



OFFICE OF PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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REQUESTING OPT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

SUMMARY AND CONTENTS

The attached material provides information and detailed instructions for all schools, whether public, charter or other nonpublic schools, regarding what is required to request and receive transportation services from the New York City Department of Education's Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT). These requirements apply in all cases regardless of whether the school is new, is moving from one location to another, or wishes to change the transportation services the school may already be receiving. In the pages that follow you will find important information on the topics listed below. Please read and review this material carefully before submitting any request for services. The successful management of transportation requires the very active involvement of school-based personnel in a number of significant areas that are discussed within. OPT takes it as a given that, if you submit a request for services, your school will be prepared to undertake these responsibilities.

- What are the general rules governing pupil eligibility for transportation?
- What issues should be considered *before* you decide you want to request busing?
- If busing is requested, will your students be on buses with students from other schools?
- Do buses for GE students have attendants or escorts on board?
- Who is responsible for managing discipline while students are on buses?
- How many days of transportation may a school receive?
- What time can buses arrive at and depart from school in the morning and afternoon?
- What do school personnel have to do to manage transportation?
- What training does OPT provide to assist schools in managing transportation?
- What documents must the school provide in order to request transportation?
- How is pupil eligibility for transportation determined?
- How are bus stops and bus routes created and assigned to students?
- What transportation is available for students who cannot be assigned to buses?
- What transportation is available for students who are ineligible for full-fare service?

So that OPT may efficiently plan and implement transportation, we request that your request for services be submitted to us within ten days of your receipt of the request form. All requests to receive bus services for General Education students **must** be received by July 15 of any year for service to start the following September. Schools submitting requests for bus service for GE students after July 15 will be provided with MetroCards only.

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Requesting OPT Transportation Services

The Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) is responsible for coordinating transportation services for more than 600,000 students who attend over 3,000 public and nonpublic schools located in New York City and in surrounding areas up to fifty miles outside of NYC. Transportation to and from these schools is available to pupils who reside in New York City according to the Department of Education's eligibility requirements. For Special Education (SE) pupils, specialized transportation is provided ***only*** to those students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that mandates this service. Many pupils who receive special education services do ***not*** have IEP's that require specialized transportation and these pupils are eligible only for the same services provided to General Education (GE) pupils. For GE pupils, eligibility depends upon and varies with the student's *grade level* and the *distance from home to school*. Considerable information on pupil eligibility can be found on [OPT's website](#). In addition, [Chancellor's Regulation A-801](#), explains the specific criteria used to determine eligibility.

OPT strives to provide safe and reliable transportation to and from school for all eligible New York City children. Achieving this requires the assistance of the school administrators and school-based personnel on whom we rely for critical information and who manage the delivery of services at the school level. In considering the services you may wish to request, you should be aware that there is some work involved in keeping transportation-related issues in order and transportation running smoothly. The following are some of the major considerations:

- *Before deciding that your school should have yellow bus service, it would be wise to consider the environment and traffic conditions surrounding the school.* Narrow streets, one-way streets, high concentrations of residential parking on streets in front of and around the school, all present particular challenges in relation to picking up and dropping off children in front of the school. When school buses cannot turn onto streets that pass in front of the school building, for example, it may be necessary to pick up and drop off at the nearest street corner. This, in turn, may require that school personnel go to the corner to meet young children and escort them to the school entrance.
- In creating routes for transportation, *OPT attempts to be as efficient and economical as possible. This means that we very often have pupils from several different schools on the same bus, or pupils of different genders and ages are on the same bus, or that we frequently have pupils with different educational or behavioral conditions on the same bus.*
- While buses transporting Special Education pupils all have attendants on board, and some SE buses may also have pupils on board who have individual paraprofessionals accompanying them, *buses that transport only General Education pupils have only one adult on board: the driver.* Since the driver's primary responsibility is safely driving the bus, this may present problems in situations where students misbehave. Under the Chancellor's Regulations, ***the management of discipline on the bus is the school's responsibility.*** *OPT will be happy to work with any school to implement successful procedures for maintaining safe and well-managed transportation, but the school must understand that it bears the major share of responsibility in this area for GE buses.*
- *GE bus service for all charter and nonpublic schools is limited by NYS law to 180 days of service per school year. The school year also starts and ends with the NYC public school calendar.* One implication of this is that any nonpublic school that wishes to begin or end

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bus service on a date before or after the NYC public schools must contract for that service independently with a bus company. The OPT website provides information on contracting for such services. We recommend using the same vendor that provides your “regular” service during the “regular” school year, but we cannot negotiate such contracts on your behalf or serve as your fiduciary in any way in these matters.

