

## 3 Ministry-funded school bus service



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

### How are daily bus routes designed?

Routes are designed to transport eligible students who want to access a Ministry funded vehicle to and from the closest school that they can enroll at. Routes are designed to transport as many eligible students as efficiently as possible. Routes will generally only travel down main roads and students are expected to make their own way to a central bus stop.

Route design takes into account the following factors:

- › the location of current eligible students
- › bus stop location
- › student and road safety
- › that the route runs within a suitable timetable
- › that the route is within Ministry's cost limits
- › any approved exemptions

Students who bypass a closer school(s) to attend their school of choice will not be considered when designing routes.

The exact design of the route will be at the discretion of the service agent following discussion with the transport service provider (TSP), and the affected school(s).

### 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.education.govt.nz/schooltransport](http://www.education.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.

### At what times do school buses operate?

Services should not start picking up students before 7am, and all students should be set down by 5pm. Ideally students should not be on the vehicle for any longer than 60 minutes.

There may be some exceptions to this timeframe due to local circumstances such as route length, school starting times, and the number of schools on the route.

## 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 will be reduced or stopped, a minimum of one full term's notice is given.

## Can a school bus service be extended?

Schools may seek an extension to a current route to service more eligible students. While Ministry services generally only travel along main roads extensions may be approved along main or side roads not currently travelled by the route.

Extensions will be considered if:

- › there are four or more eligible students living on or around the road that the extension is being sought for; and
- › the distance to the home of the furthest eligible student is at least 2.4km from the road the bus currently travels along.

Extensions will be approved if the above criteria, and the other route design guidelines are met.

If the route extension is approved the vehicle will travel along the route to a central point where the vehicle can safely turn around. Students may need to travel to meet the vehicle at this central point. A final decision on where the route will travel to, along the extension, will be decided by the service agent in consultation with the **transport service provider** and school.

## Bus stops

Stops will be decided by the service agent in conjunction with the **transport service provider**.

## 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.

Historically students have been able to transfer their entitlement for School Transport Assistance under guidance called **Transport Entitlement Zones**. Routes reviewed and designed during 2016 and onwards will not be using **Transport Entitlement Zones** as a consideration for route design for either the **Daily Funding Programme** or the **Direct Resourcing Funding Programme**.

## Glossary of defined terms

### Main road

A major road or arterial road for motor transport.

### Public transport service

This includes buses, ferries, or train services that:

- › are registered by the appropriate local or regional council, and
- › run regularly and on all school days, and
- › are fare-paying services.

All commercial services are required to be registered with the appropriate local or regional council.

### School's address

A school's address is defined by the Ministry using Geographic Information Software.

### Side road

A minor road branching off a main road. These may connect to other main roads, to other side roads, or may be dead ended.

### State school

Most New Zealand schools are state schools which receive government funding. State schools can be primary, intermediate, middle, secondary, or area/composite.

Generally they accept both boys and girls at primary and intermediate levels (Year 1 – 8), although some secondary schools offer single sex education. Lessons are based on New Zealand curriculum.

For School Transport purposes, state schools and state-integrated schools are considered separately.

### State-integrated school

These are schools integrated into the state school system under the provisions of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975. Section 34 of the Act makes provision for School Transport Assistance to integrated schools. See also **school of special character**.

### Student's home

A student's home address is defined as the point on the closest public road that is closest to the student's roadside gate.

### Suitable public transport

The Ministry is currently working with providers of public transport to determine a mutually appropriate understanding of what constitutes suitable public transport. This is expected to be concluded, including engagement and communication by December 2016 for effect at the start of the 2017 school year. Until that time a **public transport service** is deemed to be suitable if it meets all of the following criteria:

- › the public transport service travels within 2.4 kilometres of the roadside gate of the **student's home**
- › the public transport service travels within 2.4 kilometres of the **closest appropriate school**
- › the public transport service does not require the student to change transport services more than once on a journey
- › the public transport service has a suitable timetable



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