

REGULATION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: EBH-RA, EBI-EA, EEA, EEB-RA, EKB-RA, IPD-RA, JEE, JEE-RA, JHC, JHC-RA, JHC-EA

Responsible Office: Supportive Services
School Support Operations

Transportation of Students

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for transporting students attending public or nonpublic schools, determining safe walking conditions, providing for the safety of school bus riders, reporting disciplinary problems and denying bus riding privileges, arranging transportation of students with disabilities to private schools and providing transportation for special and alternative education pupils, scheduling and routing MCPS buses, determining traffic controls needed in school areas, using buses for field trips or athletic events, reporting child abuse and neglect, and reporting a bus accident.

II. PROCEDURES

The director of the Division of Transportation is responsible for school bus transportation and works with police and other public officials who are charged with student pedestrian safety and control. The associate superintendent for supporting services, director of the department of school support operations, principal, and director of transportation share the responsibility for making decisions relative to the operation of buses and the safety of students.

A. Students Attending Public or Nonpublic Schools

1. Transportation is provided for regular education, special/magnet programs, alternative programs and special education programs as required by the policies of the Board of Education. In the case of regular education, neighborhood bus stops are arranged consistent with safety and the walking distances as established by the Board of Education. In the case of special and magnet programs, centralized bus stops (usually at neighborhood elementary schools) are established consistent with the program authorization of the special and/or magnet program. Similarly, bus stops are established for those alternative programs authorized for

transportation. In the case of special education, bus stops at students' residences are established consistent with the student's Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.).

2. The following factors shall be considered in determining the demarcation line for transportation eligibility.
 - a) In applying the walking distance factor, the line will be drawn as near as possible to coincide with commonly recognized breaks in the pattern of homes, such as street intersections, streams, parks, walking easements, commercial property, vacant land, unusual contour variations, and other features.
 - b) In communities where the pattern of streets includes unusual characteristics, such as long blocks with no clear-cut breaks and few, if any, of the features above to apply, the line will be drawn to minimize, to the extent possible, the dividing of a block of homes that face a given street.
 - c) If there are no recognized breaks and if the inclusion of an entire block under b) above would result in recognized inequity in the level of service provided to students within a community, a line will be established between adjacent residences that, in the judgment of the director of the Division of Transportation, is most equitable in relation to the location of the line in the rest of the area.
 - d) In establishing the demarcation line, the director of transportation, as the superintendent designee, may vary the base adopted distance factor by plus or minus .1 miles.

B. Students with Disabilities to Private Schools

According to the following criteria, financial aid for transportation is provided to parents of students for whom placement in a private school and payment of tuition have been approved by the State Department of Education. MCPS Form 336-44: *Application for Reimbursement of Transportation Expenses* is submitted by eligible parents to the director of transportation.

1. Daily transportation within a 75 mile radius may be provided using the Shady Grove depot as the hub. (Exceptions require approval by the state supervisor for student transportation.)

2. Parents of students who are in residential placement in a location beyond the 75 mile limit are *eligible* for reimbursement for the cost of four round trips each school year. The reimbursement is made for the actual cost of transportation or the cost for tourist air fare, whichever is less.
3. Special transportation arrangements that are negotiated and approved by the director of transportation are temporary and will be discontinued if public school transportation can be arranged later.
4. In no case is reimbursement made to eligible parents of students for daily transportation until MCPS Form 336-44: *Application for Reimbursement of Transportation Expenses* showing the number of days the student attended school is signed by the principal of the private school and forwarded to the director of transportation. The director of transportation will ensure that reasonable economy is achieved in effecting the transportation by instituting the following arrangements.
 - a) The mileage allowance is established by the Board of Education for students who are entitled to daily transportation.
 - b) When an MCPS school bus is unavailable, the Division of Transportation shall approve contracts for bus service or taxi service, or reimbursement shall be made to each parent at the approved-per-mile rate, or that parent's share of the contract cost, whichever is the lesser amount.
 - c) Parents are expected, where possible, to form car pools so that several students may be transported at the approved-per-mile rate.
5. All transportation arrangements will include provision for public liability insurance coverage by the owner(s) of vehicles used.
6. Payment for travel by automobile is not made in advance.
7. It is the responsibility of parents to get students to and from the bus stop when the private school provides bus service and charges parents.
8. Financial arrangements for air travel may be made in advance and should be processed through the Division of Transportation Special Education section.
9. Financial support is not available for transportation to summer school.

