

Durham

Student Transportation Services

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DURHAM STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Durham Student Transportation Services Mission Statement

Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) is a consortium formed by agreement between the Durham Catholic District School Board and the Durham District School Board, for the purpose of providing a common administration of student transportation services for Durham Region. DSTS is one of more than thirty student transportation consortia within Ontario which have been mandated by the Ministry of Education.

The DSTS consortium administers each of the Board's transportation policies and plans and implements all aspects of home to school transportation services. A Governance Committee comprised of Trustee and Senior Administration representatives from each Board oversee the activities of the DSTS consortium.

DSTS endeavors to provide efficient transportation services to and from school each day for students qualifying as eligible for transportation based on each Board's policy governing transportation eligibility. DSTS plans and implements home to school transportation for approximately 30,000 students to schools throughout the Durham region.

The safety of transported students is the highest priority for DSTS. In all aspects of school bus service, from route planning and design through daily operations, safety is always the first consideration. The establishment of safe bus stop locations, extensive driver training requirements, and multiple safety features on a school bus are just a few of the key considerations in establishing a safe transportation system for students. Efforts to improve are continually on going.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

The Education Act places no mandatory responsibility for School Boards to provide transportation services. Accordingly, it is understood that transportation is a privilege, not a right. The Durham District and the Durham Catholic District School Boards believe there are conditions that may warrant the provision of transportation services for students in accordance with approved Board Transportation Policy. As such, school bus vehicles are an extension of the classroom, and students are responsible to the Principal for their conduct in accordance with all applicable Board policies and procedures.

The policy outlined below provides the guidelines regarding eligibility for transportation of students under jurisdiction of the Durham District and Durham Catholic District School Boards.

1.0 ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

1.1 Transportation Eligibility

DSTS will arrange transportation in accordance with member board policies and jointly agreed to common operating parameters.

Students are eligible for transportation if their primary address is within the designated school's attendance boundary at a distance of more than:

Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB)

- Elementary Panel 1.6 kms
- Secondary Panel 3.2 kms

Durham District School Board (DDSB)

- Elementary Panel 1.6 kms
- Secondary Panel 3.2 kms*

(*as of September 2017, the secondary walk distance will be reduced from 4.0kms to 3.2kms)

DSTS will arrange transportation to and from a stop located near the student's primary address, unless otherwise notified by the school or parent/guardian.

1.2 Walk Distance Calculation

Durham Student Transportation Services uses a geometrics planning software program for all students within the service area. The software determines the distance eligibility and walk radius to each school. The distance measurement is taken from the residential property line to the closest property line of the designated area school.

Townhouses and apartment complexes will be measured from the property line of the complex to the closest property line of the designated area school. The measurement is taken on the shortest route to the school. Municipal pedestrian walkways are included in the walk distance calculation.

1.3 Primary Address

A student's address is his/her legal and permanent residence. This address determines his/her designated school attendance boundary. A student may have one primary address. In the case of joint custody, it is the decision of the parents/guardians to determine the primary address.

1.0 Eligibility Guidelines (cont'd)

1.4 Designated Area School

The designated area school is the school a student is assigned to attend, as determined by the school boundary, by Board staff, or authorized by Director of Education or designate, for programming or accommodation purposes, based on the primary residence address.

1.5 Alternate Childcare/Daycare Address

It is recognized that parents and guardians may require child care for their elementary aged children. While DSTS only accepts one primary address for each student, transportation to and/or from an alternate childcare/daycare address may be provided given that the childcare address is within the designated school's transportation boundary.

The provision of transportation to and/or from childcare/daycare is dependent upon the following criteria:

- a) The student is eligible for transportation to and/or from a childcare/daycare address provided the address is within the transportation boundary of the designated school;
- b) The alternate transportation follows the same schedule five days per week;
- c) A student may only have one alternate pick up and/or drop off stop;
- d) Both addresses must be served with the routes and stops which are existing or created in accordance with DSTS guidelines;
- e) Transportation to and/or from an alternate childcare/daycare address is for JK to Grade 8 students only.

1.6 Joint Custody Arrangements

Legal joint custody students, where parents/guardians of elementary and secondary students reside at two different addresses may be provided with transportation to and from both addresses if:

- a) Both addresses are eligible for transportation to the same designated area school of attendance;
- b) The alternate address is on a consistent five day (5) day a week, Monday to Friday schedule only throughout the year;
- c) Both addresses must be served with routes and stops which are existing or created in accordance with DSTS guidelines;
- d) Requests for alternate pick up and drop off locations are completed with the school accompanied with a copy of the joint custody agreement or shared custody legal separation agreement.

