

Bus Route & Stop Design Guidelines



NOTE: Due to the phase out of the Family Responsibility Zone, eligibility for the 2023-2024 school year will be different for individual schools. Please contact the School Administration if you are unaware of the status of the Family Responsibility Zone for your school.

PURPOSE

To outline guidelines for the development of bus routes and bus stops for eligible students transported by NLSchools.

SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all regular student transportation within NLSchools, including:

- Contracted Services
- Government-operated Services

RELATED GUIDANCE

These guidelines should be read and applied in conjunction with:

- NLSchools [policies](#) and [procedures](#)
- [Department of Education's School Bus Transportation Policies](#)
- Individual contracts entered into between NLSchools and a given contractor

DEFINITIONS

Family Responsibility Zone (FRZ) (Where Applicable):

Less than 1.6 kilometers from school. The area that is less than 1.6 kilometers from school is considered the FRZ. The distance to a school is defined as the shortest route by a publicly maintained roadway from the very end of the student's driveway where it meets a publicly maintained roadway to the beginning of the nearest school access point (roadway or walkway) via a publicly maintained road. An access point is considered a vehicle entrance, vehicle exit or walkway to an entrance to the school facility. Traffic flow signage is not considered, as this measurement is based on general access, not specifically vehicle access; therefore, it is not restricted by traffic direction requirements.

Capacity of Regular School Bus

K to 6	70 passengers
K to 12 (mixed load)	70 passengers
7 to 12	63 passengers

School's Catchment

The geographic area where students are eligible to attend a specific school

Alternate Transportation Student

A student who has been approved for Alternate Transportation in accordance with the NLSchools Alternate Transportation Policy.

ELIGIBILITY

A student is eligible for transportation if their civic address is located:

1. outside of the FRZ (Where Applicable); and
2. within the boundary of the school's catchment area

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Note: if a student lives in an unincorporated area with no publicly maintained services, distance is measured from the entrance of the community (where it intersects with the publicly maintained roadway) to the nearest school access point.

Distance is typically measured via NLSchools BusPlanner (routing) software or Google Earth/Maps. However, in instances where distance is too close to accurately measure remotely, the Regional Manager or designate will physically measure using an NLSchools-approved vehicle.

BUS ROUTE DESIGN

Bus routes are determined by NLSchools based on the geographic location of all eligible students. Eligible students are then assigned to a specific route, as determined by NLSchools, based on their civic address. Therefore, a student is only eligible for transportation on their assigned route.

Note: proof of address may be required at the discretion of the School Administrator

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Student Transportation is funded through the Department of Education. Funding is only provided for eligible students. NLSchools must follow guidelines set out by the Department of Education when designing, maintaining and reviewing bus routes.

Responsibility for the design and management of bus routes rests with the Regional Manager of Student Transportation. Each Regional Manager may designate specific tasks to a suitable Student Transportation representative.

Department of Education's School Transportation Guidelines state that:

1. Only eligible students are to be considered when designing routes;
2. Distance is defined as the shortest route from a student's driveway via publically maintained road to school property access point;
3. School arrival and dismissal times should be staggered to allow for double runs when possible.
4. Runs should operate at full capacity whenever possible;
5. There should be no more than 4 stops within 1.6 km unless authorized by the Department of Education; and
6. Every effort should be made to remain on main roads to minimize travel time.
 - a. Travel on side roads may be permitted if students live more than 500 meters from the main road and:
 - i. The street is maintained by either the municipality, local service or the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure
 - ii. There is adequate room for a bus to turn around without backing up
 - iii. The street can accommodate large vehicles

In addition to the guidelines for route design, NLSchools weighs several other factors when designing routes. These factors include:

Travel Time

Every effort should be made to keep routes below 60 minutes where possible.

- Some routes may periodically run beyond 60 minutes due to weather or construction delays
- Where timing of routes is questionable, an NLSchools representative may be required to audit a route via ride-along to ensure bus stop times are as efficient as possible. An inquiry should be made on the NLSchools [Public Inquiry Form](#) to request an audit.

Every effort should be made to balance routes to minimize travel time without implementing additional routes or adding significant distance. For example, if it is possible to reduce one route from 60 minutes to 45 by increasing a 15 minute route accordingly, this option should be considered.

Publicly Maintained Roadway

Roads that are maintained by either a Municipality, Local Service District or the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Priority Snow Clearing

Roads that are not priority maintained pose significant challenges for winter operation. Every effort is made to keep routes on priority maintained roads to avoid potential incidents and delays.

