

POLICY BOARD OF EDUCATION OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Related Entries:	EEA-RA, EBH-RA, JEE, JEE-RA, JFA-RA, KLA
Related Sources:	<i>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.</i>
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.

Policy History: Adopted by Resolution No. 89-78, February 13, 1978; amended by Resolution No. 219-78, March 14, 1978, Resolution No. 718-78, October 10, 1978, and Resolution No. 725-79, August 20, 1979; amended by Resolution No. 403-84, July 23, 1984; reformatted in accordance with Resolution No. 333-86, June 12, 1986, and Resolution No. 438-86, August 12, 1986, and accepted by Resolution No. 147-87, February 25, 1987; amended by Resolution No. 284-97, May 13, 1997; amended by Resolution No. 616-01, November 13, 2001; amended by Resolution No. 252-08, June 23, 2008.