

TRANSPORTATION GUIDE

HOW IT WORKS AND WHO TO CONTACT

The Bus Service Contractor operates the basic education student bus service system. The district Transportation Department works with the Contractor to plan routes, schedules and stops. All buses used by the Bus Contractor are certified by the Washington State Patrol. The State Patrol inspects buses twice yearly to ensure they are maintained in accordance with state standards.

Drivers must have a medical exam, be fingerprinted, have a background check, have first aid and CPR training, earn a commercial driving license and take 40 hours of training to be certified by the state Superintendent of Public Instruction to drive a school bus. Drivers must complete in-service training each year.

INFORMATION AND CONCERNS

For information on bus stops and schedules, visit the district web site at www.tacomaschools.org or phone the district Transportation Department for details on eligibility and routes for basic education. Phone any concern about a late bus, the bus driver, an incident or service to the Dispatcher at 253-475-0334. Before phoning, have at hand as many details as possible – date and time of the incident, the bus number, names of those involved – to quicken a response to the concern.

WHERE TO CALL

Bus Coordinator at school

Information on bus stops and schedules

Durham.....253-475-0334

 Dispatcher: buses on route, service concerns

 Bus Discipline Officer – disciplinary actions

Pierce Transit customer service253-581-8000

School district “night line”253-571-1000

 News about bus service during bad weather

Special Education transportation.....253-571-1855

Transportation Department253-571-1853

 Eligibility for bus service, routes

For additional information go to our Web site at www.tacoma.k12.wa.us/distinfo/transportation.

BASIC BUS SERVICE

In this section on Bus Service, you will find information about:

- How it works and who to contact
- Who may ride a school bus
- How to ride a school bus
- Emergency bus route information

Bus Carrier

The district contracts with Durham School Services for regular education student transportation. The district operates Special Education school buses. Signs on the outside of the buses will either read “Durham” or “Tacoma School District No. 10.”

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WHO MAY RIDE A SCHOOL BUS

Eligibility for transportation to/from school is based on student's residence. The student must live more than one radius mile from his/her primary school of attendance (PSA) in order to receive transportation. A student may be transported less than one mile if the district determines that the walking route contains hazardous conditions. Walking distance to the student's assigned stop: eight to 10 blocks for high school, six to eight blocks for middle school and four to six blocks for elementary school.

Special consideration

The student may receive bus service if:

- hazards making it unsafe for a student to walk to school cannot be mitigated;
- a 504 plan is in place or a doctor verifies in writing that the student has a medical problem that makes it necessary for him/her to ride a school bus; or
- the student stays before or after school at a home or child care site in an area served by a school bus, and that address is used for enrollment purposes.

To start service or change service, the parent/guardian needs to ask the school bus coordinator to prepare a Bus Run/Stop Change Request and forward it to the district Transportation Department. The request will then be reviewed by the Transportation Department. If it is concluded that the student is eligible, a stop may be added or the child may use an existing stop.

Transportation outside the student's primary school of attendance (PSA)

Only students who enroll in a school outside of their primary school of attendance (PSA) will be eligible for transportation services if their enrollment is due to participation in a specific district-required program. The district will determine busing boundaries for the programs. The bus stop may be eliminated if the program has been discontinued or the student moves.

Change of residence

If a student's residence changes during the school year (out of his/her present PSA) and the student wants to remain at the same school, transportation will not be provided. Transportation must be provided by the parent/guardian.

Optional enrollment

Bus service will not be provided to students who live outside their primary school of attendance (PSA) if the child/parent has chosen another school.

Out of district

Transportation will not be provided to students who reside outside of district boundaries unless the student is eligible through the McKinney Vento Act.

Web site

All routes and bus stop times except ASA, Band, Jaws or special education routes are indicated on the district web page at www.tacomaschools.org. Bus routes and times may change. This information is updated twice a week.

Students assigned to a bus stop

All students must be assigned to a bus stop. The stop is determined by the home or daycare address. Sixth- and ninth-graders will be assigned to the closest stop to their home. A student may not depart the bus other than at his or her boarding or alighting place. A request to deliver a student to a different stop, other than his or her regular stop, or ride a different bus is granted only if the student gives the bus driver a note signed by a parent/guardian and the school principal or designee. Such notes are valid for one day only, and may not be obtained on a continuing basis. A note written by a student is not acceptable. Bus drivers shall have a student manifest indicating all eligible bus riders. All students must show the bus driver their student identification upon request. If lost, appropriate identification must be obtained from the school. A

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student cannot board a bus unless his or her name is on the bus driver's manifest. If a student is not on the driver's manifest, the student needs to contact the school bus coordinator. Students are expected to show identification to substitute bus drivers.

