



Transportation

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Phone: 403.342.3724

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Regarding School Bus Transportation

The Red Deer Public Schools Transportation department receives numerous telephone calls on a daily basis. Here is a list of FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (in no particular order) to assist you with answers to the most commonly asked questions. If your question is not answered here, please call the District Transportation Department at the number above.

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What does "designated school" mean?

Answer. A designated school is one in which The Board has directed the student to attend; by virtue of the area they live in (school attendance boundary) or by the (special) educational program they are enrolled in.

What does "school of choice" mean?

Answer. A school of choice is one in which the student has chosen because of the type of program being offered. Students who are attending a school of choice are not eligible for subsidized transportation as per Board policy. The responsibility to provide transportation to and from the school of choice remains with the parent(s). In the event that there is excess capacity on a chartered (yellow) bus that is serving that school, the student may apply for approved ineligible status (AIS) and may access the chartered bus at an established bus stop.

What is an eligible student?

Answer. Alberta Education defines *eligible* students for transportation funding as those residing greater than 2.39 km from their designated school.

What is an ineligible student?

Answer. An *ineligible* student is one who lives less than 2.4 km away from his/her designated school. If an ineligible student wishes to access RDPSD's transportation, he/she is automatically subject to an *Ineligible Rider* fee.

What does Approved Ineligible Status (AIS) mean?

Answer. An AIS student is one that:

- a. lives less than 1.6 km from their designated elementary school;
- b. lives less than 2.4 km from their designated middle school;
- c. is attending a school of choice regardless of distance

What if I live more than 1.6 kms from my designated school?

Answer. Students residing more than 1.6 km from their designated school will receive approval to be eligible for busing. Parents are required to sign and submit a Charter Application Form annually, which is available at the school or Central Services.

What if I live less than 1.6 kms from my designated school?

Answer. Students residing less than 1.6 km from their designated school will be required to provide their own transportation. In the event there are empty seats on a chartered bus that is serving that school, the student may apply for approved ineligible status (AIS) and may access the chartered bus at a previously established bus stop.

Why don't yellow buses use their stop signs & flashing lights at bus stops?

Answer. Traffic laws restrict the use of certain yellow bus flashing warning lights and mechanical stopping arms in urban settings. (City Bylaw 3186/97)

How do I apply for school bus transportation to the Gateway Christian School?

Answer. Transportation to the Gateway Christian School is completely separate from that of transportation to other Red Deer Public Schools (even though it falls under the umbrella of Red Deer Public Schools). Please contact the school directly to request, arrange and pay for school bus transportation to this particular school.

Why does Red Deer Public Schools charge fees for student transportation?

Answer. Alberta Education provides transportation funding for all *eligible* students to receive free transportation to their designated school. RDPSD's Student Transportation provides a service to students throughout the division by offering to fill bus seats that are not required by designated students. Charging fees helps to recover a portion of the incremental cost of providing additional service to students. These are called *Ineligible Rider* fees. An *Ineligible Rider fee* is a fee-based service that exceeds the transportation standards as outlined by Alberta Education.

How do I pay my transportation fees when they're due?

Answer. Student Transportation fees must be paid in advance of accessing the service. Fees may be paid by cash or cheque (post-dated cheques are also accepted). Cheques must be dated for the 1st or the 15th of the month only. This mitigates the risk of cheque cashing issues. Cheques are made payable to *Red Deer Public Schools*. Fees are due when the application is submitted and cannot be processed without it. Those who have paid their fees will receive their bus pass at the school and once received, are authorized to use the bus.

How do I know if my son/daughter is eligible for Transportation to school?

Answer. Red Deer Public Schools establishes designated schools for each area of the city. Eligibility for transportation services is determined by the distance from a student's place of residence to their designated school. Guidelines for determining distances are established by the Department of Education. Designated schools for the various areas of the city are outlined on the Red Deer Public School District website at <http://www.rdpsd.ab.ca/MAIN/boundaries>.

* Eligibility distances: Grade 1 to Grade 5 = 1.6 km Grades 6 to 12 = 2.4 km

Should I have received any information confirming his/her application?

No, all "eligible" applications are automatically confirmed and considered as having a seat on the bus. ("eligible" = attending his/her designated school, in grades 1 to 5 and over the 1.6 km minimum walk distance).

