



**BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
Division of Business Services  
Department of Planning and Support Operations

Office of Transportation

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# Transportation Operating Procedures



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## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES**

Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) Office of Transportation shall be organized to provide school transportation service for eligible students based on safety, efficiency, adequacy, and economy. Through the use of publicly owned and privately owned buses, the following shall be taken into consideration in developing the school transportation system:

1. Every school bus ride in itself is a learning experience and the school bus ride should also leave students in the proper frame of mind to take full advantage of the instructional program offered.
2. Certain rules and regulations pertaining to the transportation of public school students in the State of Maryland have been established. Items covered are as follows:
  - a) Specifications governing new school bus equipment

All school buses, both Baltimore County Public Schools' and contracted school buses, shall fully meet the specifications as established by:

    - 1) Maryland State Department of Education
    - 2) Maryland Vehicle Law, Transportation Article
    - 3) Board of Education of Baltimore County
  - b) Inspection

All buses shall be regularly inspected a minimum of three (3) times each year. Unannounced inspections, as deemed necessary, may be made by the Office of Transportation or the Motor Vehicle Administration each year.
  - c) School bus drivers

All drivers shall meet the qualifications of the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT), Maryland Annotated Code, and Bylaws and the Board of Education. Drivers shall possess a satisfactory driving history, be fingerprinted for a criminal background check and submit to a DOT pre-employment drug test and participate in DOT random, post-accident and reasonable suspicion drug and alcohol testing. Drivers shall pass a DOT physical examination prior to employment and once a year during each year of employment. This examination must be made by the medical provider under contract with BCPS.
  - d) Driving regulations

Certain other driving regulations governing school buses are set forth by Maryland Vehicle Law, Transportation Article. Baltimore County Public Schools shall establish its school bus system to conform or exceed minimum standards as set forth by Federal, State, and Local mandates.
3. Baltimore County Public Schools provides transportation for regular education, magnet programs, alternative programs, and special education programs as required

by Policy 3410. The school system's responsibility for the safety of students that ride buses to school and school related activities shall begin when the student enters the bus. Conversely, its responsibility ends when the student exits the bus at the designated bus stop at the end of the school day. The school system's responsibility for students walking to and from school shall begin when students enter upon and ends when the student exits from school property. Parents and school system staff are expected to promote safe walking practices, safe behavior at bus stops, and safe behavior on the bus. Parental assistance may be needed on those days when inclement weather makes walking to and from school or school bus stops difficult.

## **ROUTES AND SERVICES**

School bus service will be provided consistent with distance eligibility criteria established in Baltimore County Public Schools Policy 3410 or for exceptions granted for walking conditions not meeting an acceptable level of safety. Service shall be provided within the parameters of acceptable levels of safety, program efficiency, economy of operations, and equity of service; however, safety shall be the primary consideration.

The Office of Transportation is responsible for establishing school opening and closing hours. Bus arrivals will be scheduled within 15 minutes of opening and closing times at middle and elementary schools. At high schools, buses will arrive within 30 minutes of the opening time.

Regular routes shall be established in the interest of safety with the following factors given consideration:

1. Students' eligibility for bus service within the school boundary
2. Age, health, and physical condition of students
3. Location of students' homes and number of students in areas to be served
4. Availability of buses for routes
5. Road and student walking conditions

Bus schedules shall be established to fully utilize all buses, but safety shall be foremost in mind.

In establishing bus stops, safety of students presently on the bus, safety of students boarding or leaving the bus, and safety of other motorists shall be taken into consideration.

Before schools open each year and at various times during the year, bus routes, stops and schedules shall be reviewed to determine means of improving safety and efficiency of the operation.

