

1. Rationale

The *Education Act* does not require school boards to provide transportation. Therefore, transportation is a privilege not a right.

Responsibility for getting to and from school rests with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s).

The board recognizes that providing transportation services for its students is important for students to be able to access the board's schools and programs. Transportation services will be reflective of a partnership with the home, which prioritizes safety, equity, consistency, and the efficient use of available resources.

2. Policy

It is the policy of the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) to provide transportation services to eligible students that are safe, equitable, efficient, cost effective, and within the allocated funding.

3. Definition

- 3.1 Adult student - a student who is 18 years of age or older, or 16 or 17 years of age, and has removed themselves from parental control.
- 3.2 Attendance area - the area within a school's attendance boundary (including any attached holding areas).
- 3.3 School vehicle - includes all school purpose vehicles used to transport students, including buses (regular, commuter, and program) and specialized vehicles.
- 3.4 Commuter bus - a vehicle that is available for students to access beyond the designated walking distances of their home school.
- 3.5 Program bus - a vehicle authorized by Policy 2410 – Transportation of Students, to provide transportation for students attending designated specialized programs.
- 3.6 Courtesy rider - an out-of-attendance-area student who has been approved to ride a commuter or program bus.
- 3.7 Designated specialized programs - includes French Immersion (FI) and special education county classes (Gifted, Autism Spectrum Disorder [Complex Care], Social Skills, Developmental Skills, and Life Skills).
- 3.8 Home school - the school located within a student's primary residence attendance area.

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- 3.9 Primary residence - a student's legal and/or permanent residence. This address determines the student's home school. A student may only have one primary address. In the case of joint custody, it is the decision of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the primary residence, and to provide that information to the school upon request.
- 3.10 Operator - an individual(s) or firm owning and/or operating vehicles under contract with the board and shall include the board.
- 3.11 Out-of-attendance-area student - a student who does not attend their home school and is not otherwise eligible for transportation to the school they attend.
- 3.12 Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium (SCSTC) - a consortium formed through an agreement between the SCDSB and the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board (SMCDSB) for the purpose of providing a common administration of student transportation services throughout Simcoe County. The SCSTC administers each board's transportation policies and procedures and implements all aspects of home-to-school transportation services.
- 3.13 Urban area - an area located within the municipal limits of the cities, towns, and villages in Simcoe County.
- 3.14 Co-curricular activities - activities related to the regular day school program (e.g., field trips, speakers, dance instructors, in-class field trips).
- 3.15 Extracurricular activities - activities that are outside of the regular day school program (e.g., sports or music competition).
- 3.16 Active transportation - any human-powered form of transportation including students walking or wheeling (bicycle, scooter, skateboard, wheelchair, or other mobility devices) for all or part of their journey to and from school each day.

4. Guidelines

- 4.1 Provision of transportation service
 - 4.1.1 Home-to-school transportation and transportation between schools shall be provided on buses and other vehicles owned by operators under contract to the SCSTC or SCDSB, and public transit.
 - 4.1.2 Students are expected to attend their home school, unless registered in a designated specialized program located in a different school.
 - 4.1.3 The board is not responsible for the transportation of out-of-attendance-area students.
 - 4.1.4 The board provides transportation to eligible students between home and school. Transportation to locations outside of home and school are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

- 4.2 Walking zones
- 4.2.1 The board will establish designated walking zones for each school based on the following distances from the school property:
- 4.2.1.1 elementary students - 1.6 km; and,
- 4.2.1.2 secondary students - 3.2 km.
- 4.2.2 Distance measuring will be done by the SCSTC using a digitized map, vehicle, and/or a measuring wheel. Measurements are taken from the student's residential property line nearest to the closest entrance of the school property.
- 4.2.3 The boundary of each designated walking zone will reflect the most direct and practical walking route from the home school to home.
- 4.2.4 Students, including those with special education needs, who reside within a designated walking zone for their home school or school offering a designated specialized program, are not eligible for transportation, unless otherwise qualified by policy.
- 4.2.4.1 Where feasible, within urban areas, students may be provided with transit passes allowing them access to public transportation as an alternative to the provision of school transportation.
- 4.2.4.2 Responsibility for getting to and from school rests with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s). The responsibility to confirm if the designated walking zone is safe for their child lies with the individual student's parent(s)/guardian(s).
- 4.3 Bus routes
- 4.3.1 The Director of Education, or designate, is authorized to provide transportation to and from home schools for students residing outside designated walking zones, and to make all decisions related to the implementation of the board's transportation policy and administrative procedures regarding transportation.
- 4.3.2 Bus routes will be organized efficiently and economically and will correspond with the following criteria, unless there are exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Director of Education, or designate, in their sole discretion:
- 4.3.2.1 maximum travel for elementary students is 60 minutes one way;
- 4.3.2.2 maximum travel for secondary students is 75 minutes one way;
- 4.3.2.3 maximum travel for elementary or secondary students registered in designated specialized programs may exceed 60 minutes (elementary) or 75 minutes (secondary) one way;
- 4.3.2.4 maximum walking distance to a bus stop is 0.8 km;
- 4.3.2.5 maximum walking distance to a bus stop may exceed 0.8 km where the SCSTC determines the roadway is unsafe for a school vehicle to manoeuvre;
- 4.3.2.6 maximum walking distance to a bus stop may exceed 0.8 km when a student is registered in a designated specialized program; and,
- 4.3.2.7 students will ride only on assigned school vehicles and will be picked up and dropped off only at designated stops.
- 4.3.3 If a student must ride on more than one school vehicle on a one-way trip, bus routes will be organized so a transfer point is located at a school.