How are parents notified of route revisions?

Routes are occasionally revised to add stops for new students and students that have a change of residence. And to eliminate stops that are no longer being used. These changes may significantly affect the pickup times for other stops on the route. The school is responsible for notifying parents/guardians of changes in routes or pickup/drop off times. Transportation is not provided to or from a parent's work location or from a commercial area or building.

Are the bus passes/tags handed out on the first day of school?

Bus passes/tags are sent to the school for distribution. We try to have them at the school for the first day of school however it depends on how many last minute changes have to be made to the routes. Students are normally authorized to ride the bus without a bus tag for the first two weeks of school.

Can my son be transported from his school to a location other than home for sports?

Transportation service is not provided to for students to any location other than the regular assigned school bus stop. Transportation to personal after school activities such as medical visits, tutoring, recreational activities, shopping religious instruction or other activities is the responsibility of the parent of guardian.

Can parents or staff ride the school bus?

Due to concerns related to safety, security and vehicle capacity, parents are not permitted to ride to or from school on District route buses except when the parent is a Teachers' Aide. Teacher's Aides must obtain permission from the Transportation Department prior to riding. Transportation of parents or staff to or from school(s) is never permitted.

Where can I find the location of the bus route or bus stop closest to me?

The most up to date bus stop information for all of our bus routes can be found by visiting the following URL: <http://www.rdpsd.ab.ca/Transportation.php>

Will my Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten Student be transported?

Answer. RDPSD does not normally provide transportation to kindergarten students. Instead, parents of K children may be eligible to receive Alberta Education Grant funding. Parents transporting children to and from the kindergarten program may apply for the full grant; parents transporting one way (either to or from the school) may apply for one-half of the grant. A parent is eligible to receive this funding provided they reside with their child at least 1.6 km from their designated school, or, if attending a school of choice, the child must reside at least 2.4 kilometers from *both* the designated school *and* the school of choice.

What is the Kindergarten Transportation Grant?

Answer. Kindergarten programs are normally only conducted for half of a day. The school district doesn't provide transportation at lunch times (to either pick-up or drop-off) and therefore parents may be reimbursed for transporting their child. Half of the Grant may be awarded to parents transporting their child one way and the full Grant may be awarded for parents transporting their child both ways. Grant applications are obtained from the local school's main office or at the Central Services office located at 4747-53rd Street. These applications are due at Central Services no later than September 30th of that school year in order to be eligible for funding. Late applications will not be eligible for grant reimbursement. A letter of confirmation of approval will be sent to the parent. Payment will be made to the parent(s) unless a portion thereof is required to be applied to outstanding school fees.

When will I receive my Kindergarten Transportation Grant funding?

Answer. Payment of Transportation grants are made prior to June 30th of the current school year and will be forwarded to the student's school for pick up.

How are bus stops determined?

School bus routes are developed each year based upon actual enrollment. Student pickup and drop-off locations may change from year to year based upon actual student enrollment and geographic distribution. School bus routes are developed to allow the school bus to travel in the most direct route through neighborhoods. This is to reduce time and mileage and allow the trips to run in combination with trips serving other schools. Every additional stop impacts the length of time students are on the bus and the number of buses required to provide transportation service. Students are expected to cross neighborhood streets with low traffic volume and to walk up to the guideline distances to and from the school bus stop (Elementary = 1.59 km, Middle = 2.39 km). School bus stops normally serve multiple students residing near the stop point. Unfortunately it is not possible to locate all school bus pickup locations within sight of the home and visibility from the residence is not a factor in the establishment of school bus stops. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide supervision while walking to and from, and while waiting at, the pickup location.

How far ahead of time should my child be at the bus stop?

Answer. We recommend you take your child to the bus stop approximately 5 minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive.

Why is my child's bus late?

Answer. School bus routes can be delayed for a variety of reasons including Weather, traffic, driver absenteeism, maintenance difficulties, unacceptable student behavior and unforeseen incidents. Students should remain at their assigned school bus stop for at least 10 minutes after the scheduled pickup time. Parents/guardians who leave for work before the scheduled school bus pickup time should make arrangements with a neighbor or family member to assist their child(ren) in case of an unscheduled delay.

