
Purpose / Background

School bus transportation from home to school and back must comply with provincial statutes and regulations. The Board believes that the responsibility for providing safe and reliable student transportation is shared by employees, school bus contractors and their employees, parents, and students. The school bus is considered an extension of the school; therefore, school administration, parents and passengers have active roles to support student management on school buses.

Planning and operation of the student transportation system will consider, but not be limited to, safety, financial sustainability, efficiency, school attendance area boundaries, potential traffic hazards, and other infrastructures concerns.

Current provisions under the Alberta Commercial Vehicle Safety Regulation require that regular school routes can only be completed with a vehicle that is compliant to Canadian Standards Association D250.

GUIDELINES

1. Eligibility and service levels are defined as per Board Policy 17 – Student Transportation.
2. Student transportation will be provided to students who have been registered by the guardians to access the service and upon payment of the applicable fees to RVS for busing.
3. Service for Urban Passengers (Authorized passengers who reside within the City of Airdrie, the Town of Cochrane, the City of Chestermere, or the Hamlet of Langdon.)
 - 3.1 Bus stops serving authorized passengers for a specific school shall be located no closer to the school than 2.0 kilometres, excepting those schools housing grades 6 or lower students for which bus stops serving authorized passengers shall be located no closer to the school than 1.5 kilometres.
 - 3.2 The walk distance to a bus stop is typically 1.2 kilometres for students enrolled in grades 7 – 12 and typically 0.4 kilometres for students enrolled in grades K – 6.
4. Service for Rural Municipal Passengers (Authorized passengers who reside within a town, village, or hamlet excepting the City of Airdrie, the Town of Cochrane, the City of Chestermere, or the Hamlet of Langdon.)
 - 4.1 Bus service in these municipalities shall be provided if the distance from the residence to the school is more than 2.4 kilometres, excepting those schools housing elementary students for which bus service shall be provided if the distance from the residence to the school is more than 1.5 kilometres.
 - 4.2 Bus stops serving authorized passengers for a specific school shall be located no closer to the school than 2.0 kilometres, excepting those schools housing elementary students for which bus stops serving authorized passengers shall be located no closer to the school than 1.5 kilometres.
 - 4.3 Distance between bus stops shall be approximately 0.8 kilometres.
5. Service for Rural Passengers (Authorized Passengers who do not reside in a city, town, village or hamlet.)
 - 5.1 Bus service is provided at the mouth of a cul-de-sac for students whose residence is 0.8 kilometres or less from the road(s) on which the bus has been designated to travel.

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- 5.2 On road(s) that a school bus travels, bus stops shall be spaced at intervals of approximately 0.8 kilometres except if Clause 5.3 of this procedure applies.
 - 5.3 Exceptions to clauses 5.1 or 5.2 of this procedure may be granted by the Transportation Safety Coordinator, RVS Transportation Department and Contractor personnel.
 6. School buses are limited to public roadways and shall only enter onto private property when authorized by the Senior Manager of Transportation, provided the property has been assessed by the Transportation Safety Coordinator, considering the following:
 - 6.1 A student as identified by the Director of Learning Supports as requiring specialized or enhanced transportation services;
 - 6.2 For safety; or
 - 6.3 To facilitate routing efficiency.
 - 6.4 If authorization of private property pick-up is granted the ongoing requirements of the property owner is the completion of a Private Property Access Agreement (RVS AF5500E) to enter onto the property with a school bus, and the driveway or private road(s) is maintained to allow unimpeded and safe access for the school bus.
 7. Transportation may be provided to an alternate location other than the primary registered address and the school. Requests must be made at the time of registration and will be provided if the alternate location is within the school attendance area of the student's designated school and there is space available on the route requested.
 - 7.1 Service arrangements are valid for the applicable school year only and must be applied for on an annual basis and may not be available year to year.
 8. Families who require a second bus stop location in addition to their regular service may apply for a secondary stop by completing an application (Request for Secondary Transportation Stop AF5105-E) and remitting the required fees.
 - 8.1 Service to an alternate location is in addition to the service between the student's residence and the designated school.
 - 8.2 The secondary address must be located within the school's attendance boundary, in excess for 1.5 km for K-6 schools or 2.0 km for Grades 7-12.
 - 8.3 Addition of secondary stops is subject to availability of space on the second route and route scheduling.
 - 8.4 Service from more than two locations will not be provided.
 9. The Transportation Department sets the location for bus stops and bus routes in consultation with the RVS Transportation Safety Coordinator and the school bus contractors. All bus stop locations are audited for safety by the Transportation Safety Coordinator with the audit evaluation criteria based on the Alberta Highway Geometric Design Guide.
 - 9.1 When assigning urban or rural municipal students to stops, transportation coordinators will prioritize assignments to existing RVS bus stops.
 - 9.2 When it can be demonstrated that a bus stop location assigned by the Department is unsafe, a guardian may request that the stop be relocated through a change request.
 - 9.3 Bus Drivers have no authority to grant bus stop changes. All requests to modify stops must be submitted to the Department in the manner designated by the Transportation Department.
 - 9.4 Modifications to routes must be approved by the Senior Manager of Transportation.

