

MEMORANDUM

January 21, 2020

TO: Education and Culture Committee
Public Safety Committee

FROM: Craig Howard, Senior Legislative Analyst *CH*
Susan Farag, Legislative Analyst *SOF*

SUBJECT: **School Bus Stop Safety**

PURPOSE: Receive briefing from MCPS and MCPD staff, no action required

Expected Participants:

- Dr. Andy Zuckerman, MCPS Chief Operating Officer
- Todd Watkins, Director, MCPS Department of Transportation
- Assistant Chief Tom Didone, MCPD
- Captain David McBain, Director, MCPD Traffic Division

The joint Committee will receive an update from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) representatives on school bus stop safety. Councilmember Rice, Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, and Council President Katz, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, requested this briefing after learning of two tragic incidents that occurred at or around school bus stops in December.

While the investigations into those specific incidents are ongoing, the Committee Chairs identified the following topics related to school bus stop safety in general for discussion:

- 1) Factors that go into determining the placement and location of school bus stops.
- 2) Current safety measures that are in place at crosswalks and intersections near schools and school bus stops.
- 3) Procedures for determining when sidewalks/other walking routes are not safe for students and instead bus routes will be provided.
- 4) Discussion of any technology improvements that are being looked at to potentially improve safety at or around school bus stops.
- 5) The types of signage and signaling that are provided around school walk zones.
- 6) Current status of education and outreach efforts on school bus stop safety for both community members and students.

Previous Committee/Council Discussions

The safety of students travelling to and from school has long been one of the highest priorities for the County Council, the County Executive, and the Board of Education. As a result, over the past few years the Council has held several briefings, updates, and worksessions on different aspects of school bus safety in particular and youth pedestrian safety overall. In addition, the Council has discussed these issues as part of agency requests during operating budget worksessions. Some of these discussions are summarized below.

- **School Bus Cameras** – The joint committee has had several discussions on the school bus camera program. While the most recent discussion focused on the Inspector General’s report on the bus camera contract, the joint committee met in July 2019 to have a broader discussion of the program overall.¹ Topics discussed at this meeting included MCPD’s review process for bus camera violations prior to issuing a citation, data on the number of citations issued and the bus stops with the most violations, public education efforts, and examples of pedestrian injuries and near-misses from cars that have illegally passed a stopped school bus. The staff memo from the July briefing is attached at ©1-12.
- **MCPS Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures** – In March 2018, the Education Committee held a briefing to discuss: MCPS’ process for establishing student drop-off and pick-up procedures at schools; MCPS’ process for planning for drop-off and pick-up procedures in the design of new schools; MCPS’ practice for reviewing, updating, and/or revising procedures; and MCPS’ communication with individual school communities on appropriate and safe drop-off and pick-up procedures.² The staff memo from this briefing is attached at ©13.
- **Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS)** – In December 2016, the Council received a briefing on OLO Report 2017-1, *Impact of Montgomery County’s Safe Routes to School Program*.³ The OLO report found that SRTS engineering improvements may have reduced pedestrian and bicycle collisions near schools, through this impact may not persist in the long term. Following the full Council briefing, the joint Education and Transportation and Environment Committee held an additional worksession to review the next phase of SRTS engineering assessments and improvements, an update on SRTS education and encouragement activities, and the status of SRTS enforcement activities.⁴ The executive summary of OLO Report 2017-1 is attached at ©14-16, and the joint committee staff memo is attached at ©17-20.
- **Youth Pedestrian Safety** – In November 2015, the full Council received a comprehensive briefing on youth pedestrian safety from MCPS, MCPD, and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT).⁵ Some of the topics discussed included walking routes to schools, the number and allocation of school crossing guards, and school-based communication and outreach related to youth pedestrian safety. The staff memo from this briefing is attached at ©21-24.

¹ https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2019/20190729/20190729_PSEC1.pdf

² https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=14742&meta_id=151237

³ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2017%20Reports/OLOReport2017-1-MontgomeryCountySafeRoutestoSchool.pdf>

⁴ http://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=128&event_id=5977&meta_id=141459

⁵ https://montgomerycountymd.granicus.com/Viewer.php?view_id=169&clip_id=10488&meta_id=92906

Background Documents

The Board of Education has enacted Policy EEA, *Student Transportation* in order to “establish safe, responsive, and accountable operation of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) student transportation system, in partnership with parents and students, and to delineate the services provided.” Additionally, both MCPS and MCPD publish several documents online related to school bus and pedestrian safety.

The table below lists the Board policies and other background documents that are attached. Also, documents (as well as videos and other information) can be accessed online at the following locations:

- MCPS – <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/transportation/>
- MCPD – <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/POL/Chief/bureaus/field/traffic/index.html>

Document	Attached at:
Board of Education Policy EEA, <i>Student Transportation</i>	©25-29
Board of Education Regulation EEA-RA, <i>Student Transportation</i>	©30-41
Ride by the Rules: Put Safety First (Elementary School)	©42-44
Ride by the Rules: Making the Right Choices (Middle and High School)	©45-47
Ride by the Rules: A Parent’s Role	©48-50
What You Should Know About Riding the Bus	©51-59
Understanding the School Bus Law	©60

MEMORANDUM

July 24, 2019

TO: Public Safety Committee
Education and Culture Committee

FROM: Susan J. Farag, Legislative Analyst ^{SSF}
Craig Howard, Senior Legislative Analyst ^{CH}

SUBJECT: **Update: School Bus Safety**

PURPOSE: **To receive updated information on the school bus camera program, no vote needed.**

Those expected to brief the Joint Committee include:

- Assistant Chief David Anderson, Field Services Bureau, Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD)
- Captain Tom Didone, Traffic Division, MCPD
- Richard Hetherington, Manager Automated Traffic Enforcement Unit, MCPD
- Todd Watkins, Transportation Director, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

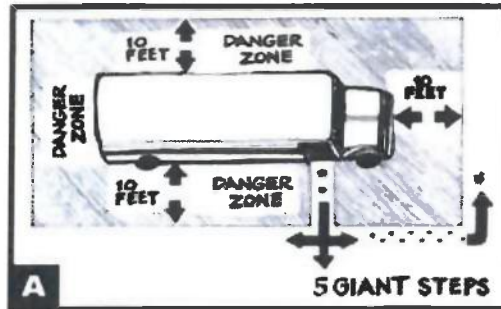
BACKGROUND

The County has multiple initiatives that focus on pedestrian safety, which are embodied in the Executive's Vision Zero Initiative (with a goal of zero fatalities by 2030). Several of these cross-departmental approaches focus on prevention through education and enforcement. Today's worksession focuses on one of those initiatives -- school bus cameras used to enhance student safety as children travel to and from school each day.

Taking advantage of State legislation that permits local jurisdictions to implement school bus camera programs, the Council passed legislation in 2012 that allowed the County to implement its own program. School bus cameras are attached to buses and can photograph and videotape vehicles that pass the stopped bus when it has its red lights flashing and stop sign/arm extended.

STATE LAW

Maryland Transportation Article 21-706 provides that a driver must stop at least 20 feet from the rear of a stopped school vehicle that is operating flashing lights. If the driver is approaching the school vehicle from the front, it must stop at least 20 feet in front of the school vehicle. This requirement keeps other vehicles well outside the identified pedestrian "danger zones" surrounding a school bus as shown in the picture on the next page.



The driver may not proceed until the school vehicle resumes motion or the alternately flashing red lights are deactivated. The exception is if the school vehicle is on a different roadway (i.e. a physical barrier between bus and the driver such as a grass median, jersey barrier, sidewalk, etc.)

1 Two-lane roadway:
When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop!

2 Two-lane roadway with a center turning lane:
When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop!

3 Four-lane roadway without a median separation:
When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop!

4 Divided highway of four lanes or more with a median separation:
When school bus stops for passengers, only traffic following the bus must stop.

STATE FINES

While County administers the bus camera program, the enabling legislation and the specific fines are State law. The State enacted enabling legislation in 2011 that permits local jurisdictions to implement school bus camera programs. The maximum penalty was \$250. At the time, the Courts set the penalty at \$125.

Believing that \$125 was too low, several local and State legislators pushed for legislation to increase the fine. Chapter 744 of 2017 increased the maximum fine to \$500. The Courts set the penalty at \$250. Chapter 744 had a sunset provision, which would abrogate the law effective June 30, 2019 if further data showed no benefit of the more punitive fines. To aid the General Assembly in determining whether the maximum fine should be permanent, the law required that by December 2018, the Montgomery County Police Department report on its bus camera program. The report must include the total number of violations recorded by school bus monitoring cameras, the effect of this law on the frequency of violations in Montgomery County, and the number of violations recorded in Montgomery County for vehicles travelling in the opposite direction of school buses on multilane highways with painted medians.¹

The MCPD report stated, in part:

“In order to improve the effect of the enforcement program, legislation was introduced to increase the fine to \$250 for the civil violation in the automated program. The intent of the legislation was to bolster the deterrent effect and make the fine an amount that is not easily accepted as a cost of traveling on the highways and can have an impact on driver behavior.”

The report noted that while the number of citations increased during the studied time frame, due to an expansion of the program to more buses, the number of citations per bus/per day actually decreased. The General Assembly subsequently passed legislation in the 2019 session that repealed the sunset provision and made the maximum penalty of \$500 permanent.

CURRENT PROGRAM

MCPD operates more than 1,400 school buses. At the end of the 2018-2019 school year, 1,000 buses were equipped with cameras and were in service conducting enforcement operations. Since the end of the school year, MCPD has added camera systems to 138 more buses. The remaining 300 buses should be completed by mid-August.

The Review Process: There are multiple steps in the review process before a driver is issued a citation, and the review is conducted both by the vendor and by the Police Department. The school bus camera equipment captures video of vehicles as they approach and pass a stopped school bus. The video also captures data on when the school bus driver activates the yellow flashing lights, and then the red flashing lights. This video is uploaded to the vendor, and the vendor reviews the video to identify vehicles that have committed a violation. The vendor sends an inquiry to the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to get the registered owner information. The vendor then reviews the information a second time. If the event meets the criteria of a moving violation, it is sent to the Police Department to be reviewed by Automated Traffic Enforcement Unit (ATEU) staff. These staff have been trained in the law, its meaning, and its practical application. If the ATEU reviewers approve the event as a violation, it is sent back to the vendor for final creation of a citation. The final citation is once again returned to the Police Department

¹ November 6, 2018 Report to the General Assembly on School Bus Camera Violations.
[http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/ess06-pubs/Counties/Montgomery/SB154Ch744\(2\)_2017.pdf](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/ess06-pubs/Counties/Montgomery/SB154Ch744(2)_2017.pdf)

for a final inspection, mailed back to the vendor, and finally mailed to the violator. This process is required to be completed within 14 days of the event.

Once the driver receives the citation, the driver can access a website to view the same video used by the vendor and Police. The driver can then either pay the citation or request a court date to contest it. If the driver is not satisfied with the District Court determination, the case may be appealed to the Circuit Court. In 2018, a little more than 700 individuals requested a court date, but 25% failed to appear. In 2019, there were 307 people who requested a court date. Again, about one quarter of them failed to appear in court.

Citations Issued: During the 2016-2017 school year, the program issued approximately 16,257 citations. During the 2017-2018 year, it issued 33,564. And during 2018-2019 school year, it issued 54,458. The significant growth in the number of citations stems from increasing the number of equipped buses from 80 in 2016 to 1,000 in 2018-19. MCPD indicates that while the number of citations increased, the per bus/per day rate has dropped from 1.06 to 0.42.

Typical Types of Complaints: The Council has received several complaints about the program. Two scenarios are the most common:

- A driver is approaching a stopped bus from the opposite direction on a street that is more than four lanes wide. There is no median where the bus is stopped.
- A driver is turning left onto a street and suddenly sees a bus stopped in the opposite direction. The bus was not initially seen from the turn lane. But once the driver turns, the driver must choose between stopping in oncoming traffic or passing the school bus.

MCPD advises that both of these situations still require a driver to stop and not pass the stopped school bus. However, video reviewers are instructed to take all circumstances into consideration when making a decision about an event, and in approximately 25% of the cases, reviewers give the driver the benefit of the doubt and reject the violation.

Public Education: MCPD staff have given interviews to both radio and print media outlets. The department also advertises the law and the camera program on Ride-On buses. Information about the school bus law and the camera program are available on the MCPD website. MCPS also provides information to students at the beginning of each school year.

