

Chapter 2

OPERATING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a collection of recommendations to guide districts in operating a safe, effective and efficient school transportation program. These are recommendations and are not policy unless adopted by the school district or by the Board of Public Education.

Routing and Scheduling Recommendations

It is necessary to procure a map of the area served by a particular school or school system in order to establish bus routes that will adequately meet the needs of pupils in a particular area. Information on the road conditions, railroad crossings and other factors that might affect the particular operation should be recorded along with the location of homes and the number of school-age children in each. See route hazard identification, APPENDIX B.

Satisfactory school bus stops must be identified along streets and highways where buses can travel with the least amount of risk.

The number of pupils to be transported and the distance to be traveled are primary factors in allocating equipment for a particular area. Pupils should be assigned to specific stops according to walking distances, grade level and the school attended.

Consideration should be given to the distances between stops to comply with the minimum distance required to activate the red and amber lighting systems.

Routing techniques: There are an infinite number of routing techniques that can be used. The following are examples:

- A circular route circumscribes an area by using different roads on outgoing and incoming trips. It has the advantage of equalizing time in transit for transported pupils since the first child on in the morning is the first child off in the evening.
- A shoestring route extends from the school to some terminal point in the district. If the bus is stored at the school, the same road or roads are used on the outgoing and incoming trips; consequently, children are always traveling more or less directly toward the school.
- A feeder route extends from a point farther out in the district to a transfer point on the main route. It may be advisable for one or more of the following reasons:
 - to limit the use of large buses to improved roads;
 - to reduce travel time on the main route; or
 - to provide some form of transportation on roads which at times may be impassable by larger, more desirable motor vehicles.

A shuttle route extends between two or more school buildings. Such routes are often required for the transfer of pupils in districts operating two or more schools.

Retracing routes can eliminate the need for pupils to cross the roadway.

Emergency routes should be established and utilized in all school systems when weather or road conditions dictate that it is not safe to travel on other than hard-surfaced roads. Announcements can be made by radio or other means when such routings are to be used. Computer-assisted routing may be an effective tool.

Methods of serving bus routes

The single trip plan involves a morning and an afternoon trip by one bus on each route. This form of service is well adapted to sparsely settled area. It also meets the needs of schools where the instructional program requires both elementary and secondary pupils to arrive at the same time.

The double trip plan calls for each bus to cover two different routes in the morning and afternoon. This plan is suited to districts of relatively dense population where distances are not great. As children of all grades are carried on each trip, program adjustments in the instructional schedule are necessary to avoid idle waiting time at the school. If these adjustments can be made without sacrificing the interests of the children, the double trip may be economical by requiring fewer buses.

The multiple or dual trip plan calls for more than two trips each morning and afternoon over the same route by each bus. This arrangement is feasible only where route distances are relatively short or time differences between locations are great. High school pupils may be brought to school on the first morning trip with elementary children arriving on the second trip. In the afternoon, the elementary children should be brought home first if it is desired that the elementary day be shorter than the high school day. Districts whose program requires a day of equal lengths for both groups may transport the high school pupils on the first trip in the morning and return them on the first trip in the afternoon.

Survey And Stops

A survey should be conducted by the pupil transportation director for the purpose of identifying factors that might indicate the need for a route change. After the survey is completed, a time study should be made by driving over the route in the same equipment that will be used in the actual operation. The driver(s) who will operate over the route(s) should regard the trip as a dry run. All scheduled stops and times between stops should be indicated. This data, if accurately obtained, will permit the development of a schedule that probably will need little revision once it is placed into effect.

After the route has been established, a schedule showing individual stops should be available in the bus for the information of substitute drivers.

Requests for new or additional service should be investigated thoroughly before a change is made.

Stops should be established only after thorough investigation has revealed the location to be the most desirable in the area.

It is considered poor practice to negotiate a U-turn on main arteries of traffic even though provisions for such turns may have been made. The projection of the rear end of the bus into inside traffic lanes from medians that are too narrow to accommodate bus length often creates traffic interference that places the lives of transported pupils in jeopardy.

