

APPENDIX 'E'

Student Transportation Fact Sheet – 2021-22 School Year

Last Updated: July 2021

We know that there have been a number of changes to student transportation since the onset of COVID-19. This fact sheet has been created to ensure that you have the latest information and to assist in answering questions from parents/guardians. The fact sheet will continue to be updated and shared as the situation evolves.

Transportation Eligibility

- As in previous years, transportation is provided for students who meet the following criteria:
 - Distance: JK- 8 more than 1.5KM from the school and within the catchment area
 - Special Needs: Home pick up for any student not attending their local school
 - Hazards/Board Approved Areas: students that reside in specific geographical areas will be provided neighbourhood bus stops.

Empty Seat and Extenuating Circumstances

- The TCDSB will follow the same practice as last school year in terms of accommodating non-eligible requests. Students will only be placed on buses where there is room and or time and only on buses that are not shared with the TDSB. This review will take place in mid to late October.
- Currently, these ineligible students have not been placed on bus routes for September.
- As you know, this is not a typical start up to the year. The decision to defer a decision on the Empty Seat an extenuating circumstance requests was made to help promote physical distancing on school busses, as well as to help the Toronto Student Transportation Group (TSTG) and bus operators effectively plan bus routes and seating arrangements in light of the new COVID-19 health and safety precautions.

Phased Start to Student Transportation

- TSTG, which provides bus services for the TDSB and the TCDSB, will be moving forward with a phased start for student transportation to ensure that students with special education needs are prioritized and receive bus service beginning the first week of school.
 - During week 1 of the school year (September 9-14) only students with special education needs will be provided with student transportation.
 - Beginning September 15th, all other eligible students will be provided with student transportation, unless there is a significant driver shortage or other unforeseen issues related to COVID-19.
- Students with special needs include those on mini-buses, mini-vans, taxis, and WC accessible vehicles.
- This information has been sent to parents/guardians through school messenger and the transportation portal, and has been posted on the TSTG website and social media accounts.
- Parents will receive a phone call from TSTG the week before school starts confirming their start date (September 9th or September 15th).
- As always, [active transportation](#) is recommended when possible.

Bus Driver Shortage

- School boards across the province continue to face a school bus driver shortage that has caused start-up issues for the past several years.
- This year, the COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the driver shortage issue because approximately 20% of the driver pool is over 60 years of age.
- Over the summer, bus operators were directed to increase recruitment efforts.
- The actual impact of a driver shortage is typically not known until the end of August/early September when operators actually go through their route sign up.

COVID-19 & School Bus Safety

- To help ensure the safe start-up of student transportation services for students and drivers, the Toronto Student Transportation Group, working with the school bus operators and Toronto Public Health, has put a number of COVID-19 protocols and precautions in place. These include:
 - Requiring that all students (K-12) wear non-medical face coverings (exceptions will be made for students with medical conditions or special needs);
 - Requiring that all bus drivers wear medical masks and/or face shields when students are being dropped off or picked up;
 - Assigning seats for students with siblings and classroom cohorts seated together; and,
 - Enhanced cleaning of high touch surfaces (e.g. seats, inside hand railing, interior windows and walls, etc.) before and after each shift.
- Please see the full list of [health and safety protocols and precautions](#) to ensure the health and well-being of all students and drivers on bus.
- Some Covid [videos](#) have been created for families to view to better understand protocols.
- Please also note that parents/guardians who have to secure their special needs child(ren) on the bus will also be required to wear face coverings.
- Assigned seating plans will be created by TSTG for every school bus run but will be provided to schools and school bus operators to refine and update as needed over the first few weeks of school.

Supervision/Responsibility

- Schools should plan for supervision of bused students 30 minutes prior to the school start time and 20 minutes after the final bell.
- Parents are responsible for their children prior to entering the bus and once they are dropped off at the end of the day.
- The school bus is an extension of the classroom. Principals are responsible for students once they enter the bus.
- Students who have no one to receive them at the end of the day at their bus stop will be returned to the school. Schools should have staff available until the bus route is scheduled to have dropped off all students. Schools should consider removal of transportation privileges for any student/family that continues to not meet the bus.
- If we are notified of a missing student the Missing Student Protocol will be enacted. Please review page 31 of the [Transportation Operations Manual](#) for more information.

- The Purple Equals Parent Program is mandatory for students in JK to Grade 3. Students with a tag will only be dropped off if a caregiver or older sibling is available to receive the student. Packages with tags should arrive at schools the week prior to the first day of school.

Late Buses

- Buses may run late for a number of different reasons. School bus operators are required to update the Late Bus Portal which will generate an email notifying schools and parents/guardians signed up for the portal of the delay.
- Constant and regular delays should be reported to the TCDSB's Transportation department for investigation and resolution.

Transportation Information for Schools

- Schools have access to all their student transportation information via [BusPlanner](#).
- Student information is updated on a daily basis starting the second week of school.
- Applications are still required for all students requesting transportation who use an alternate address (daycare), have special needs, or are not eligible but seeking service, and they must be submitted through the school. Eligible students using the closest big bus stop should automatically be assigned after the student is registered in Trillium and uploaded into our Transportation system so no forms required for these students.

Parent/Guardians Questions and Communication

- Parents/guardians can access their children's information by signing up on the [Transportation Portal](#) and can subscribe to the email notification for late buses.
- We anticipate that students' specific route information will be available during the week of August 24. However, we encourage parents/guardians to check back regularly as routes may change before the start of school.
- To access your child's transportation information, please visit the [Transportation Portal](#), email transportation@torontoschoolbus.org or call 647-790-3829.
- General transportation information is located on TSTG's website at www.torontoschoolbus.org and answers to many questions can be found on the [FAQ](#) page.