6. Students may be expected to walk as far to get to a bus stop as other students of the same level, who are not eligible for transportation, are asked to walk to school.
7. Students may use a different bus stop in the morning and afternoon, but those stops must be the same Monday through Friday.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Occasionally, students eligible for free bus service are requested by the Baltimore County Public Schools' to use public transportation servicing their area. This service is paid for by Baltimore County Public Schools. School bus transportation is provided under the jurisdiction of Baltimore County Public Schools Policy 3410. Transportation services are provided to elementary and middle school students who must walk more than one (1) mile to the assigned school. School bus transportation is provided for high school students who must walk more than one-and-one-half (1 1/2) miles to the assigned school.

The preceding statements of Policy 3410 concerning walking distances of students to school shall be adhered to except when circumstances and surrounding road conditions necessitate a change. In these cases, some few students may be required to walk a distance in excess of the stated limits, or others who live within the limits may be transported. The Superintendent of Schools and the staff will individually consider cases.

## **DISTANCE MEASUREMENTS**

The residence of the parent/guardian will be used to determine eligibility for transportation. For the purposes of establishing school bus service, day care centers will be treated as individual residential addresses.

1. Measurements will be from the residence property line to the nearest available door of the school.
2. Measurements from apartment complexes, condominiums, and townhouses will be from the property line of the unit or the apartment or condominium building entrance to the closest available door of the school.
3. Measurements will be made using road shoulders, pathways, right-of-ways, sidewalks or other surfaces which pupils can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles unless:
  - a) It is a residential street in a community with little or no transient traffic;
  - b) Roads/streets have a posted speed limit of 30 miles per hour or less.
4. Measurements will be made using suitable crossings which are defined as:
  - a) Where students are not required to walk across railroads, bridges, tunnels or overpasses unless they have adequate pedestrian walkways.
  - b) Where students are not required to cross a principal arterial or freeway unless a grade separated crossing is provided.
  - c) Where students are not required to cross a proliferation of business/commercial district entrances when using road shoulders or a right-of-way as a walkway.
  - d) Where adequate sight distance, line striping, and crosswalk signage exists when warranted.
  - e) Adequate sight distance as referenced above is defined as follows:

25 mph – 250 feet  
30 mph – 300 feet  
35 mph – 350 feet

## **CROSSING PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS**

Taking into consideration that motorists all too frequently ignore a school bus's flashing red lights, the following crossing procedures have been established in the interest of safety:

1. Students are to be at their designated bus stops and on the side of the road of the bus pickup five (5) minutes before the bus arrives.
2. Except at specifically designated bus stops, the students are not to wait until the bus stops and then cross the road to board the bus
3. Students getting off the bus are to wait on the side of the road where they get off.
4. Students must stand away from the side of the bus until the bus pulls away, leaving better clearance for vision in both directions.
5. When traffic is cleared and it is safe to cross, the students proceed to the other side of the road.

School administrators and parents should continually reinforce rules about safe crossing with students. If assistance is needed, seek the support of the Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Transportation.

## **ESTABLISHING SCHOOL BUS STOPS/ROUTES**

In the case of regular education, neighborhood bus stops are provided in accordance with the walking boundaries established in Baltimore County Public Schools Policy 3410. In the case of magnet and alternative programs, centralized pick-up points are established, and are typically located at one or more neighborhood schools. In the case of special education programs, bus service is arranged in accordance with the students' Individualized Education Plans (IEP).

1. School bus stops will be established considering safety, efficiency, economy, and equity and should be at least one-quarter (1/4) mile apart. Stops may be made closer for reasons of safety.
2. Bus stops will be established for eligible elementary students in regular and special education programs on both sides of any roadway with a posted speed limit of over 35 miles per hour.
3. Bus stops will be established for eligible secondary students in regular and special education programs on both sides of any roadway with a posted speed limit of over 40 miles per hour.
4. Buses will not be routed into a dead-end cul-de-sac or other street that requires a three-point turn or a backing maneuver to exit unless the alternative bus stop would present an unusual safety hazard.