Pedestrian Injuries: MCPD has documented dozens of cases where there have been near misses. The most serious injury captured on video was of a young girl crossing the street in a crosswalk, heading to her school bus. The girl crossed the street and was struck by a vehicle in the middle of the roadway, in the crosswalk, and launched down the street.

Areas with Most Violations: The table on ©5 lists the locations with the most citations issued since the program began in October 2016. The most common area for violation is the 880 block of Colesville Road, and most of the stops with the most violations are on State roads as previously discussed by the Education Committee in 2018. In October 2018, the Council President, Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, and Board of Education President sent a letter to the Maryland State Highway Administration (©6-7) requesting that the “State install signage or

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other notification mechanisms” near bus stops with the most violations. The letter noted that “we believe that an additional visual reminder could provide an effective deterrent to continued high numbers of violations.”

DISCUSSION ISSUES

- 1) The expansion of the program to include most of the bus fleet has resulted in considerably more citations. In turn, that has resulted in more complaints. Is there a need for a more significant public campaign to educate drivers on the law, and to alert them of the camera program?
- 2) Is it feasible to add messaging to the school buses themselves? Or display street signs near high-incidence areas?
- 3) Do the police engage in police stops to provide warnings/education to drivers in high-incidence areas?
- 4) Are 14 days sufficient for the multiple steps in the review process? Is there any need for additional staff or resources to ensure citations are reviewed in a timely manner?

This packet contains

MCPD Response to Questions

October 29, 2018 letter to State Highway Administration

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Responses to Questions for Joint PS/ED Committee (07/22/19)

1. Please provide a brief overview of current law. (Graphics are helpful, if you have them)

The law regarding stopping for stopped school buses can be found in the Maryland Transportation Article Section 21-706- Overtaking and Passing School Vehicles. There are three sections to the law and are as follows:

(a) *Driver to stop on meeting or overtaking stopped school vehicle – In general.* - If a school vehicle has stopped on a roadway and is operating the alternatively flashing red lights specified in Section 22-228 of this article, the driver of any other vehicle meeting or overtaking the school vehicle shall stop at least 20 feet from the rear of the school vehicle, if approaching the school vehicle from its rear, or at least 20 feet from the front of the school vehicle, if approaching the school vehicle from its front.

(b) *Driver to stop on meeting or overtaking stopped school vehicle – When vehicles may proceed.* - If a school vehicle has stopped on a roadway and is operating the alternately flashing red lights specified in Section 22-228 of this article, the driver of any other vehicle meeting or overtaking the school vehicle may not proceed until the school vehicle resumes motion or the alternately flashing red lights are deactivated.

(c) *Exceptions.* - This section does not apply to the driver of a vehicle on a divided highway, if the school vehicle is on a different roadway.

In simple terms, the law requires every vehicle to stop for a stopped school bus whether their vehicle is traveling the same or opposite direction of the stopped school bus regardless of the number of lanes on either side of the roadway. The only exception allowed is that vehicles traveling the opposite direction of the school bus are not required to stop if they are on a divided highway. In other words, unless there is a physical barrier such as a grass median, jersey wall, curbed sidewalk/median, etc. you are required to stop for a bus which is stopped and operating it alternatively flashing red lights. The definition of a “divided highway” is also provided in the Maryland Transportation Article Section 11-113 which states the following:

“Divided highway” means a highway that is divided into two or more roadways by:

- (1) An intervening space;
- (2) A barrier; or
- (3) A clearly indicated dividing section constructed to impede vehicular traffic.

It is worthwhile to note that since the inception of this program we have had two cases appealed to the Circuit Court of Montgomery County. In both cases, the judges ruled in our favor and in one case in particular, **Montgomery County, MD vs. Johari Aziza Moore**, the Honorable James A. Bonifant addressed and affirmed some specific items that are pertinent to the typical types of complaints that we have received. In Judge Bonifant’s Opinion he stated, “the cardinal rule of statutory construction is to ascertain and carry out the intention of the Legislature. Our search for legislative intent begins,

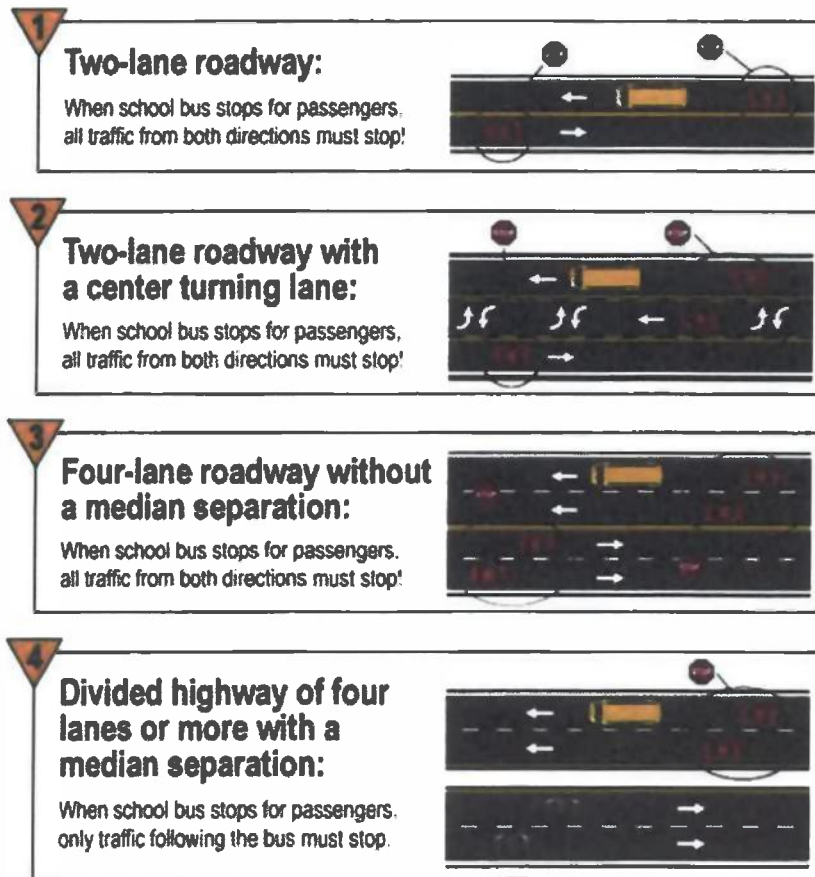
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and usually ends, with the words of the statute at issue. When the statutory language is clear, we need not look beyond the statutory language to determine the Legislature's intent. Often referred to as the 'Plain Meaning Rule', courts generally look to the ordinary definition of the words used to determine the Legislature's intent".

Judge Bonifant went on to say, "The appellate courts have cautioned that the Plain Meaning Rule of statutory construction is not rigid and does not require a court to ignore the overall purpose of the law. An equally well-settled principle of statutory interpretation is that a statute is to be construed with reference to the purpose, aim or policy of the legislature reflected in that statute. The Court of Appeals has gone so far as to state the real legislative intent prevails over the intention indicated by the literal meaning of the words used. Clearly, the purpose of Transportation Article Section 21-101 is to protect children. The legislative intent is to establish a policy requiring drivers to stop their vehicles to avoid striking an inattentive child running to or departing from a school bus. With that purpose in mind, the Court believes the Legislature intended a broad application of the law to reduce the possibility of a catastrophic event for a child".

It is with this guidance and understanding of the law that is the basis for our enforcement. The law is very clear on which vehicles and under what circumstances vehicles are required to stop for a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing. Below is a graphic that helps articulate the requirements under the law:



2. Please provide a brief description of the violation/citation process, including review and ability to contest the ticket.

The process is designed to mirror the same approval process that has been in effect for many years in our speed and red-light programs. The equipment on the buses capture video of vehicles approaching and passing a school bus slowing and stopping. Within the panes of the video there are yellow and red light indicators which show the activation of the yellow lights and the subsequent activation of the red lights. The video tracks the approach of the bus as well as the vehicle activity around the bus and records this activity. The video is then uploaded to the vendor and their team of reviewers watch the video and identify potential vehicles that have committed a violation of the law. These potential violators, or events, are then used to create the framework of a citation. The vendor then sends an inquiry to MVA to get the registered owner information. Once that information is received it is placed in the citation framework and it is reviewed a second time, by the vendor, at a higher level. If the event passes both levels of review it is sent to the Police Department to be reviewed by ATEU staff. Our reviewers then verify the MVA information and ensure that the information received by MVA matches the vehicle in the video and they review the video to affirm or reject that a violation has taken place. The staff has been trained in the law, its meaning, and practical application.

If our reviewers approve the event as a violation, they turn the event into a citation and it gets sent back to the vendor for final creation of the citation. Once the "final" version has been created it is sent back to us again for final inspection. Once approved, the final version is sent back to the vendor to be printed and mailed to the violator. This process is legislatively required to be completed within 14 days of the date of the event.

Once the violator receives the citation they have the ability to go on to the website, with their citation number, and review the same video that we used to make a determination as to the validity of the violation. At that point they have option to either pay the citation or request a court date to contest the citation. If they choose to go to court, they mail that request back in and a court date is scheduled. They then have the opportunity to address the court with their concerns and all parties review the video in court in front of the Judge. The Judge then makes his ruling on the citation based on the evidence and testimony provided. Additionally, if a violator is not satisfied with the verdict rendered in District Court they can appeal the decision to the Circuit Court and possibly beyond.

3. How many citations have been issued by year, for the past three years?

Our program went "live" on October 13th, 2016. During the 2016-2017 school year we issued approximately 16,257 citations. During the 2017-2018 school year we issued approximately 33,564 citations. During the 2018-2019 school year we issued approximately 54,458 citations. It is important to understand that during that period of time we went from 80-200 buses during the '16-'17 school to 200-500 buses during the '17-'18 school year, and from 500 to 1,000 buses during the '18-'19 school year.

While the overall number of citations has increased dramatically over that period of time. Our per bus, per day rate has dropped from 1.06 to approximately .42 citations per bus, per day.

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4. Do you know how many citations are contested in court?

Our rate of court requests is similar to that of our speed and red-light program. We generally have one court date per month for each type of enforcement program, speed, red-light, and school bus. In 2018, we had approximately 713 people request a court date with about 25% of those failing to appear. In 2019, we have had 307 people request a court date, to date, and have roughly the same failure to appear rate.

5. Most of the recent complaints to Council involve two scenarios. the first is driving in the opposite direction of a stopped bus on a street that is more than four lanes wide. For example, the corner of Montgomery Ave. and Hurley Ave. in Rockville. This one can be particularly confusing because one side of Montgomery has a raised median and the other doesn't. (The bus stops on the side without the median). The other situation is turning left onto a street and suddenly seeing a bus stopped in the opposite direction. it is not easily seen from the road people are turning from. But once they see it, they can't stop in the lanes of oncoming traffic. they must complete their turn and this sometimes means passing the stopped bus.

Without restating the law, both of these scenarios are very clearly outlined in what is permissible and what is not. Both of these situations require that the vehicles come to a complete stop prior to passing a stopped school bus. In terms of the first scenario, the description answers the question. Where there is no median the vehicle must come to a stop. In the second scenario, if a vehicle is making a left hand turn onto another roadway they should be looking to their left for oncoming traffic before making the turn. Since there is no obligation for traffic to stop if they are in front of the bus it would stand to reason that there would be no traffic that would obstruct their view of the school bus to their left before they make the turn. That being the case, they would be required to remain on the street they are on if they don't feel they can make the turn without passing the stopped bus with its red lights flashing. We instruct our reviewing staff to take all circumstances into consideration when making a decision about an event. We provide the benefit of the doubt to drivers in most cases and reject approximately 25% of the events that get forwarded to us by the vendor for a variety of reasons to include both of these scenarios.

6. How do you inform the public about the school bus law? Publicity campaigns? Social media coverage? do you need additional resources? Do you have publicity/education campaigns developed for the upcoming school year?

Since the beginning of the program, and even prior during our pilot program, we have used the "Paint Doesn't Protect" diagram as the basis for our educational program. Myself and Captain Didone have taken part in several local radio programs, we advertised on Ride-On buses, we have taken part in several print news stories explaining the program and the law, not to mention that it is still covered in drivers-ed. The bus law and associated graphics are on our website and I believe MCPS sends information home with students at the beginning of each school year.

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7. Have you had any pedestrian injuries near bus stops this year?

We have documented dozens of cases where there have been near misses and potential catastrophic incidents. The most serious involved a young female who was crossing the street, in a crosswalk, to get to her bus, which was stopped with the red lights activated. As the girl crossed the street, she was struck by a vehicle in the middle of the roadway, in the crosswalk, and launched down the street. She recovered from her injuries and the driver was charged with striking the pedestrian after a police investigation. Unfortunately, the number of near misses continues to astound staff with increasing frequency. Fortunately, there have been no fatalities or serious injuries.

