

Busing - Frequently Asked Questions

Heather Mayhew, Business Administrator
Dr. Brodzik, Superintendent

There are certain questions regarding busing that come up every year. What follows is a list of responses to Frequently Asked Questions that we receive from parents and residents about how busing works and how it's paid for. If you have any questions about busing you can always contact our transportation department at 856-540-6200 x7114.

Does the Pennsville School District own their own buses?

Pennsville does not own their own buses. We have used Wyshinski Bus Company to meet our transportation needs for a number of years.

How do the bus routes get determined?

Bus routes are determined using historical data and an analysis from our transportation software. We strive to maintain safe and economical routes with a focus on limiting the time students spend on a bus.

Why isn't every seat on a bus filled?

The Pennsville School District is required to provide a seat to each student who is eligible for transportation *even if they decide to travel to school by different means*. This means that when you see a bus that is less than full it's because there are always more students that are assigned to the route than have opted not to ride that day.

I've been told that we live too close to the school to qualify for busing. What are the rules for who gets transported and who does not?

- In accordance with state law, *N.J.S.A.* 18A:39-1, all public elementary school students (grades K-8) who live more than two miles from their school and all public secondary school students (grades 9-12) who live more than two-and-a-half miles from their school are entitled to transportation.
- In addition, any student classified with special needs who either meets these distance requirements or for whom transportation is required in the student's *Individual Education Plan* must be transported.

How is that distance from school to the house measured? Can't you just "move the line" so that my child gets picked up? My house is just over the line!

- Measurement is made by the shortest distance along public roadways or walkways between the entrance to the student's home and the nearest public entrance of the school building. This measurement is for eligibility purposes only and is not necessarily the travel path to or from school. This provides for a system that is equitable to all of our students.

- Someone is always one house “over the line”. If we increase the distance for pickup to move the line by one house, then the next house is over the line.

What is subscription busing?

Boards of Education are not required by law to provide busing for students who live less than the state-mandated distances from school - even for safety reasons. However, boards are permitted, at their own discretion and expense, to provide transportation for students who reside less than the mandated distance from school and may charge the student's parents or legal guardians for this service. This transportation service is called subscription busing.

Does my subscription busing bill cover the cost of the bus run?

No, subscription busing actually costs about \$575 per student and the district only charges \$225 of that amount. While parent fees do offset a portion of the cost, the district's annual operating budget covers the majority of the subscription busing costs.

Why doesn't Valley Park run on the same bus schedule as the other two elementary schools?

The Pennsville School District operates a three-tier transportation system. This tiered system allows for the same bus and driver to perform a High School / Middle School route (Tier One), then a Central Park / Penn Beach route (Tier Two), and finish with a Valley Park route (Tier Three). Using a tiered route system significantly reduces the costs of transporting our students as completing all of the elementary school bus runs at the same time would require us to pay for more buses.

How old does my child have to be to get off the bus by themselves with no adult present?

The District requires an adult to be present at the bus stop for a pre-school, Kindergarten or First Grade student to be dropped off.

What happens if no adult is present to receive that young child?

Valley Park School students who do not have an adult present to receive them when dropped off by the school bus at the end of the school day will be returned back to school. The parent will be assessed supervision charges (currently \$32.00/hour, rounded to the nearest half hour) for those children who are returned to school and placed in the after-school “Pick Up Pals” Program until picked up by the parent/guardian or authorized adult. Additionally, any parent/guardian of a child who is returned to the school habitually, which is defined as three (3) or more times in a school year, may be referred to an appropriate State agency.

Why did my child's bus stop get moved? It's been there for years.

Many bus stops stay the same from year to year. However, some stops do change from time to time if new students move into your neighborhood. Instead of creating an additional stop, we may move an existing stop to accommodate all students in that area and run the most efficient bus route.

Can the district do anything if I feel my child has an unsafe walking route to school? Who should I contact?

Case law has long held that safety along public road ways and walkways is a municipal responsibility. It is for this reason that municipalities install sidewalks, traffic signals and signs, and paint crosswalks. Pursuant to section 40A:9-154.1 of New Jersey statute, school crossing guards are appointed by the municipality and are under the supervision of the chief law enforcement officer. Please contact a local Pennsville Township Official with concerns.

How long does it take to get a bus route set up for my child if I just moved here or changed addresses within the district?

Changes made during the school year usually take between 24-48 hours. This allows teachers, administrators, and the bus driver time to be informed of any changes. However, if parents miss the summer deadline the process could take considerably longer right before the start of school. Every change to a bus route to accommodate a new student affects every other student on that route. If we allowed people to add students to bus routes up until the first day of school we could never get bus routes prepared in time to notify parents for the start of school. That's why there is a deadline in the summer for bus paperwork to be submitted and why anyone who is late gets "frozen" until all the routes have been updated.

