



Frequently Asked Questions

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The following questions and suggested answers have been developed to clarify concerns regarding student transportation.

1. Who determines the walking distance from home to school for students?

The four Member School Boards determine a reasonable walking distance for students and follow the provincial standard. The Minimum walking distances are:

JK – SK	.2 km
Grades 1-3	1.2 km
Grades 4-8	1.6 km
Grades 9-12	3.2 km

It is the parent's responsibility to get the child safely to and from the bus stop.

2. The bus comes by my house to pick up my younger brother and I am not allowed to ride the bus even though there are empty seats. How does this make sense?

Non-eligible riders are not permitted to ride any vehicle having empty seats as there is no way to respond to those requests equitably across the region. East of Thunder Bay Transportation Consortium services a very large area encompassing towns from Dorion to Nakina and Nipigon to Manitowadge. We bus for 33 schools which belong to 4 different School boards. In order to remain consistent, our policies must be strictly enforced. If we allow ineligible students to ride in one town, we must allow it for all

students in all towns for each board which would result in additional buses and increased costs not funded by the Ministry of Education.

3. Are JK and SK supposed to be picked up at their house?

JK and SK students may be required to walk up to 200 meters to their bus stop and sometimes further due to the safety of the stop location. Please keep in mind that JK and SK students will not be dropped off if there is no responsible person to meet them at the stop.

4. Can I be transported to an alternate address?

The East of Thunder Bay Transportation Consortium (ETBTC) allows one permanent pick up and one permanent drop off for each student. The addresses may be different provided:

- i. the location is within the school boundaries
- ii. the request is made by the parent or guardian
- iii. the approved pick up and drop off locations are permanent

We consider a permanent change to be one that is more than 15 days in duration. If you need a change for less than 15 days, it will not be granted. It is up to the parent to make arrangements for changes less than 15 days. If a student has parents who are separated, we allow a pick up and drop off for each parent but again, there must be a permanent schedule. For student safety reasons, we want to ensure everyone is aware where a student is to be picked up and dropped off.

5. Why can't students eat on the bus?

Eating and drinking are not allowed on the bus for safety reasons. A child could choke on a piece of food and with the high seat backs and noise on the bus, the driver may not be aware of the situation. Leftover food and drink not only cause a mess, but can attract bees and wasps. Some student's have a very severe reaction to bee stings and to some foods such as peanut butter. It is safer for everyone when the no eating and drinking rule is adhered to.

6. When does ETBTC decide to cancel school bus transportation in bad weather?

In consultation with bus operators, the ETBTC Coordinator may cancel school bus transportation during inclement weather when it is not safe to drive a bus.

The ETBTC will make every effort to announce the decision to cancel school buses before the start of the school day before 7:00 am. It will be announced on local radio stations and posted on the website, www.etbtc.on.ca.

7. What makes school vehicles safe?

All buses built since 1980 meet safety standards developed by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA D-250) and set by Transport Canada. The size and bright yellow color make school buses very visible. The school bus is designed to protect passengers from impact. The floor is raised, the window glass is shatter proof, and there are strengthened reinforcements along the sides of the bus. The flashing lights and stop arm warn motorists that they must stop for a stopped school bus. The high penalty (six demerit points and a substantial fine) acts as an effective deterrent to motorists who might fail to stop for a school bus. School bus drivers receive special training and licensing, rigorous examinations and must maintain a good driving record.

8. Why aren't seat belts required on school vehicles?

Some parents are surprised to find that while seat belt use is mandatory in passenger vehicles, their children travel unrestrained on a school bus. School buses are designed to protect passengers through "compartmentalization". This means that school buses have:

- i. Seats with high backs
- ii. Seats positioned close together to form compartments;
- iii. Seats filled with energy-absorbing material;
- iv. Strong seat anchorages.

Parents also need to be aware of additional information about seat belts:

- i. To be effective, seat belts must be worn correctly (snug and low on the hips for full protection. Seat belts which are not correctly worn may cause injuries.)
- ii. Because school vehicles carry passengers from the very young to high school students, seat belt fit must be readjusted and use monitored to ensure safety.
- iii. Because of increased use, seat belts on school buses are subject to more wear and tear, and their condition must be monitored.

- iv. Studies using crash test dummies have shown that adding seat belts to the current school bus seating arrangement can actually increase the chance of head and neck injuries in restrained passengers.

9. Who do I call if my child does not return home on the school bus, at the normal time?

If your child does not arrive home in the afternoon, the first step should be to contact the school to see if the child is still there. If the student is not at the school, the next step would be to contact ETBTC at 807-229-1669 or toll free at 1-877-853-3833 and cell at 807-228-1246.

10. Who do I call if I have concern about my child's bus driver, who should I contact?

If you have a concern regarding your child's bus driver, the ETBTC should be contacted. When a concern is received, the bus operator is contacted immediately and the concern is investigated. A bus driver should never be confronted by a parent at any time.