Stops should always be located at a distance from the crest of a hill or curve to allow motorists traveling at the posted speed to stop within the sight distance.

Additional precautions should include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Determine the location and destination of all pupils to be transported.
- Provide the driver, attendance officer, and the transportation office with the following information:
 - A list of pupils on the bus(es);
 - Approximate times for pick up and return of pupils;
 - A map indicating routing of the bus and pupil locations; and
 - Identification of pupils with dormant medical problems that may require specific actions from the driver in the event the problem becomes active.
- Provide parents or guardians of all pupils with the driver's name, bus number, pick up and return times, school closing information, school calendar, procedures to challenge routing decisions, etc.
- Determine the advisability of utilizing computer-assisted route scheduling.
- Plan routes that will permit optimum pupil safety, program efficiency and operational economy.

Also see School Bus Route Hazard Identification, APPENDIX B. The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services undertook activities to develop a school bus route hazard identification system and a means of educating school bus drivers about such hazards.

Recommendations For Pupil Management

An effective pupil management program is a collaborative effort involving many groups of people in the school community. Parents, students, school bus drivers, school administrators, contract managers in districts where contract transportation is provided, law enforcement, and social service agencies must be part of the on going process to motivate students to good behavior. It is the responsibility of the school district to ensure that a comprehensive student management program is developed so all persons involved in the process are familiar with their responsibilities.

School District Responsibilities

- Establish the policies and procedures by which the program functions.

- Establish pupil regulations governing the behavior and safety of pupils at the bus stop and while boarding, riding, and disembarking from the school bus. The rules students are expected to follow should be limited in number and either posted in the bus and/or made available to all riders.
- Institute and administer an instructional program that teaches pupils proper conduct and safety procedures.
- Conduct a training program for school bus drivers to ensure that all policies, procedures, regulations and their enforcement are understood.
- Ensure that parents receive written copies of the bus rules and regulations. Clearly establish their roles and obligations with respect to pupil promptness, attitude and behavior.
- Initiate procedures to ensure open lines of communication and cooperation between school administrators, bus company officials, state agencies and bus drivers.
- Train drivers in skills that will enable them to maintain order, safety, and respect for the rights of others. These skills should include at least the following:
 - specific verbal intervention techniques used to maintain order and safety; and
 - communication skills that promote rapport, mutual respect, and encourage pupil compliance.

Ensure that administrators support and enforce disciplinary procedures, policies and reasonable actions by the driver.

Driver Responsibilities

- Drivers shall be familiar with and abide by all rules, policies and procedures affecting pupil transportation.
- Drivers should recognize the importance of establishing rapport with parents, their supervisor, and school administrators when working to ensure proper pupil conduct.
- Drivers should establish proper rapport with pupils
- Drivers should instruct pupils in proper behavior, consequences of improper behavior, general procedures and evacuation drills.
- Drivers should maintain order, safety, and secure the rights of others on the school bus. They should exercise good judgments and prudence in this pursuit, using appropriate verbal intervention. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Minimizing interior noise.
 - Controlling passenger movement.
 - Requiring an orderly entrance and exit.

- Eliminating movement or potential movement of objects.
- Requiring silence at railroad crossings.
- Prohibiting transportation of unauthorized materials.
- Drivers should handle minor infractions with school district approved, on-board consequences and discussions.
- Drivers, in instances of serious or recurring misconduct, should follow school district policy pertaining to the misconduct and submit written reports on appropriate forms to administrators or other persons designated to deal with discipline problems.
- Drivers should be aware that they represent the school system and/or the bus company, and should present a positive image in dress, language, and manner while on duty.
- Drivers should be familiar with the assigned routes and designated school bus stops.

Pupil Responsibilities

Proper pupil behavior is important. The distraction of the driver can contribute to accidents. Pupils and parents should be made aware of and abide by reasonable regulations to enhance safety. The consequences of unacceptable behavior should be clearly understood. The following will protect the pupil's rights and maintain order on the bus:

- Pupils must be aware that they are responsible for their actions and behavior.
- Pupils must know the rules and procedures and abide by them.
- Pupils must display respect for the rights and comfort of others.
- Pupils should realize that school bus transportation can be denied if they do not conduct themselves properly.
- Pupils should be aware that any driver distraction is potentially hazardous to their safety.
- Pupils should be aware of the dangers involved in and around loading and unloading zone, including the dangers of loose clothing, clothing accessories and other loose personal items.

