8600 – TRANSPORTATION

FINAL DRAFT

By State law, a school district is not required to transport or pay for the transportation of students. If a school district does provide transportation, it is not required to provide this service to resident students living within 1½ miles, by the nearest traveled route, to the public or State approved nonpublic school in which the pupil is enrolled. It shall be the policy of Traverse City Area Public Schools to provide safe and efficient transportation services to eligible students. Eligibility shall be determined within the limitations established by State law and this Transportation Policy.

SERVICE ELIGIBILITY

It shall be the policy of Traverse City Area Public Schools to establish designated transportation zones for each school within its boundaries. Students residing within these designated transportation zones are eligible for transportation from the vicinity of their home to their assigned school of residence. All eligible students must submit a request, **in writing,** to their school's office to receive these services. Students who request transportation in writing but fail to utilize the requested services shall have those services rescinded.

Designation of Transportation Zones

Transportation zones shall be established for each school to maximize the efficiency of transportation services. The maximum extent of the transportation zone shall be the defined attendance boundary for the school. Transportation services shall not be provided outside the attendance boundary or within a designated minimum area surrounding the school location. Traverse City Area Public Schools shall consider State law and issues of safety and hazardous travel conditions when establishing these zones.

Assignment to School of Residence

The student's address for the purpose of establishing transportation eligibility is the student's legal and permanent place of residence. This address is used to determine the student's public school of residence based on the district's established attendance boundaries and assigned grades for schools.

Allowable Travel Distances to Bus Stops

The distance between the student's residence and their assigned bus stop is calculated based on the shortest travel distance as determined by the district's routing software. Whenever possible, the travel distances to bus stops shall not exceed one (1) mile. However, exceptions may be necessary in certain instances in order to maintain safe and efficient routing.

Open Enrollment & Schools of Choice Students

Transportation shall be provided to Open Enrolled and Schools of Choice students from established bus stops within the district's boundaries that serve the students' school of attendance. All Open Enrolled and Schools of Choice students must submit a request **in writing** to their school of attendance in order to receive this service.

TCAPS' Montessori Program Students

Students attending the Traverse City Area Public School's Montessori Program are not eligible for transportation services.

Non-Public School Students

Transportation shall be provided for each resident student attending a State approved nonpublic school within the District boundaries. Transportation zones shall be established for each eligible non-public school in accordance with this policy. Eligible students shall be transported in accordance with State law and this Transportation Policy. All eligible students must submit a request, **in writing,** to their school's office in order to receive these services.

Students In Transition Empowerment Program (STEP)

Students eligible under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act shall be transported to their school of origin, to the extent feasible. Requests for transportation to and from the school of origin for these students shall be provided **in writing** by the District's STEP Liaison.

Special Education Students

Students who have special needs or accommodations for transportation as established by Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or 504 plans will be provided with transportation services in accordance with these plans.

Other TCAPS' Programs
Young 5's, Preschool, Ready 4, TAG, and Traverse City High School

Students attending these programs shall be eligible for transportation to/from their school of attendance at an existing bus stop within the attendance boundary of that school. All students must submit a request **in writing** to their school of attendance in order to receive these services.

New Students

New students must register at their school of attendance before transportation service eligibility can be determined and services arranged. The Transportation Department will schedule service for eligible students within three (3) business days of notification from the school.

Courtesy Seats

Transportation service may be granted to students not normally eligible. This courtesy service will be provided only if, in the judgment of the Traverse City Area Public Schools, no additional costs will be incurred. In addition, the following specific criteria must be met:

- a seat is available on the bus;
- the bus stop already exists;
- the parent or guardian is responsible for accompanying the student to and from the bus stop;
- the bus route and the length of the ride are not affected;

- the need has been identified for the entire school year; and
- the student creates no additional discipline burdens or issues.

Alternate Addresses

An address other than the student's primary residence is an alternate address request for transportation services. Transportation services will be provided to a maximum of two bus stops per student, on a consistent schedule. The alternate bus stop must be located within the student's school of attendance boundary.

PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF PARAMETERS

Parental Responsibilities

Parents or guardians of students who are provided transportation shall ensure that their child understands and follows the rules and regulations for riding the school bus. Parents or guardians are responsible for their student's safety from the time when the student leaves home up to the time when the student boards the bus in the morning and as soon as the student gets off the bus in the afternoon.

For safety reasons, all students enrolled in Kindergarten, Young 5's, Preschool, and Ready 4 must be accompanied to/from the bus stop by a designated adult or sibling. Other authorization may be designated by the parent or guardian but must be received **in writing**.

By law, parents or guardians are not permitted to board a school bus (MCL 257.1859).

Student Responsibilities

Students who are granted the privilege of traveling to and from school by school bus must behave in a safe and appropriate manner while they are aboard the vehicle. Those who behave in an unsafe or inappropriate manner will lose this transportation service privilege, in accordance with the student discipline policy.

Students are required to be standing outside at their assigned bus stop five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled arrival time of the bus. The bus will not wait for students who are not already at the bus stop when the bus arrives. If the driver does not see students at the bus stop, the driver will not activate the alternating flasher to stop traffic; instead, the driver will proceed to the next scheduled stop on the route.

Bus Stop Placement

According to Pupil Transportation Act 187, section 257.1855, the driver of a school bus shall not stop the bus for the purpose of receiving or discharging pupils in the following instances:

- Within 200 feet of a public or private roadway intersection unless the stop is approved by the school administrator or entity under contract with a school to provide pupil transportation services.
- Upon a limited access highway or freeway, or upon any other highway or roadway that has been divided into 2 roadways by leaving an intervening space, a physical barrier, or clearly divided sections so constructed as to impede vehicular traffic if the pupils are required to cross the roadway.
- Upon a roadway constructed or marked to permit 3 or more separate lanes of vehicular traffic in either direction if the pupils are required to cross the roadway.