5. Buses will not be routed on private roadways or on roads not maintained by the county or state governments.

## **TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**

### **Mid-day**

1. Mid-day bus stops for prekindergarten students will generally be established at the student's home or the nearest corner to the home.
2. Bus stops may be grouped (example: apartment complex, adjacent houses).
3. Bus stops shall be at the same location 5 days a week.
4. Schools are responsible for seeing that all kindergarten and prekindergarten students board the bus from school wearing a prominently placed identification (ID) tag with the following information:
  - School Name
  - Student Name
  - Home Address
  - Home & emergency phone numbers
  - Bus Stop
  - Applicable day care Information (provider name, address, phone number)
  - Picture ID or tag color-coded with the bus name/color preferred
5. Half-day prekindergarten students must be met by a responsible, authorized person at each mid-day stop. If a student is not met, the driver shall complete the route and return the student to school. The driver shall immediately notify the Office of Transportation when a student is not met.
6. The area manager for the Office of Transportation will identify the need for an attendant on a mid-day bus.
7. Schools shall instruct parents to be sure that afternoon half-day prekindergarten students are wearing the ID tag upon boarding the bus from home.

### **End of the Day**

1. The Office of Transportation shall establish bus stops for all eligible full-day elementary school students. Afternoon half-day prekindergarten students will use the same stops.
2. Bus stops shall be at the same location 5 days a week.
3. ID tags will be prominently placed on kindergarten and prekindergarten students by school personnel.

4. All students will be discharged at their appropriate bus stop at the end of the day. Bus drivers are responsible for students from the time they enter the bus until they exit the bus. A parent does not have to be present at the bus stop. When the regular or substitute bus driver is sure that it is the student's assigned bus stop, then the student may be discharged. When the regular or substitute bus driver is not sure whether the stop is the correct bus stop or is concerned for the safety of the student for any reason, the driver shall complete the route and then return the student to school. When the driver makes the decision to return a student to school, the Office of Transportation must be called immediately.
5. Kindergarten and prekindergarten students shall be seated in the front of the bus.
6. End of the day transportation procedures will be used for scheduled early dismissals and emergency early dismissals.

### **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO CHILD CARE FACILITIES**

Baltimore County Public Schools will provide transportation from a child care provider to a public school providing the child care facility is within the boundaries of the school district and the transported area of the school.

Children who have transferred to a public elementary school under existing transfer policies and are attending a child care facility within the boundaries of the school district and the transported area to which the child has transferred will likewise be provided transportation from the child care facility to the public school.

Children attending child care facilities that are within the non-transported area of an assigned school will not be provided transportation, unless the walking conditions, as determined by the Office of Transportation, are unsafe.

### **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR MAGNET PROGRAMS**

#### **Elementary Schools**

Baltimore County Public Schools provides transportation to and from elementary magnet programs for students who reside within the established transportation zone of the magnet program. Some transportation is arranged as shuttle service from the home school location. This may require students to ride the regular neighborhood bus or to walk to the home school where they are picked up as a group and then transported to the magnet program.

Magnet schools will notify parents/guardians of specific transportation provisions prior to the opening of school.

#### **Secondary Schools**

Baltimore County Public Schools provides transportation to and from magnet programs in secondary schools for students who reside within the established transportation zone of the magnet program. Transportation is provided from a limited number of pick-up points located at designated school sites in each of the five geographic areas of the county. Parents/guardians are responsible for providing transportation for their students to and from their designated pick-up point.

Magnet schools will notify parents/guardians of the respective pick-up points prior to the opening of school for the upcoming year. Pick-up points do not fall under the same guidelines as regular bus stops with regard to distance and walking conditions. Supervision of the students at the pick-up points is the responsibility of parents/guardians.

Transportation is not provided for students who reside outside of the established transportation zone of a magnet program.

### **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR PRIVATE/NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Children who attend private schools in Baltimore County may be eligible for school bus transportation on established school bus routes provided by the Board from a point on public roadways nearest or most accessible to their respective homes, to a point on public roadways nearest or most accessible to their respective schools, without changing the route of the bus in question. These students shall be expected to conform to the same rules and regulations that apply to public school students.