8. What areas/routes have the most violations?

Historically, we have not tracked the most offended locations by route but by stop location. The table below shows the stop locations with the most violations since the inception of the program on October 13, 2016.

Location	Number of Issued Citations	Percentage of Total Issued
8800 Blk. Of Colesville Road	3,900	3.7%
1400 Blk. Of East West Highway	2,345	2.2%
400 Blk. Of North Frederick Avenue	2,285	2.1%
8800 Blk. Of Piney Branch Road	1,661	1.6%
2200 Blk. Of Bel Pre Road	1,282	1.2%
5100 Blk. Of River Road	1,211	1.1%
8900 Blk. Of Piney Branch Road	1,190	1.1%
11900 Blk. Of Rockville Pike	1,076	1.0%
8400 Blk. Of 16 th Street	1,024	.97%
5400 Blk. Of Tuckerman Lane	968	.92%

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL PRESIDENT

October 29, 2018

Gregory Slater, Administrator
Maryland Department of Transportation
State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202-3601

Dear Mr. Slater:

In 2014, the Montgomery County Council (Council) passed legislation to implement a school bus safety camera program, as authorized under State law. Given the potential dire consequences of drivers illegally passing stopped school buses, the Council and the Montgomery County Board of Education (Board) believe that this program is of the utmost importance in keeping the County's children safe.

During the most recent school year, the Montgomery County Department of Police (Police Department) issued more than 34,000 citations from cameras installed on 500 Montgomery County Public Schools' (MCPS) buses—less than one-half of the entire bus fleet. The fact that the Police Department has recorded and issued so many violations is an unfortunate sign of the necessity of this program.

While MCPS is working to install cameras on its remaining school buses, the school system and the Police Department are involved in ongoing efforts to increase drivers' awareness and understanding of the law prohibiting the passing of a school bus that is stopped on a roadway and operating its flashing red lights. While reviewing the bus camera program in September 2018, the Council's Education Committee learned that the five MCPS bus stops with the most bus camera violations are all along State roads:

- 8800 block of Colesville Road (US 29)
- 1400 block of East-West Highway (MD 410)
- 300 block of North Frederick Avenue (MD 355)
- 5100 block of River Road (MD 190)
- 8800 block of Piney Branch Road (MD 320)

Overall, these five locations account for 7,295 (or 14%) of all the bus camera violations issued in Montgomery County since October 2016.

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Mr. Gregory Slater

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October 29, 2018

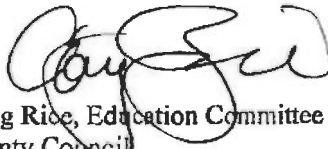
The Council and Board respectfully request that the State install signage or other notification mechanisms near these five bus stops to remind drivers of the requirement to stop for a school bus. We believe that an additional visual reminder could provide an effective deterrent to continued high numbers of violations at these locations. We are happy to work with the State to determine the most appropriate signage or other notification mechanism for each location.

The Council and the Board appreciate your consideration of this request as part of our continued efforts to ensure the safety of our schoolchildren. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Hans Riemer, President
County Council



Craig Rice, Education Committee Chair
County Council



Michael A. Durso, President
Board of Education

Cc: Councilmembers
Board of Education Members
Andre Futrell, District Engineer, State Highway Administration, District 3

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ED COMMITTEE #3
March 19, 2018
Briefing

MEMORANDUM

March 15, 2018

TO: Education Committee
FROM: Craig Howard, ^{CH} Senior Legislative Analyst
SUBJECT: **MCPS Student Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures**
PURPOSE: Briefing and Discussion, No Action Required

Expected Participants:

- Todd Watkins, Director, MCPS Department of Transportation

Background

The Committee will receive a briefing and have a discussion with MCPS staff on student drop-off and pick-up procedures. Student drop-off and pick-up is a key component that MCPS plans for at each school, and can often present logistical challenges due to the unique site constraints or traffic patterns at each school.

Since this issue is both complex and very important for student safety, the Chair of the Education Committee requested that MCPS staff brief the Committee on how it addresses student drop-off and pick-up policies and procedures from a countywide perspective. Specifically, MCPS was asked to address the following discussion questions:

- How does MCPS plan for and establish student drop-off and pick-up procedures at schools, and how does that vary by the Elementary, Middle, and High School levels?
- How does MCPS plan for drop-off and pick-up procedures in the design of new schools?
- What is MCPS' general practice for reviewing, updating, and/or revising drop-off and pick-up procedures? For example, is there a standard review conducted prior to the beginning of each school year? Is it done as issues arise during the year?
- How does MCPS communicate with individual school communities on the appropriate student drop-off and pick-up procedures, both at the start of each school year and during the year if any changes to the procedures are required?

For context, examples of written student drop-off and pick-up procedures and/or diagrams for Diamond Elementary School (C1), Silver Spring International Middle School (C2), and Walter Johnson High School (C4) are attached.

Impact of Montgomery County's Safe Routes to School Program

OLO Report 2017-1

October 25, 2016

Safe Routes to School is a national and international model for making walking and bicycling to school safer and more accessible for children and for increasing the number of children who choose to walk or bicycle. Montgomery County initiated its Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in 2004.

The Council requested this study to understand the impact of SRTS in the County and whether the program should be expanded. OLO found that pedestrian and bicycle collisions near schools decreased following SRTS engineering improvements, and that this decrease differed from Countywide trends. OLO, however, was unable to discern whether the SRTS program changed the number of students that walked or biked to school.

Background on Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Around Schools

DOT, the Police Department and MCPS each play a role in addressing safety issues around schools. Generally,

- MCPS distinguishes between bus riders and walkers and evaluates bus stops and recommended walking routes to schools that ensure student safety;
- DOT responds to MCPS requests for physical improvements to infrastructure that promote pedestrian and driver safety around schools as needed; and
- The Police School Safety Section oversees the Crossing Guard Program and School Safety Patrols.

SRTS in Montgomery County

In 2004, the County initiated SRTS. DOT leads SRTS in collaboration with the Police Department and MCPS. Consistent with Federal Highway Administration guidelines, the County's SRTS program incorporates activities in the "5 E's": Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation, as outlined below.

The "5 E's" of the Montgomery County Safe Routes to School Program

Component	Description
Engineering	DOT assessments of areas around schools to identify and implement engineering improvements that facilitate walking and bicycling to school, such as crosswalks, flashers and signs.
Education	DOT provision of safety programs in school and outreach to school staff to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety, focused on 40 targeted elementary and middle schools.
Encouragement	DOT promotion of activities intended to encourage walking or bicycling to school, such as Walk to School Day, walking school buses and bicycle trains, and Bike to School Day.
Enforcement	Police enforcement activities around 40 targeted elementary and middle schools.
Evaluation	Data collection and analysis by DOT, Police and CountyStat to monitor SRTS outcomes.

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SRTS Budget. Over the past ten years, the annual budget for SRTS totaled \$200,000 or less. The majority (82% in FY16) of funding was allocated to engineering improvements, which cost an average of \$7,000 per school. This represents a small share of the County’s budget for pedestrian safety, which totaled \$8.1 million in the operating budget and \$58.6 billion in the Capital Improvements Program for FY16. On the whole, the SRTS program accounts for less than 1% of the County’s planned expenditures for pedestrian safety in FY16.

Impact of SRTS on Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

To assess the impact of the SRTS engineering component on safety, OLO examined data on pedestrian-vehicle and bicycle-vehicle collisions around schools before and after SRTS engineering improvements. OLO was unable to assess the impact of other SRTS activities on safety, or the impact of SRTS on school walker and biker trends.

Overall, OLO found that pedestrian and bicycle collisions within a quarter-mile from public schools decreased following SRTS engineering improvements, and that this decrease differed from Countywide trends. While OLO cannot conclude whether the SRTS program *caused* the observed decreases, the table below shows that for three out of four assessment years (2009, 2010, and 2011), collisions within a quarter-mile of schools decreased following engineering improvements, while collisions in other parts of the County remained flat.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Collisions per 100,000 County Resident Population, Within and Outside the ¼-Mile Radii Around Public Schools, by Year of Assessment

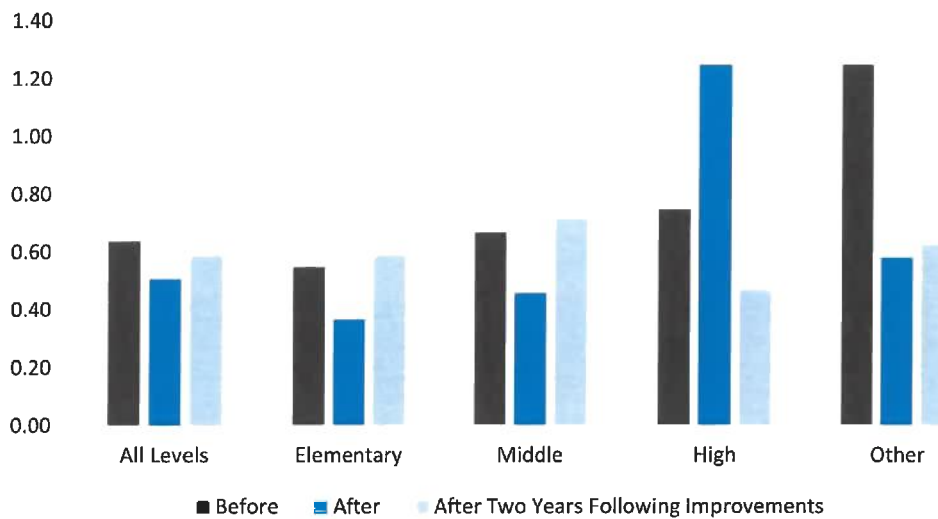
Year of SRTS Engineering Assessment*	2009	2010	2011	2012
# Schools Assessed	23	29	29	25
"Before" Period	2007 to 2008	2008 to 2009	2009 to 2010	2010 to 2011
"After" Period	2011 to 2012	2012 to 2013	2013 to 2014	2014 to 2015
Collisions Within ¼-Mile of Assessed Schools				
# Collisions Per 100,000 Before	4.8	4.5	2.8	2.0
# Collisions Per 100,000 After	3.1	2.6	1.8	2.5
Difference	-1.7	-1.9	-1	0.5
% Change	-35%	-42%	-36%	25%
Collisions Not Within ¼-Mile Radius of Any School				
# Collisions Per 100,000 Before	91.1	94.2	94.3	91.9
# Collisions Per 100,000 After	93.2	96.2	91.5	92.7
Difference	2.1	2	-2.8	0.8
% Change	2%	2%	-3%	1%

* OLO excluded from its analysis 96 schools assessed before 2009 or after 2012, to ensure that collision data were available for both two years before the assessment and two years after the estimated completion of improvements.

OLO also examined changes in average annual collisions by school type and whether decreases in collisions near schools persisted beyond two years, as shown on the chart on the next page. Two findings emerged:

- In the two years following engineering improvements, pedestrian and bicycle collisions schools decreased near elementary and middle schools but increased near high schools; and
- After two years, collisions near elementary and middle schools generally returned to their pre-engineering improvement levels for both elementary and middle schools.

Average Annual Collisions Within 1/4-Mile Radii of Schools Before and After SRTS Improvements



OLO’s Recommended Discussion Questions

Overall, OLO finds that SRTS engineering improvements may have reduced pedestrian and bicycle collisions near schools, though this impact may not persist in the long term. However, any impact from this fairly small program, which accounts for less than one percent of the County’s pedestrian safety investments, suggests that there may be value in continuing the program and expanding it where warranted.

OLO offers two recommended discussion questions for the Council to raise with DOT, MCPS and the Police Department during worksession:

1. What opportunities exist to further support pedestrian and bicycle safety around schools?

The Council may wish to discuss with agency staffs potential strategies for further supporting pedestrian and bicycle safety around schools, including strategies targeted at students who reside further than a quarter-mile from schools and ways to maintain safety gains from SRTS engineering improvements. The Council may also wish to discuss whether opportunities exist to improve collaboration between MCPS, DOT and the Police Department to support pedestrian and bicycle safety.

2. Given that the SRTS program is a low-cost intervention that appears to have generated results, do opportunities exist to expand the use of SRTS concepts?

As noted above, the SRTS program accounts for less than 1% of the County’s pedestrian safety expenditures, which also include the Crossing Guard Program and the education, engineering and enforcement activities that form part of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative.