- 4.4 Bell times
 - 4.4.1 Bell times for elementary schools will be no earlier than 8:30 a.m. and no later than 4:15 p.m.
 - 4.4.2 Bell times for secondary schools will be no earlier than 8 a.m. and no later than 4:30 p.m.
 - 4.4.3 Bell times described in item 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 may be altered to minimize travel time on a school vehicle, allow students to attend designated specialized programs not offered in their home school, and achieve efficiencies in the organization of bus routes.

- 4.5 Supervision times
 - 4.5.1 Planned supervision time for elementary and secondary schools for the purpose of school vehicle scheduling only, is no more than 30 minutes before the morning school bell and no more than 30 minutes following the afternoon school bell.
 - 4.5.2 Supervision time described in item 4.5.1 may be altered to allow students to attend designated specialized programs not offered in their home school.

- 4.6 Alternate transportation
 - 4.6.1 Alternate transportation arrangements may be made for students residing beyond the designated walking zone of their home school upon the written request of a parent/guardian, or the adult student, to the home school principal, provided that:
 - 4.6.1.1 the request clearly identifies one alternate pick-up location for every morning and one alternate location for drop-off for every afternoon, five days a week, for the school year;
 - 4.6.1.2 both the requested pick-up and drop-off points are within the school attendance area and outside the designated school walking zone of the home school the student attends; and,
 - 4.6.1.3 both the requested pick-up and drop-off points are served at an existing bus stop by existing bus routes on which there is available space.
 - 4.6.2 Transportation requests that meet the conditions above but involve pick-up and/or drop-off locations in a reoccurring pattern (i.e., alternating transportation) require the approval of the SCDSB superintendent responsible for transportation.
 - 4.6.3 Approved requests for alternate or alternating transportation pick-up and/or drop-off locations are for the current school year only, and a request must be made annually.
 - 4.6.4 The board reserves the right to reverse previously approved alternate transportation approvals when safety, behaviour, or capacity conditions warrant.

- 4.7 Out-of-attendance-area transportation
 - 4.7.1 The board will assume no obligation to provide transportation for out-of-attendance-area students who have chosen to attend a school that is not their home school. In such circumstances, responsibility of getting to and from a school will rest entirely with the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - 4.7.2 A request in writing for a courtesy rider spot at existing bus stops on existing routes to attend a school that is not a student's home school will only be approved if there is surplus space on the school vehicle and there is no additional cost to the board.
 - 4.7.3 The board reserves the right to reverse previously approved out-of-attendance-area transportation approvals when safety, service, behaviour, or capacity conditions warrant.

- 4.8 Other transportation considerations
 - 4.8.1 The Director of Education, or designate, in their sole discretion, is authorized to provide transportation:
 - 4.8.1.1 for students who attend the Ontario school for the blind, an Ontario school for the deaf, a demonstration school, or other facilities as provided for in the *Education Act*, regulations, or policy/program memoranda;
 - 4.8.1.2 for students with disability needs requiring transportation to and from school as an accommodation as evidenced by a certificate or assessment from a medical doctor describing the student's needs, and the duration the student is anticipated to require transportation, up to one school year. The board may waive, in writing, the requirement for an annual certificate for specific disability related needs of a permanent nature;
 - 4.8.1.3 for elementary school students to attend designated specialized programs not offered in their home school, when the student's primary residence is outside the designated walking zone of the school offering the program;
 - 4.8.1.4 for secondary school students to attend designated specialized programs not offered in their home school, when the student's primary residence is outside the designated walking zone of the school offering the program;
 - 4.8.1.5 for late school vehicles for secondary co-curricular programs where sufficient numbers exist;
 - 4.8.1.6 for a student or group of students to travel on a scheduled run to attend a special event; and,
 - 4.8.1.7 on compassionate grounds with a limited time of approval.

