

Policy for: <p style="text-align: center;">STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES</p>	Revision 3
Date Approved by School Committee: May 17, 2022	Signature of Chair: Matthew Spengler

The goal of the Needham School Committee is to provide a safe, efficient, economical and punctual transportation program that extends the educational opportunities of all students.

The scope of services offered includes: pupil transportation between school and home (or nearest bus stop) for Needham Public Schools’ students and Needham resident students attending a private school in Needham; transportation as a related service for students on an Individualized Education Program (IEP); transportation to extracurricular student programs; and other transportation as required by law. This policy applies to school transportation services provided by school employees using school vehicles, or by transportation contract providers.

Except as provided for in Policy #EEAFB, the term ‘school bus’ will mean all vehicles used to provide pupil transportation services, including school buses and vans.

1. Eligibility

All children in grades Kindergarten through six who reside more than two miles from the school they are entitled to attend are eligible for free transportation services. Also eligible are students whose IEP or 504 Plan includes transportation services, students admitted to a day school in another town under Chapter 74 Section 7 and who require transportation, and any other students eligible for free transportation under state and federal laws.

It is the objective of the Needham School Committee to provide a seat for ineligible riders on a space-available and funds-available basis. Ineligible riders are: students in grades Kindergarten through six who reside less than two miles from the school they attend and all students in grades seven through twelve who are not otherwise eligible for free transportation services.

Pupils who attend approved private schools will be entitled to the same rights and privileges as to transportation to and from school as are provided by law for pupils of Needham Public Schools and will not be denied transportation because their attendance is in a school which is conducted under religious auspices or includes religious instruction in its curriculum.

In the event of a shared physical custody arrangement, in which a student has two legal residences within the same school attendance zone, eligibility under this section will be determined based on the further of the two legal residences from the school the child attends.

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If the child is determined to be eligible for free transportation, transportation will be provided between school and both legal residences free of charge. If ineligible, transportation will be offered for a fee, on a space available basis, except that the family will pay only one fee for both residences.

2. Fees

The Needham School Committee reserves the right to charge a transportation fee to ineligible riders. Fees will be approved annually by the School Committee.

The Superintendent will administer a program that provides financial assistance to students in need who wish to ride a school bus. Students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch under the National School Lunch Program will not be required to pay a fee.

The Superintendent or designee is authorized to reimburse parents/guardians who voluntarily choose to transport their disabled child to an approved school located outside of the Town of Needham. The reimbursement program may utilize rates in excess of the standard state mileage reimbursement amount (on a mileage, daily or weekly rate basis), provided that parental reimbursement represents a cost savings to the Needham Public Schools, compared to other modes of available transportation.

3. Riding Limits, Routes, Stops and Specialized Transportation Equipment

Bus routes and stops will be established under the direction of the Superintendent in cooperation with pupil transportation contractors. Routes will be designed to maintain a reasonable route length (of not more than one hour in duration), ensure student safety, maximize ridership and conserve fuel. The Superintendent will cause bus routes to be made publicly available to parents prior to school opening.

Authorized bus stops will be located at convenient intervals along public ways in places where students may be loaded and unloaded, cross highways, and await the arrival of buses with the utmost safety allowed by road conditions. Children will be assigned to stops that are within a reasonable walking distance (not to exceed one-half mile) of their homes.

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Students with disabilities may be entitled to transportation that includes specific drop off/pick up locations, supports and specialized equipment, such as monitors, adapted buses, lifts and ramps.

The Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) determines the capacity of pupil transportation vehicles and the District will adhere to RMV guidelines.

4. Riders

Bus passes will be issued to all registered riders. Bus passes certify a student’s eligibility to ride the bus, guarantee a place on the bus and identify registered riders. Students will ride only the bus to which they are assigned.

Unauthorized students are not permitted to ride buses. Requests for a child to accompany another on a bus to which they are not assigned are not permitted.

For safety reasons, students must ride their assigned bus and be picked up/dropped off at their assigned stop. Students are not permitted to board a different bus, or to be dropped off/picked up at a different stop.

Only authorized Needham Public School employees and contract providers are permitted to operate school buses in Needham.

5. Measured Distances

It is the policy of the Needham School Committee to measure distances from school to individual homes in the community when there is a question of eligibility that has not previously been resolved. The purpose of this measurement will be to determine whether the student meets the distance-related eligibility requirements outlined in this policy. The Needham School Committee reserves the right to measure the distances from school to home in those cases where qualifying distances are in doubt. Requests to measure for qualifying distances may be made by parents/guardians or by the school administration.

The measurements will be made from “portal to portal” over a commonly traveled route. Portal to portal will mean the distance between the intersection of the public way and the private way to the individual home, and the entrance way of the school building that the child

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is entitled to attend. Where there is more than one entrance way to the school building, either entrance may be used for measuring distances, provided both of the entrances are ordinarily accessible. A commonly traveled route will mean a sidewalk or public way which, in the ordinary course, is open and accessible to school transportation vehicles and pedestrian traffic. School transportation vehicles are not required to travel over non-public ways.

6. Student Conduct

Drivers are responsible for the safety of children on school transportation vehicles. Drivers have full authority over the school bus or van and its passengers in route to and from school, and during loading and unloading.

Student conduct on school buses is governed by School Committee Policy #EEAEC.

7. Use of Buses for Extra-Curricular Activities

Needham Public Schools will provide transportation only for Needham Public Schools - related extracurricular activities and/or programs. Field trips will conform to guidelines established under Policy #IICA.

8. Program Administration

The Superintendent of Schools or designee is responsible for developing procedures to implement this policy. These procedures shall establish standards for the safe operation and maintenance of school buses, the proper conduct of students/ parents or guardians/ drivers, and the efficient and effective administration of the school transportation program.

Contract providers of pupil transportation services in Needham will be held to the same vehicle, equipment, personnel and performance standards as established for Needham-owned buses and employee drivers.

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9. Complaints and Appeals

Complaints and appeals concerning school transportation will be reported to the Superintendent's Designee. The Superintendent's Designee will work with parents/guardians to resolve and/or refer the concern/complaint to the appropriate authority or to the Superintendent.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

M.G.L. c. 71 sec. 68
M.G.L. c. 71 sec. 37H
M.G.L. c. 71 sec. 47
M.G.L. c. 71B sec. 8
M.G.L. c. 74 sec. 7
M.G.L. c. 74 sec. 8A
M.G.L. c. 76 sec. 1
M.G.L. c. 71 sec. 68
M.G.L. c. 90 sec. 16B
M.G.L. c. 90 sec. 7B
M.G.L. c. 90 sec. 7D
M.G.L. c. 90 sec. 7AA
M.G.L. c. 90 sec. 8A ½
M.G.L. c. 90 sec. 13A
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