The Council may wish to discuss with Executive Branch staff how other pedestrian safety interventions compare with the SRTS program in regards to their effectiveness and whether opportunities exist to implement SRTS concepts around other places that attract pedestrian traffic, such as libraries and public transit facilities.

MEMORANDUM

July 18, 2017

TO: Education Committee
Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment Committee

FROM: Natalia Carrizosa, Legislative Analyst ^{NC}
Craig Howard, Senior Legislative Analyst ^{CH}

SUBJECT: Montgomery County's Safe Routes to School Program

Safe Routes to School is a national model for making walking and bicycling to school safer and more accessible for children and for increasing the number of children who choose to walk or bicycle. Montgomery County initiated its Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program in 2004.

On October 25, 2016, the Council received and released Office of Legislative Oversight Report 2017-1, *Impact of Montgomery County's Safe Routes to School Program* (Executive Summary attached at ~~1-3~~). OLO found that traffic engineering improvements in areas around schools made as part of the County's SRTS program may have reduced pedestrian and bicycle collisions near schools, though this impact may not persist in the long term.

On December 6, 2016, the Council received a briefing on the OLO report. At that briefing, the chairs of the Education and Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, & Environment Committees requested a worksession during the summer of 2017 to follow-up on several SRTS issues discussed on December 6. Specifically:

1. DOT's planned second round of SRTS engineering assessments and improvements;
2. An update on SRTS education and encouragement activities; and
3. The status of SRTS enforcement activities.

The packet includes an update on each of these issue areas based on responses from agency staff to questions sent by OLO and Council staff in advance the worksession (~~1-18~~). Agency representatives expected to participate in today's worksession include:

- Venu Nemani, Chief, DOT Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations
- Captain Thomas Didone, Director, MCPD Traffic Division
- Todd Watkins, Director, MCPS Department of Transportation

BACKGROUND ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND THE SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

MCPS, DOT, and the Police Department each play a role in addressing safety issues around schools:

- MCPS distinguishes between bus riders and walkers and evaluates bus stops and recommended walking routes to schools that ensure student safety;
- DOT responds to MCPS requests for physical improvements to infrastructure that promote pedestrian and driver safety around schools as needed; and
- The Police School Safety Section oversees the Crossing Guard Program and School Safety Patrols.

Board of Education policy (attached at ~~C4-9~~) establishes that, in general:

- Elementary school students can be walkers if they live within a 1-mile radius of their school;
- Middle school students can be walkers if they live within a 1.5-mile radius of their school; and
- High school students can be walkers if they live within a 2-mile radius of their school.

In 2004, the County initiated its Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. DOT leads SRTS in collaboration with the Police Department and MCPS. Consistent with Federal Highway Administration guidelines, the County's SRTS program has incorporated activities in the "5 E's": Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation, as outlined below.

The "5 E's" of the Montgomery County Safe Routes to School Program

Component	Description
Engineering	DOT assessments of areas around schools to identify and implement engineering improvements that facilitate walking and bicycling to school, such as crosswalks, flashers and signs.
Education	DOT provision of safety programs in school and outreach to school staff to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety, focused on 40 targeted elementary and middle schools.
Encouragement	DOT promotion of activities intended to encourage walking or bicycling to school, such as Walk to School Day, walking school buses and bicycle trains, and Bike to School Day.
Enforcement	Police enforcement activities around 40 targeted elementary and middle schools.
Evaluation	Data collection and analysis by DOT, Police and CountyStat to monitor SRTS outcomes.

FY17 funding update. OLO Report 2017-1 provided funding data through FY16. DOT staff report that for FY17, operating and capital budget allocations for SRTS engineering assessments and improvements combined totaled approximately \$300,000. An additional \$100,000 was allocated for education and encouragement activities in DOT. Engineering continues to represent the largest component of the County's SRTS program. MCPD staff report that no specific funding was available in FY17 for SRTS enforcement activities, which were funded with a State grant from FY09-FY16. Annual grant funding ranged from \$10,900 to \$29,200.

SECOND ROUND SRTS ENGINEERING ASSESSMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS

As part of the SRTS program, DOT conducts systematic assessments of areas around schools to identify engineering improvements for improving safety. Between 2004 and 2015, DOT completed a first round of assessments of public schools and made recommended improvements. During this first round, DOT focused on areas within a quarter mile from schools. Additionally, most of the first-round recommendations consisted of signing and marking improvements such as crosswalks, flashers and stop signs. DOT also conducted assessments around private schools in FY16 and FY17.

DOT is currently planning a second round of public school assessments that will begin during FY18. DOT's assessment template for the second round is attached at ~~C14-15~~. Moving forward, DOT plans to assess all public schools on a six-year cycle. DOT is considering the following changes to the assessment process compared with the first round:

- **Expanded assessment areas.** Rather than focusing on streets within a quarter-mile from schools, DOT is proposing evaluating streets within each school's "walking area" as defined by MCPS, which can extend up to 1 mile from elementary schools, 1.5 miles from middle schools and 2 miles from high schools.
- **Assessing high schools last.** DOT plans to assess elementary and middle schools first, prioritized based on the date of their last assessment. High schools will be assessed last, as their walking areas typically overlap with elementary and middle school walking areas. Lists of schools by their original assessment dates are provided beginning at ~~C16~~.
- **Broadened scope of improvements.** Most of the first round assessments focused on improvements to signage and street markings, while more recent assessments have also considered physical improvements such as traffic calming islands, improving ADA accessibility and sidewalk improvements. For the second round assessments, DOT plans to continue the approach from the more recent assessments and consider a broader range of physical engineering improvements in addition to signs and street markings. Depending on the nature of improvement, DOT would recommend implementation either in the short-term or the long-term.
- **Maps of walking areas.** DOT plans to create maps of each school's walking area as part of the assessment process (excluding schools in Gaithersburg and Rockville).

STATUS OF SRTS EDUCATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

In FY17, DOT staff continued to organize and facilitate education and encouragement activities intended to teach children how to walk and bike safely and promote walking and bicycling. During FY17, DOT:

- Conducted 42 "bike rodeos" and 30 crosswalk simulation activities at 11 schools
- Held a bicycle safety assembly at Hallie Wells MS in collaboration with AAA
- Organized a "Don't Be Distracted" PSA video contest open to students in the County
- Produced a crosswalk activity training video in collaboration with Takoma Park
- Facilitated schools' participation in Walk to School Day and Bike to School Day (50 schools participated in each event)
- Collaborated with Police, Fire and Rescue, and AAA to coordinate a Safety Day at Bethesda ES
- Increased social media presence by incorporating social media into events and activities

The Police Department's School Safety Section (SSS) Officers also provide safety education in school assemblies and AAA Otto the Auto presentations, and they participate in SRTS education and encouragement activities when possible. The Police Department also manages the School Safety Patrol program, and reviews numerous requests each school year for crossing guards at new intersections currently not staffed with a guard. MCPS school administrative staff solicit and support DOT's outreach and education activities. While schools are not required to participate in SRTS, the MCPS Chief Operating Officer serves as the liaison between SRTS staff and MCPS schools as needed.

STATUS OF SRTS ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Between FY09 and FY16, State grant funding supported Police SRTS enforcement activities around schools. This funding is no longer available. However, the Police Department continues to conduct enforcement around schools. In April of 2017, the Police Traffic Division conducted surveys at schools to observe and document seat belt, child restraint and cell phone violations. The Traffic Division then sent letters to school principals to notify them of the violations they observed and encourage the principals to reach out to parents to discourage future violations. In May, the Traffic Division followed up this activity with enforcement operations around elementary schools focusing on seat belt, child restraint and cell phone violations.

Because enforcement activities are no longer grant-funded, they are not subject to the State grant's reporting requirements and do not have access to the grant program's tracking mechanism. As a result, limited data are available on these activities.

PROPOSED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Building on the collision data presented in the OLO report, for the second round of SRTS assessments commencing in FY18 how do the Police Department and DOT plan to collect and analyze data within the walking areas pre- and post-improvements?
2. At the December 6 worksession, participating staff noted that enhancing communication and collaboration among departments/agencies is important for improving the effectiveness of SRTS education and encouragement activities. What efforts are planned in FY18 to address this?
3. How will enforcement activities be coordinated with new engineering improvements, and do enforcement efforts tend to have greater effectiveness immediately after improvements are made or at a later point after awareness of the improvements may be lower?

AGENDA ITEM #12
November 17, 2015
Briefing

MEMORANDUM

November 13, 2015

TO: County Council

FROM: Essie McGuire, Senior Legislative Analyst *EM*
Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Administrator *GO*
Susan Farag, Legislative Analyst *SF*

SUBJECT: **Briefing – Youth Pedestrian Safety**

Today the County Council will receive a briefing on youth pedestrian safety. The following individuals are expected to participate:

- Todd Watkins, Director, Department of Transportation, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)
- Assistant Chief Betsy Davis, Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD)
- Assistant Chief Darryl McSwain, MCPD
- Captain Tom Didone, Director, Traffic Division, MCPD
- Al Roshdiah, Acting Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)
- Fred Lees, Acting Chief, Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations, MCDOT
- Nadji Kirby, Safe Routes to School Coordinator, MCDOT

MCPS, MCDOT, and MCPD work together to assess transportation routes to school both systematically and case-by-case as concerns arise, to implement appropriate safety measures for walkers, and to communicate pedestrian safety information to school communities. The three entities will give an overview today of their respective lead responsibilities for the youth pedestrian safety, including: assessing safety measures both at schools and along walking routes; how decisions are made to provide bus versus walking transportation; public communication and outreach; and recent data on youth pedestrian safety and incidents.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MCPS is responsible for student transportation and the safe and efficient operation of MCPS buses. A total of 1267 buses transport approximately 100,000 students each day. The Board of Education has established Policy EEA, Student Transportation (attached at ~~circles 1-6~~), which is

implemented under Regulation EEA-RA, Student Transportation (attached at ~~circles 7-17~~). This policy and regulation establish the following:

- Walking distances are expected to be 1 mile for elementary schools, 1.5 miles for middle schools, and 2 miles for high schools. Bus transportation will be provided beyond these distances. (~~circle 2~~)
- Bus transportation may be provided within these policy distances if a safe walking route does not exist. (~~circle 2~~)
- The Director of MCPS Transportation works with MCPD and MCDOT as well as school principals to determine appropriate implementation of crosswalks, adult crossing guards, and other safety measures at the school or along walking routes. (~~circle 1~~)
- Students are expected to walk in residential areas with or without sidewalks, and to walk along primary roadways with sidewalks or sufficient shoulder width. Secondary students are expected to cross controlled intersections where traffic signals, crosswalks, or other traffic control is in place. (~~circles 3-4~~)

MCPS reports that bus routes are frequently implemented within the policy walking distances to address safety concerns. It is illustrative that there are two high schools, three middle schools, and 12 elementary schools where all students are offered bus transportation as there are not appropriate walking routes available. There are also two elementary schools where all students are required to walk, and six where fewer than 60 students are eligible for a bus.

MCPS today will describe more fully how safety measures are assessed both at schools and along walking routes; what processes are in place to evaluate and remedy safety issues as raised; how determinations are made to provide bus versus walking transportation; and how safety information about walking routes is communicated to schools and families.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

On November 10, CountyStat reviewed the Pedestrian Safety Initiative. The briefing included data regarding collision trends around public schools (~~select slides attached at circles 24-29~~). Council staff highlights the following:

- ~~Circles 24 and 25~~ show trends in school age pedestrian collisions from 2008. They show that the number has been increasing since 2012, as well as the percent share of all pedestrian collisions. CountyStat notes, however, that this could be in part due to improved data collection on age.
- In both graphs, collisions involving high school and college youth are the highest number of the age groups.
- ~~Circle 26~~ shows school-aged pedestrian collisions within a quarter mile of a public school. The total number ranges from a high of 13 in 2010 to a low of 7 in 2011 and 2012.
- ~~Circles 27-29~~ detail student pedestrian collisions within a quarter mile of school by school for elementary, middle, and high schools.
- Richard Montgomery HS and Kennedy HS had the highest number of student pedestrian collisions within a quarter mile of school in the six-year period, 4 at RMHS and 3 at KHS.

- ~~Circle 30~~ shows party at fault by age group for both pedestrians and drivers. Teenaged drivers were the lowest at fault age group for drivers. For pedestrians, however, ages 10-19 were by far the highest group at fault in 2014 and also had the highest 2011-2013 average of any age group.

As noted above, MCDOT works closely with MCPS to evaluate pedestrian safety issues around schools and implement appropriate mitigation measures. The policy for establishment of school zone traffic controls is attached at ~~circles 18-23~~. It outlines criteria for implementing reduced speeds, flashing signals, and other signage.

