

TRANSPORTATION FAQ's

Each day, over 2,500 students are transported to and from Menomonee Falls schools via contracted service with Johnson Bus Company. The District expense line item costs about \$1.25 million per year. Whether or not students are eligible for District transportation services is often a source of confusion for many residents. Below are some of the most commonly asked questions regarding transportation services for students in the School District of Menomonee Falls.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) – Section I

Regarding the school district's pupil transportation services

Q1: Who is eligible for District provided transportation?

A1: Elementary school students (pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade) who live one mile or more from school and secondary school students (grade 6-12) who live two-miles or more from school are eligible for District provided transportation to and from school.

Q2: How was that determined?

A2: State law requires school boards to provide transportation to and from public schools to all resident students who live more than two-miles from the nearest public school they are entitled to attend. However, in 1962, the School District of Menomonee Falls electors voted to shorten the distance for elementary students (pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade) to one-mile. This distance can only be changed by a vote of the electors at the District's Annual Meeting in September, or at a special meeting called for that specific purpose.

Q3: I have been told that my children are not eligible for District transportation, but the children across the street ride the bus every day. How can my neighbor's children be eligible and not mine?

A3: The School Board's Finance & Auxiliary Services Committee has stressed the importance of adhering strictly to the State Statute to assure fairness District-wide to everyone in providing transportation services. It is possible that the short distance across a street, or even a few houses down a street can mean the difference between being within the one- or two-mile limit required. We understand that may seem like we are splitting hairs, but again, to ensure fairness and keep transportation costs in line it is essential that the statute is strictly adhered to.

Q4: My child has been taking the bus to school since kindergarten. Now that she is going to middle school I have been told that transportation will no longer be provided unless I want to pay for it. How can this be? We live closer to the elementary school my child attended than North Middle School.

A4: As I mentioned earlier, the distance for determining transportation increases from one to two miles in sixth-grade. The elementary school your child attended is more than a mile from your home as is North Middle School. However, North Middle is within the two-mile radius of your home, therefore transportation is not provided to your child now that she is attending the middle school. Again, the State dictates that children within a two-mile radius of their homes are not eligible for District-provided transportation. Electors in our District changed that to one-mile for children in elementary school (Pre-K – 5th Grade) because of their young age.

Q5: My first child is starting school in the fall. We are just about one mile from the school. How can I find out for sure if my child is eligible for transportation?

A5: The District has a database of District addresses with transportation eligibility references for each school to assist in answering this and many other questions. Please contact the District for help in determining if your particular address is eligible. Remember, sometimes even small differences such as what side of the street you live on or where on the street your house is located can make a difference in eligibility, so it is important to have a precise understanding.

Q6: My neighbor's children attend private school and yet I noticed they are transported to school by Johnson Bus Company. I am told that this service is paid for by the public school district. Why is the District transporting students to private schools?

A6: Just as state law requires a district to provide transportation for students to the nearest public school, it also requires a school district to transport a resident pupil to and from a private school under two conditions: (1) if that student lives within the attendance area of that private school, and (2) if that private school is situated within the public school district or not more than five miles beyond the boundaries of the school district, measured along the usually traveled route.

Q7: My friend said he receives a payment from the District because his children, who attend a private school, do not ride the bus to school. I pay property taxes and do not have children in school. Why don't I receive a payment?

A7: The payment your friend receives is through what is called a "Parent Contract." State law says that if the cost of providing transportation for students attending a private school exceeds one and one-half times the District's average cost in the previous year, the District may offer a "Parent Contract." The District pays the parents of students attending that private school an amount equal to its average cost per pupil (based on the previous year's cost). The parent must then provide transportation for their child to the private school. This payment is one of several options available to public school districts to fulfill its obligation to provide transportation to all eligible resident students regardless whether they attend public or private school. It is not a payment for not riding the bus.

Q8: My children attend a Catholic school, which I drive them to every day. I just learned that my friend, whose children also attend Catholic school but at a different church, are bused to school by the School District of Menomonee Falls. Our churches are not that far apart. Why does the District provide transportation to my friend's church, but not to mine? I checked with my church and we do live within the "attendance area" of our church's school. Why can't my children ride the bus?

