



This fact sheet provides information about Ministry of Education daily school bus routes and how they are designed.

### How are daily bus routes designed?

The Ministry of Education's **service agents** design daily school bus routes to meet the travelling needs of eligible students and according to the Ministry of Education's School Transport Assistance policies.

#### What do service agents consider when designing and reviewing school bus routes?

When designing and reviewing the routes of a daily school bus network, **service agents** take into account:

- › the number of students in the area who are eligible for School Transport Assistance:
  - there must be a minimum of eight students on a main road in one direction from the school
  - side roads/extensions can be considered if there are four or more students living on a side road/extension or the distance to the home of the farthest eligible student is a minimum of 2.4kms one way from the main road.
- › the location of eligible **students' homes** and the **Transport Entitlement Zone** boundary, and
- › the timing of the route so that all eligible students serviced by the route can arrive at their school before the school day commences, and
- › the distance the bus has to travel, the serviced schools, and bus turnaround points, and
- › any special considerations (for example; gravel roads, steep gradients, severe bends, traffic volume, severe winter weather), and
- › daily cost limits set by the Ministry of Education and optimising the route so it is effective and efficient.

#### Who decides where bus stops are located?

The individual **transport service provider** for each school bus route determines the safe and suitable locations of bus stops on the bus route. The **transport service provider** will advise the service agent of where the bus stops are and eligible students are expected to assemble at these bus stops in the morning at their allocated time.

The service agent provides the draft bus route map to the school for it to consider the safety of the bus stops. Any caregiver with safety concerns about the location of an existing bus stop should contact their school **bus controller**. The **bus controller** will work with the **service agent** and the **transport service provider** to resolve the issue and, if necessary, relocate the bus stop closer to school.

#### Who are the people involved in Ministry school bus services?

**Service agent:** A service agent is the transport agent contracted by the Ministry of Education to manage and administer School Transport Assistance on its behalf. Go to the Ministry's website, [www.minedu.govt.nz/schooltransport](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/schooltransport), for a list of service agent contact details.

**Bus controller:** The bus controller is responsible for school bus route administration and safety. Each school has a school bus controller. Generally this person is the principal or a full-time teacher.

**Transport service provider:** The transport service provider is the company contracted by the Ministry of Education to run a school transport service on a route.

## How do Transport Entitlement Zones affect school bus services?

Each **state** and **state-integrated school** has its own **Transport Entitlement Zone**. School buses can only pick up eligible students within the **Transport Entitlement Zone(s)** of the school(s) they service.

## What if an eligible student doesn't live near a bus route?

Eligible students attending their **nearest appropriate school** are responsible for making their own way, or being conveyed by their caregiver, up to 2.4 kilometres from the **student's home** to the bus route.

Eligible students who are not attending their **nearest appropriate school** are responsible for making their own way, or being conveyed by their caregiver, up to 2.4 kilometres from the **Transport Entitlement Zone** boundary of the school they attend to the bus route.

If the bus route is more than 2.4 kilometres away from the **student's home** or the **Transport Entitlement Zone** boundary as described above, then the student may be eligible for a **Conveyance Allowance** towards the cost of getting to and from the school bus route. For more information, see Fact Sheet 2.

## At what times do school buses operate?

The first morning pick-up will normally be no earlier than 7.30am and the last afternoon set-down completed by 5.00pm. There may be a small number of exceptions to this general rule due to local circumstances, such as a longer route length, school starting times, and the number of schools on the route.

## Can ineligible students ride on Ministry contracted school buses?

School bus services are designed to meet the travelling needs of eligible students. However, **transport service providers** may allow ineligible students to travel on a school bus, as long as they meet all of the following conditions:

- › the **transport service provider** must first obtain the written permission of all schools affected by the bus route; and
- › no eligible students are disadvantaged – either by not being able to have a seat or by having their journey unduly delayed; and
- › the route cannot be altered without the permission of the **service agent**; and
- › the **transport service provider** is contractually required to charge ineligible students a fare.

## Bus routes remain within the Transport Entitlement Zones of the school(s) they service

Bus routes are designed to travel only within the **Transport Entitlement Zone(s)** of the school(s) serviced and run no closer than:

- › 1.6 kilometres from the **Transport Entitlement Zone** boundary of the school(s) it services, and
- › 1.6 kilometres from the last eligible **student's home** on the route.

If the end of a route does not have a safe turning point, the **service agent** will either shorten the route back towards the school(s) serviced by the route or extend the route by no more than 500 metres to the next nearest safe site for turning. Eligible students affected by this may be eligible for a **Conveyance Allowance** to get to the new bus stop. Refer to Fact Sheet 2 for more information on **Conveyance Allowances**.

## Can school buses travel into the Transport Entitlement Zone of a school that is not serviced by the route?

A school bus can only temporarily travel outside of the **Transport Entitlement Zone(s)** of the school(s) it services for practical travel reasons – for example, if it is a convenient way to turn the bus around or to shorten the distance on a route. While doing so, the school bus cannot pick up or set down any students while out of its 'home' **Transport Entitlement Zone(s)**.

## Can a Transport Entitlement Zone be amended?

Where a school believes that their **TEZ** should be changed, then that school is able to seek an amendment. The process requires consultation between the affected schools as any amendment to a TEZ will require a school(s) to agree to permanently transferring part of their zone to their neighbouring school. Ministry of Education approval is also needed. More information can be found on the School Transport webpage.

## Can caregivers pay to have a bus route extended?

It may be possible for a caregiver(s) to pay to have an existing route extended within the **Transport Entitlement Zone(s)** of those schools already serviced by the route, only as long as:

- › no eligible students using the bus are disadvantaged – for example, by being unduly delayed, and
- › there is no safety risk, and
- › the **service agent** has agreed to the extension in writing.

The caregivers and the **transport service provider** agree the amount charged for the route extension.

## Can a school bus service be redesigned, reduced or stopped?

Yes. If a **service agent** determines that an individual school bus service is no longer viable, they may recommend that the service be redesigned, reduced or stopped. This could be due to low eligible student numbers using the bus.

If this happens, a **Conveyance Allowance** may be paid to caregivers of eligible students. Where a school bus service has been reduced or stopped, a minimum of one full term's notice is given.

The Ministry of Education does not fund school bus services where **suitable public transport** is available. As regional council-registered public transport services expand and start to overlap with Ministry of Education school bus routes, the Ministry works with the local regional council and the New Zealand Transport Agency to plan bus services for the area to avoid any overlap of service provision. If, as a result, the Ministry decides to stop a school bus service, it will give at least one full term's notice to the affected students.

## Do these route design guidelines apply to Direct Resourcing Funding Programme routes?

Yes, these route design guidelines apply to the design of school bus routes provided under both the **Daily Funding Programme** and the **Direct Resourcing Funding Programme**. Schools funded under the **Direct Resourcing Funding Programme** are provided funds directly and the amount of funding is based on the Ministry-designed bus route. However, under a **Direct Resourcing Funding Programme** a directly funded school can run its buses as it chooses, provided its bus routes only travel within its **Transport Entitlement Zone**.





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