

Guideline Number	Topic		
8600.001	Pupil Transportation Service Operating Parameters		
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**Statement**

Pupil transportation services shall be planned and provided within a set of defined operating parameters. The safety of student passengers and the general public will be the administration’s first priority. The administration is also responsible to the School Board for the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the transportation service. To ensure safety, effectiveness, efficiency and equity, it is necessary for the transportation system to be structured within certain operational parameters.

Pupil transportation is not a required service, it is a privilege provided to eligible riders by the Board of Education. When transportation service is provided, it is provided to eligible pupils of the same grade level at designated bus stops approved by the Transportation Department on public roads that are maintained by the Michigan Department of Transportation and/or the Ottawa County Road Commission.

When pupil transportation is provided to eligible riders, it is to be free and paid for out of school district funds. By state law, public school districts are prohibited from demanding, requesting or accepting compensation for transporting students.

**Procedures**

**Bus Stop Placement**

Student riders will be assigned to a designated bus stop. It is the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to see that a child gets safely to and from the assigned bus stop. The school district provides transportation as a non-mandated service and establishes placement of bus stops in accordance with requirements of the law.

The parent/guardian is responsible for the safety, security and behavior of the student before the bus arrives in the morning and after the bus departs in the afternoon. Bus stops are placed with the safety of students as a top priority. The location and safety of stops shall be determined by the Director of Transportation within the following considerations:

- Avoidance of stops at unsafe locations;
- The need for a right-side pick up or drop off to avoid unsafe or illegal student crossings;
- Factors such as visibility (sightlines), speed, volume and number of traffic lanes;
- Proximity of bus stops to each other and the planned student load at each stop;
- Limitation of school bus travel to public roads (not private roads) and certain residential communities where paved access is regularly and properly maintained for bus travel; and,
- The requirements necessary to carry out a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

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Student riders may be required to walk to their assigned bus stop. The walk distance may be up to the same distance as that required by Administrative Guideline 8600.002 – Pupil Transportation Service Eligibility.

**Seating Capacity**

After the fourth Friday following Labor day of each school year, a school bus shall not be used to transport more than 100% of the number of persons for which the school bus has a rated seating capacity.

After the fourth Friday following Labor day of each school year, the desired maximum number of student passengers assigned to a single bus bench seat will vary based on the following guiding criteria:

- Elementary students in grades YK-5 will be assigned a maximum of 3 students per bus bench seat (6 students per row).
- Middle school students in grades 6-8 will be assigned to approximately 2.5 students per bench seat (5 students per row).
- High school students in grades 9-12 will be assigned to approximately 2 students per bench seat (4 students per row).
- Any limitation or requirement of a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be implemented.

**Ride Time**

Pupil transportation services will be planned with the objective of limiting any one student’s overall ride time, including the time spent in transferring from one bus to another (if applicable), to 60 continuous minutes or less for elementary students and 75 minutes or less for middle school and high school students. This criteria may be exceeded in unique or exceptional circumstances.

**Transfers**

In the interest of overall system-wide efficiency and effectiveness, student passengers may be required to access more than one bus in the morning and/or the afternoon. Any planned transfers will be limited in accordance with the following criteria:

- No student will transfer more than once on any trip to or from school;
- Transfers will only be conducted in safe, authorized locations as designated by the Director of Transportation;
- All transfers will be supervised, either from driver-to-driver or, if conducted at school locations, by school building staff.

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**Bus Route Planning Strategies**

To achieve the mandate of providing safe, efficient and effective pupil transportation services, the Director of Transportation may utilize multiple bus routing strategies including:

- Combining grade ranges from YK-12 on individual bus runs;
- Route tiering whereby an individual bus services multiple schools in succession on separate bus runs;
- Shared bus routing whereby an individual bus services multiple schools in combination on the same bus run;
- Transfers whereby some students are required to move from one bus to another bus on any individual trip to and/or from school; or
- Shuttles whereby a group of students congregate at a single location to access a bus that moves the entire group of students directly to their destination.

**School Bell Time Management**

To achieve the mandate of providing safe, efficient and effective pupil transportation services, the Director of Transportation may recommend altering school hours to support strategies that increase route tiering and shared routes. The Director of Transportation shall advise the administration on transportation service implications for any school hour changes under consideration.

**Bus Arrival and Departure Windows**

In order to achieve routing efficiency and to adequately serve school and student requirements, arrival and departure windows are established at each school. The Director of Transportation shall establish, in consultation with an Assistant Superintendent, acceptable arrival and departure windows based on the following criteria:

- The school’s bell times;
- The ability of the Principal to schedule supervision of students;
- The ability to tier routes to achieve efficiencies and balance time and service delivery;
- The specific loading/unloading requirements of the school in situations where there is a need to stagger arrival and departure times due to the size or configuration of the school bus loading/unloading zones;
- The request of the Principal to enable students to participate in programs before or after core school hours; and
- Bus arrival and departure windows shall generally not exceed 30 minutes at any location.

For more information on a variety of transportation issues, please refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) tab on the Transportation Department website.