10. Students who attend the Maryland School for the Blind and the Maryland School for the Deaf will have transportation available to and from their home area on weekends. Pickup and discharge points will be determined by staff in the Division of Transportation. MCPS buses will be used if possible. This transportation will be scheduled at times that do not interfere with regular morning and afternoon runs.
11. All inquiries relative to the program, as well as requests for reimbursement or other matters, are to be directed to the director, Division of Transportation.

C. Regular Education Students on Special Education Buses

1. Under certain circumstances, regular education students are permitted to ride special education buses on a space available basis only. However, special education students have first priority for transportation on special education buses.
2. Regular education students may not ride a special education bus unless they have approval of the Division of Transportation. Normally, regular education students who transfer from their home school to another school will not be permitted to ride special education buses. Special education students and their siblings may be transported to the same school.
3. If a regular education student is required to meet a special education bus at an existing special education bus stop, parents may be required to:
 - a) Provide transportation to and from the stop
 - b) Provide supervision for the children until the bus arrives in the morning and meet the bus in the afternoon
4. If special education routes are modified during the school year, it may become necessary for a regular education student to meet a special education bus at a different location. In some cases the transportation may no longer be available.
5. Regular education students will not generally be transported on special education buses serving seriously emotionally disturbed and autistic students (unless authorized by both the Department of Special Education and the Division of Transportation).
6. The Department of Special Education will provide a list of program locations in Item 5 to the Division of Transportation annually by July 1.

- D. Special Transportation Providers or Services for Transportation of Special Programs including Alternative Programs
1. The transportation staff will attempt to the fullest extent possible to arrange for all transportation, including special education students, by using MCPS-owned vehicles. When it becomes apparent that the level of transportation services cannot be provided with MCPS equipment, the director of the Division of Transportation will consider the use of commercial transportation or vehicles available from commercial or noncommercial organizations and direct reimbursement to the parents or other individuals to accomplish the necessary transportation. When the cost of the transportation exceeds the normal cost of transporting special education students, the director of the Division of Transportation will develop for the director of school support operations the necessary information with possible alternatives. In unusual circumstances when costs are excessive, the associate superintendent will consult with the deputy superintendent and chief financial officer.
 2. Because of unusual requirements of some students, it may be necessary to contract for their transportation. If this is the case:
 - a) A student will be eligible for this type of service only when routing of an MCPS bus to serve him/her would result in major inconvenience to students regularly assigned to the bus and/or when the cost of providing such service on an MCPS bus would be greater than contracting for transportation and/or when it would not be reasonable to expect parents to accompany the student to a stop on an existing bus route
 - b) In arranging for special transportation, the director of the Division of Transportation will consult, as appropriate, the staff of the Department of Special Education to ensure maximum coordination of efforts in meeting the need
 - c) Contracts with a firm or individual to provide special transportation facilities will be negotiated and approved by the director of transportation who will ensure that:
 - (1) A proper level of insurance is provided
 - (2) Reasonable training, certification, and safety conditions will prevail
 - (3) The charge is reasonable