MCDOT staff will also provide additional description of the department's role in assessing walking routes to school, determining and implementing safety measures, public communication, and an update on the Safe Routes to School Program and other related CIP projects.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

MCPD is responsible for the deployment and supervision of 170 crossing guards (including 27 substitutes) this school year. MCPD reports that there are 25 guards at middle schools, and 118 guards at elementary schools. Some guards work both an elementary and middle school if times allow.

MCPD works closely with MCPS and MCDOT to determine the appropriate location of the guards and to make adjustments as warranted. MCPD reports also that the crossing guards are a valuable source of information about pedestrian safety issues at the schools, as they are key observers at the scene.

MCPD will provide greater detail as to how decisions are made to assign crossing guards and how safety adjustments are made. MCPD will also describe its role in public communication and outreach and other youth pedestrian safety measures.

DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. Walking route assessment

The school based pedestrian collision information presented by CountyStat focuses on collisions within a quarter mile of school. ~~Circle 25~~ indicates that approximately 145 collisions Countywide in 2014 involved school age pedestrians, which would include student collisions that may occur farther away from the school.

The Council may want to understand what additional data about school age pedestrian collisions is available. For example, the CountyStat presentation included information about collision severity but not broken down by age group. To what extent is age group data tracked within the collision incident data elements? For the collisions beyond a quarter mile from school, how much is known about whether the incident was connected to a walking route or other school related activity? For the collisions with pedestrians aged 10-19 at fault, is there more information about where these collisions occurred?

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There is significant focus on the immediate area surrounding a school, and on adjacent major intersections. **The Council may want to discuss to what extent assessments can be made farther along the walking routes to a school.** Council staff acknowledges that with 200 schools, assessing a 1-2 mile radius may be infeasible. However, would it be possible to identify and prioritize assessment of schools in areas of higher incidents or other traffic concerns? To what extent is this already occurring?

2. Crossing Guards

Executive branch staff reports that the number of crossing guards has remained flat in recent years. **The Council may want to discuss further the number and allocation of crossing guards.** Understanding that not all schools may require a crossing guard, are guards needed at additional schools, or would some schools benefit from more guards than they currently have? Would any high schools benefit from a crossing guard to increase student compliance with pedestrian safety? Is additional capacity needed to allow for necessary safety adjustments?

3. School-based communication

MCDOT and MCPD appear to each have a role in providing communication and outreach about youth pedestrian safety. Some of this is in the form of public education campaigns including advertisements and posters.

The Council may also want to discuss the level of school based communication provided. How often are presentations in schools made by MCDOT or MCPD on youth pedestrian safety? Given that there are 200 schools, what is the expectation of reaching each school? How are parents and students informed about appropriate walking routes to the school?

The Council may also want to hear from MCPD about the role that School Resource Officers have in communicating pedestrian safety. Can SRO's provide additional capability to communicate on this issue, particularly in schools with greater traffic and pedestrian safety concerns?

POLICY

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries: EEA-RA, EBH-RA, JEE, JEE-RA, JFA-RA, KLA

Related Sources: *Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §3-903(c); Code of Maryland Regulations §13A.06.07.09 Instructional Content Requirements; Montgomery County Code, Article II, §44-7 Denominational and parochial school students entitled to transportation; and Montgomery County Code, Article II, §44-8, Cost of transportation of students; levy and appropriation; charge to students.*

Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer
Department of Transportation

Student Transportation

A. PURPOSE

To establish safe, responsive, and accountable operation of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) student transportation system, in partnership with parents and students, and to delineate the services provided.

B. ISSUE

MCPS is authorized by the regulations of the State of Maryland to provide safe and efficient transportation to the students residing within Montgomery County. The Montgomery County Board of Education is responsible for establishing the operational expectations and eligibility criteria for its student transportation services. It is the responsibility of the Montgomery County Board of Education to work with other agencies when needed and to consider the safety of students when designing school site plans including pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns; assessing routes for walking to and from school and school bus stops; and, establishing bus routes and locations of school bus stops.

C. POSITION

1. Eligibility for Transportation

- a) The Board of Education adopted attendance areas for each school are the basis upon which transported areas are defined. Students attending their home school who reside beyond the distances defined below will receive transportation services.

- (1) Transported areas surrounding MCPS schools are as follows:
 - Elementary Schools—beyond 1 mile
 - Middle Schools—beyond 1.5 miles
 - High Schools—beyond 2.0 miles
 - (2) The superintendent of schools is authorized to extend these distances by one-tenth of a mile to establish a reasonable line of demarcation between transported and non-transported areas.
 - (3) Transportation may be provided for distances less than that authorized by Board policy if a condition is considered hazardous to the safety of students walking to or from school, or to establish a reasonable boundary consistent with the safety criteria outlined in C.2.
- b) The Board of Education may establish transportation services for certain consortia schools, magnet, gifted and talented, International Baccalaureate, language immersion, alternative, or other programs based on the purposes of the programs, attendance areas, and available funding.
 - c) Enhanced levels of transportation services will be provided to those students, such as special education students, who meet the eligibility requirements of federal and state laws. Commercial carriers may be used to provide required services.
 - d) Students who attend denominational and parochial schools may be transported as specified under provisions of the Montgomery County Code. This service will be provided only on a space-available basis along established bus routes designed to serve public schools in keeping with the terms and conditions as set forth in this policy.
 - e) Under special circumstances, students may ride established bus routes across attendance boundaries for valid educational reasons.
 - f) Mixed grade/age level student loads are permitted.
 - g) Every effort is made to balance ride times and resources.
 - h) Buses may be used for educationally valuable purposes other than transporting students to and from the regular school day, such as field trips, extracurricular events, interscholastic sports, and outdoor education or

academic programs. Unless otherwise approved by the superintendent or his or her designee, use of MCPS buses is limited to MCPS and other governmental agencies. MCPS will establish criteria and rates for the use of MCPS transportation services for purposes other than transporting students to and from school on the regular school day.

- i) In exigent circumstances, the superintendent may apply to the Board of Education for a waiver to temporarily adjust transported distances. Board action on the waiver request can be taken after allowing at least 21 days for public comment following publication of the waiver request. If the Board deems an emergency exists, this notification provision may be waived without notice if all Board members are present and there is unanimous agreement.

2. Student Safety

- a) MCPS is responsible for routing buses in a manner that maximizes safety and efficiency.
- b) MCPS buses will not cross a main line railroad at grade crossing while in Montgomery County.
- c) MCPS is responsible for designing traffic control patterns for new and renovated schools prior to the completion of construction. MCPS will assess the safety of proposed traffic control patterns taking into consideration safe approaches by pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.
- d) MCPS is responsible for conducting safety evaluations of bus stops and recommended walking routes. The following criteria will apply to students walking to schools or school bus stops:
 - (1) Students are expected to walk in residential areas along and across streets, with or without sidewalks.
 - (2) Students are expected to walk along primary roadways with sidewalks or shoulders of sufficient width to allow walking off the main road.
 - (3) Middle and high school students are expected to cross all controlled intersections where traffic signals, lined crosswalks, or other traffic control devices are available.

- (4) Elementary school students may be required to cross primary roadways where an adult crossing guard is present.
 - (5) Elementary and middle school students are not expected to cross mainline railroad tracks unless a pedestrian underpass, overpass or adult crossing guard is present.
 - (6) Students are expected to walk along public or private pathways or other pedestrian routes.
- e) MCPS will follow an effective process for handling and investigating accidents so that injured students and staff are cared for promptly, further injury is prevented, and correct and timely information is disseminated to all necessary parties.
 - f) Student safety, security, and comfort depend on appropriate behavior on MCPS buses identical to that expected of students in school. The Board of Education affirms that, while riding the bus, students are on school property, and disciplinary infractions are handled in accordance with Regulation JFA-RA: *Student Rights and Responsibilities* and other related policies and regulations.
3. Community Partnerships
- a) MCPS will encourage a partnership of students, parents, and school staff to teach and enforce safe transportation practices.
 - (1) MCPS will implement a systemwide outreach and education program to teach safe walking practices en route to and from school, encourage safe bus-riding behavior, and reinforce appropriate student conduct while riding the bus.
 - (2) School staffs will encourage parents to teach their students safe walking practices en route to and from school.
 - (3) Bus operators and attendants are responsible for maintaining safe conditions for students boarding, riding, and exiting the bus. MCPS will provide preservice and in-service instruction to bus operators and attendants, consistent with COMAR 13A.06.07.09.
 - (4) Parents will be responsible for their child's safety along their walking route and at the bus stop. While waiting at bus stops, students should

observe safe practices, respect persons and private property, and stand well off the traveled portion of the road.

- b) Principals and the leadership of PTAs or parent teacher organizations at special programs located at special centers that operate in lieu of nationally affiliated PTAs will be notified in advance of routing changes that involve reductions of service, as described in Regulation EEA-RA.

4. Identification and Resolution of Transportation and Safety Issues

Members of the public are encouraged to address inquiries, concerns, or complaints regarding student transportation as set forth in Policy KLA: *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*. Complaints not resolved through the cluster transportation supervisor or other department staff, including the director of transportation may be appealed to the chief operating officer who will render a decision on behalf of the superintendent of schools, advising the appellant of the right to further appeal to the Board of Education consistent with the Education Article, *Annotated Code of Maryland*, Section 3-903(c).

5. Environmental and Economic Considerations

MCPS will balance environmental and economic factors when operating and maintaining its vehicles.

D. DESIRED OUTCOME

MCPS will have an efficient system of student transportation that provides an appropriate means of travel to and from school, is responsive to community input, and, in partnership with parents and students, coordinates effective community participation in the safe movement of students on a daily basis.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The superintendent will develop regulations to implement this policy as needed.

F. REVIEW AND REPORTING

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Board of Education policy review process.

REGULATION MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: EBH-RA, EBI-RA, EEA, EEB-RA, IGN, IPD-RA, JED, JEE, JEE-RA, JFA-RA, JHC, JHC-RA, KLA, KLA-RA

Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer
Chief of School Support and Improvement

Student Transportation

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this regulation is to establish permissible uses of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) student transportation service and to delineate responsibilities for the safe movement of Montgomery County students to and from school or school-related activities.

II. PROCEDURES

The director of the Department of Transportation (DOT), under the direction of the chief operating officer, is responsible for student transportation and the safe and efficient operation of MCPS buses. DOT is in direct communication with police and other public officials who are charged with student pedestrian safety and control. The director of DOT coordinates with school principals on decisions regarding the safe travel of students to and from school and the effective operation of buses.

A. Transported and Non-transported Areas

Transported areas surrounding MCPS schools are defined by the Board of Education as follows:

Elementary schools—beyond 1 mile;
Middle schools—beyond 1.5 miles;
High schools—beyond 2 miles.

The distance will be measured from the nearest point of residential property to the curb in front of the nearest school door.

1. Transportation may be provided to students who live within the prescribed distances established by the Board if the director of DOT determines that an appropriate walking route does not exist.
2. In establishing the demarcation line between transported and non-transported areas, the director of DOT may extend these distances by one-tenth of a mile to coincide with breaks in the pattern of homes, such as street intersections, major roadways, streams, parks, walking easements, commercial property, vacant land, unusual contour variations, and other features.

B. Levels of Transportation Service

Students who reside in transported areas established by the Board or meet the eligibility criteria of federal laws may receive transportation services as follows:

1. Neighborhood bus service, defined as transport from neighborhood bus stops to school, will be provided to students residing within the home school area or areas eligible for transportation services to the consortia school they attend.
2. Centralized bus service, defined as transportation from a central location such as a neighborhood elementary school, to the program site, may be provided to students attending specific programs as identified in the MCPS *Options (Guide to Countywide Programs)* booklet, in accordance with Board action, attendance areas, transportation services, and funding levels. Parents/guardians are responsible for students' transportation to and from centralized bus stops, whether or not there is an appropriate walking route.
3. Bus service on established routes may be provided to students who live outside the transported area of the school they attend, on a space-available basis. Parents/guardians are responsible for students' transportation to and from an established neighborhood or centralized bus stop. Restrictions will be imposed when student safety is jeopardized.
4. Enhanced levels of transportation service will be provided to students who meet the eligibility requirements of federal laws:

a) *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*

Transportation may be provided as a related service to a student with disabilities as specified in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

b) *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*

Transportation may be provided as an accommodation to a student with disabilities as specified in the student's Section 504 Plan.

c) *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*

Transportation will be provided to a homeless student as required by the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987*, as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015*.

