



METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

Transportation FAQs

Who can ride the bus?

All regular education students in grades K-12 who attend their zoned school, and who live more than 1.25 miles from school (1.5 miles for high schools), are eligible for school bus transportation, by State Law. Exceptions are made for certain areas where unsafe walking conditions exist. If you do not know your zoned school, please call our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636). Parents of eligible students who are registered for school will be sent a letter before the beginning of the school year that includes all bus route information for their children.

Special Education, Special Needs and some Pre-K students are also eligible for transportation. Since these students often attend out-of-zone schools, special provisions are made on a case-by-case basis. You should contact our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636) to be directed to the proper person to assist you.

Why are there no seat belts on school buses?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is responsible for establishing Federal motor vehicle safety standards to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries from motor vehicle crashes, including those involving school buses. We also work with the states on school bus safety and occupant protection programs. School bus safety is one of our highest priorities.

School bus transportation is one of the safest forms of transportation in the United States. We require all new school buses to meet safety requirements over and above those applying to all other passenger vehicles. These include requirements for improved emergency exits, roof structure, seating and fuel systems, and bus body joint integrity. These requirements help ensure that school buses are extremely safe.

Every year, approximately 394,000 public school buses travel approximately 4.3 billion miles to transport 23.5 million children to and from school and school-related activities. Since 1984, on the average, 11 passengers per year have died in school bus crashes. While each of these fatalities is tragic, it should be noted that the numbers of fatalities among school bus occupants are small when compared to those in other types of motor vehicles. For example, in 1995, twelve occupants in a school-bus-body type vehicle died in a crash. During the same year, 8,168 children between the ages of 5 and 20 died as passengers or drivers in all other types of motor vehicles.

School bus crash data show that a Federal requirement for belts on buses would provide little, if any, added protection in a crash. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) have come to the same conclusion. NTSB concluded in a 1987 study of school bus crashes that most fatalities and injuries were due to occupant seating positions being in direct line with the crash forces. NTSB stated that seat belts would not have prevented most of the serious injuries and fatalities occurring in school bus crashes.

In 1989, NAS completed a study of ways to improve school bus safety and concluded that the overall potential benefits of requiring seat belts on large school buses are insufficient to justify a Federal requirement for mandatory installation. NAS also stated that the funds used to purchase and maintain seat belts might better be spent on other school bus safety programs and devices that could save more lives and reduce more injuries.

Rather than requiring seat belts, NHTSA decided that the best way to provide crash protection to passengers is through a concept called "compartmentalization." This requires that the interior of large buses provide occupant protection so that children are protected without the need to buckle-up. Occupant crash protection is provided by a protective envelope consisting of strong, closely-spaced seats that have energy-absorbing seat backs. The effectiveness of compartmentalization has been confirmed in the NTSB and NAS studies.

Small school buses, those with a gross vehicle weight rating under 10,000 pounds, must be equipped with lap or lap/shoulder belts at all designated seating positions. Since their sizes and weights are closer to those of passenger cars and trucks, the agency believes seat belts in those vehicles are necessary to provide occupant protection.

School bus pedestrian fatalities account for the highest number of school bus related fatalities each year. There are about 31 such fatalities per year, about two-thirds of which involve the school bus itself and about one-third of which involve motorists illegally passing the stopped school bus. In its 1989 report, NAS

stated that since children are at "greater risk of being killed in school bus loading zones (i.e., boarding and leaving the bus) than in the bus, a larger share of the school bus safety effort should be directed to improving the safety of school bus loading zones." NHTSA agrees with NAS that states and localities should focus their efforts toward improving school bus loading zones.

While no Federal requirement exists for seat belts on large school buses, states and localities are free to install them if they feel it is in the best interest of safety in their area. However, the NAS report states that if seat belts are to be beneficial, "states and local school districts that require seat belts on school buses must ensure not only that all school bus passengers wear the belts, but that they wear them correctly."