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10. Exceptions to the limits of service outlined may be made by the Senior Manager of Transportation for students identified by the Director of Learning Supports as requiring customized or enhanced and designated school transportation services.
 11. Exception routes to schools from outside the school's designated attendance boundary must be approved by the Board.
 12. Appeals of decisions made by Transportation Department staff need to follow the process described in AP152 – Dispute Resolution.
 13. Transportation services authorized by RVS may include school buses and parent-provided transportation. Parent-provided transportation may be authorized for reimbursement at standard rates set by RVS only if the Transportation Department is unable to provide school bus service to an eligible student.
 14. The Senior Manager of Transportation is responsible for the supervision and direction of transportation services in accordance with RVS Board Policy 17 – Student Transportation and provincial legislation, including the transportation of students under contracted services to other School Divisions.
 15. School Administrators must assign school-based staff to supervise school bus queues during unloading and loading of students and must provide incident follow-up support for bus drivers and address student management issues reported.
 16. Parents and guardians are responsible for:
 - 16.1 Completing annual registrations for transportation services for their eligible students and children for each new school year.
 - 16.2 Maintaining familiarity with AP350 Student Code of Conduct as well as the School Bus Expectations (these rules are acknowledged by the parent or guardian during registration process).
 - 16.3 Ensuring that their student(s) or child(ren) understand and obey the AP350 Student Code of Conduct and the School Bus Expectations.
 - 16.4 Ensuring that their student(s) or children arrive at and depart from the assigned bus stop safely.
 - 16.5 Dressing their students or children appropriately for the weather conditions potentially occurring during the school day.
 - 16.6 Ensuring that if their students have a health condition requiring the administration of medication, the student carries the medication and understands what to do if they need to use the medication.
 - 16.7 Having their students be punctual and arrive at the bus stop five minutes prior to the scheduled stop time.
 - 16.8 Ensuring that their students are respectful of property owners and refrain from using private property to congregate near a bus stop.
 - 16.9 Acquiring a bus-pass and encouraging the student to scan the pass whenever entering or leaving the bus.
 - 16.10 Establishing contingency plans with the student to address situations such as:
 - 16.10.1 Late bus arrival or the bus does not arrive.
 - 16.10.2 No one is home.
 - 16.10.3 There is an emergency school closure.
 - 16.11 Reimbursement for any willful damage caused by their student while riding to and from school.

