

Policy Outline

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I. Policy Value Statement

The Board of Education is committed to providing transportation services to students in a safe and efficient manner. With the intent of protecting the general well-being of students, the Board of Education recognizes the need to establish parameters for which transportation services are provided.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process by which transportation services for students are provided.

III. Standards

- A. The provisions of this policy apply to all eligible students, public and non-public, for whom school bus transportation is provided by the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).
- B. Transportation will be provided to all eligible students attending public and non-public schools designated and approved by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and/or the HCPSS subject to the availability of funding.
- C. Transportation services provided to a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504 plan will be provided in accordance with that plan, as well as federal, state, and local laws/regulations.
- D. Students who attend parochial schools will receive transportation services as provided in the Howard County Code and HCPSS policies and procedures. This service will be provided only on a space-available basis along existing school bus routes designed to

serve public schools. Parochial schools that receive state aid will not receive transportation services.

- E. When considering the need for and/or implementing school bus service, the staff will consider:
1. Reasonable levels of safety.
 2. Program efficiency.
 3. Economy of operations.
 4. Equity of service.
 5. IEP or Section 504 plan requirements.
 6. Homeless children and youth.

Providing a reasonable level of safety will be the major staff consideration.

- F. Eligibility for transportation¹
1. Transportation services will be available to students when the measured distance between their bona fide residence and the home school is greater than the following, except as otherwise specified within Policy 5200, Implementation Procedures. Utilizing transportation software, measurements will begin at the property boundary or the school/school campus from the closest adjacent suitable pathway and end at the property line of the bona fide residence:
 - a. Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5: 1.0 mile
 - b. Grade 6 through Grade 8: 1.5 miles
 - c. Grade 9 through Grade 12: 2.0 miles
 2. Other transportation service:
 - a. The parent of a child in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12, who is eligible for transportation services, may request Alternate School Bus Service.
 - b. The parent of a child in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 8, who is not eligible for transportation service, may request Space Available Bus Service to or from a child care provider.
 - c. Temporary transportation service may be provided when a suitable pathway or suitable crossing does not exist, or if the service is necessitated by a student's medical diagnosis.
 3. Every student deemed eligible must submit a request for assignment before they will be provided with transportation services. The following criteria will apply to this requirement:

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- a. Service will be provided to eligible students after their request for assignment is approved and processed by the Student Transportation Office.
- b. Student assignments will be monitored for regular use. Those assignments not actively utilized may be reviewed for reconsideration.
- c. A new request for transportation services will be required for each school year.
- d. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan with transportation as a related service are exempt from the requirements in this section.

G. School Bus Stops

1. Routes will be established in such a way that the walking distance from a student's bona fide residence to an established school bus stop is no greater than the eligibility for transportation distance as outlined in Section III.F.1.
2. Students are expected to board and exit the bus from the same bus stop location that is the closest suitable pathway to their residence unless otherwise directed or permitted to do so by a principal, assistant principal, or transportation area manager.
3. School bus stops for students with needs of accommodation or assistance will be determined consistent with the needs identified in the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan.

H. Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Appeals

1. Requests for re-evaluation of a walking route or school bus stop are to be directed to the Student Transportation Office.
2. Appeals of the decisions made by the staff of the Student Transportation Office are to be directed, in writing, to the Student Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Committee.

IV. Responsibilities

- A. The Superintendent/designee will ensure the safe design of all school bus routes that serve public and non-public schools.
- B. Parents will ensure the safety and conduct of their children from the time they leave home until they board the school bus or enter school property and from the time they leave the school bus or exit school property at the end of the day.
- C. The Student Transportation Office will identify transported areas, non-transported areas, and school bus routes.
- D. Students will adhere to the HCPSS Student Code of Conduct.

V. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VI. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Accommodation – A strategy, service, or facility modification that allows a student to access academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities comparable to peers without disabilities.
- B. Adequate Sight Distance – A distance required along a roadway to enable a motorist traveling at or near the design speed of the roadway to see and stop for a student to safely cross the street or safely pass a student walking along roadway shoulder used as a walking route to and from school or a school bus stop. This determination may be made in conjunction with a county or state traffic engineer.
- C. Alternate School Bus Service – A program for students in grades Pre-K through 12 who are eligible for transportation services and need to ride two different buses on a regular basis due to individual parental needs.
- D. Bona Fide Residence – A person’s principal residence maintained in good faith. It does not include a temporary residence or a superficial residence established for the purpose of attendance in the HCPSS. Evaluation of a person’s bona fide residence is a factual one made on an individual basis.
- E. Child Care Provider – An individual or center chosen by a parent to care for or supervise their child(ren) in their absence.
- F. Homeless Student – A student who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, whether or not the temporary housing is located in Howard County, as defined in Policy 9300 Homeless Children and Youth.
- G. Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A written description of the special education and related services for a student with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the student’s IEP team.
- H. Non-Transported Area – The geographical area within each school attendance area, as defined by the Board of Education, within which HCPSS school bus transportation services are not provided.
- I. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:

