

Transportation Frequently Asked Questions and Information

What should I do if my child is late to the bus stop, even though we can see the bus and can make it there before the bus pulls off?

It is important to be on time at the bus stop. Students and parents should never run after a bus, bang on the side of a bus or cut in front of a bus. These are extremely dangerous actions that could lead to injuries and, in other localities, have resulted in deaths. It is better to miss the bus than risk injury. Although bus drivers are trained to look in all directions for people and for cars, there are blind spots and danger zones.

From my front door or window, I can't see my child's bus stop.

Parents are encouraged to accompany young children to the bus stop. Bus stops are placed so that no elementary child has to walk more than approximately 0.3 of a mile and no middle or high school student has to walk more than approximately 0.5 of a mile.

My child has to cross the street to get to the bus stop. This is a safety issue.

Parents are responsible for the safety of their children to and from bus stops and are particularly encouraged to accompany young children.

Bus routes may be designed where students have to cross a roadway to get to or from the bus. School bus drivers are trained and school buses are equipped with traffic warning devices to enhance a safe crossing.

Safety is a team effort and a responsibility shared by the parent, student, bus driver and motorist. Go to the free downloads section of www.pts.org for information on how to cross safely and protecting children from passing motorists. These publications can help you teach your child about crossing the roadway safely.

What items can my child bring onto the bus?

If students cannot hold their belongings in their laps or fit them under the seat, then the belongings should be left at home or taken to school by another means. Items cannot take up a seat, be placed in the aisle or be put in front of any emergency exit.

My child rides a crowded school bus. There are three or more to a seat, and some students are standing.

Buses that transport younger, smaller students may require these students to sit three or more per seat. While the transportation department strives to route buses so that this does not happen, it's not always possible. The same practice applies to middle or high school students. When possible, the routes are established so that these students may

sit two to a seat. Often, this may not be possible, either. Each concern regarding overcrowding is evaluated on a case-by-case basis as quickly as possible. The transportation department never wants to have students riding in an overcrowded bus or standing; however, state regulations allow students to stand under certain conditions, which gives a school division time to assess each situation.

My child wants to have a few friends visit after school. What is the procedure for riding a different school bus to or from school?

Approvals are granted by the school, based on the current number of students on buses. Check with your school to learn how it handles individual cases.

My child has to walk past the residence of a convicted sex offender or vicious dog, etc.

Traffic conditions are the primary factor the school division's transportation department uses when establishing or evaluating routes and stops. Parents are responsible for the safety of students going to and from school bus stops and while waiting for the bus. This is another reason it is important for an adult to accompany students to the bus stop.

Several people in the neighborhood are school bus drivers, and they park their buses on the street. They are creating a safety problem because we can't see around them.

Drivers take their buses home because it is cost-efficient to do so. Allegheny County Public Schools wants to be a good neighbor, and bus drivers are encouraged to choose appropriate parking spots for their buses. But the school division's transportation department cannot determine the legality of a parked school bus. Only the police can do this.

There are no children who live in the area of the current bus stop — they all live at the other end of the street. The bus has to go right by the corner we want to designate as our bus stop, and the driver has to stop at the stop sign there. Why can't the bus stop be relocated?

Bus stops are established for neighborhoods rather than for individual households, so that no elementary child has to walk more than about 0.3 of a mile and no middle or high school student has to walk more than about 0.5 of a mile. Families may move several times during a child's scholastic career, but the locations of bus stops are considered permanent unless they need to be changed to ensure that walking distances stay within the guidelines.

Why aren't school buses equipped with seat belts?

The issue of seat belts on buses has been debated for more than 30 years. Please go to www.nhtsa.gov and enter "school bus" in the "search NHTSA" block to learn more.

What are the different types of school buses?

Allegheny County Public Schools majority of school buses are the conventional style. The Conventional Style school bus is the traditional style with the long forward hood. The bus is equipped with swing-out "crossing gates" which force any students crossing in front of the bus to walk well out in front of the bus so that the driver can see him or her. Additionally, we still operate two Transit style school buses, with the flat design on the front.

In terms of bus sizes, the 77-passenger conventional buses are the ones that are used to transport most students.

The smaller buses range in size from 54-passenger to 36-passenger buses. These are nominal sizes, though. Many of these buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts. A single wheelchair position requires the same space as two or three bench seats. Therefore, a lift-equipped bus will carry far fewer passengers than its nominal size might indicate.

All of our buses are diesel-powered. Additionally, all of our buses are equipped with two-way radios.

Why are 39" seats in school buses rated for three children when they only will accommodate two?

The rated capacity of a 39" width passenger seat was devised many years ago by the committee then making recommendations to the National Minimum Standards for School buses. In determining seating capacity of a bus, an allowable average rump width standard was established.

Accordingly, 13" of rump width was suggested when a 3 - 3 seating plan was used. This suggested guideline is still recognized by most states as the accepted approach. It is not a federally mandated requirement.

Why are buses sometimes late?

School bus drivers can have the same reasons as motorists for being late. Traffic delays, weather conditions, accidents or driver's illness are just a few reasons. School buses also have mechanical breakdowns that cause delays in picking students up on time. A school bus may be able to run but have a red traffic light malfunction which would make it unsafe to pick up or discharge students on our highways, before it is repaired. In cases where the regularly assigned bus or driver is unable to pick up students, a separate bus and driver are dispatched to pick up the students. Generally, when a bus starts out late on its first run, it continues to be late for its second run also.

Why are spare replacement buses needed?

Buses operate throughout the day with shuttles, kindergarten runs, and field trips, in addition to the normal to-and-from school transportation requirements. In order to have the required number of operational buses each day, a group of backup or spare buses must be retained. By state regulation, school buses are required to be serviced and inspected every 30 days. When a bus is in for service, a spare bus is required to continue its runs without interruption. Furthermore, when a bus has mechanical problems or damage from accident or vandalism that require it to be out of service, a spare bus is needed to perform the duties of the out-of-service bus. Often, this can be for an extended period of time, especially in the case of accident repairs.

Spare buses are also used during the year to augment the operating fleet when new student transportation requirements necessitate that the daily operating fleet be increased. Because of delays created by the budget, procurement, and production processes, it can take from nine months to a year for additional buses to arrive. During that time, the spare buses are used to satisfy the requirement.

What is the definition of a school bus?

A school bus is a vehicle that is sold or introduced in interstate commerce for purposes that include carrying students to and from school or related events, but does not include a bus designed and sold for operation as a common carrier in urban transportation. A school bus can be used to carry non-students, if local rules allow it, usually with the requirement that school bus signs and warning lights not be used. But a normal everyday transit bus or shuttle bus cannot be used to carry school children. Such buses do not have any of dozens of safety features required on a school bus, such as joint strength, roof strength or compartmentalized seating.