5. Transportation on special education buses may be provided to siblings of special education students attending the same school. When transportation service for the special education student ends, transportation service for the sibling ends.

C. Non-MCPS Transportation Services

DOT staff will attempt to use MCPS-owned vehicles to the fullest extent possible to transport students eligible for enhanced transportation services as described in Section II.B.4. When enhanced transportation services for eligible students cannot be provided with MCPS vehicles, the director of DOT will consider the use of commercial transportation services and/or direct reimbursement to the parents/guardians or other individuals for the most economical transportation that meets the needs of the student.

1. Commercial transportation services will be negotiated by the director of procurement in the Department of Materials Management and must be preapproved by the director of DOT. Such contracts will require compliance with all elements of COMAR related to student transportation (13A.06.07) and applicable MCPS DOT guidelines. If transportation can be arranged on an MCPS vehicle at any time, the commercial service will be terminated.
2. Transportation and related expenses for which parents/guardians expect to be reimbursed must be preapproved by the director of DOT. The reimbursement rate shall not exceed the Board-approved mileage rate for staff travel. If transportation on MCPS vehicles can be arranged later, further expenses will not be approved.

D. Student Safety

1. The director of DOT or designee shall evaluate the safety and efficiency of buses, bus stops, recommended walking routes, and traffic control patterns for schools.
 - a) MCPS buses are equipped with cameras to increase the safety of students. Cameras record activity on the interior and exterior of the bus.
 - (1) Through the school bus camera enforcement program, a partnership of MCPS DOT, the Montgomery County Department of Police, and the Montgomery County Government, school bus passing laws are publicized and citations to drivers in violation of school bus passing laws are issued, with the assistance of camera footage from MCPS school buses.
 - (2) DOT staff conduct reviews of camera footage of bus interiors, with more frequent viewing of video from buses transporting non-verbal students.
 - b) MCPS DOT has developed safety protocols for buses transporting students with special needs and provides regular training to bus drivers and attendants. Safety protocols establish expectations for MCPS drivers and attendants to communicate with parents/guardians/caregivers, teachers and/or paraeducators to plan for meeting the unique needs of special needs students.
 - c) Questions concerning safety of students moving to and from school shall be directed to the DOT cluster supervisor, who determines whether a hazard exists and takes appropriate action where warranted.
2. Walking Routes
 - a) Appropriate walking routes are established through analyses that include the following:
 - (1) Commonly available online digital tools providing aerial views of neighborhood roadway configurations

- (2) Onsite visits by DOT staff trained in student safety
 - (3) Review of comparable walking routes in other neighborhoods
 - (4) Existing safety features as well as impediments to safety
 - (5) Observed pedestrian/vehicular use of the walking area
- b) An appropriate recommended walking route will be within the distances defined in Board Policy EEA, *Student Transportation*, but may not follow the shortest or most direct route.
 - c) DOT services will not be modified due to temporary conditions such as standing water after rainfall, snow and/or ice accumulation on sidewalks during inclement weather.
3. Crosswalks and Adult Crossing Guards

The locations of crosswalks and adult crossing guards are determined jointly by the director of DOT, the Montgomery County Police Department School Safety Unit, and the Montgomery County DOT. Adult crossing guards are employed by the Montgomery County Police Department and are assigned at the request of MCPS.

4. Bus Routes

Buses are routed in a manner that maximizes safety and efficiency. DOT is responsible for establishing routes for school buses and the stops for loading and unloading students. The following will be considered:

- a) Buses will only be routed on roadways and bridges designed to accommodate the size and weight of the bus.
- b) Routes will be established in such a way that the walking distance from a student's home to an established bus stop is no greater than the distances identified in Board Policy EEA, *Student Transportation*:

Elementary schools—1 mile
Middle schools—1.5 miles
High schools—2 miles

- c) Regular education buses will be routed on through roadways. However, when compelling circumstances require deviation from the through roadway, buses may be routed on roadways without outlets (e.g. dead-end streets, courts, and cul-de-sacs) under the following conditions:
 - (1) There is space for the bus to turn around.
 - (2) The turn from the through roadway and entrance back onto the through roadway can be made safely.

5. School and Parental Partnership for Student Safety

MCPS will encourage a partnership of students, parents/guardians, school staff, and DOT staff to teach and enforce safe practices for moving to and from school in all modes of transportation.

a) Bus Operator/Bus Attendant

The bus operator and attendant, if assigned, are responsible for encouraging safe riding practices, enforcing and addressing disciplinary issues, and instructing how to safely get on and off buses.

b) Principal

The principal is responsible for the following:

- (1) Providing classroom instruction on school bus safety rules, safe walking, and safe bus-waiting practices
- (2) Enforcing safe traffic practices on school property, including ensuring that school loading zones are adequately supervised, and restricting vehicles other than buses from school loading zones during loading and unloading activities

c) Parents/guardians are responsible for their student's safety along their walking route and/or at the bus stop.

- (1) Parents/guardians are responsible for selecting their student's walking routes to and from bus stops and schools.

- (2) Parents/guardians are responsible for providing supervision along their student's walking route and/or at the bus stop that is appropriate to the student's age and maturity. Parents/guardians are responsible for supervision of students until they board the bus for school and upon exiting the vehicle after school.
 - (a) Parents/guardians are encouraged to walk daily to and from school bus stops or school with students, especially younger students, and to use this opportunity to teach safe walking practices, safe bus-waiting practices, and traffic awareness, and to model wellness by walking for exercise.
 - (b) Students should arrive at the bus stop five minutes ahead of the scheduled arrival time of the bus.
 - (c) Parents/guardians are responsible for meeting prekindergarten and Head Start students on mid-day buses and students on special education buses at their assigned bus stops. When these students are not met, bus operators will follow established procedures to ensure student safety until students and parents/guardians can be reunited.
 - (d) So that children are prepared for those occasions when parents/guardians may be unable to meet the bus or are late, parents/guardians are encouraged to instruct their children what they are to do in their parents/guardians' absence, as bus operators are not able to ensure that each student is met by a parent/guardian except in those circumstances described in (c) above.
- d) When a school bus or student activity bus is equipped with a passenger restraint system (i.e., lap-shoulder belts), all passengers shall follow safe riding practices for their use.
 - (1) All passengers shall be instructed, in an age-appropriate manner, regarding the proper use of passenger restraint devices.

- (2) Students who fail to use or improperly use such passenger restraint devices may be subject to discipline.
- (3) When a student with a disability fails to use or improperly uses such passenger restraint devices, the bus operator notifies the principal. The principal will determine if an IEP meeting should be conducted in order to amend the IEP to address the use of the restraint device.

6. Denial of Bus Riding Privileges

- a) Students who violate the behavior and safety rules may have bus riding privileges denied temporarily or permanently by the school principal in accordance with the following procedures.
 - (1) The bus operator notifies the principal of details pertaining to a disciplinary problem with a student on the school bus using MCPS Form 555-3, *School Bus Disciplinary Report*. If action taken by the school does not resolve the disciplinary problems, the operator contacts the DOT cluster supervisor.
 - (2) The principal will warn the student of the possibility of denial of bus riding privileges and may have the student and parents/guardians sign a bus riding contract. If the disciplinary problems continue, the principal will confer with the parent/guardian and student prior to the suspension of riding privileges or, depending on the severity and nature of the behavior problem, suspend riding privileges immediately.
 - (3) The principal will notify the parent/guardian in writing of complaints received and the suspension of the student's riding privileges, with a copy to the bus operator, DOT, and the appropriate director of learning, achievement, and administration in the office of School Support and Improvement.
- b) The student's riding privileges may be restored by the principal after a conference with the student and/or parent/guardian and consultation with the DOT cluster supervisor. The principal will notify the bus operator and DOT cluster supervisor in writing of the reinstatement of the student's riding privileges.

E. Responsibilities and Priorities in Case of an Accident

1. DOT will provide training and maintain guidelines and procedures for handling accidents so that injured students/staff are cared for promptly, further injury is prevented, students are reunited with parents/guardians as quickly as possible, and correct and timely information is disseminated to all appropriate parties. Accident scene responsibilities, notification, and reporting requirements will be consistent with state and federal requirements.
2. Accident scene responsibilities include the following:
 - a) The dispatcher, or if the dispatcher is not on duty, the bus operator ensures that emergency services and an MCPS DOT supervisor are called to the scene.
 - b) A bus involved in an accident or collision shall not be moved until released by a police officer or a DOT supervisor.
 - c) In compliance with federal transportation standards, MCPS operators must cooperate with drug testing following any accident resulting in injury or sufficient damage to necessitate a vehicle being towed.
3. Notification
 - a) Accidents must be reported to the dispatcher and police immediately.
 - b) The dispatcher will notify appropriate MCPS personnel, including the Office of the Chief Operating Officer (OCOO) when appropriate, in accordance with notification procedures.
 - c) DOT staff will notify the OCOO.
 - d) Following notification of an accident involving students, the principal/designee should contact parents/guardians as soon as possible.
 - e) If students or staff involved in the accident are hospitalized, administrative or supervisory personnel from the school and DOT will be sent to the hospital.

- f) The Department of Communications handles all news media requests for information.

4. Reporting

- a) DOT shall maintain and follow reporting and investigative procedures for all accidents.
- b) DOT shall comply with all Maryland State Department of Education accident reporting guidelines.

F. Notification of Route Changes

- 1. The director of DOT will notify principals of any significant changes in bus service by June preceding the new school year or ten calendar days prior to significant changes during the year.
- 2. Principals will provide the school community with timely notification of bus stop changes made by the director/designee of DOT. The principal, in cooperation with the director/designee of DOT, will draft a letter of notification to appropriate parents/guardians. The letter, to be sent to parents/guardians by the principal, will include –
 - a) the proposed change in service, along with the basis for action
 - b) the date when transportation will cease
 - c) location of new bus stop, if applicable.
 - d) information pertaining to placement of new crossing guards or traffic control devices, if any, and
 - e) procedures for appeal of the proposed change.

G. Uses of Buses for Field Trips, Athletics, and Functions Outside of MCPS

- 1. MCPS buses are available for field trips during the hours that do not conflict or interfere with the regularly scheduled runs. A limited number of buses are not committed to regular bus routes and are therefore available for trips any time of the day and for multi-day trips.
- 2. Schools may use MCPS buses to transport participants to approved extracurricular activities.

3. Government organizations, such as Montgomery County, the City of Rockville, the City of Gaithersburg, the City of Takoma Park, and/or educationally related non-profit organizations may use MCPS buses, as approved by the director of DOT, for educational purposes in furtherance of the educational mission of MCPS.
4. The chief operating officer periodically sets the fee schedule for school field trips and use of buses by other public agency programs. The schedule includes operational and bus operator costs. Refer to the DOT web page, *WebTrips: Field Trip Request System*, for details.
5. DOT, in cooperation with the Procurement Unit in the Department of Materials Management, is responsible for screening private motor coach carriers used for school-sponsored activities to ensure they meet the following standards:
 - a) The company carries the required levels of insurance.
 - b) All vehicles are inspected and pass inspections according to federal requirements.
 - c) Drivers hold appropriate licenses and receive all required safety training.
 - d) The carrier meets all federally required drug testing and employment standards for motor coach operators.
6. Responsibility for Students
 - a) It shall be mandatory for a staff member from the school group or a chaperone authorized by the principal/designee to be onboard each bus used for student trips made on MCPS buses. A bus operator is not authorized to begin a trip without a staff member or an authorized chaperone onboard the bus.
 - b) The responsible staff member or authorized chaperone shall adhere to the supervision and safety procedures set forth in MCPS Regulation IPD-RA, *Travel-Study Programs, Field Trips, and Student Organization Trips*.

H. Resolution of Concerns from the Public

As set forth in Board Policy KLA, *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*, the Board encourages the public to seek resolution through an informal process of cooperative agreement among the most immediately affected parties. Formal steps set forth in MCPS Regulation KLA-RA, *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*, for resolving complaints only should be used after informal approaches have been unsuccessful in resolving the complaint.

1. A member of the public who has an inquiry, concern, or complaint regarding student transportation is encouraged to discuss the matter with the DOT cluster supervisor to seek an informal resolution.
2. A concern not resolved informally at the level of the DOT cluster supervisor should be addressed to the director of DOT for their decision.
3. The director of DOT's decision may be appealed to the chief operating officer who shall render a decision on behalf of the superintendent of schools, advising the appellant of the right to further appeal to the Board consistent with Board Policy KLA, *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*; MCPS Regulation KLA-RA, *Responding to Inquiries and Complaints from the Public*; and the Education Article, *The Annotated Code of Maryland*, Section 3-903(c).