1. Biological Parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 2. Adoptive Parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 3. Custodian – A person or agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody or control over the student, but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian, as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101 (c) (Informal Kinship Care) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.
 6. Foster Parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- J. School Bus Routes – A set of scheduled school bus stops and planned roadways traveled by a school bus as developed by the Student Transportation Office.
- K. School Bus Stop – A designated location where students board and are discharged from a school bus.
- L. Section 504 Plan – A plan to provide accommodation for an individual student to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- M. Space Available School Bus Service – A program for students in grades Pre-K through 8 whose residence is located outside the service area. Student participation in this program is predicated on the need for child care services on a daily basis and meeting all eligibility requirements. Bus service will be provided only if school bus seating space is available.
- N. Student Transportation Office – The HCPSS office that is responsible for coordinating transportation services.
- O. Student Walking Route – The path a student walks to and from home to school.
- P. Student Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Committee – Committee composed of external representatives and one (1) or more citizens of Howard County approved by the Superintendent/designee to review walking route and school bus stop

appeals. Persons with a pending student walking route and school bus stop appeal will be temporarily prohibited from participating in related activities of the Student Walking Route and School Bus Stop Review Committee.

- R. Suitable Crossings
 1. Where adequate sight distance, line striping, and crosswalk signing exists when warranted.
 2. Where pupils are not required to walk across railroads, bridges, tunnels, or overpasses unless they have adequate pedestrian walkways.
 3. Where adequate safety provisions can be made for crossing roadways.
 4. Where pupils are not required to cross certain roadways unless a grade separated crossing is available.

- S. Suitable Pathways – Road shoulder, walkway, right-of-way, sidewalk or other surface which students can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles except:
 1. Residential streets in a community with little or no transient traffic.
 2. Roads/streets with speed limits of 30 miles per hour or less.

- T. Transported Area – The geographical area within each school attendance area, as defined by the Board of Education, within which HCPSS school bus transportation services are provided.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. §1411
 - Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §791 et seq
 - McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act – 42 U.S.C. §11301 et. seq.

 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 5-203
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 7-606
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 9-100
 - Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, § 9-101
 - Md. Ann. Code, Transportation, § 22-228
 - COMAR 13A.06.07, Pupil Transportation
 - COMAR 13A.05.01
 - Louisa E. Baker v. Carroll County Board of Education, Maryland State Board of Education, Opinion No. 99-25

- B. Board Policies
 - Policy 9000 Student Residency, Eligibility, Enrollment and Assignment
 - Policy 9300 Homeless Children and Youth

- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other
HCPSS Student Code of Conduct

VIII. History²

ADOPTED: July 24, 1980
REVIEWED: July 1, 2011
MODIFIED: May 26, 2022
 July 14, 2022
REVISED: June 14, 1990
 June 21, 2005
 June 10, 2021
EFFECTIVE: July 14, 2022

² Key: **Adopted**-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy; **Reviewed**-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent's Standing Policy Group; **Modified**-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination; **Revised**-The date the Board took action on a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination; **Effective**-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Effective: July 14, 2022

I. Eligibility for Transportation Services¹

- A. Distance criteria will be adhered to concerning walking to a school bus stop or when determining eligibility for school bus service provided that traffic and/or walking conditions meet a reasonable level of safety and/or conditions permit safe bus operations. Some students may be required to walk to a school bus stop or to school in excess of the stated distance if a reasonable level of safety cannot be achieved.
- B. In establishing the demarcation line between transported and non-transported areas, the Student Transportation Office may extend these distances to coincide with breaks in the pattern of homes, such as cul-de-sac, street intersections, major roadways, streams, parks, walking easements, commercial property, vacant land, unusual contour variations, and other features.
- C. Where applicable, the Student Transportation Office will identify geographic areas where exceptions are made to the eligibility criteria because of safety reasons. When this occurs, the Student Transportation Office will notify the appropriate school administration of the exception.
- D. Non-transported area information can be found on the HCPSS Transportation website. The school administration will notify the parent(s) and student(s) that the student(s) is ineligible for bus transportation services. If a student is not eligible for transportation, it is the parents' responsibility to determine their child's method of travel to and from school.
- E. Eligible students must request a transportation route assignment. Requests must be submitted prior to the final day of school for the upcoming school year. Late requests could result in a delay in transportation services. No transportation service will be provided prior to the approval of a submitted request.
- F. All school bus route information will be posted on the HCPSS Transportation website.
- G. The rolling implementation of changes to this policy begin with an opt-in initiative, along with distance change, for Pre-K students only, beginning with

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II. Other Transportation Services

A. Alternate School Bus Service

1. Alternate School Bus Service must be requested using the Alternate School Bus form, which can be obtained from the HCPSS Transportation website.
2. The parent must submit the form to the Student Transportation Office where it will be approved upon receipt.
3. The requested service remains consistent throughout the school year.
4. Both the home address and the alternate address are located in the same school attendance area and within the service area for the school.
5. No more than one alternate bus may be requested.