- In view of traffic conditions in New York City, under the terms of OPT’s contracts with its vendors, all buses have a “30 minute window” which governs the time when they must arrive at your school in the morning or afternoon. As a practical matter this means that, if your school’s session time is 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM, your morning routes may arrive as early as 8:30 AM (they should not arrive later than 8:55 AM), and the PM routes may arrive as late as 3:30 PM and not be considered late or be subject to any violation for a late arrival. If necessary, bus routes dedicated to providing service for students living in shelters may arrive up to 45 to 60 minutes or more prior to your school opening or after your school dismisses.

- If you request GE bus service, once routes and stops are created for your school, generally in late July, the “ridership” will be posted on our website and your school will be provided a user ID and password to view it. Parents will also be able to view their child’s information on our web site by entering their child’s ID number and date of birth. The ridership list will show which students are routed, at what bus stop, and which bus route. Two things need to be done with this information –
 - It should be used as a guide for someone to be outside at the end of the day (and possibly for as long as 30 minutes or more after the end of your school day), to know which student is supposed to get on which bus, and to ensure that only eligible pupils are allowed to board the bus.
 - Using access to DOE-provided computer systems,¹ the ridership information will need to be entered by someone into the individual student records in September (this is done one time on a large scale, but needs to be updated if a student moves and needs to use a different stop, etc.).

- Also, someone may need to be outside the school in the morning (and possibly up to 30 minutes or more before the start of your school day) to help younger students off the bus and into the building which, of course, should also be open and available when the buses arrive.

- Once the initial set of bus stops is created, the school is responsible for the management of these stops. This means that, over the course of the school year, someone is responsible for:
 - Requesting creation of a new bus stop when a new student enters the school or a current student moves,
 - Changing the location of an existing bus stop, or
 - Deleting a bus stop if no one is using the stop

¹ NYC public and charter schools use the DOE pupil information system known as ATS (“Automate the Schools”). Nonpublic schools and other schools outside of New York City use the “Nonpublic Student Information System” known as NPSIS.

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All of this is done via an online application on the OPT web site.

- Someone should also be responsible for communicating to OPT any problems with busing
- (e.g. route K1234 was 30 minutes late today, or route K9876 didn't come in the PM until 45 minutes after school ended, etc.). This may be communicated in one of two ways (or both): OPT has an online "violations" application where a violation may be entered, or there is a Customer Service telephone number that can be called (718-392-8855).
- Students who end up not being routed for a bus stop, yet are eligible for full-fare transportation, should be issued a MetroCard. OPT sends the MetroCards to the school and someone at the school needs to be responsible for distributing the cards to the students and recording that a particular card (each card has a unique serial number) was given to a specific student. For public and charter schools, this must be entered in ATS. Other nonpublic schools are required to maintain manual logs to document the distribution of MetroCards and these records must be maintained for seven (7) years.
- Also, if a student loses the MetroCard card (or if it is damaged, gets stolen, etc.) that card needs to be deactivated by someone in ATS or NPSIS and a new card assigned. Once any "extra" cards at the school are distributed, more cards may be requested.
- Once service to a school has been initiated, student documentation must also be maintained by someone on a continuous basis using either NPSIS or ATS for the following:
 - To enter a new student who is eligible for transportation
 - To delete a transportation record for a pupil
 - To update or correct an existing pupil record
- Lastly, whoever the school assigns to manage transportation **must** participate in training provided by OPT in the use of the ATS or NPSIS systems and in management of transportation-related information. These training programs are conducted periodically throughout the year at OPT's office in Long Island City. Arrangements may also be made to conduct training for groups of individuals from different schools at other locations or at individual schools. We are happy to work cooperatively to accommodate all reasonable requests for training, but it is expected that any individual assigned to manage transportation information will also cooperate with us and will be available to participate in the training that is required.

Before service can be initiated, a school must submit the following to the Office of Pupil Transportation:

1. Request for Service form – All schools must electronically submit this three page form that includes space for the name, address, phone and fax number of the school, the name of the Principal, the grade range, number of students attending the school, type of school, school's session time,² names and contact information for the school's transportation coordinator(s),

² New York City public schools that do not have an approved School-based Option ("SBO") regarding their session time are required to use the DOE "standard schedule" until an SBO is approved. The standard schedule is a 6 hour and 20 minute day with additional time on Monday and Tuesday afternoons for professional development and parent engagement.

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and other information important for transportation. There are separate versions of this form for public, charter and other types of nonpublic schools.

