



TO: ALL PARENTS, GUARDIANS, FAMILIES, AND STUDENTS

FROM: WEST COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

RE: REGULAR EDUCATION BUS SERVICE AND SAFETY INFORMATION

West County Transportation Agency is a public, Joint Powers Agreement or Agency formed by your school district or contracted by your district to provide safe, economical, coordinated and child-centered school transportation service for you. This Agency has been in operation since July 1988 and has saved its member school districts thousands of dollars over operating their own transportation program. The information in the following paragraphs should be useful to you regarding the regular home-to-school transportation program of your district.

BUS ROUTES

Your bus route schedule may be attached to this packet of information. Bus routes and stops remain rather constant over time. You are urged, however, to check the schedule, identify your route identification number and become familiar with the bus stop location. Students need to have a designated school bus stop, and any student who wishes to ride another bus must have a signed permission note from a parent. Students without such a note will be allowed to leave the bus at their regular stop only, or will be returned to school. We are most concerned about providing the most reasonable protection for your child, and will do everything possible to do so. If you are unsure of your bus stop, please call West County Transportation Agency at 206-9988 x219. A number posted near the entrance door identifies the route.

Your child is urged to get to the bus stop at least five minutes prior to the posted stop time. Bus stop times may change or vary depending on ridership changes made in the first couple of weeks. Drivers make a point to notify students and parents of any changes.

Students must remain orderly at the bus stop, must remain at least twelve feet back of the main traveled portion of the roadway and should be visible to the driver.

BUS PASSES AND REGISTERING FOR TRANSPORTATION

For districts that charge fees for school transportation, a cover letter and bus pass application may be attached and a supply of the applications is available at your school office. Drivers can also get the application to your child. Passes will need to be carried with students and will be required to board the bus. The passes have an imbedded RFID chip in them that identifies your child. The passes will have to be carried with students and will be required to board the bus.

There will be an electronic device that will record when students board the bus in the morning and depart at the home bus stop in the afternoon.

New for districts that do not charge fees!

For districts that **do not** charge fees, students will need to register for transportation. We will verify or assign a specific bus stop for each student and issue a bus pass. The pass will have an RFID chip in them that identifies your child. The passes will have to be carried with students and will be required to board the bus. There will be an electronic device that will record when students board the bus in the morning and depart at the home bus stop in the afternoon.

WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL BUS STOPS

Students should be particularly careful when walking to and from school bus stops. Parents should accompany young children to the bus stop and assist in keeping order while waiting for the bus. Children should be instructed to keep on sidewalks or on the shoulder, and far away from the main traveled portion of the roadway. Children should pay close attention to traffic, weather conditions, and visibility conditions. Visible clothing, or clothing and backpacks with reflective material should be worn at all times. Children should remain orderly at all times and refrain from boisterous conduct or horseplay while walking to and from the school bus stop. Children should not engage in conversation with strangers or accept rides from passing motorists. When walking to or from a bus stop, children should face traffic.

GENERAL RULES OF CONDUCT AT SCHOOL BUS LOADING ZONES

Students should wait in an orderly fashion while at the bus stop in the morning. They should be at the bus stop at least five minutes prior to the posted stop time. Students should be at least twelve feet back from the main traveled portion of the roadway and visible to the driver. Pushing, shoving or horseplay is not allowed at the bus stop. Students should be mindful of the bus stop location. Many are in driveways and on private property. Students are not allowed to throw rocks or other objects, play around, cause excessive noise, touch or tamper with the other private property or vehicles nearby. Once the bus arrives students shall wait for the driver to come to a complete stop and the door of the bus to open before they begin to move forward to the bus. Students should board the bus one-at-a-time, using the available handrails, and move quickly to an open seat. If a student drops papers or other objects while boarding the bus, he/she should get the attention of the driver. NEVER GO UNDER OR NEAR THE BUS TO RETRIEVE PAPERS OR OTHER OBJECTS. The driver may not be able to see you!

In the afternoon, students should wait for the bus to come to a complete stop, the brakes are set and the door is open before they stand up to exit the bus. Students should have all of their clothes and supplies together in preparation for their bus stop. Students should use handrails when leaving the bus and shall walk away from the bus to the shoulder or sidewalk and walk directly home. If a student drops papers or other objects while he/she is leaving the bus, please get the attention of the driver. NEVER GO UNDER OR NEAR THE BUS TO RETRIEVE PAPERS OR OTHER OBJECTS. The driver may not be able to see you!