B. Space Available School Bus Service

1. Space Available Bus Service must be requested using the Space Available form, which can be obtained from the HCPSS Transportation website.
2. The child care provider must be located in the same school attendance area and within the service area for the school.
3. In the event that there is a change in the location of the child care provider that may change the student's eligibility status, the parent must notify the school administration of the new location. The parent will be notified by the school administration with any changes in transportation.
4. Space Available Bus Service may be terminated on short notice if space is no longer available. Service provided to out-of-district students will be terminated before that of in-district students.

C. Temporary School Bus Service

1. Unsafe Walking Conditions
 - a. Temporary school bus transportation may be authorized by the Superintendent/designee if conditions render walking to and from school unsafe.

- b. Parents will be notified 48 hours prior to the termination of temporary school bus service by the school administration.

2. Medical Condition

- a. A student not eligible for regular transportation services may be granted temporary service if the service is necessitated by a medical diagnosis.
- b. Requests for temporary transportation services for medical reasons will be submitted to the school to be reviewed immediately by the Student Support Team (SST).
- c. If the parent request for temporary services is approved by the SST, the school administrator will notify the Student Transportation Office to initiate service.
- d. The school administrator will inform the parent of the decision made by the SST.

3. Homeless Children and Youth

- a. Transportation will be provided for students who are homeless in accordance with requirements in the McKinney-Vento Act and HCPSS Policy 9300 Homeless Children and Youth.
- b. The Pupil Personnel Worker will notify the Student Transportation Office of students who are homeless.
- c. The Student Transportation Office or Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW) will schedule transportation services depending on the type of transportation required.

III. Establishing School Bus Stops and Routes

- A. School bus stops will be established in compliance with Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.06.07 with consideration given to, but not limited to, safety, efficiency, economics, equity, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Section 504 Plan requirements.
- B. School bus stops will generally be at least 1/4 mile apart.
- C. School bus stops may be established on both sides of a roadway when sight distance and/or traffic conditions warrant.
- D. Off-road school bus stops (loading and unloading zones) will be established whenever possible, consistent with Maryland Vehicle Laws and COMAR 13A.06.07.
- E. School bus routes will be developed using industry accepted standards, including, but not limited to, string routes, circular routes, feeder routes, shuttle routes and double coverage routes.

1. The Transportation Office may, at its sole discretion, adjust if deemed necessary to ensure the overall efficiency of the school bus routes.
 2. The Student Transportation Office will, at its sole discretion, adjust a school start time plus or minus a maximum of ten (10) minutes if deemed necessary to ensure the overall efficiency of the school bus routes.
- F. Prior to the start of each school year, school bus stop time and location information will be available to parents and students at each school. Information will be available on the school system's website and other HCPSS resources.

IV. Resources and Reviews

- A. Road crossings may require final approval from the Howard County Department of Public Works Traffic Engineering Division. The Howard County Office of Transportation should be consulted in any review of road crossings.
- B. The following resources will be used, as appropriate, to help determine suitable pathways, walkways, school bus stops, suitable crossings, bus turnarounds, school bus routes, etc.
1. Howard County Police Department
 2. Howard County Department of Public Works Traffic Engineering Division
 3. Howard County Office of Transportation
 4. Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks
 5. Columbia Association
 6. Other state or county agencies

V. Walking Route and School Bus Stop Appeals

- A. Parents who have a concern about their student's walking route or school bus stop location will contact the Student Transportation Office to indicate their concern.
- B. If the parent disagrees with the response from the area manager, the parent will be provided a Walking Route and School Bus Stop Appeal form.
- C. Walking Route and School Bus Stop Appeals must be submitted to the Student Transportation Office in writing, using the Walking Route Appeal Survey or the School Bus Stop Survey forms.
- D. Appeals will be forwarded to the Student Walking Route and Bus Stop Review Committee, who will submit its findings and recommendations to the Superintendent/designee.
- E. The Superintendent/designee will review the committee's findings and recommendations, as well as those of the Student Transportation Office, and render a decision that will be communicated to the appellant.

- F. If the appellant is not satisfied with the Superintendent's decision, a final written appeal may be made to the Board of Education.

VI. Other

The Student Transportation Office, Howard County Police, Howard County Traffic Engineering Office, Howard County Office of Transportation and/or any other state or county agency may make recommendations to the Superintendent on safety-related matters related to Policy 5200 Student Transportation.

VII. Monitoring

Policy 5200 implementation procedures will be overseen by the Division of Operations.

VIII. References

Alternate School Bus Form
School Bus Stop Survey Form
Space Available Form
Walking Route Appeal Survey

IX. History²

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