- (4) Requirements for state reimbursements are met
 - d) Special transportation will be arranged with the understanding that if MCPS bus service can be made available at a future date, the contracted service will be terminated.
 - e) Any exception to these procedures must be approved by the director of the Department of School Support Operations.
- E. School Use of Buses for Field Trips or Athletic Events (See MCPS Regulation IPD-RA: *Travel Study Programs and Class and Student Organization Trips.*)
- 1. Availability of Buses
 - a) Field Trips
 - (1) MCPS buses are available for field trips during the hours that do not conflict or interfere with the regularly scheduled runs. Adequate travel time must be allowed for the trip to assure the return of the bus for the regular run.
 - (2) Available MCPS buses can be assigned for a field trip on a nonschool day if the total round trip mileage is less than 150 miles.
 - (3) On days when buses are reserved for large scale musical activities, safety patrol picnic, and so on, the number of MCPS buses available for field trips will be limited. Information concerning these activities will be included in an advisory memorandum to all principals listing the dates affected. On those dates, buses will be assigned for field trips as requests are received by the Division of Transportation on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - (4) A preferred route will be attached to the trip ticket before it is forwarded to the Division of Transportation field trip coordinators for approval.
 - b) Athletics
 - (1) Schools may use MCPS buses to transport teams to interschool games for the approved athletic activities. MCPS buses also may

be used for approved night and Saturday games. In all instances, only participants, cheerleaders, and coaches or designated faculty chaperones shall be transported. Parents and spectators will need to provide their own means of transportation.

- (2) MCPS buses may not normally be used for out-of-county athletic events on a school day before 4:15 p.m.
- (3) Transportation to and from after-school athletic events cannot be provided between the hours 1:45 p.m. and 4:15 p.m. Buses are available following the second tier elementary school dismissals. For evening and Saturday athletic events, teams should be ready to board buses at the time designated on the trip ticket.

2. Requesting Bus Services

- a) Bus service is requested by submitting all copies of MCPS Form 215-1: *Field Trip Ticket* to the field trip coordinator ten days in advance of the date of the trip with a preferred route of travel attached.
- b) The original and two copies are returned to the school after approval of the request for bus service for a field trip.
- c) The teacher/chaperone presents the original and two copies of MCPS Form 215-1 to the bus operator at the time of the field trip. All bus operators are instructed not to transport students on a field trip without the Field Trip Ticket. This form is the bus operator's written authorization to be on the road.

3. Cancellation or Postponement of Trip

- a) On a day when school opening is delayed because of inclement weather, transportation will be provided for only those field trips scheduled to begin at 11 a.m. or later (if road conditions permit – as determined by the director of the Division of Transportation).
- b) On a day when schools are closed or when schools are dismissed early because of inclement weather, transportation will not be provided for field trips.

- c) When a field trip must be postponed for any reason, the trip may be rescheduled on the first available date mutually agreeable to both the principal and the director of the Division of Transportation. A new MCPS Form 215-1: *Field Trip Ticket* must be submitted. In these situations the user will not be required to submit the Field Trip Ticket ten days prior to the day of the field trip.
- d) If a trip is canceled or postponed, for a reason other than inclement weather, and the principal fails to notify the director of the Division of Transportation in time to notify the bus operator, the school is responsible for the amount due the bus operator for reporting to the school to make the trip.
- e) If an activity is canceled because of inclement weather or for other reasons, field trip coordinators will make certain that charges are not made for services on that particular day.

F. Responsibility for Students

1. Bus Operator

The bus operator is responsible for the supervision of students while being transported to and from school. For student safety, post-trip inspections must be performed by the operator and attendant, if assigned, after each run segment, field trip and before returning to the depot to ensure students are not left unattended on the bus.

2. Principal

The principal is responsible for:

- a) Providing classroom instruction of safety rules for school bus riders
- b) Maintaining accurate records of students transported at public expense including an up-to-date listing of names of students authorized to ride on each bus identified by destination, route, and/or area served (The listing should include the following information for each student: name, home address and telephone number, grade, route identification, and date the information is recorded)

- c) Ensuring that school loading zones are adequately supervised (Bus riders should not be permitted to move toward the bus at school loading zones until the bus has been brought to a complete stop.)
- d) Enforcing safe traffic regulations on school property
- e) Reporting under/overloading and any other unsafe practice to the Division of Transportation

G. Report of Disciplinary Problems

1. Bus Operator

Using MCPS Form 555-3: *School Bus Operator Disciplinary Report*, the bus operator notifies the principal of details pertaining to a disciplinary problem with a student on the school bus. If action taken by the school does not resolve the disciplinary problems, the operator contacts the appropriate transportation supervisor.

