

East of Thunder Bay Transportation Consortium

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Student Transportation

Revised August 23, 2021

The health, safety and well-being of students and staff is a top priority as schools are reopening.

As a result of physical distancing expectations, the ministry acknowledges that transportation planning will be challenging due to the reduction in vehicle capacity to accommodate students, which may result in school boards and consortia transporting fewer students. Given local circumstances differ across the province, school boards, in partnership with their local health units, should determine what protocols are required as well as any subsequent impacts to service levels.

- ✓ Encouraging active forms of travel or private transportation by parents and caregivers, where possible, to ease pressure on transportation demand.
- ✓ Reviewing transportation eligibility policies (e.g., walk distances, courtesy rider) to focus available transportation capacity on students who would be unable to reach school without it.
- ✓ To support return to school 5 days a week, school boards may be required to increase the utilization of buses beyond one student per seat and operate closer to capacity.
- ✓ To the extent that physical distancing may not be possible, the use of non-medical masks for all students is required on school vehicles. Exceptions should be made for students with medical conditions or special needs that prevent masking. Rear seats are to be loaded first when possible.
- ✓ Students should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept assisting with contact tracing in the case of a student or driver contracting COVID-19. Students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort should be seated together.
- ✓ Medical masks and eye protection (i.e. face shields) will be provided for school bus drivers, school bus monitors and student aides. Eye protection for drivers should not interfere with the safe operation of vehicles and is intended to protect drivers during close contact with students, such as during boarding and exiting
- ✓ Enhanced disinfecting protocols for frequently touched surfaces (for example, handrails and seatbacks) to at least twice daily.



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- ✓ Where possible, the seat directly behind the school bus driver should remain empty to maintain physical distancing. Windows should be opened when feasible to increase ventilation.
 - ✓ School boards should support accommodations for immunocompromised and otherwise medically vulnerable students, and students with special transportation needs (e.g., arrange separate vehicle, assign seating at front of school bus).
 - ✓ Training, where appropriate, to support school bus drivers, school bus monitors, and student aides should be provided to ensure that health and safety measures are understood, followed and enforced.
 - ✓ Reviewing planning parameters such as limiting transfers and the number of students at a bus stop, to reduce exposure.
 - ✓ Health and safety measures should be clearly communicated to parents and guardians of students to ensure their comfort with the adapted transportation system and receive their support in having students understand and follow guidelines.

This Fact Sheet has been designed to provide information for school communities considering the changes required by COVID-19. For any questions, concerns, or accommodations, please contact your child's school principal.

*** Adapted from the Ministry of Education "COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools (2021-2022)*

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