

TRANSPORTATION

A guide for parents & students





TRANSPORTATION

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

River East Transcona School Division transports over 3,900 students in both urban and rural areas. In order to ensure a safe and efficient transportation system, it is everyone's responsibility to promote safety procedures that exercise care, caution, good manners and consideration for other people. With this in mind, general information concerning bus ridership is included in the following pages.

School bus safety starts at home—every day. Parents or guardians are responsible for supervising their children to and from the school bus. Over 65 per cent of outside-the-school-bus fatalities in North America occur when students are run over by their own bus. Parental supervision at their neighbourhood stop would, for the large part, eliminate this tragedy. Please, always accompany your child to and from their neighbourhood bus stop.

If, as parents or students, you have any problems concerning transportation in your area, do not hesitate to call the transportation department at 204.669.0202, or your school principal. We would be pleased to assist you.

Director of Transportation

WHAT CAN A PARENT DO ABOUT SCHOOL BUS SAFETY?

A Parent Checklist

- ✓ Commit to your (K–4) child—you should accompany them every day to and from the school bus.
- ✓ Talk with your child regularly about school bus danger zones.
- ✓ Practise looking left, right and left again with your child before crossing all intersections and driveways.
- ✓ Make sure your child can be easily seen—dress your child in bright-coloured clothing; attach reflective material to their backpack.
- ✓ Shorten or remove any drawstrings that are longer than six inches when tied (make sure they are tied). Better yet, replace them with Velcro or buy clothing and backpacks without drawstrings. Children have been dragged to their death by buses when long drawstrings were snagged.
- ✓ Store everything in your child's backpack and ensure it is securely closed. Never let your child carry anything that can be dropped near or under a bus. Ensure your child's teacher is insisting on the same.
- ✓ Remind your child regularly that if anything falls underneath or in front of the bus, **leave it—do not retrieve it. Step away from the bus** and ask the school bus driver what to do first.
- ✓ Have your child leave home in plenty of time to eliminate the last minute dashes that cause accidents, especially in inclement weather. Teach your child to tell and be responsible with time.
- ✓ Wait for your child on the same side of the street as the bus stop. Do not make your child cross the street to get to you. Children often forget pedestrian safety rules when they see their parent.
- ✓ Support school bus discipline. Teach your child their driver is the leader of the school bus safety team. Work with the school and driver if disciplinary problems are reported.

BUS STOPS

- The transportation department pre-assigns students to bus stops.
- Please ensure your child is familiar with the bus stop location prior to their first trip.
- The bus number is posted on both sides of the bus, front and back.



We ask parents to review the following with their children:

ARRIVAL AT PICKUP POINT

- Be on time for the bus. Leave home early. Walk quickly. **Arrive five minutes before the departure time. You can wait for the bus—the bus cannot wait for you!**
- On your way, cross the street only at the corner. If there aren't any sidewalks, walk on the left facing cars.
- Never run into the street or road. Always look left and right and left again to make sure no cars are coming when you cross.
- Stay away from the street when waiting for the bus. Always wait for the bus in a safe place, at least two metres from the curb.
- Be sure that there is space between you and the passing cars.
- Don't play tag or run around, but stand quietly at the stop and wait for the bus to come.
- If other students are waiting at the bus stop, get in line without pushing or jostling.
- While waiting for the bus, do not damage or trespass onto private property.
- Do not play on snow banks.

BOARDING THE BUS

- Line up in single file in front of the bus door, at least two metres from the curb.
- Wait until the driver opens the door before approaching the bus.
- If there is a school bus patrol, wait until the patrol takes up their position beside the door before approaching the bus.
- Wait your turn.
- Board the bus quickly without crowding or pushing.
- Always use the handrail—this could save you from falling off the steps and into the street.
- Make sure you watch where you are stepping.
- A seating plan is in effect at all times.
- Go directly to your assigned seat and sit straight, with your back firmly against the seat. The bus driver has the authority to reassign any seating.
- All students must remain seated and facing forward.





CONDUCT ON THE BUS

- Follow all directions and safety procedures from the first time they are given by the driver. Any behaviour that distracts the driver is a serious hazard to the safe operation of the bus and, as such, jeopardizes the safety of all passengers.
- Once you are on the bus, sit down right away. Adhere to the seating plan at all times. Keep your books, parcels and musical instruments on your lap or under the seat.
- Laws require the aisle to be kept clear at all times (see page 7).
- When you are travelling on the bus you may talk quietly with the people near you, but do not yell. Noisy children may distract the bus driver.
- We ask the students to be completely silent when the school bus is crossing a railroad crossing.
- Never stick your hands, arms, head or feet out of the windows. Waving with an arm outside the bus is dangerous.
- Do not touch the emergency door or exits or any part of the bus equipment.
- The bus is neither a cafeteria nor a place to discard refuse. If you are hungry, eat at home or at school. Eating on a bus can be very dangerous due to the possibility of choking.