Seat belts have been required on passenger cars since 1968. Forty-nine states have enacted laws requiring the wearing of seat belts in passenger cars and light trucks. Laws governing the usage of occupant restraints are the prerogative of each state. We strongly believe that wearing seat belts is important. On December 28, 1996, in his weekly radio address, President Clinton asked all Americans to always wear seat belts as the first line of defense against injuries and fatalities. On April 16, 1997, Transportation Secretary Rodney E. Slater submitted a Presidential Initiative to Increase Seat Belt Use Nationwide. It emphasizes the strong enforcement of occupant protection laws as a key component and calls for Members of Congress, Federal agencies, governors, mayors, law enforcement, business and others to play active roles in this national endeavor.

School buses are heavier, experience less crash forces, and distribute crash forces differently than do passenger cars and light trucks. Because of this, the crash force experienced by the passengers of large buses is much less than that experienced by occupants of passenger cars, light trucks, or vans. Federal regulations require the installation of occupant restraints in motor vehicles based on the vehicle type and size. Because the safety record of school buses is outstanding, and because there is no compelling evidence to suggest that seat belts would provide even higher levels of occupant protection in crashes, NHTSA agrees with the NAS report that there is insufficient reason for a Federal mandate for seat belts on large school buses.

***The above information is from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. More information on the pros and cons of seat belts on school buses is available from School Transportation News Online.*

I'm told we live in the "Parent Responsibility Zone" (PRZ). What does that mean to me?

It means you live within the "non-transport" area—1.25 miles or less from your elementary or middle school, or 1.5 miles or less from your high school. These distances are determined by State Law. Since we do not ordinarily transport students living so close to schools, their transportation to and from school is the responsibility of their parents.

What if a student lives within PRZ, but lives on or has to cross a road that is considered unsafe? Can you provide transportation?

It depends. Most of our schools that sit on or near busy roads have crossing guards or "Mom Patrols" to help children get across the streets safely. However, as a courtesy in certain circumstances, we will send a bus inside the PRZ. If you believe your child should get a bus to school, please go to your school and fill out a "Transportation Request Form" in the Principal's office. The school will send it to our office, where we will review the request and determine whether it is necessary and/or feasible to provide your child with a bus. Please understand that this service is provided on a space-available basis, and can be withdrawn if the number of bus riders outside the PRZ increases, or for other reasons determined by our Routing Department.

How are bus stops and routes determined?

Every MNPS student who is eligible for transportation is assigned a specific bus stop and route number. The Routing Specialists in the Department of Transportation use the EDULOG software program to determine required bus stops. EDULOG considers bus seating capacity, student data, zoning information, and safety variables during processing to create the safest, most efficient bus routes possible. MNPS strives to place bus stops no more than 1/4 mile from each rider's home, although the distance to most stops is far less than that.

The bus passes by my house on the way to a stop up the street. Why can't it just stop and pick up my child at home?

Please remember that we transport more than 40,000 students every day, so it is impossible to provide door-to-door service to everyone, and do it in a timely manner. In most neighborhoods, it is more efficient to pick up several students in one stop, usually at a corner or other mid-way point for the students. Of course, exceptions are made for students who live on hazardous roads, or where conditions exist that would make walking up the street unsafe.

I live in an apartment complex. Why does my child have to walk all the way to the main road to catch the bus?

Apartment and condominium complexes are considered private property; MNPS buses may only travel on public roadways. Also, the roadways through many apartment complexes are too narrow to safely accommodate a large school bus. If you see a bus going up into an apartment or condominium complex, chances

are it is a Special Education or Special Services bus. We are required by law to provide home transportation to students receiving these services.

What’s the difference between the “bus number” and the “route number?”

The “bus number” is a unique bus identification number; each driver is assigned a certain bus to drive on all his or her runs. However, students and parents only need to be concerned with their “route number” which is posted on a black and white sign next to the door of the bus. That way, if a bus has to be replaced for any reason, the route number will be transferred to the replacement bus.

Who do I contact if I have a question about a bus stop or route, or need to request a closer stop for my child?