2. Principal

The principal is responsible for:

- a) Reviewing the information submitted by the bus operator concerning a disciplinary problem
- b) Determining the action necessary
- c) Completing the appropriate section of MCPS Form 555-3, indicating the action taken and forwarding copies to the transportation supervisor and the bus operator
- d) Assuring that any denial of riding privileges to a student is in accordance with Section II. D. below, Denial of Bus Riding Privileges

H. Denial of Bus Riding Privileges

- 1. 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.

- a) 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.
 - b) 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, the Division of Transportation, and appropriate director in the Office of School Administration (OSA)
2. 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 transportation supervisor. The principal will notify the bus operator in writing of the reinstatement of the student's riding privileges.

I. Accounting for Use of Bus

1. The Board of Education periodically sets the fee schedule for public school field trips and use of buses by other public agency programs. The schedule includes operational and bus operator costs. Refer to the *Field Trip Procedures Manual* for schedule details.
2. School Use for Field Trips and Athletics
 - a) Schools are required to pay for any field trips that are not financed from the MCPS operating budget. Schools collect the charges from the students and send one check to the Division of Accounting. (See Item c) below.)
 - b) Payment for trips is made upon receipt of an invoice from the Division of Accounting. All checks are made payable to the Montgomery County Public Schools and sent to the Division of Accounting.
 - c) Charges are at a rate established by the Board of Education and shall include a charge for ten miles of deadhead mileage associated with each trip.
 - d) Gassing and waiting time will be charged for trips on school days that begin at least 30 minutes after the bus operator's normal morning hours and/or trips that end at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the operator's normal

afternoon schedule. When athletic or other trips are divided into two separate time frames, gassing and waiting time will be charged for each segment of the trip. Therefore, the actual charges for each segment will be one-half hour gassing and waiting time plus the actual trip time. If specific pickup or return times are designated on the trip ticket, bus operators will not return until the designated time.

- e) Gassing and waiting time shall not be charged for activity trips.
- f) One hour gassing and waiting time is allowed for evening trips that begin after 4:30 p.m. and trips on nonschool days.
- g) Bus operators list on the trip ticket the actual time of departure from the school and the actual time of return to the school. Gassing and waiting time is listed in the designated place on MCPS Form 215-1.
- h) If a field trip is a tour, all sites visited are listed on the trip ticket form.

3. Nonschool Use of Buses

Nonschool use of buses by government organizations (Montgomery County, the City of Rockville, the City of Gaithersburg, etc.) and/or educationally related non-profit organizations as approved by the director of transportation, are billed by the Division of Transportation at the Board of Education approved field trip rate and per mile operational costs.

4. Responsibility for Students

- a) It shall be mandatory for a faculty member from the school group or a chaperone authorized by the principal to be on board each bus used for all trips made on MCPS buses. A bus operator is not authorized to begin a trip without a faculty member or an authorized chaperone on board the bus. Principals, teachers, chaperones, and coaches are requested to work closely with the Division of Transportation and to inform the field trip coordinator of any problems that arise. Any irregularity or failure to comply with the provisions of the transportation request should be reported immediately to the director of the Division of Transportation.
- b) The faculty member sponsoring the chaperoning of the trip is responsible for:

- (1) Preparing a listing, with a copy to the principal, of the names of students participating in the trip
- (2) Ensuring that students obey all rules applicable to students on regular runs
- (3) Ensuring that children of preschool age do not accompany parents when the parents serve as chaperones
- (4) Preventing students from eating and drinking while the bus is in motion.

