



# Routing Recommendations

*For school transportation after the pandemic*

Created by the Ohio Pupil Transportation Task Force

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# The Ohio Pupil Transportation Task Force

- The task force is comprised of 30 school transportation professionals from Ohio's public schools. The members worked together to study transportation options, constraints, and needs as they pertain to the pandemic.
- The material presented by the task force is meant to serve as guidance, and to help local school district officials understand the options and constraints inherent in the restart of safe school transportation services.
- Within the task force the members focused on seven different aspects of pupil transportation services. Each of these focus areas has its own presentation.



## Prerequisites for good routing

- Certain precautions and steps must be considered prior to the resumption of any school transportation routing.
- The understanding of those actions is of paramount importance, and must be considered prior to routing



# The key to running routes – protect staff

- Drivers, bus monitors/aides/paraprofessionals should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as; mask, face shields, gloves, glasses or gowns when they must work closely with students. Use guidance from your local Health Department and district administration.
- Each bus should carry a supply of temporary masks for students who come to the bus without a mask.
- Cleaning/sanitizing products should be carried on the bus in a closed container.
- The front row of seats should remain empty to protect the driver.
- Driver protective barriers may be added behind the driver seat per OSP specifications.
- Hand sanitizer stations may be added to the bus entrance per OSP specifications.



# Staff Training

- Drivers and aides/monitors/paraprofessionals must be instructed how to clean and sanitize the bus.
- Drivers and aides/monitors/ paraprofessionals should receive training on the use of PPE.
- Signs should be posted inside buses with sanitizer to provide proper use instructions.
- Students should be trained how to protect others from their cough.
- Signs should be posted in buses on how to protect a cough.
- Students and staff should be instructed to wash hands regularly and avoid touching their face.



# Resources

- Communicate with your local Health Dept. for guidance on proper social distancing in your community.
- Ask your district superintendent what the local goals are for in-person learning.
- Analyze ridership data to get a realistic number of bus riders. Consider surveying parents to ask if they will be putting their students on the bus.
- Assess the number of school bus drivers that intend to return to work and are able to drive bus routes.
- Evaluate your fleet to determine the number of available buses/vans. Consider regular ed and special needs vehicles.
- Determine capacity of each of those vehicles. Capacity will be based upon local health department guidance, prevalence of infection in your community, and the district's in-person learning goals.
- If social distancing will be employed on the buses, determine whether you have capacity to add buses and drivers to accommodate the district plan to return to the classroom. Most districts will not be able to increase fleet size.



# Controlling Ridership

**Consider limiting, reducing or eliminating one or more of the following:**

- Home to school transportation for career technical and vocational students. Provide state minimum service of transfer from high school to vocational campus.
- After school transportation.
- Field trips and extra-curricular trips
- Any bus needs that interfere with regular route service.
- Limit all students to a single stop, including shared parenting scenarios. This reduces the need for students to have multiple seats assigned on different routes.
- Special passes for alternate stops.
- Commercial child-care stops.



## **If social distancing is mandated in your community, and excess fleet capacity does not exist, consider the following ways of reducing rider counts**

- ❑ Increase the size of the no-transportation zones around schools where it is safe to walk/bike to and from school. These zones can be up to two miles from the school of attendance.
- ❑ Eliminate high school bus service so that buses can be reallocated for students in grades Kindergarten through 8.
- ❑ Routing changes, including reduced capacity, adding bus stops and modifying routes to accommodate bell schedule changes will require additional routing time for planning as well as added expense.



## Bus Stop considerations

- ❑ Adding additional bus stops to decrease the number of students at each stop will result in longer routes and potentially the need for additional buses.
- ❑ Another way to manage students at bus stops is to ask parents to monitor students at the bus stop and enforce social distancing. By asking parents to assist with this function the bus stops can be left as currently scheduled to avoid disruption to existing route.
- ❑ Drop off and pick up points at school campuses need to be carefully managed. Bus riders, parent drop-offs and walkers should all be assigned different entrances at the school building.
- ❑ Buses should be unloaded or loaded separately and not all at the same time. This may require route times to be staggered to avoid bus traffic backups in the school driveways.



