

## What should I know about school bus services?

This fact sheet contains general information about Ministry-administered school bus services for eligible students. The information is current as at June 2010.

### Overview

School bus services are one way in which the Ministry of Education provides transport assistance to eligible students. School bus routes are designed by the Ministry's service agents, who are responsible for determining and delivering school transport assistance within the policy set by the Ministry.

### How close to my home will a bus service run?

In many situations the design of a bus route will mean that a school bus will stop outside a student's home. Those students **not** living on a bus route can expect to make their own way for anything up to 2.4 kilometres to reach a bus (except where a student is not attending the nearest school – see *Fact Sheet 2: What if a student doesn't attend the nearest school?*). The caregivers of eligible students who live further than 2.4km may receive a conveyance allowance to assist with getting the student to the bus stop.

### How are bus routes designed?

School transport can be provided within **one Transport Entitlement Zone (TEZ) only** (see *Fact Sheet 2: What if a student doesn't attend the nearest school*), and school buses can only run within a school's zone. School bus routes can also run no closer than one of the following:

- ◆ 1.6km to the home of the last student on the route if the last student's home falls within the TEZ
- ◆ 1.6km within the perimeter of the school's TEZ if the last student on the route lives outside of the school's TEZ (i.e. if the student is not attending his/her nearest school).

Where there is no safe turning point at this distance, the route will be shortened back towards the school, so affected students may have to make their own way somewhat further than 1.6 kilometres. If the distance is more than 2.4 kilometres the caregiver is eligible for a conveyance allowance towards the cost of meeting the school bus.

### Should there be standing passengers on a bus?

New Zealand Transport Agency determines the legal loading limit, for every bus, which includes both seated and standing passengers. The loading limits for a particular vehicle can be found on its Certificate of Loading, and bus operators are responsible for ensuring that they do not exceed these limits. Bus routes are designed to have as few standing passengers as possible within the set cost limits.

### 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](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/schooltransport)

## **At what times do school bus services operate?**

Services generally run to provide a first pick-up after 7.30am and a last set-down before 5.00pm, to best meet the needs of the students. There may be exceptions due to local circumstances, such as route length, school starting times, and the number of schools on the route. For example, first pick-up could be at 7.15am and the last set-down at 4.45pm.

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

The service agent consults with the school's bus controller and the bus operator to decide safe and suitable locations for bus stops. Students are expected to assemble at these stops. Anyone who has safety concerns about the location of a bus stop should contact the bus controller. The bus controller will work with the service agent and the bus operator to resolve the issue or relocate the bus stop.

## **Can ineligible students ride on school buses?**

Yes. Bus services are provided for the eligible students requiring assistance. However, school bus operators may allow ineligible students to travel on the bus as long as eligible students are not disadvantaged. They will charge ineligible students a fare.

## **Can existing bus services be extended?**

Yes, existing bus services can be extended. The Ministry's service agent may approve an extension to pick up additional eligible students if all of the following are met:

- ◆ the cost of the extension is within the per-student cost limit
- ◆ the cost of the whole extended route is within the per-student cost limit
- ◆ the timetable is not significantly changed for other eligible students using the service.

Even if the conditions noted above are met, services can only be extended into the TEZ of another school with the agreement from the bus operator and the written permission of that school and the service agent. Further information can be found in Factsheet 2. Extensions can be considered if there is a temporary road hazard on a route, like a bridge under repair.

## **Can a caregiver pay to have a bus route extended?**

Yes, a caregiver can pay to have a route extended as long as there is no disadvantage to eligible students using the bus and there is no safety risk. The caregiver and the bus operator decide the amount charged.

## **Can a school bus service be reorganised, reduced or shut down?**

Yes. The Ministry of Education provides school transport within set eligibility criteria (refer to Factsheet 1). If the Ministry sees a service as no longer viable the service will be reduced, reorganised or shut down. This could be due to falling student numbers or the implementation of suitable public transport. If this happens, a conveyance allowance is paid to caregivers of eligible students living more than 2.4 kilometres from the school or the remaining service. Changes are usually arranged to coincide with the end of a school term.

## **What happens if there is a bus crash or incident?**

New Zealand has a very good safety record for school buses, and serious crashes and incidents are rare. However, when one does happen, the following action is taken:

1. Bus driver/operator obtains medical aid immediately and contacts the Police, the school/s and the local service agent.
2. Police notify caregivers or next of kin where there has been serious injury or death.
3. School bus controller notifies the principal and telephones a report through the local service agent immediately. Where police are not required to do so, the principal immediately notifies caregivers of any students who have sustained injuries.
4. Service agent immediately notifies the Ministry of Education local and national offices.
5. Within three days, the school bus controller files a written report, including any new developments, with the local service agent.