SCHOOL BUS DANGER ZONES

The areas closest to the perimeter of the bus are called the danger zones. Students are directed to be no closer than twelve feet to the bus, except when loading and unloading. The vast majority of school bus accidents and injuries to students occur outside of the bus in this danger zone. If students drop papers, lunch boxes or other objects while loading or unloading from the bus the student must get the attention of the driver. **NEVER GO UNDER OR NEAR THE BUS TO RETRIEVE PAPERS OR OTHER OBJECTS.** The driver may not be able to see you!

SAFE RIDING PRACTICES

Safe riding rules are attached. Students are oriented by their regular driver in the first couple of days regarding basic expectations. Within the first two months of school students receive training in safe riding practices and evacuation of a school bus which may be supplemented by classroom activities. Classroom behavior is expected on all school buses. By law, students must remain seated at all times, must keep all body parts and objects inside the windows of the bus, and must follow all directions of the driver. As you can see, the driver must be responsible for the safe transportation of as many as 84 passengers so the fewer the distractions, the safer the ride will be. Students are not allowed to transport animals or insects of any sort, or glass containers on the bus. If your child has a school project that requires the transportation of these objects, please arrange to transport your child yourself.

RED LIGHT CROSSINGS

Whenever the red, alternate flashing lights (near the top of the bus) are illuminated all traffic must stop in both directions, as students are loading and unloading and may be crossing the road. With kindergarten through eighth grade the driver must get out and physically escort the students. Even though not required, we perform the same procedure for all high school students. Please be exceedingly aware of school buses that are stopped. Students that are exiting the bus at their stop must be extra cautious to walk away from the bus as quickly as possible. Please instruct your child that if he or she drops papers or books, to walk away far from the bus and get the driver's attention. Never go under the bus to retrieve papers and stand back away from the bus a fare distance.

California's procedure for crossing students at bus stops is vastly different and safer than the procedure of any other state in the nation. When a student needs to cross the road and the stop is designated as a "red light crossing", the driver sets the parking brake, secures the bus, turns on the red lights, takes the key, opens the door and exits the bus with a hand-held stop sign to "escort" the students across the road. The student should follow all of the directions of the driver, and not cross the road until the driver verbally tells the student to proceed. This crossing maneuver is considered most dangerous and students must be aware, alert and follow all directions of the driver.

After September 1, 1992, Federal and State law requires all new school buses in California to be equipped with a stop sign on the side of the bus near the rear that will be extended at red light crossings. In addition, drivers that escort students will be required to use a hand-held stop sign. Some of the older buses may not be equipped as such, so please be aware of buses with and without stop signs on them. Look for the red lights.

Some of our newest buses will also have amber flashing lights next to the red ones that will be illuminated approximately 200 feet prior to the bus stop to warn motorists of the impending red light stop.

After January 1, 1998, school buses are required to use the red flashing lights every time they load and unload students, not just when students cross the road. There is a dramatic increase in the number of times you will encounter school buses with their red lights flashing. As a passing or following motorist, you are required to stop until the lights are extinguished to protect the students. As you know students may act in an unpredictable fashion. Stopping for the red lights prevents a potential tragedy. Citations for passing a stopped school bus with red lights flashing in Sonoma County are about \$300 for the first violation and close to \$1,000 for subsequent violations.

CLOTHING HAZARDS

In the last few years, there have been several serious student injuries or fatalities in other states due to clothing or backpacks that have drawstrings. In addition, student backpacks with multiple keychains could also get caught in the bus handrail or doors. The drawstrings or keychains could get caught in handrails or the door of the bus, without the driver's knowledge. Please inspect your child's clothing and backpack to ensure there are no drawstrings or other hanging objects that could get caught as they exit the bus.

FEES FOR HOME-TO-SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

If your school district has adopted a fee for school transportation, they will have an application for the bus pass included in this packet (or perhaps sent by separate cover). Please make haste in sending your check so that we may process your child's pass as quickly as possible.

Fees for home-to-school transportation have been legal for 23 years. In the Spring of 1992, the Supreme Court of the State of California heard a challenge to that law and upheld the legality of charging fees for school transportation.

