

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions and Answers) – Transportation

Dear Friends of West Ottawa Public Schools:

The following **FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions and Answers)** has been developed to assist parents/guardians in finding common answers to important questions regarding pupil transportation. This FAQ document is organized into three unique sections:

- **Section 1 – BUS STOP RELATED QUESTIONS**
- **Section 2 – SCHOOL BUS RELATED QUESTIONS**
- **Section 3 – GENERAL TRANSPORTATION RELATED QUESTIONS**

We hope that you find this FAQ document helpful in addressing your bus stop, school bus or transportation related questions.

Section 1 – BUS STOP RELATED QUESTIONS

Q. When and where can I review my child’s bus stop location and pick-up/drop-off information?

- A. Bus stop information is available for eligible bus riders, 24/7, by logging into [Parent Portal](#) the confidential Infinite Campus’ communication tool for grades: K-12. Parent Portal is accessible from the Parent Resources header on the District website. Information about signing up for a Parent Portal account can be found at the [Parent Portal login webpage](#). Bus stop information is turned “off” during the summer months while routes are being developed, and turned “on” again two (2) weeks prior to the startup of the new school year. Parent Portal is the most accurate way to stay on top of timely changes to bus stop times and bus route adjustments.

Q. Why are there fewer individual stops and more “group stops” on the bus route?

- A. In order to be efficient with limited public resources, school districts all across the state have had to scale back on the number of individual, curb-to-curb, bus stops largely because of economic reasons. Our school district faces annual cuts from the Michigan legislature and governor in excess of \$3.5 million so efficiencies have to be maintained. The “platinum” service that was provided in the best of times is no longer feasible.

Q. Is there a specified distance that must exist between school bus stops?

- A. The “overhead yellow” lights on a school bus which are used to notify other traffic of an upcoming stop must, by law, be activated at least 200 feet from the designated bus stop. Bus stops must be at least 200 feet apart. There is no state law which specifies a maximum distance between stops.

Q. Is there a law on the maximum distance a student has to walk to get to their assigned bus stop?

- A. There is no law that specifies how far a child can walk to the bus stop.

Q. The bus goes right by my house – why can’t it stop and pick-up my child?

- A. There are many factors which are taken into consideration when school administrators establish the placement of school bus stops. The basic legal factors are spelled out in MCL 257.1855, but the **primary concern** is visibility of the school bus to other traffic and the consideration of stopping distances necessary for other motor vehicles in order to accomplish safe loading and unloading of bus riders. In general, on a highway or roadway, state law requires 400 feet of clear and continuous visibility where the speed limit is more than 35 miles per hour, and 200 feet of clear and continuous visibility where the speed limit is 35 miles per hour or less.

Section 1 – BUS STOP RELATED QUESTIONS – continued

- Q. I live in a mobile home community or an apartment complex, where will the bus pick-up and drop-off my child?**
- A. For safety, school buses generally pick-up and drop-off at “group stops” on private roads and driveways, just off from major roads and highways. For efficiency, buses generally do not weave in and around mobile home communities and apartment complexes. Most often, bus stops are centrally located to all students within a specified area. When possible, bus stops are created to encourage students to approach and depart the bus to the front of the bus in the bus driver’s line of vision.
- Q. What about the safety of my child getting to and from the bus stop? There are no sidewalks where we live and the bus stop is out of the “sightline” from our home.**
- A. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to see that a child gets safely to and from the bus stop. The school district provides transportation as a non-mandated service and establishes placement of the bus stop in accordance with the requirements of the law.
- Q. My child is starting Kindergarten. Will the bus pick my child up in front of my house?**
- A. Not necessarily. There are no special laws or regulations for transporting regular education students enrolled in Kindergarten. Transportation is provided in accordance with the requirements of the Pupil Transportation Act with regard to the placement of the bus stop.
- Q. When should my child be at the bus stop before school?**
- A. Bus riders should be at their assigned bus stop at least five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time. This allows for some variation in the bus route due to unanticipated events.
- Q. Why do bus pick-up/drop-off times vary, especially at the beginning of the school year?**
- A. At the beginning of the school year, bus routes are developed for all eligible riders, not knowing who is and who is not going to ride. Routes are constructed with the best of intentions based on known information at the time when routes are developed. However, it is only after bus routes get underway that the District learns where added efficiencies can be found.
- From the time bus information is made available to parents, about two (2) weeks prior to the start of school, until about mid-to-late September, bus pick-up and drop-off times may vary. Parents/guardians are asked to be patient as bus drivers learn their new routes and become familiar with their new students.
- Once the school year gets underway, buses generally run on time with exception to weather conditions, road construction, no adult present at the bus stop, students who become ill, mechanical problems, etc.
- Q. Do I have to stop when I see a school bus with its overhead “yellow” lights on?**
- A. The National Transportation Safety Administration says that upon activation of the overhead yellow lights, “...motorists should **slow down** and **prepare to stop**.”
- Q. Do I have to stop when I see a school bus with its overhead “red” lights on?**
- A. **Yes... you MUST stop.** There is no provision in law to permit a motorist to pass a school bus with its overhead red lights on and stop arm(s) extended. The penalties for “running the overhead reds” in a school bus zone (20’ in any direction around the bus) are double, similar to traffic violations in a work or construction zone. Fines are expensive – 3 pts on your license and a \$275 ticket!
- Who gets the ticket? Under current law, the registered owner of the vehicle is the presumed driver. You may not need to be identified to receive a ticket from the police – only the vehicle’s license plate number is needed to issue a traffic citation. Loss of life due to an accident while running the reds is a Class C felony offense. Don’t do it!

Section 1 – BUS STOP RELATED QUESTIONS – continued

Q. I saw a school bus performing a bus stop, picking up and dropping off students with just its four-way flashers on (the overhead yellow and red lights were not flashing at the bus stop). Is that legal? What should I do as a motorist?

- A. **Yes...** it is both legal and safe. Under certain circumstances, **when students are not crossing the road** (right-hand drop only), Public Act 187 of 1990 allows what is called a “*hazard light stop*” to allow all traffic to continue, unimpeded, while the bus stop is being performed. This practice has reduced the potential of an accident created by the mix of some motorists who stop for the bus and others who violate the overhead red light/stop arm law.

Motorists approaching a school bus that is performing a hazard light stop may proceed with passing the bus while it is picking up or discharging students (right-hand drop only).

Motorists should always use care when doing so. In this type of stop, children are not allowed to cross the roadway. However, motorists should always be prepared for the unexpected and drive accordingly.

Here is a helpful way to remember what to do when approaching a school bus with alternating red lights (on top) or flashing hazard lights (down low):

*“Reds on top... come to a stop,
Yellows down low... drive by slow.”*

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