### **DISCONTINUATION OF SERVICE**

Once bus service has been authorized and initiated by the Office of Transportation, that service will not be discontinued unless written notice from the school to the parents of the students affected has been provided. The elimination of service will typically coincide with the opening of a new school year unless safety considerations warrant immediate termination.

### **APPEALS**

1. Appeals of the decisions made by the Office of Transportation may be directed to the Executive Director of the Department of Planning and Support Operations. The Executive Director may refer appeals to the Transportation Advisory Committee.
2. The Transportation Advisory Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Superintendent of Schools.
3. The Superintendent's Designee will review the committee's findings and recommendations and make a final determination on the appeal.
4. An appeal of the Superintendent's decision may be made by filing a written appeal to the President of the Board of Education.

### **NON-APPROVED RIDERS**

1. The transportation of adults, except when they are acting in the capacity of chaperones on field trips, is prohibited. Children of adult chaperones who are not enrolled in Baltimore County Public Schools and non-participants in the scheduled event are also prohibited.
2. Parents may not ride school buses when they are being used to transport children to and from school on their regularly scheduled routes without prior approval of the Office of Transportation.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION**

1. Bus Stop Location
  - a) Whenever feasible, service to the home address is provided for students with special needs. However, there are many courts and dead-end streets that buses cannot safely negotiate. In these cases, parents/guardians or child care providers are responsible for meeting the bus at the nearest safe location as determined by the Office of Transportation.
  - b) The bus attendant assists with loading, unloading, and the care of students while on the bus.
2. Occupant Restraint Systems
  - a) The Office of Transportation will work closely with the school, parents, and IEP team to plan for approved occupant restraints or support devices, as required for individual students.
3. Length of Ride
  - a) Every effort is made to provide the shortest and safest ride for all students. Some students may have longer rides because of the proximity of their home to the school placement.
  - b) Change in the student population throughout the year may alter the length of the bus ride.
  - c) The Master Plan for Baltimore County Public Schools includes an indicator that all students will have a daily ride time less than 3 hours.
4. Driver and Attendant Training
  - a) Drivers and attendants are required to attend annual training sessions developed by the Office of Transportation. Topics include first aid procedures, use of epi-pens, safe driving practices, and other related topics.
  - b) In addition to the required training, drivers and attendants may be given supplemental training at the schools. Topics may include techniques in behavior management and other disability-specific strategies.
  - c) Drivers and Attendants are available to meet at the school with parents, the school nurse, or IEP team members to discuss specific considerations as they relate to individual students.
5. Pick-up and Drop-off of Students
  - a) All children must be ready to board the bus at least five (5) minutes before the scheduled time.
  - b) All students with special needs must be accompanied to and from the approved bus stop by a parent or guardian.
  - c) If no one is at the approved bus stop to receive a student, the driver will contact the Office of Transportation to receive further direction. The driver may return to the bus stop after completing the route or return the student to school.

- d) Parents/guardians may provide prior written authorization for students to be discharged from the bus without someone to receive them. The school administrator shall give the final approval for all such requests.
6. Special Transportation Considerations
- a) Parents, the Special Education Office, and/or the IEP chairperson should request that a representative from the Office of Transportation attend the IEP meeting to address concerns and/or issues.

## **SCHOOL BUS EMERGENCY EVACUATION**

In September and February, each school, under the direction of the school administrator(s), must conduct school bus emergency evacuation drills. Every precaution must be taken to see that the procedures and appropriate behavior for leaving a school bus in case of an emergency have been discussed and practiced with all students. Students must have practice in leaving the bus through the bus emergency door, as well as through the front door.

Such drills are to be conducted with the same seriousness as displayed during the monthly fire drills in the school building. Students should practice leaving the bus in an orderly manner without pausing to gather up books or personal belongings.

