

Student Transportation Services of Central Ontario - School Bus Transfer Procedures

1.0 Statement of Purpose:

School Boards served by Student Transportation Services of Central Ontario (STSCO) recognize that, as part of the daily journey to school, it is reasonable to permit the transfer of students from one bus to another in order to provide for efficient and effective transportation service. With this in mind, the Boards and STSCO are committed to ensuring that transfers occur in safe locations and that appropriate supervision is provided while transfers occur.

The following procedures are intended to assist students, families, schools and transportation service providers in understanding transfer site responsibilities. The procedures are also intended to ensure ongoing provision of safe and effective transportation service to students.

1.1 Definitions:

An “*approved transfer location*” is the location where students switch from one vehicle to another for the ride to school in the morning or the ride back to their designated home bus stop in the afternoon. *Please note: designated home bus stop is the stop assigned by STSCO staff and is generally a centralized stop serving more than one area family with the location being in a spot reasonable for students to board and disembark a bus.*

A “*feeder bus*” is the bus or school purpose vehicle which, in the morning, transports a student from their designated home bus stop and delivers them to an approved transfer location for transferring to a second vehicle for purposes of transport to their school of attendance. Correspondingly, in the afternoon, a “*feeder bus*” transports a student from an approved transfer location home to their designated home bus stop.

A “*transfer bus*” is the bus or school purpose vehicle which, in the morning, delivers a student from an approved transfer location to their school of attendance, or, in the afternoon, transports a student from their school of attendance to an approved transfer location.

1.2 Transportation Service Provider (Bus Company) Responsibilities:

The transportation service provider will be responsible for transporting students to and from school safely and effectively. Feeder bus routes will be planned and operated so that the vehicle arrives at the approved transfer location a minimum of five minutes before the scheduled departure time of the transfer bus.

As agreed upon between school administration and the bus driver, a designated parking location will be assigned. The driver of the feeder bus will oversee the safe morning

disembarking and afternoon loading of all students before leaving the approved transfer location.

All drivers will ensure that no students are permitted to exit a bus unless school transfer staff are on duty for purposes of supervision and in the vicinity of the bus parking area. This is very IMPORTANT and is a central to ensuring student safety. When in doubt as to whether supervision is in place on any given day, drivers should keep the students on the bus until the responsible school staff person is visible to them.

In the event that a feeder bus is late arriving at an approved transfer location in the morning, the driver of the feeder bus will contact their company dispatcher and the dispatcher will then contact the transfer bus company to advise of the lateness. Depending on the degree of delay, the parties will agree upon whether the transfer bus should proceed to the destination school. If it is the case that the transfer bus proceeds before the feeder bus arrives, the delayed feeder bus will proceed to the approved transfer location, students who attend the school where the transfer location is situated will be permitted to disembark, and the feeder bus will then deliver remaining students to the final destination school to which they normally transfer. If the transfer bus is late arriving in the morning at the approved transfer location, then the same communication steps will be used as for a late feeder bus.

In the event that a transfer bus is late arriving at an approved transfer location in the afternoon, the driver of the transfer bus will contact their company dispatcher and the dispatcher will then contact the transfer location school and the bus companies operating feeder buses to advise of the lateness. Given that multiple students with widespread home bus stop locations are transported on transfer buses, feeder buses should not proceed with their routes in the afternoon until the delayed transfer bus arrives at the transfer location.

If a feeder bus is late arriving in the afternoon at the approved transfer location the company operating the feeder bus is to contact the school and the transfer bus company to advise of the delay. Students on the transfer bus who are assigned to the late feeder bus will be allowed to disembark the transfer bus into the care of transfer location school staff. Such students will then wait in a safe location in the vicinity of the school and under staff supervision until their feeder bus arrives.

All drivers of transfer and feeder buses will ensure that students not attending the transfer location school or not requiring to transfer to another bus remain on the bus at the transfer location during periods of waiting for transfer students to load or unload in the morning or afternoon.

In accordance with Board Policy regarding bus idling and in effort to avoid the harmful effects of unnecessary exhaust fumes, drivers are to turn off their bus if parked at a transfer location and not in the direct process of loading or unloading students (i.e. when waiting for students from other buses or from the transfer location school to arrive).

1.3 School Responsibilities:

The school will be responsible for overseeing the safe movement of students between buses while students are in the vicinity of the school. Assigned school staff will assist students in determining the correct bus to board at approved transfer locations. This responsibility will involve provision of appropriate staff supervision by the school. School administration will ensure that the transfer supervision staff are visible to students using the transfer.

If a student is unsure of what bus to get on, transfer school staff on duty will refer to the appropriate transfer bus/student list and direct the student to the appropriate bus.

In effectively overseeing operations at the approved transfer location, the respective staff at the transfer location school and the destination school (that which transfer students attend) will collaborate on implementing a bus buddy system which will link a responsible older student with younger students to ensure that the younger students board their transfer bus in the morning and board the correct feeder bus in the afternoon. The schools will communicate the nature of bus buddy arrangements to individual bus drivers who can then assist in ensuring smooth functioning of the buddy system amongst individual students on a daily basis.

Should a student disembark their vehicle of arrival at an approved transfer location and miss their transfer bus in the morning or their feeder bus in the afternoon, school staff will take the student under their care immediately and implement contingency procedures which will include notifying the student's school of attendance and STSCO for purposes of ensuring appropriate communication with the students' family and determining steps for the student's safe transportation to their final destination.

1.4 Student Transportation Services of Central Ontario Responsibilities:

STSCO will be responsible for providing an accurate transfer bus/student list to administration at the school where an approved transfer location is located. The list will include student name, grade, school of attendance, home phone number and bus route identifier. Periodically, as necessary, updated copies of the list will be provided to the school by STSCO.

Where called upon and on an annual basis, STSCO will assist schools and bus companies with initial set-up of bus buddy systems.

In the event of a student missing their transfer or feeder bus, where requested by the schools involved, STSCO will assist in dealing with family notification and decision making regarding the safe transportation of the student to their final destination.

On an ongoing basis, STSCO will communicate transfer procedures to bus companies, schools and the public to ensure thorough understanding by all parties and consistent application of the procedures throughout the jurisdictions of member School Boards.

April, 2008