

## **Stoughton Public Schools**

### **Student Transportation Policy and Guidelines**

The Stoughton Schools will transport students on a daily basis according to the policy and guidelines listed below.

Student handbooks for elementary, middle and high schools outline the responsibilities of the students with regards to their conduct on the bus. Violations of the rules or conduct outlined in the handbook may result in temporary or permanent suspension of bus riding privileges. No refunds will be issued for students suspended from bus services.

Parents/guardians are responsible for students until the time they enter the bus and again once the student leaves the bus.

Student transportation is a privilege, not a right, and is dependent upon the student's good behavior while on the bus.

#### **Eligibility**

1. The Stoughton Public Schools follow the State requirements for transporting students, which is any student in grades kindergarten through sixth, who lives more than 2 miles from the school they are entitled to attend, shall be eligible for transportation at no cost. (MGL., c71, sec 68)
2. Students in kindergarten through grade six living less than 2 miles from their school and in grades seven through twelve are not eligible for free transportation.
3. Mileage is determined by the "Transfinder Pro" transportation software system. This is a scheduling and routing package that contains a GPS (Global Positioning System) to determine mileage. Transfinder measures from the midpoint of a lot, along the street of the listed address to the assigned school.
4. Massachusetts General Law and the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education define the route to a school as a "commonly traveled route." The route between the residence and the school is a "walkable distance" not necessarily the route the bus may take.
5. Students with temporary medical disabilities who are not eligible, or who require additional assistance, may be approved for transportation on a short-term basis with permission of the Superintendent and upon the presentation of a doctor's note. Students will be assigned to the special education vehicles that have monitors.
6. Elementary "out of district" students are not eligible for transportation.

#### **Routes and Stops**

1. Bus routes and their corresponding stops are developed initially through the Transfinder system. The route is driven and each stop checked. The routes and stops are forwarded to the Stoughton Police Department for review, and changes are made and recorded in Transfinder.
2. Once the routes are finalized, a postcard will be sent to all students assigned to buses listing their bus number, stop location and times. These postcards serve as bus passes until permanent passes are issued. (Secondary Only)
3. Stop locations, pick-up and drop-off times are listed on the postcards and are "estimates." Weather, traffic, the number of stops on a route, and the number of students at a stop effect pick-up/drop-off times. Students must be at the stop at least "10 minutes" prior to the scheduled pick-up times. Buses will not wait for students.

4. The Stoughton Public Schools responsibility for a student begins once the student boards the bus. Parents have the responsibility of supervising and transporting students until they board the bus in the morning and once they are discharged from the bus in the afternoon.
5. Students riding the bus will be picked up and dropped off at their assigned stop five days a week. If a change of stop or bus is requested and approved, this will become the new assigned stop five days a week *for pick-up and drop off*. Requests to change stops or buses must be submitted to the building principal in writing, stating the reasons for the request and the name, address and telephone number of the person who will now be responsible for the student prior to boarding and/or after leaving the bus.

When a change of location of a stop is requested, the new location must meet the criteria outlined in the “bus stop determination worksheet.” New stop location requests will be reviewed by the School Department on a case-by-case basis and all decisions are final.

6. Kindergarten students will not be dropped off at a bus stop unless a parent, responsible adult or older student is there to escort them home. If no one is present to meet the student, they will be returned to their school. Kindergarten students will not have door-to-door stops.
7. Secondary buses will leave the middle school on their 1<sup>st</sup> run in the afternoon at 2:22 p.m. Buses will leave the elementary schools when released by the administration.
8. The same buses transporting the elementary students are used to transport secondary students. Due to time constraints, the number of stops on secondary routes is reduced; and secondary students may be required to walk up to one half mile to their assigned stop.
9. In certain weather situations, schools may remain open but sidewalks may not be completely clear of snow. Under those circumstances, the Superintendent of Schools may implement the use of the “snow emergency stops.” These stops may be used by any student who will then be transported to school. A list of snow emergency stops is available at [www.stoughtonschools.org](http://www.stoughtonschools.org).
10. Maintaining the sidewalks and roadways is the responsibility of the Public Works Department and they should be notified for repairs or maintenance.
11. Bus drivers do not determine stops, nor can they change stops. Drivers will not allow students not assigned to a route onto a bus. Drivers cannot, by law, drive a bus with student numbers greater than its capacity, except in a very specific case of emergency and then only at the direction of the School Department. Drivers will not allow non-students (including parents) onto buses.
12. Routes will be considered “full” when 65 secondary students or 70 elementary students are assigned to them.

Questions or comments about routes or stops should be forwarded to your student’s school administrative office.

### **Pay and Ride**

1. Those students who are not eligible for transportation may “at the discretion of the School Committee” pay to ride a bus. “See eligibility requirements above.”
2. Pay and ride students will be assigned to “existing” stops. Stops will **not** be added.
3. Due to limited seating, students who live farthest away from their assigned school will be given preference until the seats are filled.

4. Secondary pay and ride students will receive their pass once an application has been completed and the fee is paid in full, if it is determined that there is space available. **Students cannot ride buses without a pass.** Students will receive postcards showing their stop location with the “approximate” pick-up and drop-off times, if it is determined that there is space available. This postcard will serve as their pass until permanent passes are issued. Permanent passes will be issued during the first days of school. If a student does not have a pass, they will be allowed to ride home in the afternoon and to school the following morning, but must obtain a temporary pass prior to boarding the bus for the 2<sup>nd</sup> afternoon trip. On the second and subsequent days, if the student still does not have a pass, they will not be allowed to ride the bus. Replacement passes are available at the administrative office of your child’s school for a fee.

Students submitting late applications will be placed on a waiting list in the order that they are received. After the first week of school, students will be placed on buses if space is available and time allows additional students.

5. Fees for the pay and ride program will be set by the School Committee. Full non-refundable payment, in the form of credit card, bank check, money order or cash, is due on or before a date determined by the School Committee, in your child’s school office.
6. **To pay by credit card please go to: [www.mealpayplus.com](http://www.mealpayplus.com). PLEASE NOTE THAT MEALPAY CHARGES A FEE 4.29% FOR EACH TRANSACTION.** To pay by credit card you will need to have your child’s **Local Assigned Student Identification Number (LASID)**. For grades 6 through 12, the LASID number is on your child’s report card, for elementary students the LASID number can be obtained from your child’s school office. When payment is made by credit card, ***a Pay & Ride application must be filled out and submitted in order for students to be assigned a bus.***

Credit card payments will only be accepted through a date determined by School Committee. All payments made after that date must be in the form of bank check, money order or cash.

7. No payments will be refunded without approval of the Superintendent.
8. The School Committee reserves the right to make adjustments to the annual fee at any time during the year, even if the school year has started. In the event the School Committee elects to raise the fee during the school year, you will be notified of the amount of the fee increase, the effective date of the increase, and the date by which the additional payment is due. If the additional payment is not received by the due date, your child will not be allowed to ride the bus after the effective date. Also, in the event you elect not to pay the additional fee or otherwise do not pay the additional fee and your child’s transportation privileges are terminated, you are not entitled to a refund on any fees already paid.
9. Applications are available at the administrative office of the school your child attends and by going on-line to <http://www.stoughtonschools.org> and clicking on “Programs,” then Transportation, then Pay and Ride Application. Applications should be completed and returned to the office of the school your child will be attending **in September**.
10. Students who meet federal low-income guidelines will have their pay and ride transportation fees waived. Applications shall still be submitted and all other transportation procedures shall apply.

Approved by the School Committee July 8, 2008.

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