## Miscellaneous considerations

- Driver rooms will need to be eliminated or streamlined to cut down on time spent inside the Transportation office.
  - Consider creating one-way pedestrian traffic flow in driver's room
  - Consider different ways for drivers to check-in upon arrival- such as radio or computer logins.
- Some districts may require drivers and other on-board staff to have their temperature taken upon reporting to work.
- If buses need to be sanitized between routes, bell times will have to be adjusted to provide time for this task.
- Reducing the number of riders per bus without otherwise reducing the total ridership will increase transportation cost to the district.
- Buses should be operated with vents open to maximize air flow through the bus.
  - Health officials have made it clear that the rate of infection is decreased in the outdoors or when natural air flow is enhanced. We can use the roof vents and windows in the bus to take advantage of this fact.
- We will need to leave a few seats empty for kids who move or new enrollments to keep from re-routing the buses daily.



## Safety issues

- Bus stop safety is the most critical part of school transportation.
- We must continue to follow the current boarding procedures drivers have been taught to keep our students safe.
- When at a bus stop, the driver has one hand on the horn, foot on the brake and the other hand is used for signaling students to board the bus.
- Drivers cannot check student temperatures as they board without jeopardizing the safety of the students at the bus stop.
- Drivers cannot squirt hand sanitizer into student's hands, as this would cause closer contact with the student and would not work with safe boarding procedures.
- Parent or parent representatives must be at the bus stop with children to keep them safe and enforce social distancing.



# The parental role in school transportation

Communication with parents is essential. For students to return to the classroom safely using school transportation parents will need to have an active role. There will also need to be some changes in procedures.

- Students should only be assigned to one bus and one driver. When possible, students should ride the same bus AM & PM.
- School bus drivers are in short supply. If school transportation is to continue to operate, we must minimize health risks to the drivers. All students will be required to wear a mask to board the school bus and are required to keep it on until after departing the school vehicle.
- Parents must check their child's temperature each morning and may NOT send their child to the bus with a temperature over 100.4 degrees.
- If a student becomes ill while at school, school transportation shall not be used to transport the student home. The parent or a parent representative will need to pick up the student up at school.
- Routing adjustments due to address or school changes will take longer as transportation staff carefully manage bus loads and routing capacity.



# Routing Options depending on Risk Level

*Any change in risk level during the school year will disrupt school routes. It could take several weeks to accomplish rerouting and follow state transportation requirements.*

## No risk – little or no viral infection in community

- We return to regularly scheduled routing.
- No changes in capacity.

## Low risk - low viral infection rate in community – moderately well contained

- No more than 2 students per seat.
- Siblings shall sit together.
- Row of seats behind driver left empty w/seat behind driver for PPE storage and seat across may be used for new enrollments or students who inadvertently show up for the bus.
- Students board the bus, back to front, in the AM and dismiss front to back, upon arrival to their building.
- In the PM, students will need to board the bus from back to front, in the order they depart the bus.



# Routing Options depending on Risk Level

*Any change to a higher risk level, mid year, could take several weeks as buses will need to be re-routed.*

## **Moderate risk – viral infection rate is pronounced in the community**

- No more than 1 student per seat
- Siblings sit together.
- Row of seats behind driver empty w/seat behind driver for PPE storage and seat across aisle empty for driver safety.
- Reduce ridership pool by increasing walking distance around schools.
- Consider state minimum bussing.
- Any change could take up to 5 business days if bus needs to be re-routed.
- Students board the bus, back to front, in the AM and dismiss front to back, upon arrival to their building.
- In the PM, students will need to board the bus from back to front, in the order they depart the bus.

## **High risk – viral infection rate is increasing**

- Consider terminating transportation service.
- Recommend state minimum bussing.
- No more than 1 student per every other seat/sitting diagonally.
- Row of seats behind driver empty w/seat behind driver for PPE and seat across the aisle empty for driver safety.
- Routing will need to be adjusted per local policies. This could mean varied days of attendance/multiple tiers/adding drivers & buses as district is capable of.
- Students will need to board the bus, front to back in the AM and dismiss by zig zag when arriving at the school.
- Students board the bus, back to front, in the AM and dismiss front to back, upon arrival to their building.



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this transportation task force.



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