- 4.9 Persons authorized for school vehicle travel
 - 4.9.1 In addition to eligible day school students, the following persons are authorized to travel on school vehicles:
 - 4.9.1.1 with prior approval of the principal, adult supervisors on school vehicles carrying students on approved co-instructional activities;
 - 4.9.1.2 with prior approval of the principal and if space permits, a school volunteer with a required Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC);

- 4.9.1.3 staff of the board or the operator and those otherwise authorized by administration to provide necessary assistance or care for students;
 - 4.9.1.4 if space permits, preschool children of drivers, provided the operator ensures school vehicles are equipped with appropriate restraints and infant seats for safe transportation and provided the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) releases and indemnifies the board for any liability which may be incurred as a result of such child travelling; and,
 - 4.9.1.5 if space permits, and with prior approval of the principal, exchange students hosted by board schools using existing bus routes and stops.
- 4.10 Active transportation
- 4.10.1 Active transportation increases physical activity, which contributes to a healthy lifestyle and well-being. Normalizing and promoting active and sustainable travel as the preferred choice of transportation reflects the principles of Ontario's *Foundations for a Healthy School*. Furthermore, it reduces the number of vehicles used for student transportation, resulting in improved air quality, and enhances school safety by reducing the volume of traffic in the school parking lot, kiss and ride, and on nearby streets and roads at bell times.
 - 4.10.2 The SCDSB supports and encourages active transportation and acknowledges that active transportation is an important component of a healthy lifestyle and learning (APM A1240 – Active School Travel).
 - 4.10.3 By using active modes of transportation to school and school events, students gain independence which contributes to their social and psychological well-being and development. This will prepare students for learning and foster lifelong habits using active modes of transportation.
- 4.11 Transportation of students for instructional and co-instructional activities
- 4.11.1 Transportation of students for instructional and co-instructional activities is normally provided by school vehicles owned by or under contract to the board or SCSTC.
 - 4.11.2 Staff and other adult volunteers (with a required VSC) with the appropriate vehicle license may transport small groups of students in private vehicles or rented vehicles provided the principal has approved, in writing and in advance, of such arrangements.
- 4.12 Student behaviour
- 4.12.1 The board considers transportation to be a privilege. Conduct which is detrimental to the safe operation of the transportation vehicles or to the safety or well-being of others riding on the vehicle will not be permitted.
 - 4.12.2 The driver of the vehicle is in charge of the operation of the vehicle, and the safety or well-being of riders, and must be given each rider's co-operation and support.
 - 4.12.3 Every student is responsible to the principal of the school that the student attends for their conduct while on a school vehicle. Administrative procedures

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provide further direction regarding the responsibilities of principals for student behaviour in transportation situations.

- 4.12.4 An operator shall be entitled, upon giving not less than 24 hours prior written notice to the board, to refuse to transport a student who in the operator's reasonable opinion constitutes a threat or danger to the safe operation of the vehicle or the safety or well-being of that student or any rider, pending investigation of the circumstances and decision by the board.
 - 4.12.5 Permanent or temporary loss of transportation privileges shall result for a student whose behaviour while travelling on a school vehicle is considered to endanger the safety or well-being of others.
- 4.13 Cancellation of transportation or changes in times of school vehicle runs
- 4.13.1 The Director of Education, or designate, is authorized to make special arrangements to cancel or alter transportation services to ensure the safety of students during inclement weather or emergency situations.
 - 4.13.2 Each principal is responsible for ensuring that their school has a contingency plan for the safe care of students in the event of early closure or when homeward transportation must be cancelled.
- 4.14 Student safety
- 4.14.1 The board's responsibility for the supervision of students who are transported on a school vehicle will commence only with the student's entrance to the vehicle and will terminate with the student's exit from the vehicle at the designated stop.
 - 4.14.2 The safety of each student transported shall be of prime importance in every aspect of transportation.
 - 4.14.3 Safety of transportation by school vehicle shall be part of the program of studies in elementary schools.
 - 4.14.4 Each school shall develop appropriate safety rules with regard to school vehicle loading areas.
 - 4.14.5 Safety information will also be provided to individuals authorized to travel on school vehicles.
 - 4.14.6 Student transportation protocols for use in school lockdown situations are to be followed (APM A1226 – Protocol for Student Transportation During School Lockdown Situations).

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4.15 Expectations

4.15.1 The board will provide expectations to parents/guardians in order to ensure the optimum safe transportation of their children.

4.15.2 The Director of Education, or designate, will provide expectations and responsibilities for students being transported.

4.15.3 It is the responsibility of the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure their child(ren)'s safety to/from designated bus stops and while at the designated bus stop.

4.16 Dispute resolution

4.16.1 All transportation disputes will first be received by the SCSTC for resolution or redirection.

4.16.2 Disputes outside the mandate of the SCSTC will be directed to the SCDSB from SCSTC administration.

4.16.3 The SCDSB superintendent responsible for transportation will receive the dispute for resolution and communicate the decision to the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student involved.

5. Administrative procedures

The Director of Education is authorized to provide the administrative procedures necessary to implement this policy.

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