



Public Transport

Provision of Dedicated School Bus Services

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to articulate the policy for the provision of dedicated school bus services.

2.0 APPLICATION

- 2.1 This policy applies to all requests received for new dedicated school services or amendments to existing dedicated school services.

3.0 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 This policy has been developed in consultation with the School Transport Liaison Committee.

- 3.1.1 The School Transport Liaison Committee includes representatives from:

- Territory and Municipal Services Directorate: Public Transport/ACTION
- Education and Training Directorate
- Catholic Education Office
- Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools
- Association of Independent Schools
- ACT Council of Parents and Citizens
- Catholic School Parents Canberra and Goulburn.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 Dedicated school bus services – follow a regular timetable and route, and are available to school students only, not the general public. Dedicated school bus services are designed to carry primary and high school students, not pre-school children.
- 4.2 School bus services - include either regular route services (whether direct or interchanging) or dedicated school services, or a combination of the two, preferably involving no more than one interchange between services.

5.0 BACKGROUND

- 5.1 More than 50 percent of school students use route services to travel to and from school.
- 5.2 Route and dedicated school networks are integrated and rely on the use of the same bus and personnel resources. There is limited ability to make significant or rapid changes to dedicated school services without sufficient time to plan the network change and identify resources.
- 5.3 Any new dedicated school service may result in changes to an existing service.

6.0 PRINCIPLES IN THE PROVISION OF DEDICATION SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

- 6.1 The following principles apply to the provision of dedicated school bus services:
- 6.1.1 The cost effectiveness of dedicated school bus services will be a key consideration.
- 6.1.2 Decision making regarding the provision of a dedicated school bus service will be based on the most efficient use of resources, taking into account existing regular route and dedicated school services in the local area, and other network needs.
- 6.1.3 Student safety accessing dedicated school and regular route services will be considered and addressed with school education programs.
- 6.1.4 Dedicated school bus services should arrive, where possible no more than 30 minutes and no less than five minutes from school start and finish times.
- 6.1.5 Decisions on the provision or non-provision of dedicated school bus services will be articulated to the relevant parties and documented.
- 6.1.6 Where a service has become unviable, consultation will be undertaken with



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stakeholders with a view to increase patronage before removal of service.

7.0 PROCESS FOR REQUESTING AND IMPLEMENTING A DEDICATED SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

- 7.1 The process for requesting a school bus service is:
 - 7.1.1 Parents contact their school Principal or stakeholder providing address of student/s and indication of demand for the service if possible. Requests will then be forwarded to Public Transport for consideration.
 - 7.1.2 Public Transport will consider/investigate the requests.
 - 7.1.3 Public Transport makes a decision in consultation with the stakeholder representative and affected schools in regard to the request as soon as possible, but within three months.
 - 7.1.4 The outcome of the request will be provided to the relevant parties, including the reasons for the decision.
 - 7.1.5 Public Transport will advise the school(s) of the timing of the introduction of a new service, or adjustments to existing services.
 - 7.1.6 The school is responsible for forwarding this information to their school community
 - 7.1.7 Public Transport's website will reflect the change to school services.

8.0 DEMAND FOR THE PROVISION OF DEDICATED SCHOOL SERVICES

- 8.1 The provision of a dedicated school service is determined by a number of criteria which includes the demand for a dedicated school service.
 - 8.1.1 School bus services with strong patronage are favoured.
 - 8.1.2 For a new dedicated service, at least 30 students are required.
 - 8.1.3 Where there is a lower level of demand, consideration can be given to combining school services for geographically proximate schools with similar start/finish times, or through a service to a major interchange.
 - 8.1.4 Where patronage on an existing service has declined for a sustained period, Public Transport may review the service and consider withdrawing the service or adjusting school services in the area.
 - 8.1.5 Where a service has become unviable, Public Transport will undertake to communicate with stakeholders for patronage increase before removal of service.
 - 8.1.6 Government and non-government schools draw students from a broad geographical area and school bus services will reflect this spread where demand warrants.
 - 8.1.7 As a general principle, children attending a school outside their priority enrolment area cannot assume that dedicated school bus services will be provided.
 - 8.1.8 Students attending schools that are not geographically proximate to their home may be required to travel to school by other means. This may include using regular route services, by interchanging to a dedicated school service, or by private means.

9.0 DECISION MAKING CRITERIA

- 9.1 There are several key criteria to be considered in making a decision regarding the provision of a school service. The following criteria are to be considered:
 - 9.1.1 The age of the students.
 - 9.1.2 The level of demand for the service.
 - 9.1.3 The locations of demand for the service.
 - 9.1.4 The availability of, and safety and convenience of access for students using, regular route services in the local area of the school.



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- 9.1.5 The availability and carrying capacity of existing dedicated school bus services in the local area.
- 9.1.6 Impact on the scheduling of regular route service.
- 9.1.7 The available funds for dedicated school bus services.
- 9.1.8 Safe pedestrian access for students.
- 9.1.9 Parking and traffic issues.
- 9.2 All criteria are to be considered and balanced. For example, while there may be a high level of demand for a dedicated service, the existence of several regular route services close to a high school would generally rule out the provision of a dedicated school bus service.
- 9.3 Parking and traffic issues at schools may require the postponement of the provision of new school bus services while physical works are implemented. Alternatively, education programs provided by the school may be required to improve parking and traffic issues.