Practice drills in emergency evacuation are to be conducted on the school grounds. It should be noted that in a true emergency many hazards would exist along a roadway that do not exist in a practice drill on the school grounds. Therefore, appropriate conduct of students after they have left the bus is extremely important.

The following recommendations are offered to school administrators for conducting these drills:

1. Plan the drills ahead of time.
2. Explain all details to pupils ahead of time and answer any questions. Do not plan a drill as a complete surprise.
3. Schedule drills when buses arrive in the morning or ahead of dismissal time in the afternoon.
4. Conduct drills at a safe place on the school grounds. Select a spot to the right and well away from the bus where the pupils are to assemble and await the "all clear" signal.
5. Provide opportunities for students to practice leaving the bus by the rear door only, as well as by both doors.
6. Instruct students that the bus driver may not be able to get to the rear door in an actual emergency. Use students to assist in opening the rear door and helping smaller children alight. Make sure the bus is empty.
7. Allow students to decide for themselves, if possible, how much assistance they will need and how they will go about exiting the rear door. Show the helping students how to offer a helping hand: palm up and avoid grasping other students' arms, or

reaching up to pull them out. Try to let the students hold on as they are receiving help.

8. Time each drill. Announce the results to the riders. Strive to keep the evacuation time for each drill under two (2) minutes.

## **GUIDELINES FOR OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION FIELD TRIPS**

### **Availability of Baltimore County Public Schools Buses for Field Trips**

Baltimore County Public Schools buses are generally available for authorized field trips. The Office of Transportation establishes procedures for the use of these buses and guidelines are published annually. If public school buses are not available, schools are urged to use vendors from the Approved Contractors list.

Baltimore County Public Schools owned buses should be used for field trips throughout Baltimore County, Baltimore City, and other nearby points when such trips can be made within the time limits of 9:30 a.m. and 1:45 p.m. As a result of the heavy demand for field trip buses, occasionally it is necessary for buses to begin and end from two different terminal locations.

Due to many unforeseen conditions there are occasions when the bus drivers must change the return time. It is of utmost importance that they receive full cooperation from the teachers in charge. The 1:45 p.m. arrival at school is absolutely essential in order to ensure that there is no disruption to the regular afternoon operation.

### **Procedures for use of Baltimore County Public Schools Buses for Field Trips**

1. Field trips may be scheduled by contacting an area dispatch office. Requests should be made at least two (2) weeks prior to the trip date by completing a Request For Field Trip form. At that time, each stop the bus will be required to make should be indicated.
2. Depending upon the availability of buses, the dispatcher will accept the request, answer questions, enter the trip into the database, and complete the transportation arrangements.
3. There are forms for school personnel to submit; however, for administrative control purposes, it is recommended that each school maintain its own internal Teacher-Principal request and approval procedure. It is helpful if all requests are coordinated and telephoned into the dispatcher by the same individual.
4. A written confirmation of the trip, including an estimate will be provided within two (2) school days.
5. Upon completion of the trip, the teacher and the driver shall agree to the recorded mileage and time. Trips are charged on an hourly and per-mile basis. All trips except GRANT PAID will be billed to a school account number and a notice will be provided.
6. Field trip rates are set and updated by the Office of Transportation on an annual basis.

## 7. OTHER PERTINENT FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

- a) NO STANDEES are to be allowed on field trips
- b) Regular transportation rules concerning pupil behavior on the bus will be in effect and should be enforced by the teacher in charge during all field trips.
- c) In case of an accident or a breakdown while on the trip, the driver will notify the Office of Transportation immediately. If the trip is scheduled on a weekend or during evening hours, the Office of Security should be notified.
- d) In the event the trip is canceled, the school shall notify the dispatcher promptly. The Office of Transportation staff will make every effort to nullify the trip by contacting the driver in advance. However, if this is not possible, it will be necessary to assess a minimum service charge of one hour.
- e) Toll facility fees will be handled by the bus driver.
- f) Parking fees are the responsibility of the school.