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- 16.12 Notifying the Transportation Department about any changes to the student transportation information.
17. Students are responsible for:
- 17.1 Maintaining appropriate conduct and behaviour in accordance with AP350 Student Code of Conduct AP350 and following the School Bus Expectations. Arriving at their bus stop five minutes prior to scheduled departure time.
 - 17.2 Assembling at bus stops in an orderly fashion and respecting the property of others.
 - 17.3 Dressing appropriately for weather conditions.
 - 17.4 Scanning their assigned bus pass when entering or leaving the school bus.
 - 17.5 Sitting properly in their assigned seat and observing the directions of the bus driver.
 - 17.6 Having their belongings organized and properly secured prior to boarding or disembarking, to facilitate safe and orderly loading of school buses.
 - 17.7 Observing school bus rules and refraining from bringing restricted items on the bus.
18. Students that disregard bus expectations may subject to loss of riding privileges, suspension from the bus or other disciplinary action as documented in AP350. Students must not bring on any item prohibited from being taken on a school bus. This list can be found on the Transportation Department's website. The driver has the right to refuse items that cannot be secured properly within the bus. Additionally, the busing contractor may impose other item restrictions and should be contacted directly if there is doubt about admissibility.
19. The Transportation Department is responsible for the collection of fees established by the Board of trustees as per Policy 17 Student Transportation and any refunds associated in accordance with the terms of Section 9 of AP5105 (Fees).
- 19.1 Fees are paid to RVS online during the registration process or in person at the Transportation Service Counter at the Educations Centre.
 - 19.2 A minimum payment of 50 percent of applicable transportation fees is due at the time of registration. Applications for transportation service registered after January 15th will be charged only for second semester fees.
 - 19.3 Families that are unable to pay busing fees prior to the first day of service may make payment arrangements directly with the Department.
 - 19.4 Guardians and independent students may apply to have transportation fees waived if they qualify under the RVS waiver process.
 - 19.5 A Transportation Fee Waiver form must be accompanied by a copy of the applicant's Goods and Services Tax (GST) credit notice from the previous year with the names of the dependent children listed to have their fees waived. Only the guardian claiming the student(s) as dependent(s) can apply for the waiver.
 - 19.6 Approved waivers are valid only for one school year; eligible applicants must complete new waiver requests for each school year.
 - 19.7 Transportation fees may also be waived in part or in total if the guardian or independent student submits a Transportation Fee Waiver Form with supporting documentation and must be approved by an RVS Area Director of Schools and/or the Senior Manager of Transportation.
 - 19.8 Deadlines for fee waiver applications will be posted with the Transportation Fees structure on the RVS website.
 - 19.9 At least two notifications will be sent to individuals with unpaid transportation services or other transportation-related invoices prior to directing the receivable to collection action.

- 19.10 Transportation fees will be refunded in full if service is cancelled by October 31st of the current term. Fees will be 50% refunded if service is cancelled prior to the first day of the second semester. RVS does not issue prorated refunds for transportation service cancellations after second semester.
20. Route monitoring employs the WheresTheBus™ tablets and software and relies on global positioning systems (GPS) to enable tracking of buses by RVS staff and contractors. This system also collects bus pass scan information in near real-time for monitoring attendance on buses and helping locate students.
21. Bus video surveillance systems are operational on all buses servicing RVS routes. The Senior Manager of Transportation can access portable hard drives from the surveillance systems to view images and sounds relating to student management and other bus issues. Accessing video is regulated under the Freedom of Information Act and subject to the conditions of AP140 (Responsible Use of Technology), AP180 (Request to Access Personal Information) and AP181 (Closed Circuit Video Surveillance).
22. Reports of improper conduct of a bus operator shall be made to the Senior Manager of Transportation. These reports shall be investigated by the Senior Manager of Transportation as appropriate. As part of this investigation, a school administrator may be requested to gather information through interviews with students and/or parents.

References

- Education Act Sections 33, 52, 53, 68, 85, 188, 196, 197, 204, 222, 225, 229.
- Traffic Safety Act
- Commercial Vehicle Safety Regulation 121/2009
- School Transportation Regulation 96/2019
- Use of Highway and Rules of the Road Regulation 304/2002
- Vehicle Equipment Regulation 122/2009
- Canadian Standards Association (CSA) D250, 2021
- BP17 Student Transportation Policy
- AF5500-A Application for Bus Service
- AF5500-B Special Transportation Review
- AF5500-C Transportation Parent Concern
- AF5500-D International Education School Bus Service
- AF5105-E Request for Secondary Stop
- AF5105-F Fee Waiver Application
- Transportation Handbook for Contractor Operators
- Alberta Highway Geometric Design Guide