When it is necessary to take lunch on a trip, arrangements are made to leave the bus to eat unless weather conditions require students to eat on the bus. This decision will be made by the teacher in charge of the trip. In this situation, the bus must be stopped during the time the students are eating. The teacher in charge is responsible for seeing that the bus is cleaned after the students finish eating and before the trip is resumed.

- (5) Advising students that, for safety reasons, unprotected glass objects are not to be taken on the bus
- (6) Keeping the aisle on the bus and access to the emergency door clear at all times (A truck from the Division of Supply Management should be requested when there is need to move cumbersome equipment.)
- (7) Immediately notifying the principal by telephone in the event of an accident (See item M. below.)
- (8) Notifying the school and transportation office of any situation that will cause a change in plans
- (9) Urging the students to keep the bus clean and not to deposit debris during the field trip
- (10) Controlling the deportment and discipline of the students for the duration of the trip

- (11) Notifying the school principal before returning if a student is missing
- (12) Complying with the time schedule as stated on the trip ticket

J. Scheduling and Routing MCPS Buses

The director of the Division of Transportation is responsible for establishing routes for school buses and the stops for loading and unloading students. Bus schedules for the late opening or early dismissal of schools are outlined in the annual inclement weather plan.

1. Extension of Bus Route

After bus routes have been established, regular pickup points will be used to determine walking distances. Routes will not be extended unless the walking distance from the home to an established bus stop is greater than one mile for elementary school students, one and one-half miles for middle school students, and two miles for senior high school students, and only if the following factors prevail:

- a) The road and bridges en route will carry the weight of the bus (Weight limits will be obtained from the county and state highway departments.)
- b) The turns from the existing route and entrance back onto the existing route can be made safely
- c) If the bus must turn around, a safe and adequate turning place is available
- d) The distance factors above may be modified only if safety or other conditions warrant

2. Elimination of Bus Service

- a) Each transportation supervisor will prepare a report indicating recommended changes to the director of transportation. The director of transportation will review the reports with the director of school support operations. The director of school support operations will transmit the report, with any recommended changes, to the associate superintendent for supportive services.

- b) Each proposed change in this type of transportation service that is approved by the associate superintendent for supportive service will be brought to the attention of the principal by the transportation supervisor. The principal, in cooperation with the transportation supervisor, will draft a letter of notification to parents. The letter, to be sent to parents by the principal, will include:
 - (1) The proposed change in service, along with the basis for action
 - (2) The date when transportation will cease
 - (3) Suggested safe walking routes
 - (4) Information pertaining to placement of new crossing guards or traffic control devices, if any
 - (5) Procedures for appeal of the proposed change
- c) The transportation supervisor requests the Montgomery County police to arrange for any needed crossing guards and traffic control devices. If crossing guards or traffic control devices are necessary, no change in bus service will be made until guards or devices are available.
- d) Since hazardous walking conditions may be eliminated at any time during a school year, transportation service may be modified as described above, with a minimum of two weeks notice given to affected students/parents.

K. Traffic Controls in School Areas

1. Crosswalks, School Patrol Guards, and School Crossing Guards

The location of crosswalks, school patrol guards, and school crossing guards is determined by the Montgomery County Police Department. If there is a question concerning safety of students, the principal will contact the appropriate transportation supervisor, who works with the director of the Division of Transportation and the Montgomery County Police School Safety Unit coordinator, to determine whether a hazard exists and takes appropriate action where warranted.

2. Traffic Control and Traffic Signs and Devices on School Property Prior to Opening of New School

The traffic control pattern for a new school is established by the director of the Department of Facilities Management in consultation with the director of the Division of Transportation prior to completion of construction plans. Plans are also submitted by the Department of Facilities Management to the Montgomery County Division of Traffic Engineering for approval. Appropriate signs are installed prior to the opening of a new school.