1.0 Eligibility Guidelines (cont'd)

1.7 Temporary or Custom Transportation

Temporary changes or customized transportation arrangements cannot be accommodated by Durham Student Transportation Services.

1.8 Out of Boundary Students

Students who choose to attend a school other than their designated area school of attendance are not eligible for transportation.

No student residing outside the school's attendance boundary will be picked up or dropped off at an address outside of the designated area school of attendance boundary area.

1.9 Junior and Senior Kindergarten Protocol

For safety reasons, all students enrolled in Junior and Senior Kindergarten, must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or designate to the bus stop for pick up and must be met by a parent, guardian or designate at drop off time.

1.10 Overflow Registrations at Designated School

Transportation may be provided to out of area elementary students, if accommodation is not available at their area designated school, as determined by the area Superintendent of Education and if the distance from their primary home address exceeds 1.6 kilometers.

Students are transported for the remainder of the year until space at the area designated school becomes available. Siblings are not considered if space is available at the area designated school.

The Superintendent responsible for transportation will determine the overflow in consultation with DSTS regarding available bus routes.

2.0 SAFETY

2.1 Cancellation of Bus Service Due to Weather Conditions

DSTS will work cooperatively with bus operators and municipality staff to advise of transportation delays/cancellations affecting any portion of the service area as a result of inclement weather. Once information is collected, DSTS contacts both school boards with a recommendation. When transportation services are cancelled, the schools may remain open. The decision to close schools rests with the Director of Education.

2.0 Safety (cont'd)

2.1 Cancellation of Bus Service Due to Weather Conditions (cont'd)

If a bus route or transportation services are cancelled in the morning, this decision remains in effect for the entire day. Parents and/or guardians ultimately make the final decision on whether or not their child(ren) rides on the bus.

School bus delays/cancellations will be posted on the DSTS website. Cancellation information is sent to local media outlets including television and radio stations.

2.2 Transporting Large Equipment or Large Personal Effects on School Purpose Vehicles

In the interest of safety, and keeping aisles clear in the bus for emergency evacuations only certain equipment is allowed on school vehicles, under the following conditions:

- a) Musical instruments must be housed in cases and is of a size that can be stowed completely under a seat;

Loose large objects on a seat or child's lap may become a projectile if there is a sudden stop or accident;
- b) Ice skates or other sports equipment must be carried in a sports bag, and stowed completely under a seat.

For the safety of all on the bus, parents are expected to provide transportation for their children when bulky or large items such as projects and large sports equipment must be taken to and from school.

2.3 Progressive Discipline for Infractions on a School Bus

Students who are eligible to travel to school on a bus may continue to do so as long as they abide by the Student Code of Conduct administered by the Board of Education. The bus is an extension of the classroom. Students must demonstrate and maintain appropriate and safe behavior aboard the vehicle. Students who do not behave in an appropriate and safe manner will be subject to discipline in accordance with the Board's Safe Schools Policy and the School's Code of Conduct and may lose their school bus privileges.

DSTS will contact parents of students who are accessing school buses, but are not eligible for transportation or are not manifested to the school bus route being accessed. If the student(s) continue to access the bus, an interview with the parents and school principal will be arranged. If the situation is still not resolved, and the student(s) continue to access the bus, the Superintendent of Education/Area will be notified, and a suspension from school may be recommended.

3.0 OPERATING GUIDELINES

3.1 Mode of Transportation

The modes of transportation employed by DSTS may be any of the following, based on availability and feasibility:

- Contracted School Bus
- Regional Transit (Bus Pass)
- Taxi

Public transit may be used to serve the needs of secondary school students (Grade 9-12) residing in urban centres who are eligible for transportation under the distance eligibility criteria.

3.2 School Hours and Bell Times

DSTS is mandated to improve and maintain the efficiency of the transportation network. In order to minimize or maintain the number of buses used, it may be necessary to recommend alterations to bell times at schools for entry and/or dismissal.

3.3 Run Sharing

Wherever possible and warranted, bus routes will be shared to avoid duplication of costs. Buses may be tiered with one bus having multiple routes to more than one school or students from partner School Boards may be transported on the same vehicle.

3.4 Duration of Bus Ride

Wherever possible, every effort will be made to ensure that student's duration of bus ride is no longer than 60 minutes (one way).