Related Sources:

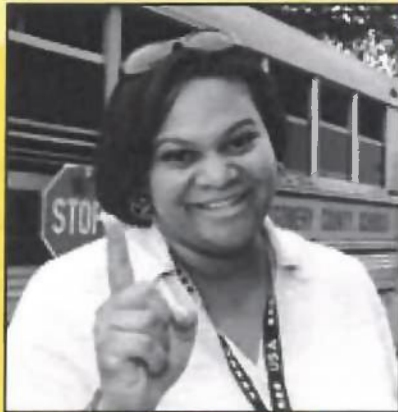
Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §3-903(c); Code of Maryland Regulations §13A.06.07, Student Transportation; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, as amended, Title I, Part A §602(26)(A); McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, as amended, Title VII, Subtitle B; 42 U.S.C. 11432 (g)(3) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015; and Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 20 U.S.C. §794 (Section 504).

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation No. 215-1, September 12, 1979; directory information updated January, 1983; revised December, 1984; reviewed April, 1988; revised May 13, 1998; revised April 21, 2010; revised August 22, 2019.



Montgomery County Public Schools
www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

Ride by the Rules: Put Safety First



Ms. Sheba Ram, MCPS Bus Operator

Ms. S says...

- *Be Respectful*
- *Be Responsible*
- *Be Safe*



Who Is a Safe Rider?

A safe rider is someone who...

- 1 Knows and obeys the rules
- 2 Listens to the bus driver and safety patrols
- 3 Treats others with respect and consideration
- 4 Stays out of the street, crossing only when all traffic is stopped
- 5 Puts safety first!

What are the rules for riding the bus?

In many ways, the rules for riding the bus are the same rules that you must follow in school. You must listen to the bus driver just like you would to a teacher or principal. Using bad language and being disrespectful of others is not allowed at the bus stop or on the bus, just as it is not allowed in school. In addition, you must follow the rules to make every bus ride safe and nice for everyone.

At the bus stop, you should

- ◆ Be there five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive
- ◆ Be considerate of nearby yards, cars, driveways, houses, buildings, and private property
- ◆ Cross the road, if necessary, only after getting a signal from the bus driver or safety patrol, and make sure to walk 10 feet in front of the stopped bus
- ◆ Line up to get on the bus quickly without shoving or pushing, and move toward the bus only after it stops
- ◆ Follow the instructions of the safety patrols and adults

On the bus, you should

- ◆ Be well-behaved, just as you would be in your classroom
- ◆ Be seated and make room for others to sit
- ◆ Follow the instructions of the bus driver or the safety patrols
- ◆ Keep your arms, feet, and head inside the bus at all times
- ◆ Keep the aisle and emergency door clear of obstructions
- ◆ Help keep the bus clean by picking up your trash

What happens if I don't follow the rules?

If you don't follow the rules, the consequences may include the following:

- ◆ The bus operator or attendant may assign a specific seat to you
- ◆ The bus operator may report you to the principal to discuss the possible consequences of your behavior
- ◆ If you continue to break the rules, the principal may temporarily or permanently take away your privilege of riding the bus after talking with your parents
- ◆ Depending on what rules have been broken, the principal may take away your bus-riding privileges immediately
- ◆ You may be suspended from school



At all times, do not

- ◆ Bring animals, alcohol, drugs, weapons, glass containers, or explosives on the bus
- ◆ Use bad language or gestures, fight, bully, or harass others
- ◆ Throw any papers or objects in the bus or out the windows
- ◆ Operate the emergency door without permission
- ◆ Smoke, drink, eat, or play radios without headphones on the bus
- ◆ Damage any part of the bus
- ◆ Ride a different bus than the one you've been assigned to, unless you have written permission from your parent and permission from the principal.



You must listen to the bus driver just like you would to a teacher or principal.

Who is a safe rider?

Someone who obeys the rules and knows that riding the bus is a privilege for most students, not a right. Be a safe rider...

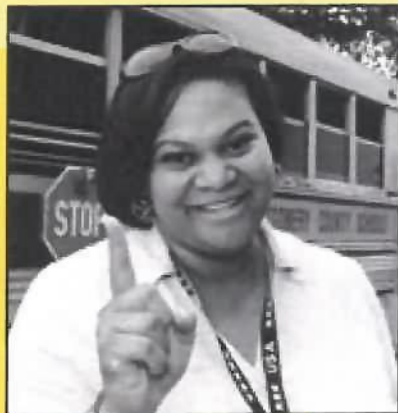
Ride by the Rules!

Buses may be equipped with both an audio and a visual recording device.



Montgomery County Public Schools
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Ride by the Rules: Making the Right Choices



Ms. Sheba Ram, MCPS Bus Operator

Ms. S says...

- **Be Respectful**
- **Be Responsible**
- **Be Safe**



Protect Yourself— and Others

You are responsible for your behavior and self-control at all times. Knowing this, and making good decisions based on the rules, can save you from making mistakes that could have unintended consequences.

School buses are an extension of school, and you must adhere to the same standards of behavior on a school bus as in the classroom. If you don't, you could face severe consequences, including losing the privilege of riding the bus or even being suspended from school. To protect yourself and others, and keep the privilege of riding the school bus, ride by the rules!

Put safety first

Be careful walking to and from the bus stop and while waiting for the bus to arrive. During early morning and late afternoon hours it is more difficult for motorists to see pedestrians. At all times, but particularly in winter when you may be walking and waiting near dark and slippery roads you should

- ◆ Wear highly visible clothing and/or carry a backpack with reflective material
- ◆ Have a safe and well-lit area to wait for the bus, especially when the roads are wet or slick
- ◆ Wait well off the road and be observant of all traffic
- ◆ Move toward the bus only after it stops and the driver has signaled that it is safe
- ◆ Refrain from trying to direct traffic upon walking toward or leaving the bus

Remember: Riding the school bus is a privilege for most students, not a right, and this privilege can be revoked at any time. Be smart...

**Ride by
the Rules!**




Obey the bus operator just as you would a teacher or school administrator.

Do:

- ◆ Behave appropriately at the bus stop, respecting private property and keeping noise levels down for nearby residents
- ◆ Line up to board the bus promptly, without shoving or pushing
- ◆ Be seated and make room for others to sit as well. After bus routes are adjusted at the beginning of the school year, standing is not allowed
- ◆ Obey the bus operator just as you would a teacher or school administrator and act as you would in the classroom
- ◆ Keep the aisle and emergency door clear of obstructions
- ◆ Keep your arms, feet, and head inside the bus at all times
- ◆ Tell the bus operator, principal, and your parents if anyone is harassing, bullying, threatening, or fighting with you
- ◆ Be aware that bus operators may assign seats to students
- ◆ Be considerate of nearby yards, driveways, houses, buildings, and private property
- ◆ Discard trash in appropriate containers
- ◆ Be courteous and respectful of others

Don't:

- ◆ Use vulgar language or gestures
- ◆ Throw any papers or objects in the bus or out the windows
- ◆ Smoke, drink, eat, chew tobacco, or play radios without headphones
- ◆ Engage in any violent behavior or sexual harassment, which also may be punishable by law
- ◆ Engage in any sexual activity
- ◆ Bring prohibited materials (i.e., alcohol, drugs, weapons, explosives, and glass containers) on the bus. In addition to being against school system regulations, possession of some of these materials is a criminal offense
- ◆ Damage or deface any part of the vehicle
- ◆ Operate the emergency door without permission
- ◆ Bring large objects that cannot be held on your lap on the bus, such as some musical instruments, class projects, etc.; try to make other arrangements to take such items to school



Riding the school bus is a privilege

Know the consequences

Failure to follow the rules may result in one or more of the following consequences:

- ◆ The bus operator may bring you back to the school, or call the police, if you pose a serious threat to your own safety and/or the safety and health of other riders
- ◆ The principal may suspend your bus riding privileges temporarily or permanently, depending on the circumstances
- ◆ For certain offenses, you may be suspended from school
- ◆ For illegal activities, you may face criminal charges

NOTE: Buses may be equipped with both an audio and a visual recording device.



Montgomery County Public Schools
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Ride by the Rules: A Parent's Role



Ms. Sheba Ram, MCPS Bus Operator

*Join Ms. S
in telling your
children...*

- *Be Respectful*
- *Be Responsible*
- *Be Safe*



Bus Safety: A Team Effort

Every day nearly 100,000 students in the Montgomery County Public Schools ride a school bus. Their safety is a top priority for the school system. A safe, pleasant ride helps students start and end the school day on a positive note and can have an enormous impact on a student's attitude toward school.

Students, parents, bus operators, principals, and teachers must work together to ensure safe and pleasant bus transportation. A parent's responsibility includes knowing and reinforcing standards of safety and behavior at the bus stop and on the bus. Disorderly students can threaten their own safety and that of others by distracting the bus operator. Disorderly and aggressive conduct also can make the bus ride to and from school an unpleasant and even intimidating experience for students. To help prevent this, buses may be equipped with audio and video recording devices.

An emphasis on safety

Parent responsibility also includes ensuring that your children have a safe and, especially for younger children, supervised place to go if school is closed, opens late, or closes early due to adverse weather conditions or if the bus does not come for some reason.

How parents can help

Every member of the community has a role in fostering safe, positive behavior at the bus stop and on the bus. As a parent, you can help preserve the safety of all students and ensure a smooth beginning and ending to the school day by making sure that your children

- ◆ Know and understand the rules for riding the school bus;
- ◆ Understand that the school bus is an extension of school, and the same standards of behavior expected in the classroom apply to the bus as well;
- ◆ Obey the instructions of the bus operator, just as they would follow the instructions of a teacher or school administrator;
- ◆ Show consideration for other students on the bus and at the bus stop;
- ◆ Speak respectfully to everyone, including their peers, without using vulgar language;
- ◆ Know that fighting and other violence, harassment, bullying, and sexual activity is strictly prohibited;
- ◆ Show consideration for properties around the bus stop, refraining from littering or damaging any property;
- ◆ Know the bus route number and ride the same bus daily; and
- ◆ Understand that riding the school bus is a privilege for most students, not a right, and that this privilege can be revoked temporarily or permanently because of misconduct.

Protecting your children

Elementary school

Parents have a central role in making school bus trips safe for their young children. To fulfill this role, make sure they

- ◆ Know basic principles of traffic safety, such as how and when to cross the road safely;
- ◆ Stay out of the road while waiting for the bus;
- ◆ Are supervised by a parent or other adult while walking to and waiting at the bus stop (at some bus stops, parents rotate this duty, while at others, parents escort their children to the bus stop and remain with them until the bus comes);
- ◆ Move toward the bus only after it stops and the driver has signaled that it is safe; and
- ◆ Understand the importance of following the rules on the bus.



Middle and high school

Even older students need reminders about the rules of conduct and safety on school buses. Reinforcing the idea that they are responsible for their behavior and self-control on the school bus and at the bus stop can save them from making mistakes that could have severe and long-lasting consequences. To help protect your children, make sure they

- ◆ Treat others, including the bus operator, with respect;
- ◆ Have a safe and highly visible area to wait at the bus stop, especially in the winter when the road may be slippery and dark;
- ◆ Know and understand the consequences of certain behaviors, such as smoking and bringing prohibited materials (i.e., alcohol, drugs, weapons, explosives, and glass containers) on the bus. In addition to being against school system regulations, possession of some of these materials is a criminal offense; and
- ◆ Refrain from any violent behavior or sexual harassment, which also may be illegal.

Open communication

Parents need to encourage their children to report any harassing, bullying, or otherwise harmful behavior to the bus operator and/or principal, as well as share this information with a parent. The Montgomery County Public Schools takes all such reports seriously and will take action to resolve these problems.

Aparent's responsibility includes knowing and reinforcing standards of safety and behavior at the bus stop and on the bus.

Encourage your children to follow the standards of behavior—for everyone's safety. The privilege to ride the school bus can be revoked if the standards aren't observed.

NOTE: Buses may be equipped with an audio and visual recording device.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RIDING THE BUS

Who rides the bus?

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) provides bus service for:

- Elementary school students living more than 1 mile of walking distance from school.*
- Middle school students living more than 1.5 miles of walking distance from school.*
- High school students living more than 2.0 miles of walking distance from school.*
- Students who face hazardous walking conditions regardless of distance from school (multilane highways, construction areas, etc.) as determined by the MCPS Department of Transportation.
- Students in special education, magnet, gifted/talented, and some vocational/education programs that are not offered at the student's home school.