3. Traffic Control and Traffic Signs and Devices at Established Schools or on Public Roads

a) A request for the review of alleged problems concerning traffic control and traffic control signs and devices at established schools or on public roads in the vicinity of the school is forwarded by the principal to the director of the Division of Transportation. The request should include the following:

- (1) Location – A simple sketch graphically illustrating the problem
- (2) A detailed explanation of the conditions considered dangerous
- (3) A recommendation of how to correct the problem

b) Upon receipt of the request, the director of the Division of Transportation schedules a meeting with the principal, the Montgomery County Police School Safety Unit coordinator, and a representative of the Montgomery County Division of Traffic Engineering to determine if a hazard does, in fact, exist and if improvements or changes should be made. If action is considered advisable, the director of the Division of Transportation sends a confirming memorandum describing the recommended action to the Division of Traffic Engineering and the principal of the school. The Division of Traffic Engineering initiates necessary action or coordinates work with the Maryland State Highway Administration to have necessary signs or devices erected.

L. Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

The Maryland Child Abuse, Neglect, and Mental Injury Law requires that all persons, including all MCPS employees, are mandated to report to the Department of Health and

Human Services/Child Welfare Services DHHS/CWS or police department as soon as possible when they SUSPECT a child has been or is being abused and/or neglected. For reference, see: MCPS Policy JHC: *Child Abuse and Neglect*, MCPS Regulation JHC-RA: *Child Abuse and Neglect*, and MCPS Exhibit JHC-EA: *Child Abuse and Neglect* (State Law).

M. Reporting a Bus Accident Involving Students

1. Procedures

The following procedures provide for the identification of students, notification of parents and appropriate school personnel, and issuance of public statements in the event of a bus accident involving students.

- a) The principal is responsible for maintaining an up-to-date listing of names and other appropriate information about students authorized to ride an MCPS bus to and from school.
- b) Special trips – The chaperone is responsible for carrying a listing of names of students being transported on a special trip and for submitting a copy of the list to the principal prior to the trip.

2. Responsibilities of MCPS Staff in Case of Accident

a) Bus operator

- (1) Contact the police immediately and request ambulance service, if necessary. The telephone number for the Montgomery County EMERGENCY OPERATING CENTER is 9-911
- (2) Notify the director of the Division of Transportation as quickly as possible
- (3) Complete an accident report within 24 hours and submit it to the Division of Transportation

b) Chaperone (Special Trip Only)

Notify the principal and provide all known factual information about the accident

- c) Director of Transportation (representative)
- (1) Notify the director of school support operations and the Department of Information immediately (during school hours)
 - (2) Notify the principals of all schools involved (during and after school hours)
 - (3) Notify the office of school administration
 - (4) If after working hours, call administrative personnel in the following order:
 - (a) Director of school support operations
 - (b) Associate superintendent for supportive services
 - (c) Deputy superintendent
 - (d) Associate superintendent of school administration
 - (e) Director of information
 - (5) If students involved in the accident are sent to a hospital or several hospitals, send administrative or supervisory personnel to the hospital(s) and notify the principal; the parent, if the principal cannot be reached; and the Department of Information regarding each student within the limits of practicality
 - (6) If a student is injured, even if only slightly, notify the principal; and if the principal cannot be reached, notify the parent of the nature of the accident, if possible
 - (7) Arrange for substitute buses to transport all students who were not injured to their homes or school
 - (8) Invoke Division of Transportation accident investigation procedure and drug testing as required

d) Principal/designee

- (1) The principal/designee should make an effort to contact parents as soon as possible following an accident and provide all the factual information known pertaining to the bus accident and the student. (Do not discuss with other children.)
- (2) If a student is injured, even if only slightly, inform the parent of the nature of the accident, if possible.
- (3) Refer all questions from the news media to the director of the Department of Information.
- (4) Complete accident reports as required by MCPS Regulation EBH-RA: *Reporting Student Accidents*.

e) Director of the Department of Information

During school hours the director, Department of Information, notifies the superintendent, deputy superintendent, associate superintendent for supportive services, and appropriate OSA director and handles all news media requests for information.

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