivers are expressly prohibited from using corporal punishment.

The bus driver is responsible for the use of the warning and stop signaling systems and the consequent protection of his/her passengers. Failure to use the system constitutes negligence on the part of the driver.

The system must be used with judgment and courtesy. Its abuse causes resentment on the part of the public. A driver should allow approaching vehicles time to stop or pass before the flashing lights are used.

- Cellular Phone Use
 - Drivers are not to operate cell phones while driving a bus route. If there is an emergency, the driver should use the bus radio, or if the situation warrants, pull the bus over in a safe location and use the cell phone.
 - If a driver needs to be contacted because of a personal emergency, the message will be relayed through the District Transportation Office.
 - Cell phones may be kept on during activity trips, but are not to be answered by the driver while operating the bus. The driver may have an adult chaperon answer the phone or wait until at the trips destination and check the voicemail
 - The driver of the Special Education bus may use the phone while on the bus at stops or waiting at the schools, but the aide should answer the phone if the driver is driving.

Eligible Transportees

To qualify as an eligible transportee a student must meet the following criteria:

- The student must reside at least 3 miles from the nearest operating public school or school bus stop

- The student is considered to reside with his or her parent or guardian who maintains legal residence within the boundaries of the district furnishing the transportation regardless of where the eligible transportee lives when attending school.
- Transportation for the student must be listed as a related service I their Individual Education Plan (IEP). If this is the case, they are eligible even if they live within the three miles.
 - Note: Not all students receiving special education service are considered eligible riders. Only those students with transportation listed as a related service in their IEP are automatically eligible. Preschool children between the ages of 3 & 6 are always eligible even if the IEP does not address specialized transportation.
- The student must be between the ages of 5 and 21 or be a preschool child between the ages of 3 and 6 with a disability.

Inclement Weather

The School Board recognizes the unpredictability and resulting dangers associated with the weather in Montana and with other acts of God. To achieve the maximum safety for children and efficiency of operation, the Superintendent of Schools is empowered to make decisions as to the emergency operation of buses, the cancellation of bus routes and the closing of school in accordance with his/her best judgment. The School Board may develop guidelines in cooperation with the Superintendent to assist him/her in making such decisions.

Legal Reference: 20-10-106, MCA
20-10-132, MCA
20-10-121, MCA

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