Parent / Guardian Responsibilities

To promote school bus safety and the efforts set forth by the school district parents of all transportees should:

- understand and support district rules and policies, regulations and principles of school bus safety;

- assist children in understanding safety rules and encourage them to abide by them;
- recognize their responsibilities for the actions of their children;
- support safe riding practices and reasonable discipline efforts;
- teach children proper procedures for safely crossing the roadway before boarding and after leaving the bus (See Appendix E);
- support procedures for emergency evacuation as prescribed by states and school districts;
- respect the rights and privileges of others;
- communicate safety concerns to school administrators;
- monitor bus stops, if possible;
- support all efforts to improve school bus safety;

Parents/guardians should be aware of the dangers involved in and around loading and unloading zone, including the dangers of loose clothing, clothing accessories and other loose personal items.

Sample Policies

- Pupil shall follow directions of the driver the first time given.
- Pupil shall arrive at the bus stop before the bus arrives.
- Pupil shall wait in a safe place, clear of traffic and away from where the bus stops.
- Pupil shall wait in an orderly line and avoid horseplay.
- Pupil shall cross the road or street in front of the bus only after the bus has come to a complete stop and upon direction of the driver.
- Pupil shall go directly to an available or assigned seat when entering the bus.
- Pupil shall remain seated and keep aisles and exits clear.
- Pupil shall exhibit classroom conduct at all times.
- Pupil shall refrain from throwing or passing objects on, from or into buses.
- Pupil is permitted to carry only objects that can be held on his/her lap.
- Pupil shall refrain from the use of profane language, obscene gestures, tobacco, alcohol, drugs or any other controlled substance on the bus.
- Pupil shall refrain from eating and drinking on the bus.
- Pupil shall not carry hazardous materials, nuisance items and animals onto the bus.
- Pupil shall respect the rights and safety of others.
- Pupil shall refrain from leaving or boarding the bus at locations other than the assigned stops at home or school.
- Pupil shall refrain from extending head, arms or objects out of the bus windows.
- Pupil shall refrain from hitching rides via the rear bumper or other parts of the bus.

Use Of Video Monitoring Systems

School systems should promulgate, communicate and enforce policies and procedures to be followed when using on-board video monitoring systems. The video camera on a school bus should be used only as an aid to monitor student and driver behavior. It should not replace the discipline policy, the authority of the driver, or the responsibility of the school officials. The basic safe riding rules must prevail and the consequences of misconduct must be carried out.

All students and drivers shall be notified that they are subject to being videotaped on the school bus at any time. Notification to parents of all students shall be made by the school district. Prior to actual taping, parents and students shall be advised that student conduct prohibited by state and school district student disciplinary code will result in appropriate consequences as defined in policy. The actual taping shall be audio and video.

Ongoing notification regarding videotaping must occur, addressing the continued need for personal awareness of safety issues. This communication is particularly important to warn against a false sense of security, especially when cameras are moved between buses. Newsletters, student handouts, and notices posted in the bus should be considered.

If video cameras are to be used for monitoring drivers, the drivers must be notified as to the extent of their use and for what purpose they will be used.

Cameras should be scheduled on a rotation basis so as not to select only certain buses. Based on the number of incidents of misconduct or the seriousness of these reports, video monitoring of a bus route may be done more frequently. The transportation supervisor may decide if more frequent monitoring is needed. Such additional monitoring is meant to supplement the written disciplinary reports by the bus driver, not take the place of reports.

After videotaping has been conducted, the tapes are to be stored at a secure location for a period of time designated by the local school district, unless a specific tape is being used in an ongoing action. The transportation supervisor or designee shall periodically review videotapes randomly selected to ensure proper pupil conduct. If no incidents are reported within a period defined by local policy, the tapes will be recycled. If incidents are reported, or if incidents are viewed during random selection, the videotapes are to be kept until final resolution and time for any appeals.