10.0 USE OF REGULAR ROUTE SERVICES

- 10.1 Regular route services close to the school may provide adequate public transport access. Students should be able to access such services in a safe manner and without having to walk long distances.
- 10.2 Where regular route services offer pick-up or drop-off points that are difficult or dangerous for students to access, consideration should be given to a dedicated school service or physical works to address safety concerns. Safety considerations are different for children of primary school and high school ages. Safety concerns will be referred to Roads ACT who will provide advice to Public Transport.
- 10.3 Regular route service timings may be suitable or may be able to be adjusted slightly to accommodate school needs. This also applies to the route taken by a regular route service.
- 10.4 In the event that demand on a regular route service is very high, consideration may be given to providing a dedicated service mirroring part or all of the regular route service, as the carrying capacity of regular route services would otherwise be tested, and amenity for non-school travellers could be compromised.
- 10.5 Where regular route services are excessively long or circuitous or require multiple interchanges for school passengers, consideration should be given to a direct, dedicated school service.
- 10.6 Should a need for a dedicated school service be established in accordance with the above criteria, the impact of that service on the existing regular route network also needs to be considered.
- 10.7 Where there is minimal impact, the service would be provided as soon as possible. Where the impact is significant, it may not be possible to implement new service until a new timetable enhancement/adjustment is undertaken and implemented. Public Transport expects a minimum of one timetable enhancement/adjustment per year will be implemented.

11.0 AVAILABILITY AND CARRYING CAPACITY

- 11.1 Wherever possible, demand should be met by existing, or adjustments to existing, dedicated school buses servicing the school or other schools in the area.
- 11.2 Dedicated school services may operate to multiple, geographically proximate schools with similar start/finish times to consolidate patronage.
- 11.3 Public Transport will carry students in accordance with the legal carrying capacity (this includes standing) of the type of fleet vehicle being used to undertake the service. For information on Public Transport's carrying capacity see [ACTION Fleet Capacity](#).

12.0 TIME PARAMETRES FOR DEDICATED SCHOOL SERVICES

- 12.1 Students will be dropped off/picked up where possible no more than 30 minutes and no less than five minutes from school start and finish times.



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- 12.2 Where part of the school has a different start/finish time, the earlier start and later finish time will be the guide.
- 12.3 Services will be provided for the same start and finish times every day of the school term and cannot be altered for individual days.

13.0 AGE OF STUDENTS

- 13.1 Public Transport's school bus services are designed to carry primary and high school students, not pre-school children. Pre-school children are not considered old enough to travel on their own.
- 13.2 Primary school aged students are generally less able to cope with interchanging than high school students and the services provided should aim to reduce the amount of interchanging required for these younger students. These students warrant a high level of priority in allocating dedicated school bus services.
- 13.3 There will be some instances where primary school students are required to interchange between regular route services, and between dedicated school services and regular route services.
- 13.4 Parents with young children may travel to assist them to get used to bus travel. A written request, for a familiarisation period of up to one month, is to be forwarded from the parent to Public Transport for consideration. Under special circumstances, such as a child with a disability, parents can apply for an extension beyond the familiarisation period. Parents travelling under these provisions are required to pay normal bus fares. To access the application for short term parent bus travel application form, use the following link: [Parents Travelling on School Services](#).

14.0 STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- 14.1 Children with special needs should be accommodated with a direct service where possible (i.e. where the number of students using that service would be sufficient). In addition, Public Transport should continue their practice of providing assistance to these students when interchanging, where possible, through both drivers and transport officers.
- 14.2 Children with special needs may also be eligible for transportation to and from school through the Special Needs Transport Assistance Program administered by the Education and Training Directorate. Applications and further information is available from schools or from the Education and Training Directorate at [Special Needs Transport Assistance Program](#).

15.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 15.1 Schools will provide Public Transport with any changes to start/finish times 12 months in advance if possible, to allow for the rescheduling of route services. Scheduling requirements of the network for regular route services can make alterations to school services difficult and time-consuming. Where possible, once a network is constructed Public Transport will endeavour to make minor school changes within two weeks and major school changes within a minimum of six weeks.
- 15.2 Schools will provide Public Transport with enrolment information as soon as possible and at the latest by mid October each year.
- 15.3 Public Transport will advise schools a minimum of two weeks ahead of any changes to bus pick up/drop off times.
- 15.4 Schools are responsible for notifying parents and students of advice regarding changes from Public Transport.



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16.0 LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER REFERENCES

Schools Transport Liaison Committee Terms of Reference

[Special Needs Transport Assistance Program](#)

[Parents Travelling on School Services](#)

[Feedback and Complaints Handling Policy](#).

17.0 FEEDBACK

17.1 Feedback in relation to this policy may be made in accordance with ACTION's [Feedback and Complaints Handling Policy](#).

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