### **APPROVED CONTRACTORS**

The list of approved contractors is available on the Office of Transportation web-site at <http://www.bcps.org/offices/transportation/publications/>. While the Office of Transportation screens all contractors, the final decision concerning the use of a particular bus or driver lies with the school personnel. If a bus appears with unmistakable defects such as badly worn tires, defective exhaust system or extensive metal damage, it obviously should not be used. If the driver appears overly fatigued from working another job prior to driving the bus, he/she should not be used. When in doubt, ask questions of the driver or call the company.

### **VIDEO CAMERA PROCEDURES**

The use of video technology on Baltimore County Public Schools buses is intended to enhance a safe and orderly environment while transporting students to and from school and school related activities by maximizing appropriate student behavior.

Students shall be informed of the use of video technology on school buses via morning announcements at the opening of the school year and reinforced as appropriate during the school year, through school newsletters, and during annual review of the Student Behavior Handbook.

Parents shall be informed of the use of video technology on school buses via appropriate school-to-home communications.

1. Buses equipped with video technology shall display a notice indicating students may be videotaped.
2. The installation and removal of all videotapes or digital data from the video unit is the responsibility of the Office of Transportation supervisory personnel or the owner, manager, or supervisor of a contracted vehicle. The school bus driver is prohibited from installing or removing videotapes and the operation of the video camera.

3. The safekeeping of all video unit keys is the responsibility of the Office of Transportation supervisory personnel or the owner, manager, or supervisor of a contracted vehicle.
4. Each videotape or data file will be labeled with the date, time, and bus number when removed from a video unit.
5. Each videotape or data file removed for viewing shall remain in the possession of the Office of Transportation supervisory personnel or authorized school-based personnel.
6. The Office of Transportation and authorized school-based personnel shall determine when a videotape or data file removed for viewing shall be re-wound for re-use or when a digital data file shall be deleted.
7. Videotapes and data files will be viewed by authorized Office of Transportation and school-based personnel. The confidentiality of all persons on videotape or data file shall be protected.
8. Videotapes will be kept in a locked and secured location within the Office of Transportation for the duration of any appeals process.
9. Digital data files will be kept in a password protected file within the Office of Transportation for the duration of any appeals process.
10. Videotapes and data files will be viewed and used by appropriate central office administrators as part of student and/or employee disciplinary hearings.

### **ACCIDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Each accident involving a school bus shall be reviewed for preventability. Accidents are reviewed monthly by The Accident Review Committee (ARC). The ARC consists of a chair, a driver trainer, two (2) drivers from each of the five areas and a representative from the Baltimore County Police Department. The ten (10) driver representatives' vote for a majority decision on the preventability or non-preventability of each accident reviewed. In the event of a tie, the driver trainer will vote. The chair and police representative act only as guides for the committee, they do not have voting privileges. The driver representatives are chosen for their ability to communicate their knowledge of safe driving and interest in the overall safety of Baltimore County Public School students. Each driver having an accident reviewed will receive a letter from the chair indicating the decision of the committee.

This committee exists in order to allow for a fair and impartial decision to be rendered by a peer group of drivers. Drivers' names and bus numbers remain anonymous during the reviewing of accidents. It is not the intention of the committee to persecute or intimidate any driver but to make them more aware of responsibilities and safe driving techniques.

The drivers serve on a two-year rotating basis; each year a new driver representative is chosen from each area.

The appeals process is available if a driver disagrees with the original review of an accident, and is as follows:

1. Notify the appropriate area supervisor in writing within five (5) days of receiving a notification letter. The driver will be asked to attend the next monthly meeting of the ARC to provide additional information or a more detailed account of the accident.
2. If the committee fails to reverse its decision, a further appeal may be initiated by notifying the Director of Transportation in writing, requesting the supervisory staff review the accident.
3. If a driver possesses compelling evidence that is contrary to the decision after the second appeal, he/she has the right to an administrative hearing.

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