*A tenth of a mile may be added to establish a reasonable boundary.

Bus safety: a team effort

Students

Students are responsible for their behavior and self-control on the bus and at bus stops at all times. Disorderly students can threaten the safety of all riders by distracting the bus operator making the bus ride to and from school an unpleasant and even intimidating experience for other students. School buses are an extension of school, and students are expected to adhere to the same standards of behavior on a school bus as in the classroom.

Students are expected to obey the instructions of the bus operator just as they would follow the instructions of teachers and school administrators. Students must also remember that riding the school bus is a privilege for most students, not a right, which can be revoked if the student fails to observe basic standards of conduct and safety.

Parents

Parents can help further the safety of all students by making sure their children know the bus rules and etiquette that help ensure safe, orderly, and pleasant bus trips. Parents also should make sure their children know their bus route number, located in windows on both the right and left side of the bus, near the front (see [Route Numbers](#) section below). The number that is painted on the bus, usually on the body and bumpers is not used for bus route identification.

For elementary and middle school students, it is recommended that a parent or other adults wait at the bus stop with the students to monitor and supervise their behavior and help with any problems, such as a late bus. Both students and adults should stand near the bus stop, not more than 150 feet away, where they can observe the bus as it arrives.

Bus stops are selected to provide safety and convenience for most students, and to economize on fuel and time that students spend on the bus. Parents should not request bus drivers to make additional stops. Regulations prohibit bus operators from stopping between designated bus stops.

Many routes are designed so that students do not need to cross a major roadway to use the bus. This is indicated on route descriptions by "RSO" (right side only) next to the bus stop notation. Parents should not allow their children to circumvent this safety measure by crossing the road to use a different bus stop if there is one on their side of the street.

The school system

To ensure safe, efficient service for students, MCPS follows these procedures:

- No bus may cross a mainline railroad track at grade level in Montgomery County.
- No students are scheduled to cross a divided highway to board a bus, and the number of students who must cross a main artery is kept to an absolute minimum.
- Standing during operation is not allowed on buses except during the first few weeks of the new school year when schedules and routes are being adjusted or occasionally during the year when breakdowns occur or temporary needs arise.
- All roads and bridges must be able to sustain the weight of the bus.
- Turn-around and turning areas are held to an absolute minimum and must be wide enough to allow safe maneuvering.
- Buses are routed along "through" roadways, as much as possible. Dead ends or cul-de-sacs are not traveled, unless no other safe alternative is available.
- Each bus undergoes a regular maintenance program that includes daily checks by bus operators, monthly safety inspections, and three state-required annual inspections.
- All bus operators must have a thorough background check and physical, have less than two points on their driving record, and be highly trained.
- Every school bus has closely spaced, high-back padded seats that keep passengers within the seating compartment in the event of a collision.
- Buses may be equipped with an audio and visual recording device.

The community

All motorists are required **by law** to stop when the red lights on buses are flashing. Passing a bus when the red lights are flashing is the biggest threat to

student safety. Failure to stop for a school bus when the flashing red lights are operational can result in a traffic ticket and a fine of up to \$1,000.

In addition, motorists should be forewarned that the red flashing lights and the stop sign may be engaged shortly after the amber lights are on. All traffic should slow and prepare to stop when motorists see a school bus beginning to slow down and when students are present at the roadside.

In some neighborhoods, residents of houses near the bus stop permit students to stand in a carport or garage in bad weather. This is acceptable as long as the resident agrees to such an arrangement, it does not create an additional stop or delay, and substitute bus operators can easily locate the students.

Safety between home and school: riding the school bus

Parents/guardians are responsible for their children on the way to the bus stop, at the bus stop, and on the way home from the bus stop. School bus transportation is provided for elementary school children who live more than one mile from their home school. Schools distribute information about bus routes, times, and stop locations prior to the start of the school year. This information is also available on the MCPS website. If you live near the school and do not see a stop on the list that is in your neighborhood, your child may not be eligible for transportation. Questions about transportation should be directed to your transportation depot. Your school or the MCPS website can provide you with contact information for your transportation cluster manager.

Parents/guardians are responsible for their children on the way to and at the morning bus stop. Children should arrive at their bus stop at least five minutes before the established pick-up time. Parents/guardians are responsible for children once they arrive at the afternoon bus stop and should plan to meet the bus or arrange for a caretaker or other responsible adult to accompany the

children safely home or to the child care provider. Parents/guardians should instruct their children where to get off the bus and familiarize them with unique aspects of the bus stop or landmarks so that, prior to the first day they will ride the bus, the children will clearly know the stop where they should get off the bus.

Please note: Bus operators do not know all of the possible caretakers who might be picking up a student on a particular day, and are unable to match each child with a specific adult. When students get off the bus, they are entirely in the care of the parent/guardian or other caregiver. They are on their own to walk home if no parent/guardian or caregiver is present. Please provide specific information for your children to become independent riders by making sure they know exactly where to get off the bus as well as alert the bus operator, before getting off the bus, if they do not see a parent/guardian or familiar person who normally meets them at the bus stop. Once alerted, the bus operator will return the student to the school, or take other steps to ensure the child's safety.

If you usually meet your child at the bus stop and cannot make it on a given day, call the school well before dismissal time and ask that your child be kept at the school to be picked up rather than placed on the bus at the end of the school day. This is an emergency back-up plan that should be used only in those rare circumstances when you are unexpectedly and unavoidably delayed in making it to the bus stop. Keep the school phone number in your cell phone or other convenient place should an emergency arise. Establishing a buddy plan for your child with an older sibling or classmate is advised, in case your child arrives at the afternoon bus stop without meeting you or another caregiver. Bus schedules are approximate and may vary due to traffic, weather conditions, and student changes. It is best to be present at the bus stop ahead of the normal arrival time.

The kindergarten teacher will discuss bus safety in detail during the first week of school. Following safety rules when boarding, riding, and getting off the bus is very important. Reviewing safety rules with your child will help to ensure bus safety.

If you want your child to be supervised by an adult while walking home from the afternoon bus stop, we recommend the following:

- Plan for you or another caregiver to be at the bus stop ahead of the normal drop-off time, as the bus may arrive early on any given day.
- Plan in advance for another adult who is normally at the bus stop to care for your child if you are not there.
- If you have an emergency and cannot make it to the bus stop, call the school well before dismissal time, so your child will be kept at school for pickup rather than put on the bus. Be sure you always have the school phone number with you in case of the emergency.
- Be sure your child knows and can identify the proper bus stop and understands not to get off the bus at any other stop.
- Arrange for an older student “buddy” to walk home with your child, or allow your child to stay at the older student’s house until you are able to pick up your child. Be sure to work with the other student’s parent/guardian when arranging this plan.
- Be sure your child knows to tell the bus driver, before getting off the bus, if something is “not right.” This includes a parent/guardian or caregiver who is usually at the stop not being visible; missing the stop; or getting on the wrong bus and not recognizing any stop or familiar adults.

Once the student gets off the bus, only you can ensure your child is appropriately supervised.

School bus rules

At the bus stop, students are expected to:

- Arrive five minutes before the scheduled time.
- Maintain an orderly line in preparation to board the bus promptly, without shoving or pushing.
- Stay out of the roadway.
- Be considerate of nearby yards, driveways, houses, buildings, and private property.
- Move toward the bus only after it stops and the driver has signaled that it is safe.

On the bus, students are expected to:

- Behave appropriately, just as if they were in a classroom.
- Keep the aisle and emergency door clear of obstructions.
- Keep their arms, feet, and head inside the bus at all times.
- Be seated and make room for others to sit as well. Once ridership has been adjusted at the beginning of the school year, standing is not permitted.
- Discard trash in appropriate containers.
- More: [Ride by the Rules](#)

On returning home, students are expected to:

- Walk 10 feet in front of the stopped bus, if they must cross the road, and cross only after the bus operator has indicated that it is safe.
- Refrain from trying to direct traffic upon leaving the bus.

At all times, students may not:

- Bring animals, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, weapons, glass containers, or explosives on the bus.
- Use vulgar language or gestures, fight, or engage in sexual harassment or other improper and/or illegal conduct.
- Throw any papers or objects in the bus or out the windows.
- Operate the emergency door without permission.
- Smoke, drink, eat, or play radios without headphones.
- Damage or deface any part of the bus.
- Ride a different bus than the one they have been assigned to, unless they have written permission from a parent and permission from the principal.

Large objects that cannot be held on a student's lap, such as some musical instruments, class projects, etc., should not be transported on the bus. Parents should make other arrangements to transport such items to and from school.

Bus operators and attendants may assign specific seats to students.

Consequences of misconduct

The bus operator notifies the principal of details pertaining to a disciplinary problem with a student on the school bus. A bus operator may return a student to the school, or call the police, if the student poses a serious threat to the safety and health of other riders.

Students who violate the behavior and safety rules may have bus-riding privileges denied temporarily or permanently by the school principal in accordance with the following procedures:

- The principal will warn the student of the possibility of denial of bus-riding privileges.

- If the disciplinary problems continue, the principal will confer with the parent/guardian and student prior to the suspension of riding privileges or, depending on the severity and nature of the behavior problem, suspend riding privileges immediately. The principal will notify the parent/guardian in writing of complaints received and the suspension of the student's riding privileges.
- The student's riding privileges may be restored by the principal after a conference with the student and/or parent and consultation with the transportation supervisor. The principal will notify the bus operator in writing of the reinstatement of the student's riding privileges.

In addition, students may be suspended from school as a result of misconduct on buses or receive lengthy bus riding suspensions for serious infractions.

What if the bus is late?

Buses follow a routine schedule and typically arrive at their stops within a few minutes of the schedule. Except for snowy or icy mornings, parents and students should wait at the bus stop for at least 20 minutes past the scheduled arrival time before calling the appropriate bus depot (see [For More Information](#) section). On days of inclement weather, students and parents should expect some delays due to road and traffic conditions.

It is recommended that only one student or parent at a bus stop call the transportation office to determine the length of the delay. Students should not leave the bus stop unless advised by the transportation office that there will be no bus.

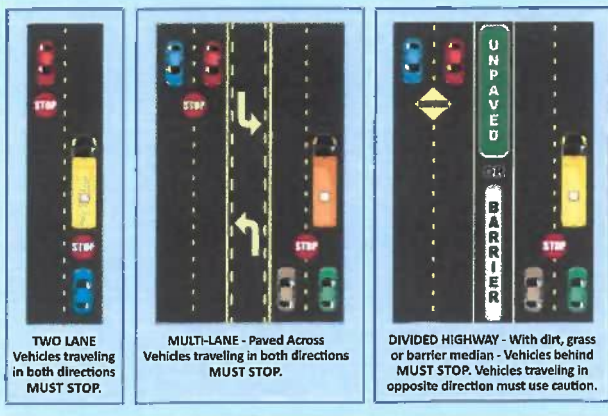


Understanding the School Bus Law

Let's Work Together to Keep Our Kids Safe

The Maryland Law

- **On Two Lane and Multi-Lane Roadways:** Motorists traveling in both directions – regardless of how many travel lanes or the presence of a turn lane – Must Stop and Remain Stopped until the flashing red bus lights are turned off.
- **On Multi-Lane Roadways Divided By a Median Strip:** Drivers following the bus must stop. Drivers do not need to stop if they are traveling in the opposite direction of the bus on a multi-lane highway that is divided by a physical barrier such as a grassy or paved median strip. Cars traveling in the opposite direction of the bus on a physically-divided highway may proceed with caution.



When Following or Approaching a School Bus

- **Be Prepared To Stop.** Flashing yellow lights on the bus are activated 100 to 300 feet before the bus is going to stop to load or unload children.
- **Drivers Must Stop and Remain Stopped** when red lights flash. Drivers should not proceed until flashing red lights are turned off or the bus begins to move.

Why Drivers Are Not Stopping and What You Can Do

- In the beginning 40 days of the 2017-2018 school year, with 500 buses armed with cameras, 7,919 drivers were recorded illegally passing school buses, which means 198 bus camera citations were recorded per day.
- Are drivers unaware (ignorant) of the law, impatient to get going, or not giving complete attention (driving distracted)?
- The goal for camera installation on all of the County's 1,200 school buses is January 2019.
- Please know and obey the law; and share this information with friends and family.

Violations are reviewed by the police department's Automated Traffic Enforcement Unit and citations are mailed to the registered vehicle owner.

- The camera-generated fine is \$250 with no points on the driver's license.
- A citation issued by a police officer is \$570 with three points on the driver's license.
- The goal is voluntary compliance and keeping our students safe.