Click here if you need to find the closest bus stop to your home. If you need to request a bus stop for you child, please go to your school and fill out a “Request for Transportation” form. Our Routing Department will review your request and let you know as soon as possible if a new stop will be added. For all other questions, please contact our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636).

My child attends a magnet school. Why can’t he/she ride the bus there?

MNPS provides transportation only to students attending their school of zone. Since students who attend magnet schools are actually zoned to attend other schools, they do not receive transportation if they choose to go to a different school.

The district does provide free MTA bus passes to qualifying students at several magnet and other schools. To find out if your child qualifies for a free MTA bus pass, call the Family Information Center at 259-4636.

My child has special needs. Who do I contact to make transportation arrangements?

If your child is in Special Education, Pre-K, or qualifies for Special Services, transportation arrangements must be made through the office from which your child receives these services. Please contact your Special Ed or Pre-K adviser to make these arrangements. If you do not know who you need to talk to, please contact our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636) to be directed to the appropriate person.

What if the bus doesn’t show up on time?

Mornings: We recommend students be at the bus stop at least 10 minutes before their scheduled pickup time, and wait at least 10 minutes beyond the regularly scheduled time before assuming there is a delay. Then, call our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636). Our dispatchers will contact the driver to find out the bus status. In the case of a mechanical breakdown, a backup bus will be dispatched immediately. Students should remain at the bus stop until the backup bus arrives. If it is more than 15 minutes past the scheduled

drop-off time, you should contact your child's school to find out if the bus's departure from school was delayed for any reason. If there was no delay, or you are concerned you may have missed your child's drop-off, please contact our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636). Our dispatchers will check with the bus driver to see what is causing the delay.

My child did not get off the bus at his/her stop. What do I do?

You should contact your child's school immediately to make sure he or she got on the bus after school. If your child did get on the bus as usual, you or the school can contact our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636). Our dispatchers will immediately check with the bus driver to see if your child missed his or her stop, or got off at a different stop. Each driver has a list of students eligible to ride his or her route, and is expected to let students off only at their assigned stops. Please explain to your child that he or she is to get on and off the bus ONLY at the assigned stop.

My child is being picked on by another student on the bus. What do I do?

All school bus discipline problems should be immediately reported to the Principal of your child's school. Students who continue to cause problems can be removed from the bus for a period of one to ten days, or permanently, depending on the nature of the disciplinary problems. In the unlikely event you or your child sees someone with a weapon on the bus or other school property, you should also contact the Metro Police Department's weapon hotline at 232-A-GUN (2486).

I saw a bus traveling in an unsafe manner. Who do I call?

You should call our Family Information Center at 259-INFO (259-4636) immediately. Please take note of the bus number and the route number, if possible, and be prepared to give the exact location of the bus, and the nature of the problem.

Why do buses always stop at railroad crossings? Why won't they turn right at stoplights?

The laws for school buses are different than the laws for regular motorists. School buses are REQUIRED BY LAW to stop at all railroad crossings. They are also prohibited by law from turning right at stoplights, unless there is a right-turn lane with a yield sign. Please be patient when following a school bus in traffic. To see exactly what Tennessee State Law says regarding School Bus Transportation, and the responsibility of motorists sharing the road with them, please click the following link:

49-6-2101. Power of boards to provide transportation

55-8-147. Certain vehicles must stop at all railroad grade crossings

What qualifications do bus drivers have to have?

In order to qualify to drive a school bus in Metro, a person must be at least 21 years old, possess a valid Tennessee Class B Commercial Driver License (CDL) with Passenger (P), school bus driver (S) and air brake endorsements, and must have a safe driving record. In addition, prospective drivers must pass the State Department of Education approved physical examination from a Metro-approved physician. The driver must pass the medical exam each year in accordance with State guidelines. Drivers must also complete a comprehensive School Bus Driver Training Program provided by MNPS, and must complete First Aid and CPR Training and Annual Recertification programs. Bus driver candidates also undergo a thorough criminal background check through the Metro Nashville Police Department, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Bureau of Investigation. This investigation will check applicants for any criminal history.