Slope of Road

Sometimes the shortest possible route is not a safe option. If a road is too steep to travel along and a more moderate option is available, a route should be designed to avoid unnecessary grades.

Unpaved Roads

In some cases, even publicly maintained roads are unpaved and they can pose significant additional concerns in bad weather and spring conditions. NLSchools will review each such circumstance on an individual basis.

Traffic Congestion

In some cases, the shortest route can take significantly longer due to traffic flow. Traffic congestion increases idling time and reduces efficiency. Where possible, routes should avoid highly congested areas.

Speed Limits

While unavoidable in many areas, NLSchools does attempt to avoid bus routes from traveling on roads where the speed limit is greater than 80 km/hr.

School Purpose Vehicle Accessibility

Considerations should be made to ensure roads are equipped to handle the type of vehicle providing student transportation services. At times, school buses will not be able to accommodate narrow streets or streets that require a school bus to back up.

BUS STOP CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to route design, each stop should be evaluated for safety and efficiency. In areas where Contractors provide student transportation service, as per the Contract template, the Contractor is

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responsible to review all routes and bus stops provided by NLSchools before the beginning of the school year and report any safety concerns to the Regional Manager.

Speed Limits

In such situations where speed limits are over 80 km/hr, consideration should be given to contact the entity responsible for that particular road to request “School Bus Stop Ahead” signs to be installed on either side of the stop location (if the stop is anticipated to be a long-term stop).

Traffic Lanes

Many bus stops exist in areas where there are 3 lanes of traffic or more. When stops are implemented on such roads, every effort should be made to implement right hand pick-up and drop-off.

Intersections

In most cases, bus stops are identified by intersection as they are easy for parents and students to identify. However, buses should never stop directly in an intersection. A safe corner, slightly beyond an intersection is recommended and should be clearly communicated to drivers as well as parents at any new stop.

Number of Students

Stops with 10 or more students have the potential to create additional safety concerns. If possible, break stops of 10 or more students into multiple stops along the bus route. This may require implementing more than 4 stops within a 1.6 km distance in the eligible zone but is advisable to reduce overcrowding.

Crosswalks

Stops should be placed in front of crosswalks whenever possible (nose of the bus nearest to the crosswalk - 5 feet before crosswalk), rather than on or behind them (rear of the bus nearest the crosswalk).

Line of Sight

Ensuring motorists have time to spot a bus stop is extremely important. The following line of sight distances are from the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure is [Traffic Control Manual](#) and should be considered when evaluating bus stop locations:

Speed Limit	Line of Sight Required
<50km/hr	70m
50km	110m
60km/hr	130m
70km/hr	180m
80 km/hr	210m
90km/hr	265m
100km/hr	330m

Note: While Stops and routes are the responsibility of NLSchools, paths traveled by students from their home to a bus stop should not be reviewed/evaluated by NLSchools. Parents/ guardians are responsible

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for the safety of students until they board the bus/once they disembark the bus. If a parent/ guardian has a concern regarding the safety of the path from their residence to a bus stop, they should contact the municipality/organization responsible for that stretch of land.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Alternate Transportation on Regular Routes

Where a student, who resides within the school's 1.6km FRZ (where applicable), is approved for Alternate Transportation, and is able to ride a regular school bus, NLSchools may implement a stop inside the FRZ to accommodate this student. This stop must be approved through the Student Support Services Division's Alternate Transportation Approval process. Additions of this nature must still meet the safety considerations listed above.

Stops Inside 1.6 km to Accommodate Eligible Students on Inaccessible Side Streets

At times, buses cannot travel on side streets due to limitations described above or due to route inefficiency. In such cases, NLSchools may implement stops inside the FRZ to accommodate the eligible students in the area. This does not mean students living near the stop who reside in the FRZ are eligible. They must apply for courtesy seating should they wish to avail of such stops.

Courtesy Seating

While NLSchools does not alter or design bus routes around courtesy riders, courtesy stops may be implemented beyond 1.6 km provided [Courtesy Seating Protocol](#) is followed.

One courtesy bus stop inside the FRZ is permitted per bus run to accommodate courtesy riders in the area where there is space available on the bus. The FRZ courtesy stop can only be added, where feasible/safe, as the last stop before arriving at school. Only the Regional Manager has the authority to approve such a bus stop. If approved, this stop will not change from year to year.