

How are bus routes designed?

This fact sheet contains information about the design of school bus routes. It also outlines the considerations that are taken into account when designing routes. The information in this factsheet is current as at November 2010 and should be read in conjunction with the other factsheets.

Overview

School bus routes are designed by the Ministry's service agents within the policy guidelines set by the Ministry. Schools and bus operators have the opportunity to make route design suggestions to the service agents.

What are the main principles and considerations when routes are designed?

Ordinarily route designs are restricted to travel on main arterial roads only, without deviations. Cost per capita limits establish economically sustainable school bus routes. There are also localised environmental limits (gravel roads, steep gradients, severe bends, traffic volume) that control how far buses can travel between the hours of 7:30am and 5:00pm.

Where there are no other special considerations:

- Routes are to be designed so that the first pickup (last drop-off) point is at least 1.6kms away from the public roadside gateway of the furthest eligible student in the direction of the school.
- In outlying residential communities it is preferable to pick up students within the community from a central pickup point or, where student numbers are large, to pick them up from several points.
- If it is determined that there is no safe turnaround point at the 1.6km point, then in general the route is to be curtailed back towards the school to the nearest safe point. However, the route may be extended by up to 500 metres if there is a suitable safe turnaround point closer than 1.6 kms. The service agent will liaise with the bus operator on the suitability of a turnaround point or pickup/drop off point for a route.

Can students be picked up/dropped off in side roads and extensions?

Side roads / extensions can be considered in the route design if there are 4 or more students living on a side road/extension and the distance to the home of the furthest eligible student is a minimum of 2.4kms one way from the main road.

Extraordinary considerations, such as significant road danger, may justify the inclusion of side roads/extensions even though the minimum distance or number of students required is not met. Such considerations will be rare, and service agents will use their discretion. Conditions may exist where including a side road/extension in the route is not acceptable, for example:

- Unacceptable time required to complete the extension and or the suitability /degree of difficulty of the side road/extension for the vehicle.

School Transport: What you need to know

The following fact sheets about school transport are available:

1. Who is eligible for school transport assistance?
2. What if a student doesn't attend the nearest school?
3. What if the nearest school doesn't offer education in the desired language?
4. What types of assistance can a student get?
5. How is transport assistance provided for students with special needs?
6. What should I know about school bus services?
7. Student behaviour on buses: What is expected?
8. What is good practice for school bus safety?
9. Who has a responsibility for school bus safety?
10. What is a Conveyance Allowance and who can receive it?
11. Who can I contact about school transport?

12. How are bus routes designed?

For more information visit our website at:

www.minedu.govt.nz/schooltransport

Can buses use loop routes if they go outside a school's Transport Entitlement Zone (TEZ)?

A bus route may travel into another school's TEZ in the course of servicing a school zone (for example, if the route distance is shorter). In doing so bus operators must not pick up or drop off students in that TEZ.

School bus or conveyance allowance?

Service agents are to determine when it is more cost-effective to use a conveyance allowance to transport students rather than pick them up with the school bus. Examples include:

- when student numbers are small (below 8 students) or exceed the per capita limits
- when the distance to the furthest eligible student (or students) means that the route's per capita limit is exceeded
- where the time required to pick up the furthest eligible student (or students) means the bus cannot get students to school on time or pick up/set down times would be earlier than 7:30am and after 5:00pm
- where parts of the route are unsuitable for a school bus.

Conveyance allowance is applied for by the caregiver and paid directly to them unless they choose to have it paid to someone else. **See Fact Sheet 10: *What is a Conveyance Allowance and who can receive it?***

Do schools and bus operators have the opportunity to be consulted on route design?

Route consultation with schools will take place once the route has been designed in accordance with the Ministry's policy. The main elements are:

- the draft routes or route changes are developed and published by the service agent
- schools and bus operators are invited to make suggestions within a timeframe on how the route may be improved
- the service agent will consider the suggestions, and make changes to the route design at its sole discretion, always ensuring the design remains within Ministry policy
- final route designs will be published and made available to schools and bus operators
- where possible and cost-effective, route design may include the specific needs of students in particular areas, such as the ability to carry snow equipment.

Schools are responsible for consulting with their communities, collating and forwarding parental feedback to the service agent. Parents have local knowledge that could benefit route design. Some examples are:

- awareness of future needs and likely fluctuations of pupil numbers from year to year
- knowledge of local roads, traffic, and danger spots that are not evident on a map
- knowledge of how to adapt to changing weather conditions over the year.

Do these route design guidelines apply to Direct Resourcing routes?

These guidelines apply to the design of both daily school bus routes and Direct Resourcing routes. For directly resourced schools, these will be used to determine their funding in accordance with the relevant funding formula. Directly resourced schools have the option to run variations to the designed routes, but are not funded for these variations.

What happens if public transport becomes available in my area?

Students are not eligible for school transport assistance (with some exceptions) if suitable public transport is available (see **Fact Sheet 1: *Who is eligible for school transport assistance?***). As public transport services expand and potential overlaps with Ministry school transport routes are identified, the Ministry will work with the regional council to establish a mutually agreed approach to route design in the area. If necessary, a services and support plan for a period of transition will be agreed between the regional council and the Ministry. Ministry approval will be required for route design changes arising from changes to public transport routes.

Looking for more information on school transport assistance?

Then visit our website at: www.minedu.govt.nz/schooltransport

To find out more about the policy outlined in this document, you can talk to your school or contact your local service agent (contact details can be found at the above web address).