GETTING OFF THE BUS

- Always remain seated until the bus has reached its destination and comes to a complete stop.
- Don't push or jostle while getting off.
- When you stop at school, let your classmates in the front of the bus get off first.
- Always use the handrail.

WALKING AWAY FROM THE BUS

- If you are not crossing the street, step directly away from the bus.
- **Do not walk alongside the bus at any time!**
- IMPORTANT: If anything falls underneath or in front of the bus, **leave it—do not retrieve it. Step away from the bus** and ask the school bus driver what to do first.

CROSSING THE STREET

Always wait at the curb, at least three metres in front of the bus so the driver can always see you. Cross at right angles, not diagonally. Never cross the road behind the school bus.

1. If there is no school bus patrol, wait for the driver's instruction before crossing.
2. When school bus patrols are available, wait until the patrol signals before crossing. The patrol will walk out part way into the street, communicate with the driver, check traffic in both directions, and only then signal when it is safe to cross by extending their arm outwards and dropping their left arm. Only at this time should you leave your curbside position to start crossing the street.
3. When proceeding onto the roadway you should always look left and right and left again.
4. Walk promptly across the road. Do not run.

PARENTS: Wait for your child on the same side of the street as the bus stop. Do not make your child cross the street to get to you. Children often forget pedestrian safety rules when they see their parent. When you accompany your child, please reinforce the importance of our safety team by always waiting for and following all driver and bus patrol instructions.

SPECIAL REQUESTS

Students other than those approved for regular transportation are not permitted to ride the school bus. School bus drivers are not authorized to grant any parental requests. Students must only get on and off at their scheduled bus stop location. Notes from parents will not be accepted.

CARRY-ON ITEMS

Items being carried on by students are limited to small articles that can easily be stored within the student's personal space (i.e. carried on the student's lap or stored under the seat occupied by the student). Law requires the centre aisle to be kept clear.

- Hockey sticks, curling brooms, ringette sticks, skis, skateboards, snowboards or other similar items are not allowed. Skates will be allowed only when blades are enclosed in proper skate guards and stored in a carry bag. Any balls must be carried in a bag.
- Science fair backboards are not allowed.
- Students should be prepared to place their carry-on items, such as books or other accessories, below their seats. This may mean carrying books or other items in a plastic bag, as school bus floors are frequently muddy during inclement weather.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Due to safety regulations, only recorders, piccolos, oboes, flutes and B-flat clarinets may be held on a student's lap. The following instruments must be placed under the seat: trumpet/cornet (slim case), trombone (narrow black case) and alto saxophone.

For further information about the transportation of musical instruments, please contact your school music teacher.

ASSERTIVE DISCIPLINE

Students in River East Transcona School Division who ride buses are subject to rules and regulations designed to provide safe transportation to and from school. We have an assertive discipline program for bus riders. With this plan, students will know ahead of time what behaviour is expected of them and what consequences will occur if they do not behave. This program provides a common approach that everyone understands. Prior understanding of this plan leads to increased administrative and parental support when problems occur. Please reinforce with your child that their driver is the leader of the school bus safety team. Work with the school and driver if disciplinary problems are reported.

RULES

1. Follow all directions and safety procedures.
2. Stay in your seat. Sit properly. Keep hands and feet to yourself.
3. Speak in a low and respectful tone.
4. Do not eat or drink.
5. Do not litter, write on or damage the bus in any way.
6. Do not swear, use rude gestures or tease others.





REWARDS

Positive rewards take the form of frequent praise and recognition from the driver to the students.

- Bus drivers greet students as they enter the bus with a few pleasant words.
- Bus drivers praise students who are well behaved as they exit the bus.

Positives make students look forward to their ride on the bus.

CONSEQUENCES

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1st incident | Student verbally warned and driver will complete a misconduct report. |
| 2nd incident | Student receives second verbal warning and a second misconduct report is submitted. |
| 3rd incident | Busing privileges suspended for two to five days and progressive discipline procedures followed. |

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Very reasonably so, parents often have questions related to school bus transportation, whether about something as vital as safety or as commonplace as a forgotten pair of mittens on a bus. In order to be responsive to the needs of parents, the transportation department has assembled a list of frequently asked questions and their corresponding answers. We hope this is helpful in making you feel more comfortable with and aware of how your children are safely transported to and from school each day. Should you have any questions that are not addressed in this list, please feel free to contact us at 204.669.0202.

Who should I call if the bus does not arrive on time?