The duration of bus ride is based on regular road conditions. The length of time does not take into account any anomalies due to external factors such as traffic, road conditions (construction, accidents involving other vehicles), road distance based on special program placement and inclement weather.

Wherever possible, DSTS utilizes a network of common community bus stops. Students are required to walk to their bus stop.

The bus stop walk distance is calculated on the shortest distance between the bus stop and the student's primary address. Municipal pedestrian walkways are included in the walk distance to bus stop. Distances are assessed and determined by DSTS' GIS based planning software program.

3.0 Operating Guidelines (cont'd)

3.5 Walking Distance to Bus Stop

Students may be required to walk up to the following distances in order to reach their bus stop:

- Maximum walk distance to bus stop of 800 meters

For areas under construction, or circumstances where buses cannot gain access, students may be required to walk further to their bus stops.

4.0 SPECIAL EDUCATION

4.1 Special Needs Transportation

DSTS is fully supportive of an integrated student transportation system for all students where it is safe and practical to do so. Students with special needs will be transported on traditional buses and specialized transportation will be utilized in situations where, due to the nature of the exceptionality or safety concerns, appropriate alternative accessible transportation is required because the features of the vehicle are more suitable to the student's needs.

4.2 Special Needs Transportation Requests and Use

DSTS will make specialized transportation arrangements for students who have been approved by the school board as:

- Having a documented permanent physical, mental or emotional exceptionality that prevents them from safely getting to and from their designated area school;
- Placement in a specialized program or contained classroom;
- Transportation is arranged for the special needs student only.

4.3 Outside Agency Transportation

With prior approval from the School Board, transportation may be provided for students attending an outside agency, if:

- The students are qualified to be resident pupils of the Board, and if the agency is a facility referred to in the Education Act;
- By mutual agreement, the School Board will arrange for, and provide the special transportation for the outside Agency and may invoice the Agency for the cost.

5.0 ACCESSIBLE STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

5.1 Service Animals

Service dogs are trained to assist students who may have physical or developmental disabilities with their daily lives. DSTS recognizes that a student may require a service dog to be transported with them on a school purpose vehicle as part of their daily life activities.

5.2 Support Persons for Student with Special Needs

Support persons (such as Educational Assistants and Medical Professionals) for students with special needs must be authorized in advance to travel on school purpose vehicles. Approval of support persons is arranged through the Special Education Department of the School Board.

5.3 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

In compliance with the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07 created under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005), DSTS is committed to providing services in a way that is accessible to all students.

DSTS believes that excellence in customer service is founded on mutual respect for the dignity and humanity of all individuals enabling individuals and groups to participate and contribute fully with a diverse society.

Equity, valuing diversity and inclusion are related yet distinct concepts which form the foundation of social justice and reflect values such as fairness and respect for the dignity of all humans, and practicing equity involves proactively eradicating attitudes, actions, structures and systems that result in discrimination and exclusion. To this end, DSTS is committed to the continual improvement of accessibility and the ongoing removal of barriers in order to provide greater equity for all.

5.4 Temporary Medical Transportation

DSTS may provide transportation for students temporarily incapacitated or for other extenuating medical circumstances.

All temporary transportation requests shall be reviewed by the Superintendent responsible for Transportation. All requests for medical transportation must be accompanied by a qualified medical doctor's assessment outlining all required accommodations and date of anticipated recovery.

Other than documented and approved permanent medical conditions, all other medical transportation requests must be time limited or reviewed and approved on an annual basis.

4.0 Accessible Student Transportation (cont'd)

5.5 Compassionate Family Medical

Consideration will be given to special circumstances by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of DSTS or designate when a parent is critically ill/or injured and transportation is requested. The parent must make the request in writing and provide appropriate detailed medical documentation to the Superintendent responsible for Transportation. All other reasonable options such as walking buddies, walking school bus or riding with neighbours must be explored by the school Principal before transportation is granted. Transportation will only be granted for a limited time period up to three months or until end of term/year depending when the request is received and is intended to be a onetime only event. During this period the family will work on making alternative permanent arrangements.

6.0 INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

6.1 Freedom of Information and Privacy

DSTS is committed to the protection of personal information under its control and custody, and to the right of privacy with respect to personal information that is collected, used, disclosed and retained.

DSTS adheres to all applicable provisions of the Education Act, the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, and any other applicable legislation as it relates to privacy.

7.0 REQUEST TO REVIEW TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

7.1 Request for Review of Distance Calculation

DSTS uses a geometrics planning software program for all students within the service area. This software determines distance eligibility. This software measures the distance between the residence and the school property based on approved distances set in the school board policy.

