

TRANSPORTATION SERVICE STANDARDS 2026-2027

Effective Sept. 1, 2026

The Superintendent is authorized to make minor modifications to the Seattle Public Schools' Transportation Service Standards and/or operational procedures as required in the best interests of the district. This includes the ability to limit transportation if there is insufficient service to be provided to all. The Superintendent may designate additional programmatic exceptions to support students furthest from educational justice with transportation to access to services and programs that may not be available at their neighborhood school. Such exceptions will be shared with the Board.

Seattle Public Schools is committed to providing safe, efficient, and cost-effective transportation services to our students. This commitment is guided by the following Transportation Service Standards:

A. Eligibility

Students are eligible for district transportation within their assigned attendance area as referenced in the Student Assignment Plan and as described in this section (A) of the Transportation Service Standards.

District arranged transportation will not be provided for those students who by parent or student choice have enrolled in a school other than their assigned school.

1. **High Schools:** All students aged 18 and younger in King County are eligible for fare-free transit. High school students are not eligible for regular transportation from Seattle Schools.

Exceptions are allowed in the following areas:

- a. Students who require specialized transportation services as determined by their Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) plan, or 506 (Indian Student Eligibility) program.
- b. Students requiring medical transportation as approved by District Health Services.

2. **Middle Schools:** Middle school students who live within the attendance area or linked attendance area boundaries and outside the walk boundaries of their assigned school are eligible for district arranged transportation.

Exceptions are allowed in the following areas:

- a. Students who require specialized transportation services as determined by their IEP, 504 plan, or 506 program.
- b. Students requiring medical transportation as approved by District Health Services.

3. **Attendance Area Elementary / Attendance Area K-8 Schools:** Elementary and K-8 students who live within the attendance area or linked attendance area boundaries and outside the designated walk boundaries are eligible for district arranged transportation.

Exceptions are allowed in the following areas:

- a. Students who require specialized transportation services as determined by their IEP, 504 plan, or 506 program.
- b. Students requiring medical transportation as approved by District Health Services.

4. **Option Elementary / Option K-8 Schools:**

Option Elementary and K-8 students who live within the boundaries of their service area or linked service area and outside the designated walk boundaries are eligible for transportation. District-arranged transportation is provided for those students attending an elementary and K-8 Option School in their service area or linked service area.

Exceptions are allowed in the following areas:

- a. Students who require specialized transportation services as determined by their IEP, 504 plan, or 506 program.
- b. Students requiring medical transportation as approved by District Health Services.

B. Bus Stop Location

Assignment Criteria: Students will be assigned to bus stops within the following guidelines:

1. Bus stops will generally be located on arterial or primary residential streets.
2. Walking distance to bus stops will be one mile or less for middle/high school students where feasible.
3. Walking distance to bus stops will be one mile or less for elementary school students where feasible. Elementary students may cross identified intersections in the recommended walk maps created by the City of Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee and the City of Seattle Transportation Department.

C. Bus Stop Modification

Requests for stop location changes may be submitted to the Transportation Office for review. Bus stops will be modified only under the following conditions:

1. Safety concern – conditions at the established bus stop do not meet the bus stop selection criteria as defined by the district guidelines.
2. Property owner complaint – upon receipt of a concern from a resident adjacent or close by an established bus stop, if after working with the students and schools associated with the bus stop the concern cannot be resolved, a relocation of the stop will be considered.
3. Students who do not use their assigned school bus may have their bus stop removed when doing so will result in a reduced operating cost. Prior to a bus stop being removed, parents/guardians will be advised. Parents/guardians will be able to request reinstatement at a later date. Service will be restored within 10 working days of the request.

D. One-Way Ride Time

Attendance Area Elementary and Attendance Area K-8 routes will be designed to operate with travel times of 45 minutes or less where feasible. All other routes will be designed to operate with travel times of 60 minutes or less where feasible. Ride time is defined as the time the first student boards the bus until the bus arrives at school in the morning, or the time the bus leaves the school until the last student is dropped off the bus in the evening.