Appealing a bus service start or change denial

A parent/guardian may appeal the denial of a Bus Run/Stop Change Request by asking the school Bus Coordinator to fill out an Appeal Request Form and forward it to the Transportation Department. The parent/guardian will be notified of the date, time and place of the Transportation Appeals Board session at which to present views.

RIDING A SCHOOL BUS

School bus routes and stops are planned to provide the safest, most efficient and cost-effective service under all weather and road conditions. Students in the district usually ride 30 to 60 minutes on a bus to school and from school. Riding times may be longer when there are traffic jams, breakdowns or snowy/icy roads.

Riders need to line up early

Students need to be at bus stops no earlier than 10 minutes or later than 5 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time. When students see the bus coming, they need to form a line starting well back from the curb and be ready to board. Buses do not wait for any students not present and buses will not return for late-arriving students.

Riders must board quickly after school

After school, students need to go quickly to their buses, which leave 5-7 minutes after dismissal. If students miss buses, their parents must pick them up. The bus will not return.

Good behavior expected at stops

All students waiting at school bus stops are expected to follow the same rules as those when riding on a school district or Pierce Transit bus.

Students who misbehave, destroy or vandalize personal property at stops may lose their bus riding privileges. Parents will be responsible for any monetary damage caused by their students.

After school activity buses

Students may ride after-school activity buses provided they show the bus driver their student identification. After-school activity buses will drop students off in areas covered by the home to school bus routes. These buses will not travel in areas not normally served. The bus stops will be designated district school sites. These stops are available on the district's Web page. With any inappropriate student behavior, the student will lose after-school activity bus riding privileges for the school year.

Video/Audio cameras on buses

Buses are equipped with video/audio cameras. The purpose of placing these cameras on school buses is to ensure that the student behavior while on the school bus is consistent with the established rules for students riding buses to and from school and after-school activities. Cameras provide additional aid to the bus driver and school district officials in monitoring the conduct of student riders. A camera does not replace the discipline policy, the authority of the driver or the responsibility of school officials. Video monitors will provide district administrators with the ability to take timely and appropriate corrective actions in the event that violations of rules are recorded. On board videotaping is to be conducted for the purpose of promoting bus safety.

Disciplinary action may be taken based on behavior observed on video tape.

GPS (Global Positioning Systems)

All buses are equipped with global positioning systems (GPS). The dispatcher is able to locate a bus, determine if the bus has been to a bus stop and check to make sure the route is on schedule.

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BEHAVIOR RULES ARE SAFEGUARDS

Behavior rules for bus riders help ensure every student has a safe ride to and from school. Classroom behavior is expected on the school bus. Students are expected to follow all rules. Those who choose not to follow the rules may be suspended from riding a bus to or from school. Parents will have to provide transportation. Pierce Transit bus riders must follow the rules and regulations prepared by Pierce Transit. Contact 253-581-8000 for current "Rules of the Road."

Rules of conduct for bus riders

- Full student cooperation is expected with all bus drivers, including substitutes.
- Wait for bus in a line that starts well back from the curb.
- If crossing a street to or from a school bus, cross only in front of the stopped bus when the "stop" paddle is out and red lights are flashing. If at an intersection with a traffic signal, cross on the green light and "WALK" signal.
- Have school identification ready to show the driver when boarding the bus. Give it to the driver any time when asked.
- Get on or off the bus only when it is completely stopped.
- Do not bring on the bus any heavy, sharp, bulky or other items, such as unicycles, scooters or skateboards, that could affect the safety of the bus and riders, or injure a rider, such as sticks, skis or vaulting poles; a breakable container, strap or pin sticking out from clothing, knife, gun, or anything flammable. Keep animals off the bus, except a "service dog."
- Follow the bus driver's direction.
- The bus driver may assign students to a particular seat.
- Sit in only one seat, and do not save a seat for anyone.
- Stay in seat all the time the bus is moving.
- If there is a seat belt, keep it fastened.
- Keep aisles clear.
- Except for ordinary conversation, behave as if in a classroom.
- Treat other people with respect.
- Talk to driver with respect.
- Help keep the bus clean by keeping waste paper off the floor.
- Absolutely NO eating or drinking on the bus.
- Keep tobacco and matches off the bus.
- Open a window only with the driver's okay.
- Keep head, hands or arms inside bus windows.
- Get off the bus only at assigned stop.
- After getting off, do not tamper with the bus.
- Cellular phone use is prohibited if used inappropriately, causing disruption or disturbance to the bus driver or other students.
- No photos or videos of students or driver may be taken without their permission.