Parents are first asked to make sure that the buses are operating and not cancelled due to poor weather or extreme cold. (Please see the “Procedures for extreme weather” on page 15.) Normally, according to policy, we ask that your child be at the bus stop five minutes before the schedule arrival time. If after 10 minutes the bus has not yet arrived, you should call the transportation department at 204.669.0202.

What are the hours of operation of the transportation department?

The dispatch area is staffed from 6 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. every school day. Scheduling, administration, safety and training departments operate from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Will my child have the same driver and the same bus number every day?

Your child may have different drivers between the morning and afternoon routes. However, they will be consistent and in those routes from day to day, with the exception of sick leave, leave of absence and employee turnover.

Regarding buses, your child’s bus number will be consistent most of the year, with the exception of when the bus is taken out of service for scheduled or unscheduled maintenance. When this occurs, our spare buses are used as replacements. The spare buses are numbered in the 90s. Because of the size of the fleet and the number of students who are affected when a spare bus is used, parents are not notified of the change.

Can the driver stop at my house to pick up or drop off my child?

Drivers are not permitted to adjust routes, times or stops. Only certain students, whose needs are addressed through a personal transportation plan, are eligible for door-to-door service. This service is typically restricted to students with certain disabilities.

For other students, service is provided in accordance with provincial and divisional guidelines that assure a maximum distance to the stop is not greater than 800 metres. Within these guidelines, every effort is made to improve route efficiency by clustering students to stops and, where possible, providing service on major streets.

Do I have to meet my student at the bus stop?

The division is responsible for the safety of students using division-owned vehicles while the students are on the vehicle. It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to ensure the safety of students from home to the school bus pick-up point, until boarding the school bus and from disembarkation from the school bus to home. We do, however, track our new kindergarten students and highly recommend you bring them and meet them at the bus stop. Grade 1 through 12 students will be let off at their bus stop even if a parent is not there to meet them. You can make a "Must be met" request by contacting the transportation department. This stipulation will be relayed to the driver on the student manifest.

What happens if I don't meet my kindergarten student or "Must Be Met" student at the bus stop?

Upon reaching the stop, the bus driver will radio the dispatcher and request a call to your residence to notify you that the school bus has arrived at the stop. The driver will be instructed to keep your child on board and continue on with the route. After completion of the route, the principal will be notified and your child will be returned to the school. If you are in the habit of meeting your child but have not requested a "Must be Met by Parent" and, for whatever reason, are delayed in getting to the stop, the same will apply. Please remember that school buses are triple routed, and it could be some time until your child is returned to the school. Also, should you be unable to meet the bus and you send someone the driver has not seen before, you should call the transportation office to notify them of the change.



Should I call if my child will not be on the bus on a particular day or route?

Because of the large volume of students we transport, we request that only parents of kindergarten students and students with special needs call to cancel transportation on a particular day or route. For example, you may call if you need to cancel the morning pickup or afternoon take home. The same would apply if your child is going to be picked up rather than going home by bus. This saves time and worry for the drivers, wondering why their children have not come to the bus.

How does the driver know who my child is and where they belong?

Several ways. First, each driver has a student passenger list that provides him/her with information such as name, grade, address, pickup or drop-off point, time, school and any special instructions. Examples of special instructions would be medical requirements (e.g. allergies, EpiPens®) or "Must Be Met By Parent" requests.

Also, each kindergarten student is supplied with a badge the first day of school, identifying their name, school, drop-off point and take-home bus number. Teachers will pin the badges on students' backpacks. As well, the driver is in constant radio contact with the dispatcher. The dispatchers have access to all of the same data that the school has on your child.

Why is the bus late and why wasn't I called?

Some situations that cause the bus to be late include traffic, road closures, weather, vehicle breakdowns or circumstances from the prior bus route. In some instances, the bus is held up at the school waiting for students. The same holds true when picking up students. If 20 students are one minute late for the pickup, the bus will run 20 minutes late. This is very profound considering some buses can pick up as many as 250 students during the course of the morning routes.

Since we operate close to 80 buses on 360 routes, transporting some 3,900 students, it is virtually impossible to contact parents when a bus is late. However, the transportation department is in constant radio contact with all of the buses. Should a driver foresee they will be 10 minutes behind schedule, they are required to inform the base and, in turn, the base notifies the school.

At the beginning of the year, please expect the buses to run several minutes late for usually a week, as this is an exciting time for parents. It takes time to have pictures taken, and to say and wave goodbye. And in some cases, some of our new riders can be very reluctant to leave their parents and go off alone to a strange place.

How will I be notified of a change to my child's stop time or location?

We make every attempt to adhere to the pickup and drop-off times indicated. For the morning pickup, if the change is less than five minutes, the driver will notify your child of the change. If there is a change in stop time greater than five minutes, or a change in stop location or bus number, the transportation department will provide written notification to you. The afternoon drop-off time indicated in your letter is an approximate time only. Buses do run late at times, and can run early, as well. If your child's bus arrives earlier than the normal drop-off time, it will likely be because some students who would normally be dropped off before your child are not on the bus, putting it ahead of schedule.