E. Seating On Buses

A standard seat on a yellow bus is 39 inches wide. Students from kindergarten through fifth grade may sit three to a seat. Students from sixth through 12th grade will sit two to a seat. No standees are permitted on school/charter buses.

F. Before And After School Activity Buses

Transportation for before-school and after-school activity programs for elementary and middle school students will be provided to schools and programs that have funding to cover the cost of the service. The following guidelines will apply:

1. Time requested must not conflict with the regular to and from service.
2. Bus routes will be designed under the same service standards as to and from transportation.
3. Transportation service level will follow the IEP requirements for special education students.
4. Request for services or changes to services is made at least ten (10) working days prior to the effective date.

G. Recommended Bus Arrival/Departure and School Start/End Time Schedule

The bus arrival/departure time window will be according to the attached Appendix A.

The bus arrival and departure times may also be found on the District Transportation Department webpage at <https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/transportation>.

Note: Per the construction Master Use Permit, Denny International Middle School and Chief Sealth International High School must begin school a minimum of 30 minutes apart. Per the construction Master Use Permit, Decatur Elementary School and Thornton Creek Elementary School must begin school a minimum of 45 minutes apart.

H. Arrival And Departure Times for Special Education Students

Bus arrival and departure times for special education students receiving transportation will be the same as general education students unless specified differently by the student's IEP or 504 plan. Bus loading zones for special education buses may only be separate from general education buses when a legitimate, non-discriminatory reason exists and is documented by student's IEP or 504 plan for the student's safety or as determined necessary to meet the individualized disability-related needs of the student.

I. Alternative Transportation Service Address

The assignment address is the default transportation service address. Alternate service addresses will be considered for feasibility for the following situations:

- Child care
- After school activity

The district will assign transportation from one address in the morning and one address in the evening, provided the addresses qualify under the eligibility criteria and are feasible.

Transportation will be considered feasible when an existing service is available, or a stop can be established without increasing time or cost.

The provision of transportation service to/from an alternate address will be granted for the requested school year only. Parents/guardians must re-apply for consideration of continuation each year.

Schools may issue a temporary bus card to students who (with parent/guardian consent) wish to use an existing stop on an infrequent basis provided there is an existing stop within service assignment guidelines. Stops will not be added for this purpose.

J. Non-Residents Students

Non-resident students approved through the Seattle Public Schools Service Center to attend a Seattle Public School from an out-of-district address may be authorized district-provided transportation under the following conditions:

1. **High School Students:** All students aged 18 and younger in King County are eligible for fare-free transit. High school students are not eligible for regular transportation from Seattle Schools.
2. **Middle School Students:** Students may utilize existing bus stops and routes serving their assigned school. It will be their responsibility to get to and from this existing service.
3. **Elementary / K-8 Students:**
 - a. The parent /guardian must provide the district with an alternate or child care address to which they will transport the student and a contact person.
 - b. The alternate or child care address provided must be within the Seattle School District and conform to the transportation or walk boundary eligibility for the student's school of attendance.
 - c. The parent/guardian is responsible for transporting the student to the alternate or child care address.

K. Space Available Transportation

The provision of space for available transportation will be allowed under the following conditions:

1. The granting of space available will be at the discretion of the Transportation Specialists.
2. Space available may be considered when the following conditions are present:
 - a. Existing stop must be used.
 - b. Access to the stop must be in accordance with Bus Stop Location Transportation Service Standards as detailed above in Section B 1-3.
 - c. Space availability will be defined as five or more seats below the rated capacity of the bus assigned to the route in question after Oct. 1.
 - d. Grant of space available will not increase the cost to the district. If service needs change during the school year, authorization may be rescinded.

L. Transportation Services for McKinney-Vento and Foster Eligible Students

1. McKinney-Vento and foster students with a service address within the district and attending a district school or program will be subject to the same eligibility distance standard as all other students attending the same school with the exceptions noted in Section A. (Eligibility).