A student will be suspended from riding the bus for committing any of the major offenses that follow:

- Defying the bus driver.
- Fighting with another student or the driver.
- Inappropriate dress or stages of undress.
- Student riding an unassigned bus without parental or school permission.
- Exiting at the wrong bus stop without permission from parent and school.
- Not giving name or giving a false name to the driver when asked.
- Not showing his/her student identification (ID) card to the driver when asked.
- Doing anything on the bus that seriously harms anyone's safety.
- Smoking anything.
- Opening an emergency exit or exiting by such an exit or a window.
- Having banned items on the bus: including drugs, alcohol, bullets, explosives, fireworks or weapons.
- Threatening a bomb.

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- Inappropriate displays of affection.
- Bullying or harassment of other students or drivers.
- Throwing anything from the bus.
- Making obscene gestures.
- Speaking profanely or making racial slurs to anyone on the bus.
- Using laser lights.
- Spitting or biting.

DISCIPLINE FOR OFFENSES

All misbehavior on school buses and at bus stops is serious because it can affect students' safety and well-being.

It also can cause hardship for parents/guardians of offending students. If a student is suspended from bus riding, his/her parent/guardian is required by state law to provide transportation for him/her to and from school, because the state requires all students to attend school through the age of 18. The parent/guardian also may reimburse the school district contractor for repairing any damage to a school bus or other property. The student may be banned from riding a school bus or attending school until the district contractor has been paid in full for costs of repairs.

All questions or inquires should be directed to the Bus Service Contractor Discipline Officer with Durham at 253-475-0334.

School administrators may provide alternative discipline in lieu of suspension.

Discipline ranges from warning to expulsion

Major offenses are very serious and the student will be suspended. The length of the suspension will be determined by the severity of the major offense. For each offense, a student receives a School Bus Incident Warning Report, and copies are sent to his/her parent/guardian. Several incident reports will result in suspensions as follows: suspensions will range from three to 30 days or for the remainder of

the school year depending on the offense.

Steps in school bus discipline procedure

Minor offense –

- Verbal warning: The bus driver verbally critiques the student's misbehavior and may contact parent/guardian.
- Written warning: The bus driver verbally critiques the student's misbehavior and fills out an Incident Warning Report and submits it to the Bus Discipline Officer, who reviews it, files it and mails copies to the parent/guardian and school.

Major offense –

- The student will be suspended.
- The bus driver completes an incident report. A suspension report is mailed to parent/guardian and school.
- Suspension: Student is not allowed to ride any district bus for a time period, including after school activities buses..
- Parents may be contacted by the driver or the discipline officer to discuss your child's behavior.

School Bus Discipline Procedures

1. Incident Warning Report. Completed by bus driver. Durham mails report to parent, school, district transportation office.
2. Bus Discipline Suspension Report. Durham mails report to parent, school, district transportation office.

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EMERGENCY BUS ROUTE INFORMATION

The possibility of ice and snow conditions during the school year requires the district to be prepared to modify its normal transportation operating procedures. Snow may accumulate in one area and not in other areas. Circumstances in the entire city are carefully considered as well as weather reports as factors in determining whether to close school or operate late.

Transportation may be limited due to road conditions. When snow and ice conditions are present, certain roads and bus stop locations cannot be utilized in the interest of safety. The Transportation Department has designed emergency routes in an effort to avoid areas where hazardous road conditions exist. Students must catch the bus at an alternative stop. These emergency stops are located on main arterials. Buses will not travel on side streets when emergency stops are in effect. Students are returned after school to the emergency bus stop regardless of changes in the weather. It is the responsibility of families to know where the alternative bus stop is located. Emergency bus stops may be in effect when school starts on the regular scheduled time or in the case when the district is starting late. The announcement will be made on the radio and television. If it is declared that the Tacoma School district will be running two hours late, add two hours from the posted pick-up time on the emergency stop. For instance, if the emergency stop at 96th/Hosmer indicates a pick up time of 8:30 a.m. and the district announces a two-hour delay, then the pick-up time will be 10:30 a.m. Emergency stops are indicated on the district Web site at www.tacomaschools.org. Please locate our school and the available stops will be indicated. If you have a question about emergency bus routes, contact the Transportation Department at 253-571-1853.

Door-to-door service for special education students will continue providing the bus is able to make the home stop. If unable to make the stop, your bus

driver will provide you with information regarding where your stop will be located due to inclement weather conditions. You may contact the Special Education Transportation Department at 253-571-1855.

Each family needs a plan to provide care and transportation for students in case snowy/icy weather creates unsafe roads and alters bus schedules and routes.

Changes in school district operating hours or bus service are announced on the district "night line" at 253-571-1000, on the district Web site at www.tacomaschools.org and on local news radio stations and TV channels that follow. Updates may be made during the day and evening. Families may be notified by a recorded telephone call from the district's messaging system.

For additional information about emergency bus routes, see the "School Closures" section of this handbook.