2. Certificate of Occupancy – Any school not located in a NYC DOE school building **must** submit a copy of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) for the building in which the school is housed, or a “letter of no objection,” from the appropriate state or municipal agency. **This must indicate that the building has been inspected and approved for use as a school or a facility with classrooms for the grade range and number of pupils who will be attending.** In addition, all schools must remain in compliance with all building codes during the period when transportation services are provided. For schools that are under construction or renovation at the time the request for service is made, a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy (TCO) will be accepted, however it is the school’s responsibility to continue to file updated TCOs with OPT until a permanent CO is issued.
3. Curriculum Certificate – Schools must also have a curriculum that has been certified as meeting the applicable state standards prior to the provision of transportation and must maintain an approved curriculum during the period when services are provided. For nonpublic schools located in New York City, curriculum certification may be accomplished in either of two ways:
 - The school may contact the Community Superintendent of the district in which the school is located and request that the curriculum be reviewed for certification. When the curriculum has been certified, a copy of the certification letter must be forwarded to OPT.
 - In lieu of a certification letter, nonpublic schools may provide OPT with their “BEDS” number to satisfy this requirement. The “BEDS” (Basic Educational Data System) number is issued by the New York State Education Department (for more information see material available at the [NY State Department of Education website](#)).?

DOE public schools and New York state public schools outside of New York City should also provide OPT with their BEDS number. Schools outside of New York State should provide OPT with documentation comparable to that required of New York state schools to indicate that the curriculum has been reviewed and approved.

Upon receipt and review of the items above, OPT will determine the school’s eligibility to receive transportation services. If all documentation is complete, a five-digit school code will be assigned by OPT. For schools located in New York City, the first two digits identify the geographic district in which the school is located and the following three digits identify the school itself. The OPT code assigned is unique to each school, is location-specific, and is how OPT identifies the school for transportation purposes. The code issued by OPT may be similar to the code assigned to public and charter schools that use the DOE pupil information system (“ATS”), but it will never be exactly the same. Given that, **it is essential that you use your school’s OPT code whenever you contact OPT.**

After an OPT code has been assigned, the eligibility of each child for whom transportation is requested will need to be determined. In order to accomplish this, schools must identify these pupils electronically by using one of the two computer systems provided by the DOE for this purpose. Nonpublic schools use “NPSIS” (Nonpublic School Information System) to document each pupil’s name, address, date of birth, and grade. Public schools and charter schools provide these data using ATS. If the data entry is being completed prior to June of a given school year, and service is being requested for the

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requested for the following September, indicate the pupil's grade for the following September.

Within New York City, OPT determines the distance eligibility for GE pupils by use of computer software provided by the NYC Department of City Planning. This is our "official" database for distance determinations. It is taken as definitive in any dispute about distances that may be based on references to other mapping applications such as MapQuest, Google, etc. Once pupil eligibility for transportation is established, OPT will attempt to provide the type of service indicated on the Request for Transportation Service form.

For schools that request yellow bus transportation, OPT will construct routes for eligible pupils based on Chancellor's Regulation A-801. A minimum of eleven pupils is required to create and maintain a route. Each route is limited to five miles in total length, as measured through all stops to the school.³ Stops are generally established along a route at a minimum of one -quarter mile apart, not less than one- half mile from the school, and are located at a point central to a group of pupils. Once a route or routes are established, the school and bus contractor are notified and given copies of the computer printout of routes reflecting the location of each stop and the number of pupils to be picked up at each stop. When the routes have been created, the list of pupils found on NPSIS or ATS will be returned to the school with an indication of the eligibility of each pupil and, in the case of yellow bus transportation, the bus stops to which eligible pupils have been assigned.

Distance eligible pupils who cannot be accommodated on a route devised for pupils attending the school are eligible for full -fare MetroCards for use on NYCTA buses or subways. MetroCards are **not** provided for parents of pupils to accompany their young children to school. Distance eligible pupils in grades 7 through 12 will also be provided with full- fare MetroCards for use on NYCTA buses or subways. Student MetroCards may not be used on NYCTA Express Buses.

Pupils who live at least one-half mile or more from school, but do not meet the Chancellor's minimum distance criteria for full-fare transportation for their grade level, may receive a half- fare MetroCard. Unlike "regular" student MetroCards, which are purchased by the DOE, these are provided as a courtesy by the New York City Transit Authority. NYCTA policy dictates that half-fare MetroCards are good **only** for surface (bus) transit: they cannot be used on subways or on Express Buses.

If yours is a new school and you wish to request transportation services, or yours is a moving school and you wish to continue transportation services at another location, or your school already receives some transportation services and you wish to make a change in those services, please [follow the instructions available here](#) to request a Request for Transportation Service form for your school (there are distinct forms for public, charter, and nonpublic schools⁴) and submit that, along with any additional documents (a copy of the school's Certificate of Occupancy or equivalent and curriculum certification, if required) to OPT. Forms must be submitted electronically through the OPT website following the instructions that will be provided in response to your request.

³ Please note that this is **not** in relation to a five-mile radius around the school. As a practical matter, a route that measures five miles long when traced through the streets seldom extends more than about three or three and one-half miles from the school when measured in a straight line (radius).

⁴ Public schools located outside of New York City should also use the "nonpublic" school form.

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Once transportation services are established for your school, if you have any questions or require any additional assistance, contact the office of Pupil Transportation at 718-392-8855.

Thank you.