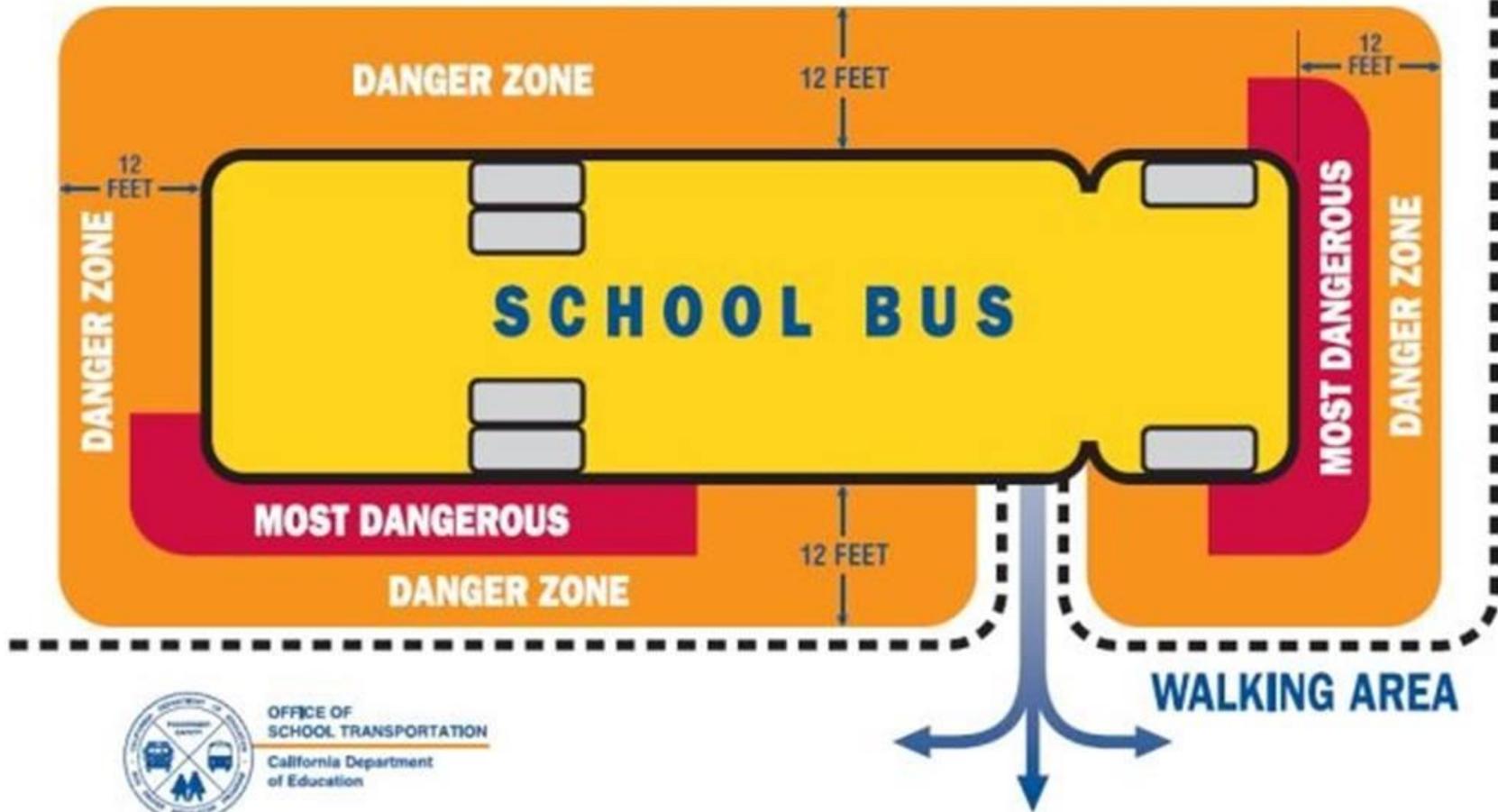
State funding for school transportation covers, on a statewide average, only about 35% of the total cost of providing school transportation for your child. The remainder must be paid out of the general operating funds of the school district--money that is coming out of classroom programs and the like. In an effort to reduce the impact, and in these tentative financial times, your district may have adopted fees. The fees offset less than 10% of the total cost of transporting your child. These fees are intended to keep the school transportation service your child receives intact, not to enhance the service level. In addition, students are expected to behave properly at all times on the bus. Refunds of the fee will not be considered if the student has experienced a suspension from the bus for behavioral reasons.

Attachments

7/93; rev. 12/94; rev. 7/95; rev. 7/98; rev. 7/00, rev. 7/01, rev.7/04, rev. 7/07, rev.7/09
rev: 7/11, rev: 7/12, rev. 7/13, rev. 7/14, rev. 7/15, rev 7/16, 7/17

DANGER ZONES

DANGER FROM PASSING CARS



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SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION
California Department
of Education