

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 2 – SCHOOL BUS RELATED QUESTIONS

Q. What is the safety record of school buses in Michigan?

- A. Approximately 850,000 students are transported daily on about 17,000 buses within Michigan with no student fatality inside the bus as a result of a mechanical malfunction or multi-vehicle accident in over 25 years. That is like evacuating the entire City of Detroit, safely every day for over 25 years with no loss of life – an amazing safety record. Buses travel over 180 million miles annually in Michigan. This equates to traveling around the earth 7,228 times each year.

Q. My child's bus seems crowded. Can some students be placed on another bus?

- A. For efficiency, buses are loaded with the attempt of utilizing all of the seating space provided on a bus. Buses have a maximum seat capacity as designed by the manufacturer. As long as student numbers do not exceed the maximum rated capacity, the bus is not considered to be overloaded. *(At the beginning of the school year, school buses may seem more crowded as the "legal limit" of eligible riders does not take effect until after the fourth Friday following Labor Day. This is done to allow schools to find efficiencies and to determine who is and who is not riding.)*

Q. As an adult, can I board and ride on the bus to monitor student behavior and help make the bus safer?

- A. State law (Section 257.1859 of the Pupil Transportation Act) specifically prohibits school bus drivers from allowing any unauthorized person from riding on a school bus while transporting pupils to and or from school. For the protection of all students, a parent/guardian should NEVER BOARD a bus with students on board – it can be very frightening to bus riders and can startle the bus driver.

In most cases when authorized adults are assigned to monitor students that are being transported on a bus, they are fingerprinted and approved employees of the District who are assigned near the student(s) who possess the greatest amount of supervisory need.

Q. Why aren't seat belts for passengers required to be used on school buses?

- A. The United States Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is responsible for establishing motor vehicle safety manufacturing standards and requirements for vehicles including school buses. The standards developed for the manufacture of school buses incorporate an occupant protection design referred to as "*compartmentalization*" which is unique to the yellow and black school bus. This standard provides a protective envelope consisting of strong, closely spaced seats that have energy-absorbing seat backs. The effectiveness of compartmentalization has been confirmed and consistently reconfirmed in National Transportation Safety Board and National Academy of Sciences studies. School safety standards have been adopted into the Michigan Vehicle Code which exempts large buses, over 10,000 pounds, from seat belt requirements for passengers. Drivers of all sizes of buses are required to wear seat belts because the driver is located in the front of the bus with no energy-absorbing seat back in front of them, and as such, are not protected within a compartmentalized space like the passengers on a school bus.

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