Bus stops shall be placed at centralized locations that can be accessed by a significant number of students to minimize the length of time and mileage of the bus route.

Bus routes shall be established so an authorized bus stop is available within the allowable traveling distance of every eligible student.

Bus stops shall not be placed where hazardous conditions exist. A hazardous situation is considered to be one that limits or impairs visibility of oncoming traffic or where the potential for visibility limitations is present because of hills or curves in the road.

In addition, no-travel roads will sometimes be determined by the District and will influence bus stop placement decisions. These will be determined in accordance with State law and other factors that determine the safety of loading and unloading students.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

School Start and Dismissal Times

The Transportation Department shall govern start and end times at each school building in order to provide efficient service.

Bus Schedules and Information

Bus stop information, including location and approximate pick-up time, will be available on the District's web site at www.tcaps.net, and at the schools at least one (1) week prior to the start of school.

It is the objective of the Transportation Department to maintain consistent service relative to the established schedule. Weather and traffic play a significant role in unscheduled delays and cancellations. Students must arrive at their scheduled bus stop at least five (5) minutes prior to the published time and be prepared to wait up to ten (10) minutes after the published time. During the first several days of school, there may be additional delays as drivers and students become accustomed to their new routes.

Mechanical and other problems may occasionally be experienced that can cause the bus to be more than ten (10) minutes delayed. In these instances, the Transportation Department should be contacted by telephone for further information.

Trips

The Transportation Department shall attempt to meet the weekday and weekend special trip needs of school groups within Traverse City Area Public Schools.

The costs associated with trips outside the regular schedule for transporting students to and from school shall be the responsibility of the trip requestor.

It is the responsibility of the school or organization sponsoring the trip to secure permission slips from parents, as required by applicable school district policies and/or regulations.

Transportation for TCAPS sponsored events out of state must be approved by the School Board prior to requesting transportation services. Out of state transportation for non-TCAPS sponsored events cannot be accommodated.

Data Management

The Transportation Department relies on each school's main office to receive and input timely and accurate information into the student database system about each student, especially information affecting transportation. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to provide a **written request** for transportation to their school's main office. Once information is received from the student database system, the Transportation Department will use its current routing software to locate each student in the District, assign the proper bus stop based on student location, and designate the appropriate bus route for the identified school of residence in accordance with this Transportation Policy.

ON BUS PARAMETERS

Grade Levels on Bus

The Transportation Department shall group together any combination of grades on one bus to assure the most efficient and cost effective service.

Ride Time

Routes are to be planned to keep individual riding distance and time to a practical maximum. Whenever possible, the amount of time spent aboard a bus by any student shall not exceed one (1) hour. However, exceptions may be necessary in certain instances in order to maintain safe and efficient routing.

The length of time aboard the bus is based on normal traffic conditions, and cannot take into account any anomalies due to external factors such as abnormal traffic conditions, construction, or inclement weather.

Bus Capacity

In an effort to maintain efficiency, the objective of the Transportation Department is to develop routes that maximize vehicle utilization. Bus routes will be designed to achieve maximum passenger loads but will not exceed the manufacturer's capacity for that vehicle. Where practical, bus seats will be loaded three (3) per seat for elementary students and two (2) per seat for secondary students.

Transfers

Where practical, students may be required to ride more than one bus while traveling to and from school.

Method of Transportation

Properly maintained school buses shall be available for the transportation of resident students. Smaller buses or vans may be substituted for reasons of economy or efficiency of operation. The District reserves the right to

provide the transportation service, in whole or in part, either directly or through a competitively bid contract with a third party, using student safety, operational efficiency and cost as the determining factor.

Student Behavior

Transportation is a privilege to be enjoyed by a student only as long as the student accepts responsibility for their own conduct, carefully follows all rules and regulations and promptly responds to the directions and requests of the bus driver or aide.

Rules of conduct for student riders have been developed to promote rider and vehicle operation safety as defined in the student handbook (procedures).

Failure to observe bus rules and/or instructions of the bus driver or aide may result in loss of bus-riding privileges for students involved.

Students who misbehave while riding the bus shall be subject to disciplinary action.

EXCEPTIONS

Occasional Bus Pass

The first priority is to ensure students are transported safely to and from school. This includes making sure bus drivers have full knowledge of which students will be riding each bus each day. This knowledge allows drivers to account for all students (particularly the younger students), and verify available room on the bus. When these criteria are met, permission to ride a bus on a pre-approved and occasional basis may be granted through the issue of an authorized bus pass.

In order to process bus passes effectively and to ensure appropriate transportation, all bus passes will be initiated at the school office and approved at the Transportation Department.

Investigative Process/Special Requests

If an individual has a concern or would like to make a request, the individual must call the Transportation Department. The concern or request will be handled in the following manner:

- The concern or request may be addressed while the individual is on the phone.
- If the concern or request cannot be addressed while the individual is on the phone, or it needs further investigation, it will be referred to a Transportation Supervisor.
- Following the referral or investigation, a Transportation Supervisor will contact the individual with their findings.
- If the individual is not satisfied with the disposition of the concern or request, the Transportation Supervisor will refer the concern or request to the Director of Transportation.
- The Director of Transportation will contact the individual with their findings.
- If the individual is still dissatisfied, the individual may appeal the decision of the Director of Transportation to the Executive Director of Operations, who will convene a Transportation Sub-Committee to consider the appeal. The decision of the Executive Director of Operations will be final.