Students are eligible for transportation if their primary address is within the designated school's attendance boundary at a distance of more than 1.6 kms for Elementary Panel and more than 3.2 kms for the Secondary Panel of the Durham Catholic District School Board and more than 4.0 kms for the Urban Secondary Panel and more than 3.2 kms for the Rural Secondary Panel of the Durham District School Board.

Distance is measured from the closest perimeter edge of the residential property to the closest perimeter edge of the school property based on the shortest route on the road network and including municipal walkways.

7.0 Request to Review Transportation Arrangements (cont'd)

7.1 Request for Review of Distance Calculation (cont'd)

If a parent wishes to dispute the distance calculation, they may do so, noting that DSTS and the School Boards have agreed upon the planning software, as expected by the Ministry of Education, to avoid discrepancies which can occur in varying web based mapping technologies.

Distance disputes should be in writing and directed to:

Durham District School Board
400 Taunton Road East
Whitby, Ontario L1R 2K6

or

Durham Catholic District School Board
650 Rossland Road West,
Oshawa, Ontario L1J 7C4

Attention: Durham Student Transportation Services

Or via Fax to (905) 666-6320

The submission will be reviewed and the decision communicated to the parent/guardian in writing. DSTS' decision is final and not subject to further review.

7.2 Request for Review of Bus Stop Location

DSTS is responsible for selecting bus stop locations within the service area in accordance with the walk to stop distance procedures. DSTS is not responsible for providing door to door transportation. Whenever possible, community collector stops are used.

DSTS will establish stop locations considering the following:

Community Collector Stops: located in areas accessible for a number of students to multiple schools. Students are assigned to the closest community stop based on primary address.

DSTS maintains an average walk to stop distance of 400 meters to a maximum walk to stop distance of 800 meters. The distance is calculated on DSTS geometrics software between the place of residence and the bus stop based on the shortest distance on a road network and may include municipal walkways.

Generally, school bus stops will not be located in areas such as cul-de-sacs or dead end streets. DSTS does not enter private property and roads, such as long rural driveways, gated communities and townhouse/apartment complexes.

DSTS reserves the right to determine if the roadway is suitable for travel, given road conditions and necessary space requirements factoring in turning radius of large school vehicles.

7.0 Request to Review Transportation Arrangements (cont'd)

7.2 Request for Review of Bus Stop Location (cont'd)

Parents/Guardians are responsible for the safe travel of their student(s) to and from the bus stop location.

Parents/Guardians may request a review of bus stop location by completing the review request form located on the DSTS website, www.dsts.on.ca

The submission will be reviewed and the decision communicated to the parent/guardian in writing. DSTS' decision is final and not subject to further review.

7.3 Request for Reconsideration of Transportation Arrangements

It is possible to request a reconsideration of the decision made by DSTS, in cases where a parent or guardian disagrees with the way in which policies and procedures have been applied.

Reconsideration Procedure:

1. Requests for reconsideration must be made in writing by a parent or guardian directed to the Chief Administrative Officer of DSTS. The request should include a detailed description of the situation and/or events.
2. Staff members of DSTS will prepare all information regarding the situation along with an explanation for their decision based on policy and procedure.
3. The Chief Administrative Officer from DSTS will assess the documentation provided by the parent and guardian. A written reply will be prepared within 15 days of receipt.
4. If the parent or guardian is not satisfied with the response from the Chief Administrative Officer, he or she may request reconsideration of the decision in writing to the Administrative Committee of DSTS, via the Chief Administrative Officer of DSTS.
5. The request for reconsideration and supporting documentation by staff will then be discussed by the Administrative Committee, who will decide by consensus whether the reconsideration is supported.
6. The Administrative Committee will then render its decision in writing within 30 working days. The parent or guardian will be notified in writing of the decision.
7. If a parent/guardian disagrees with any of the DSTS Transportation Policies and Procedures, they may petition in writing the DSTS Governance Committee. The decision of the Governance Committee is final and not subject to further consideration.

No request for reconsideration will be processed during between the dates of September 1st through October 15th because of DSTS school year start up for transportation.

7.0 Request to Review Transportation Arrangements (cont'd)

7.3 Request for Reconsideration of Transportation Arrangements (cont'd)

At any time during the process, the local School Board Trustee may be contacted to assist with the process and request submission.

All submissions will be reviewed and the decision will be communicated to the parent/guardian in writing.