Tapes must be dated and have the bus number and driver's name in order to ensure proper identification. A log shall be maintained on the use of the video camera.

When action is taken as a result of information obtained from the videotape, the driver, supervisor, school administrator, student, and parents or guardians will be contacted. A meeting of the aforementioned parties may be necessary to achieve a resolution of the problem. The videotape may be used as evidence in that meeting. All requests for review shall be made in writing. Each district must designate, by policy, persons allowed to review the tapes.

Emergency Procedures

Also see Emergency and Rescue Procedures: A Guideline Manual For School Bus Involvement, APPENDIX C. This manual is a reference for each school system in developing its own specific emergency plan. Copies of the school system's plan should be carried in each bus. This plan should be developed in cooperation with the personnel in those agencies that will render service during emergencies. The school transportation director, school administrators, teachers, drivers, maintenance and service personnel, pupils, and others should be instructed in the procedures to be followed in the event of:

- Accident:
 - how to evacuate and control pupils;
 - how to evaluate the need for medical assistance;
 - how to get help from the police, fire department and garage;
 - how to collect and record data essential to the preparation of the required accident reports (An operational plan to provide two-way communication with parents and/or guardians is imperative.) and;
 - how to prevent further accidents.
- Sudden disability of driver:
 - Procedures for handling situations resulting in the fatal injury or disability of the bus driver should be established and communicated to appropriate persons. A list including the bus operator, emergency telephone numbers, list of students assigned to the bus, and the special needs of students should be on the bus.
- Bus breakdown. The emergency plan should cover procedures for:
 - securing the bus;
 - controlling the passengers;
 - diagnosing the cause(s) of the bus breakdowns;
 - notifying school officials;
 - recovering the disabled school bus, and;
 - providing replacement transportation of passengers.
- Inclement weather conditions: The emergency plan should provide procedures for determining:
 - when schools are to be closed;
 - who is to make such decisions;

- how decisions are to be relayed to parents, pupils, school officials and staff (including teachers and cafeteria manager), drivers, contractors, maintenance and service personnel, the news media and others, and;
- how to react to such natural phenomena as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and tsunami, etc.
- Other types of emergency situations. The emergency plan should include communication norms, data collection, stress reduction and cover such conditions and events as:
 - defense/disaster drills;
 - strikes by school staff, teachers, drivers or contractors;
 - road or bridge washouts and landslides that might block school bus routes;
 - bus hijacking;
 - weapons on board or at bus stops, and;
 - unauthorized boarding.

Communication

It is necessary to keep those in charge of the system, bus companies, parents, and pupils informed of all operational procedures. The school district must ensure that the channels of communication are set up so that information can be disseminated quickly and effectively.

The school district must ensure that inquiries, requests, suggestions, and recommendations are given prompt and appropriate attention and are handled efficiently. Some of the ways and purposes that information can be disseminated are:

- **Bulletins:** To explain the school district's transportation policy to school administrators, teachers, bus companies, drivers, parents, pupils and, others associated with the operation; and to clarify new laws and safety policies so that everyone knows what is expected of them.
- **Meetings:** To provide an opportunity for those associated with the school transportation program to share their views and to help build broad community support for safe transportation.
- **Public Press:** To inform parents of policy, route, stop and schedule changes, the safety record of the operation, and positive driver achievement records.
- **Conferences:** To discuss solutions to disciplinary problems with drivers, disruptive pupils and their parents; to review policy decisions affecting drivers, contractors, pupils and school administrators.

- Letters: To inform parents of all school and state regulations, new routes, etc.; reply to more urgent inquiries regarding pupil transportation safety, policy and procedures.
- Telephone Calls: To provide quick contact between bus drivers and the school, or between parents and the school in the event of urgent or emergency situations.
- Radio and Television: To inform the public of new policies, laws, and procedures that the schools will follow in case of severe weather conditions or other natural phenomena.
- Formal Hearings: To be used, as required, for student suspensions from transportation, route challenges, serious complaints against driver, etc.