- a. Eligible middle and high school students will be subject to the same transportation service modes as other middle and high school students.
 - b. Eligible elementary (kindergarten through fifth grade) students will receive district-provided transportation service. Parents/guardians of students assigned to alternative transportation provider may request in-lieu compensation if they choose to drive their student(s).
2. McKinney-Vento and foster students attending a school or program outside of the district from an address within the district or attending a school or program inside the district from an address outside of the district will be provided service to the school of origin.

The cost for this service is to be shared with the sending or receiving district. Since each circumstance will be unique and require some level of agreement with participants and other districts, the following guidelines will be followed in each case:

- a. Students in middle and high school will be assigned public transit service where feasible. Generally, feasibility will be interpreted to mean that public transit service is available within one mile of the site and the service address, one-way ride time is less than 90 minutes and transfers are three or less. In situations where public transit is not feasible, the most cost-effective choice of district arranged transportation service or in-lieu compensation will be utilized.
- b. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade will receive district-arranged transportation service or the parent/guardian may receive in-lieu compensation.

M. Safe Routes to School/Biking & Walking Student Wellness Plan

The District Transportation Department shall continue to work in partnership with the City of Seattle School Traffic Safety Committee for the purpose of improving traffic safety for all of Seattle's school children. Student health and wellness, in addition to reducing the district's carbon footprint, shall be encouraged through the following measures:

1. Adult crossing guard placement shall be reviewed to maximize all kindergarten through eighth grade recommended one mile walk boundaries.
2. Annual mode-choice counts (using the Safe Routes to School Center mode choice survey) shall be conducted at each K-8 school during the first week in June.
3. Elementary and K-8 schools may operate a Walking School Bus that will be identified within the district's recommended walk maps. Walking School Bus routes shall be identified at all K-8 schools in partnership with the Transportation Department, City of Seattle Traffic Safety Committee, and school principals.

N. Appeals

Upon request, the Assistant Manager of Operations will review a previously denied transportation request. The Assistant Manager of Operations will provide the parent/guardian

with a written decision and notification of the parent/guardian's right to further appeal. A student's parent/guardian may further appeal the denied transportation requests by filing a written request for review to the district's Transportation Director. The Transportation Director or their designee will review the information provided by the parent/guardian and may interview district staff and/or review district records for information pertinent to making their determination. Within five school business days of receiving the request for review, the Transportation Director will provide the parent/guardian with a written decision. All appeals must be in writing and submitted through transdept@seattleschools.org.

O. Transporting Students' Infants

At the request of an eligible student, the district may allow the student to transport their infant on a school bus or other student transportation vehicle provided by the district. The infant must be transported in a rear-facing child restraint system as defined in the federal motor vehicle safety standards found in 49 C.F.R. § 572.213. If the district denies the student's request to transport their infant by school bus, the district must authorize other arrangements for individual transportation in accordance with RCW 28A.160.030. For purposes of this paragraph, "eligible student" means any student served by the transportation program of the district or compensated for individual transportation arrangements authorized by RCW 28A.160.030 whose route stop is outside the walk area for a student's school; however, if the student to be transported is disabled under RCW 28A.155.020, and is either not ambulatory or not capable of protecting their own welfare while traveling to or from the school or agency where special education services are provided, no mileage distance restriction applies.

P. Exceptions for Transportation

1. Transportation to Interim School Sites:

- a. When a program is moved to an interim site those students who are within the school's normal attendance area boundary or normal walk zone AND outside of the interim site's walk boundary will be provided district arranged transportation to the interim site.

2. Transportation Outside of Basic Eligibility:

- a. Aki Kurose Middle School students are provided yellow bus transportation if they reside more than one mile from the school, as an exception to normal middle school eligibility standards.
- b. Jane Addams Middle School students are provided yellow bus transportation if they reside more than one and a half miles from the school, as an exception to normal middle school eligibility standards.
- c. Licton Springs K-8 students will receive district arranged transportation from the Robert Eagle Staff Middle School attendance area.