My bus is overcrowded. Can some children be placed on a different bus?

A formula is used to determine bus capacity. It is assumed that elementary students (K-6) will ride three to a seat and junior high to

senior high students (7–12) will ride two to a seat. If the bus has three elementary or two high school students per seat, it may seem that the bus is overcrowded, but it will not, in fact, be over capacity. It is our goal to fully utilize all the space on the buses in our fleet.

I can't see my child's bus stop from my house. How can I get the stop moved closer?

Bus stops are placed at centralized locations that can be safely accessed by a significant number of students to minimize the time, length and mileage of the routes. If you have concerns about your child's safety, you are encouraged to accompany your child to and from the bus stop or to arrange a neighbourhood buddy to walk with a younger child. Students in the division who live less than 1.6 kilometres from their school do not receive transportation, therefore asking students to walk 800 metres or less to a bus stop is not considered unreasonable.

My child is currently being bused on a fee-for-service basis. Will there be busing available for him next year?

The transportation department re-evaluates the routing each new school year. Student demographics are affected from year to year due to graduations and people moving in and out of the school division. As a result, the routing can change dramatically. If there are no longer students that qualify for transportation in accordance with divisional policy in the area, buses will not be routed there. Subsequently, there would not be fee-for-service capabilities. As well, should the bus be at capacity, there would not be room for fee-for-service students.

Why are seat belts not required in school buses?

Seat belts are not required in school buses because research done by both the American and Canadian regulatory agencies determined that compartmentalization was a better solution. Under this concept, seat backs in school buses are made high, wide and thick. All metal surfaces are covered with thick foam padding. The seat is required to be anchored to the floor and will not pull loose during a collision. The students are less prone to injury by being bounced between the seats than by being strapped in.

Compartmentalization works well for one, two or three students in a seat. Today's 39-inch seats can accommodate three younger students, two large students or a combination of the two. Arranging and adjusting seat belts for this combination would be difficult, if not impossible.

As well, it would be difficult for the driver to enforce 60 to 70 students to put on their seat belts and keep them on. Also, compartmentalization, once it has done its energy-absorbing job, leaves the students free to escape the bus. Seat belts could leave students strapped in, perhaps upside down and in a bus that has caught fire.

Can my child be dropped off at a different stop or go on another bus?

Students must ride on their assigned buses only. Parents can request a different existing stop on the same route, but it must be consistent every day. Students are not allowed to go on other buses for reasons such as birthday parties, sleepovers, etc.

What if my child left something on the bus? (e.g. books, an instrument)

Drivers check their buses at the end of each route. Items left on the bus will remain on the bus for several days and children are encouraged to ask the driver if they have found the item. After a certain period, drivers take unclaimed items to the office, and at the end of the school year the items are donated to charity. You can help by labelling all of your child's belongings with their name and perhaps the school name.

Where can I find more information on school bus transportation in the division?

You can find more information, such as transportation policies and weather cancellations on our website at www.retsd.mb.ca. As well, you may call the transportation department at 204.669.0202.

PROCEDURES FOR EXTREME WEATHER

1. The decision to close schools and/or cancel transportation will be made by the superintendent in consultation with the director of transportation.
2. The decision to close, if it is made, will be conveyed to the transportation supervisor in Sunrise School Division for its students transported to River East Transcona schools.
3. An announcement will be posted on the RETSD website. (www.retsd.mb.ca)

4. The decision will be communicated to the media:

CBC—AM & FM	CJOB 680 AM
CFQX (QX) 104 FM	CKMM (Virgin) 103
CFRW 1290	CKSB (French)
CFWM (BOB) 99.9	CKY 102 (Clear) FM
CHIQ (Q94) FM	CTV
CITI 92 FM	Envol 91 (French)
CityTV	Global News
CJKR (Power) 97	Winnipeg Free Press online

5. All parents and staff are asked to listen to the media for announcements regarding school closings and/or cancellation of transportation.
6. If it is necessary to close schools or bus students home early during the day because of severe weather conditions, schools will be contacted by phone by the superintendent's department.
7. In the event that transportation is cancelled in the morning, this cancellation will apply for the whole day.

For more details on bus cancellation, see Policy EEAEF—Bus Cancellation at www.retsd.mb.ca > Parents & Students > Policies.

Note regarding extreme wind chill: The transportation department will monitor the wind chill at 6 a.m. using Environment Canada weather statistics from The Forks. If at that time the wind chill is -45°C or colder, the decision to cancel bus transportation will be made.

CONTACT US

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