- Sometimes bus routes must be doubled out or run as a second load to or from the school due to the regular driver being absent (and therefore a temporary driver may be driving the route).
- Traffic in the Red Deer City area is increasingly complex.
- Drivers check buses before their routes and sometimes find mechanical problems that can cause delays and require driving a different bus for that day. This can cause the bus to be behind schedule.
- Not enough drivers. The Public School district (and its contracted transportation service provider) is not immune to staffing shortages similar to other City service companies. Our Transportation services provider is constantly recruiting drivers to mitigate the risk of insufficient, qualified bus drivers.

Please know that we are doing everything humanly possible to have buses running on schedule every day. Please allow ten to twenty minutes before calling the Transportation office or the school in the event your bus does not arrive as scheduled.

Why was my child suspended from riding the bus?

Answer. Behavioral expectations on the school bus are much like those in the classroom. Then, factor in the mobility of that "classroom" and traffic, add noise and the size of the "classroom" and you have a potential catastrophe if there are not clear expectations and enforcement. The behavioral expectations on the bus revolve around the individual rights of every person on the bus, including the driver, and the collective rights of students and driver as it pertains to SAFETY. Anything that jeopardizes the safety of individuals on the bus is viewed as serious.

Most drivers have bus rules or expectations posted on the bus. When there is an infraction, a referral is turned into the school administrators who are responsible for contacting the student and parent to solve the lack of compliance with bus behavioral expectations. **The local school administrator (Principal) is solely responsible for consequences (suspension) based on the incident as described by the driver and student and not the District Transportation Manager.** Our goal is to avoid denying any student transportation to and from school however safety for all students and drivers must and will be enforced at all times.

Why can't you come further into my sub-division?

Answer. School buses come in various sizes ranging from 25 to 36 feet long, 20,000-26,000 pounds, 12-13 feet high and 6-9 feet wide. The length of the bus is one thing that limits school bus maneuverability in Cul-de-sacs, Crescents, Closes and other tight places. Smaller buses can turn in a shorter radius, while longer buses cannot maneuver the same circle without backing the bus, which is avoided in bus routing if possible. In the winter environment, many secondary streets are either poorly plowed or not plowed at all, resulting in buses becoming stuck, blocking the road and severely congesting traffic and extending the bus route times. Bus routes are not divided up into winter and summer routes, therefore winter conditions are taken into consideration during the route planning phase. Local residents often park

trucks, boats and trailers on the streets and sometimes even on the corners. Often children leave their bicycles, skateboards and basketball backboards on the streets as well. Although our (contracted) drivers are trained to be able to parallel park their buses, some sub-divisions are not designed with school bus transportation in mind. Please be aware that we design school bus routes to be safe and convenient to the majority of students within the limits of time and physics.

Under no circumstances will any bus be routed to back down streets, execute a three-point turn around maneuver, travel unpaved roads, enter situations that require a backing maneuver or travel on roadways that are narrow, impassable, or restricted by vegetation or overhanging trees or snow. A school bus must be able to travel the road without tree limbs or bushes brushing against the vehicle.

Why can't my child get off wherever they want to in the afternoon?

Answer. To avoid multiple problems, the driver is not authorized to transport any student other than those registered to ride that particular bus. A student may, with a note signed by the parent, be permitted to get off at a different bus stop so long as this bus stop is located on the assigned bus route of that student. This allows the drivers to focus on driving and safety instead of having to decide whether the student should be allowed to change their routine and get off with a friend without the parent's knowledge or permission. This should be the decision of the parent. The driver has no other way to verify that the parent has made this decision. This policy avoids confusion and the chance of students getting lost or running away. Only students registered to ride that particular bus may ride on that bus and they must possess a bus pass that designates that bus.

Why are there only 30 students riding some buses and my child's bus is crowded?

Answer. Decisions regarding each bus route are made by careful planning based on information from the school bus registration, previous similar routes and Department of Transportation data. Most routes are fixed during the summer months and changes are made after the first two weeks of school, if not sooner. The more current information we are given the better decisions regarding specific routes we can make. Distance from school, number of buses, drivers and grouping of students and neighborhoods are factors also considered. Sometimes it is just not possible to have the exact number of students on every bus. Some buses, even within the same school routing system, will have more riders than others.

Why does my child have to cross a busy road to access the stop location?

Answer. School bus stops are established based upon the most current information available at the time the route is planned and are normally designed to serve multiple students residing near the stop. Yellow bus routes can be long due to the geographic area covered. Minimizing the student ride-times is a high priority, and therefore the necessity to maintain routes along the collector/main roads (which are often busy) is a necessary practice. We realize that in order to access yellow bus service, roads will have to be crossed and that an escort for the children is prudent. Student Transportation encourages and promotes the practice of all students being escorted to and from the stop locations by a parent or guardian.

Why can't last minute bussing changes be granted?

Answer. SAFETY is our main goal and concern. Changes may be granted for consistent and regularly established bus schedules only and within the child's regular route.

Can my child bring his friend home after school with him on the bus?

Answer. The School District operates a large and very complex school bus route system. Student safety is compromised when students ride on buses other than the assigned bus route or depart the bus at other than the authorized location. For student safety, school bus drivers are prohibited from accepting notes from parents, school staff or students requesting to ride on other than the assigned school bus route or to go to an alternate location. To ensure the safety of our students, only those students who have submitted a Charter Transportation Application and have been approved for yellow bus service are authorized to ride the bus. Students may not bring friends or siblings on the bus who are not authorized to ride.

How can I become a school bus driver?

Answer. The School District's contracted Transportation Service Company is continually looking for qualified candidates to become school bus drivers. Please contact Prairie Bus Lines (Red Deer) @ 403.342.6390 for information

When is it too dangerous to transport students to school due to inclement weather?

Answer. The Superintendent of schools is responsible for the final decision to close schools due to inclement weather. The decision is made after administrative staff report from various positions in the City regarding road conditions. Other factors considered are school facility information (i.e. lack of heat, water, power etc.), school parking lot conditions, temperature and wind chill, snow and ice build up on main and secondary roads and weather forecasts and predictions.

How are parents notified if schools are closed due to weather?

Answer. Once a decision has been made to close the schools, the public will immediately be notified, usually by 6 a.m. Our website at <http://www.rdpsd.ab.ca/index.php> is immediately updated as well as all local radio stations are contacted and requested to broadcast this information. If the schools close during the day, the students will be sent home on their regularly scheduled bus unless other directions are on file at the student's school indicating otherwise. **UNFORTUNATELY UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, SCHOOLS CANNOT ACCEPT PHONED IN ALTERNATE DIRECTIONS THAT DAY.** Please give your child's school written instructions regarding inclement weather transportation ASAP if non-routine transportation is to be used.

Under what weather conditions will schools be closed?

Answer. The practice of the Red Deer Public School District is to keep the schools open, if at all possible. In this way, we are able to meet our responsibility to provide access to education, to provide a safe haven for children during severe weather conditions and to meet the needs of parents who wish/need to send their children to school. As a result, it is extremely rare for the schools to be closed. However, if extreme weather conditions cause power outages in schools, or roads and sidewalks become impassable due to snow or other conditions, the schools *may* be closed. If this occurs, announcements to that effect will be posted on our website and will be made on local radio stations.

Under what conditions are school buses cancelled?

Answer. In the Red Deer Public School district, buses will operate as long as the roads are passable and the bus contractor feels that the buses can be operated safely. The Red Deer Public School District closely works with three different busing contractors; City of Red Deer, Prairie Bus Lines and the Red Deer Society For Christian Education Busing (Gateway Christian School). When severe weather conditions occur, representatives of these contractors will contact the Transportation Coordinator if they

feel they cannot operate their buses safely at the time. If buses will not be operating on a particular day, announcements will be made on local media outlets and will be posted on our District website. If buses are operating, they will be operated as close to the established schedule as possible, but delays may occur and should be expected.

Will the schools be open if the buses are not running?

Answer. In most cases, yes. Keeping the schools open and operating the buses are two separate decisions.

Under what conditions will children be kept inside during the school day?

Answer. In consultation with parents, each school has established its own regulations with respect to “in days” and “out days”. As a general rule, students are kept inside when temperatures fall below -20 Celsius, inclusive of wind chill.

My son/daughter is in a special education program. How will they be transported?

Answer. A committee of people already involved in a student’s education determines transportation needs. After it has been determined that the student would benefit from being transported apart from the mainstreamed students, the student’s family and his/her teacher will complete the appropriate applications. This application is actually in two parts: Part 1 - *The Charter Transportation Application* is completed and signed by the student’s parent or guardian. Part 2 - *The Special Transportation Request* is completed, substantiated and signed by the student’s teacher. Both of these forms must be submitted together to the school for forwarding to the Transportation office for processing. The school offering the system program becomes your child's designated school

I have curb service for a child with special education needs. Can I make arrangements for a sibling to ride that bus?

Answer. Only students that have been approved for special needs transportation are eligible to ride a bus designated for special needs. Alberta Education provides transportation funding for special needs students with the stipulation that only special needs students are on that particular bus. Funding for special needs transportation is paid per child for each day they ride the bus and is a much more expensive service to provide than other modes of transportation.

How long does it take to set up transportation for my special needs child?

Answer. Three (3) to four (4) days are needed to obtain all emergency information, process routing information, contact drivers and communicate with parents and other professionals involved. Please understand that special needs students are on buses that are not on a regularly established bus route and are changed when additional students are added or removed.

What is the average time length of the ride for special needs students?

Answer. Our goal, for students within the Red Deer Public School District, is no more than one hour. These buses pick up students all over the City and therefore are often on longer routes than normal.

Who utilizes public transportation?

Answer. Students residing in the City of Red Deer, attending their designated school in grades 6 to 12 are transported on City public Transit buses. Students greater than 2.39 km away from their designated school will receive a monthly public Transit pass for the cost of the Transit Application fee and the pass

can be picked up at the school's main office. These passes must be picked up on the last two instructional days of the month or on the first two instructional days of the preceding month.

How do I get a City Transit bus pass for a Middle or High School student?

Answer. All students wishing to purchase a subsidized City Transit bus pass must complete an application form annually. The application form must be accompanied by the application fee. There are two (2) types of City Transit passes a student may purchase; restricted and unrestricted. Transit Transportation applications are available at all schools or at our Central Office, located at 4747-53rd Street offices. To avoid late fees, these forms are due no later than June 27th.

What is the difference between a “restricted” and an “unrestricted” Transit bus pass?

Restricted passes are for use during the hours of 6:15 a.m. until 5:00p.m. Monday to Friday. Unrestricted passes may be used at all times City Transit operates.

Who is eligible for the unrestricted City Transit bus pass?

Answer. Eligibility for transportation is determined by the distance a student lives from their designated school. The distance for eligibility for grades 6-12 is 2.4 kms. The distance is measured from the student's residence to the school property.

Students who live over 2.4kms from their *designated* school will be eligible to receive a *restricted* bus pass each month for no additional cost, upon completion of the application form and payment of the \$20.00 administration fee. These students may also choose to upgrade to an *unrestricted* bus pass for an additional \$12.00 each month.

Students attending a *school of choice* are eligible for subsidized (restricted) transportation if they live greater than 2.4 kms from both their school of choice and their designated school.

Students living less than 2.4 kms from their *designated school* will be able to purchase a restricted or unrestricted bus pass for a monthly fee. Call the Transportation department @ 403.342.3733 for questions or current prices.

I recently moved to Red Deer County, how do I get busing to a Red Deer Public school?

Answer. Red Deer Public School Division does not transport students from the County into the City of Red Deer. Red Deer County residents are designated to attend Chinook's Edge School Division schools in the surrounding County. All school transportation services from the County are provided by either Chinooks' Edge School Division (for those living West, East and South of Red Deer) or by Wolf Creek School Division (for residents living North of Red Deer). Please contact one of the above County school divisions for transportation information.

I recently moved to the City of Red Deer, how do I access busing to a Public school?

Answer. Charter (Yellow) Transportation Applications are available at the attending school. Please complete and sign it, turning it into the school office for forwarding to the Transportation desk at Central Services.

How do I know if my child will be on a yellow bus or a City Transit bus?

Answer. Grades 1-5 are provided Charter (yellow) bussing services. Kindergarten children are provided Charter (yellow) bussing services *only* if there is room on the bus (see the section on “Eligible” Students). Grades 6-12 utilize the services of the City Public Transit bus system. West Park Middle School is

currently the only exception as they are still provided with Charter (yellow) bus service. Ineligible status rules may apply.

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