

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

POLICY PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to provide transportation for students that are not within walking distance of the school and those that are within the walking distance that do not have a walking route meeting an acceptable level of safety. This policy is applicable to all students for whom bus transportation is provided by the Board of Education of Queen Anne's County. This policy does not apply to students needing special transportation. Transportation for students needing special transportation services will be provided in accordance with the individual needs of the student subject to availability of funding.

Parents and school system staff are expected to promote safe walking practices, safe behavior at a bus stop, and safe behavior on the bus. Parental assistance may be needed on those days when inclement weather makes walking to and from school or school bus stops difficult.

School bus service will be provided consistent with distance eligibility criteria or exceptions granted for walking conditions not meeting an acceptable level of safety.

When considering the need for and/or implementing school bus service, the staff shall consider:

- * Acceptable levels of safety
- * Program efficiency
- * Economy of operations

Providing an acceptable level of safety shall be the major staff consideration.

I. Eligibility for transportation, establishing bus stops, and determining walking routes:

A. Walking to and from school

1. Students living within the following distance will be expected to walk to and from school:
 - a. Grades 6 - 12: - 1.5 miles
 - b. Grades Pre-K -5: - 1.0 mile, pre-kindergarten at mid-day .5 mile
2. Walking to and from a bus stop - Students may be expected to walk up to 1.5 miles (grades 6 - 12) and 1.0 miles (grades Pre-K - 5) to and from a bus stop.

Note: Current practice requires the presence of sidewalks for walking distances to be enforced. Therefore, Queen Anne's County High School is the only school in the county that has walking zone distances in effect. A Safe Routes to School grant is being pursued to provide more sidewalks. Whether the application is successful or not should be known in the near future.

B. Authorized School Bus Passengers

1. Other than the eligible students, those who are legally entitled to ride school buses are school bus company officials, drivers, and designated employees specified for supervision of pupils by the Director of Operations.
2. Parents or other adults who are designated by the school principal as chaperones may ride on the bus while on educational field trips.

C. Establishing Bus Stops

1. School bus stops will be established considering safety and economic reasons and will be at least two (2) city blocks apart. This is equal to approximately 2/10 of a mile. Some stops may be closer than 2/10 mile apart because of safety reasons.
2. Stops may be established on both sides of a roadway when sight distance and traffic conditions warrant such coverage.
3. Buses shall be assigned to operate on paved roads only. When it is necessary for buses to be routed over private roads, written permission from the property owner shall be obtained. If it is necessary for the bus to back, a safe adequate turning place must be available. Buses shall not back in heavily populated areas. Bus stops shall be located at points where vision is unobstructed in both directions for at least 300 feet and where room is available for children to stand off the traveled portion of the road while waiting. To provide minimum obstruction to traffic flow and minimum time to complete the run, where possible, stops shall be designated at least one-quarter mile apart. One a.m. and one p.m. stop location shall be allowed for each transported student. Exceptions will be made only in case of an emergency or when extenuating circumstances exist. This shall be approved by the Principal. Pupils shall be expected to walk up to the same distance to the school vehicle stop as pupils residing in non-transported areas are required to walk to their respective schools. When a child resides one-half mile or more from an existing stop, a closer stop shall be established if it can be done without backing the bus to turn around.

D. Measuring Distance

1. The most direct route meeting an acceptable level of safety will be utilized in measuring walking distances to and from school, or to and from a school bus stop.
2. Residence - The bona fide residence of the parent/guardian will be used to determine eligibility for transportation with the following exception:
 - a. A baby sitter's home or day care facility may be used to determine transportation eligibility if all of the following are met:
 - (1) The bona fide residence of the pupil meets the distance eligibility requirement.
 - (2) The baby sitter or day care facility is located on a scheduled school bus route.

- (3) The baby sitter or day care facility meets distance eligibility requirements.
- (4) The transportation request does not involve a different bus in the a.m. than the p.m. bus. (Except noontime pre-kindergarten)

3. Measuring point for all students:

- a. Detached homes - Measurement will be from the residence property line to the front door of the school (the front door is defined as where the school bus picks up and discharges students).
- b. Apartment complexes, condominiums and town houses - Measurement will be from the town house, apartment or condominium unit entrance to the front door of the school.

E. Suitable pathways and walking routes

1. Road shoulder, pathway, right-of-way, sidewalk or other surface which pupils can walk without being required to step on the portion of the road used by vehicles except:
 - a. Residential Street in a community with little or no transient traffic.
 - b. Roads/streets with speed limits less than 40 miles per hour.
2. An exceptional condition may exist in the following cases:
 - a. When students are required to walk more than 1/4 mile along a road having a posted speed limit of 45 miles per hour or more.
 - b. When students are required to walk across a roadway involving a safety hazard.
 - c. When students are required to walk across an active high-speed, at-grade railroad crossing, bridge, or overpass, or through a tunnel, having inadequate walkways.

F. Distance Criteria for Walking

1. Distance criteria will be adhered to concerning walking to a bus stop or when determining eligibility for school bus service provided that traffic and/or walking conditions meet an acceptable level of safety and/or conditions permit safe bus operations.
2. Some students may be required to walk to a bus stop or to school in excess of the stated distance. Examples include:
 - a. Limited bus access (bus stop placement)
 - b. Measuring criteria (to front door of the school)
3. Other students may be provided with bus service although they reside in the "walking" area. Examples include:
 - a. Approved medical/physical exemptions
 - b. Temporary construction activity

II. Requests for re-evaluation of a walking route may be made to the Director of Operations.

III. Selection of School Bus Companies

- A. School bus services for the Board of Education of Queen Anne's County are currently being provided by three Limited Liability Companies (LLC) and one independent company.
- B. The recruiting, processing, and screening of LLC members and substitutes shall be the responsibility of the companies. All training of bus drivers shall be the responsibility of the Board of Education employees who are MSDE certified bus driver trainers. Proof that Federal, State, and Local certification regulations are met must be on file in the Transportation Office prior to any member or substitute transporting Queen Anne's County students.

IV. Appeals of the decisions made by the Director of Operations may be directed in writing to the Superintendent of Schools.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

COMAR 13.A.06.07

Section 7-601, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland Section 7-606, Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland

Approved: X Proposed: