

ASHLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do we have to pay a bus fee?

Unfortunately, due to rising costs and reductions in federal, state, and local funds for schools, the Ashland School Committee had no choice but to institute a fee for bus transportation in order to make ends meet.

Who is eligible for free (town paid) school bus transportation?

Ashland students in Grades K-6 who live more than 2 miles from their assigned school are eligible for free bus transportation. In accordance with State law, all other students, including all students in Grades 7-12 regardless of where they live, must pay the bus fee if they wish to use bus transportation. All students, either eligible for free transportation or those under the fee based system are required to complete the Student Bus Transportation registration form in order to secure a seat on a bus next year.

How is the 2.0 mile distance determined for students in Grades K-6?

It is measured by using the shortest route from the public way in front of a student's home to the nearest entranceway of the school. We will be using a GIS system to calculate these distances.

What is the Fee Based Bus Transportation Program?

All students who are not eligible for town paid busing will have the option to purchase a bus pass through the Fee Based Bus Transportation Program. The fee for 2020-2021 is \$350 per student with a \$700 family maximum. *There is an early registration discount if payment is received before May 15, 2020 of \$280 per student, with a \$560 family maximum.* This increase does not apply to students moving into town during the school year. Fees are non-refundable and will not be prorated for one way, or less than full use.

What if I live close to a school and could never take the bus in the past?

Under the Fee Based Bus Transportation Program you can purchase a bus pass for your child even if you live right down the block from your child's school.

How do I register my child for bus service for the 2020-21 school year?

Any student (whether free or fee-based) who wishes to use school bus transportation next year must complete a registration form and submit it to the Ashland Public Schools, Business Office, 87 West Union Street, Ashland, MA 01721 by **May 15, 2020**.

When do I have to pay the bus fee?

A check or money order (no cash please) for the full amount due made payable to the Ashland Public Schools – Bus Fee must accompany your registration form and is due on **May 15, 2020**. You may also opt to pay one half of the registration fee by May 15, 2019 and one half of the registration fee by August 1, 2020. Due to COVID-19, you may register for the bus and defer payment until August 1, 2020. You must still register by May 15, 2020 to receive the discounted fee. Full payment must be

received to hold a seat on the bus. Refunds will be honored prior to the first day school, ONLY if there is a wait list student willing to purchase the seat.

Does my child need a bus pass?

All students using school bus transportation will be required to carry their bus pass on a daily basis, beginning the first day of school. Not doing so could result in exclusion from the bus. We suggest attaching the pass to the back pack. This will keep the pass handy and allow the student to display it without delay. In late August bus passes will be mailed directly to all bus users – those eligible for free transportation and those who have paid for fee-based transportation. Lost passes may be replaced at the Business Office.

How do I find out when and where bus stops will be located?

Bus stops will be published on our web site, www.ashland.k12.ma.us, approximately two weeks prior to the opening of school.

Now that there's a fee, can I expect bus pick up in front of my house? Unfortunately no. The bus stops will likely be at corners on main roads.

Can my child ride home on another bus?

No, students may only ride their assigned buses. Transporting students to jobs, social events, scouts, or religious classes aboard a school bus that the student is not regularly assigned to is not permitted. If there is a family emergency or medical situation, parents should notify the Business Office and we will make necessary arrangements.

Can a student's conduct result in suspension from the school bus?

Students are expected to behave in a manner which will provide for optimum safety of the individual student as well as the safety of other students aboard the bus. When a student is reported for violating a safety rule in or around a school bus, school officials will review the situation with the student. Parents will be notified of the issue. Depending on the severity of the offense or the frequency of violations, the student can: receive a warning, a brief suspension from the bus or suspension from the bus for the balance of the school year. **REFUNDS WILL NOT BE MADE IF A STUDENT IS SUSPENDED FROM USING THE BUS SERVICE.**

If I feel there is a problem with student behavior or the operation of the school bus, to whom should I report this?

The Ashland School Department welcomes your inquiries and concerns. We suggest that you start with the Principal of your child's school. They can usually address most bus issues.

How do I apply for financial assistance?

A waiver or reduction of the transportation fee is available to families based on the same guidelines used to determine eligibility for Free and Reduced Lunch. Waiver applications will be sent to those who have requested them on the bus transportation registration form. The Director of Finances and Services for the Ashland Public Schools will review the waiver applications. All applications are kept

confidential. If you are unsure of your eligibility, please check the following federal website for the federal poverty guidelines: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/2020-poverty-guidelines>