A8: When the attendance areas of two or more private parochial schools of the same denomination overlap, state law requires the School Board and the private schools to determine which school will receive transportation service in that overlapping area. In this case, your friend's church was chosen as the school that would receive District transportation.

Q9: The District says it has to set limits to avoid excessive transportation costs. Why, then, do we pay to transport students to our schools who are enrolled in the Chapter 220 program?

A9: The district does not provide the transportation for students enrolled in the Chapter 220 program. That is a common misconception. Transportation for students in the Chapter 220 program is the responsibility of and paid for by the Milwaukee Public School District. When MPS closes school because of inclement weather, no transportation service is provided for Milwaukee Resident pupils to suburban schools (including SDMF Schools).

Q10: How and by whom are "unusual hazards" determined?

A10: The Waukesha County Sheriff's Department, determines whether students who are within the one- or two-mile radius of school must receive transportation service because of an "unusual hazard." The District submits written requests for an evaluation to the Waukesha County Sheriff's Department if administrators or residents feel a hazard exists. The sheriff's department then observes the area and consults with the local police department to make a determination. The sheriff files a written report with the District and the Department of Public Instruction. If the evaluation was requested by a resident, the District is responsible for sending a copy of the report to the party requesting it. The results of the evaluation may be appealed to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Those areas deemed "Unusual hazards" may be permanent, such as areas where elementary students need to cross Appleton Avenue in a place where there are no crossing guards. They may also be temporary, as may be the case during road and sewer construction. During that time, temporary routes and stops are established to provide a safe means for students to travel to and from school. When that construction is finished, all such routes and stops will be eliminated the following school year.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) – Section II

Regarding childcare providers and pupil transportation

Q11: My childcare provider lives more than one-mile from my child's school, yet my child is not eligible for district provided transportation to (or from) my childcare provider's address. Why?

A11: Transportation eligibility is based on the child's home residence, not the childcare provider's address. Although your childcare provider's address is more than one-mile from your child's school, your child's home address does not exceed the one-mile minimum distance.

Q12: My babysitter's children and mine are both eligible for transportation under the guidelines set by the State. I only work in the morning and I am home by the time school lets out. Why can't my child be picked up in the morning from the babysitter's house but dropped off at my house after school?

A12: Your house and your babysitter's house are not on the same route. This would require the district to provide

a seat for your student on two routes. To ensure fairness and keep transportation costs in line, the district does not allow a student to have multiple seats.

Q13: Is there a shuttle from my daycare center (which is not bus eligible) to my elementary school in the morning and from my elementary school in the afternoon?

A13: If your daycare center pays to create this stop for any of our elementary schools, then the District will pick-up students at your daycare center in the morning (and drop-off students in the afternoon). Families must pay the non-mandated busing fee for each student rider, which allows their child to ride to (or from) any of our elementary schools.

Q14: So why do I need to pay, when my daycare center (which is not bus eligible) is already paying to create this stop? If I'm an eligible rider to my elementary school, why am I required to pay the non-mandated fee to ride to/from my daycare center?

A14: Your daycare center is in a walking area (non-mandated) to your elementary school and out of the boundary (non-mandated) for all other elementary schools. Therefore, your daycare center is a non-mandated stop for all elementary school students. Your daycare center is paying to create the stop and you're paying to ride to/from the stop.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) – Section III

Regarding four-year old kindergarten (4K) pupil transportation

Q15: I heard that every 4K child receives a bus ride at the mid-day. Is this true?

A15: 4K busing at the midday (Out (to home) OR In (to school)) is provided to any 4K student OTHER THAN Ben Franklin (BF) Elementary School walkers (those BF 4k students that live less than one-mile from BF (and not in a hazardous walk route)).

Q16: I live less than one-mile from Shady Lane (SL) Elementary School and therefore, I am not bus eligible. My older kids currently walk to school. Next year, I will have a 4K child attending the Early Learning Center at Ben Franklin (BF) Elementary School. Are they now eligible for a bus ride to BF?

A16: Yes, and no... your (morning) 4K child will walk to Shady Lane and then board the shuttle bus to BF. When 4K is over at the mid-day, they will be bused to their home because it is several miles from BF. For an afternoon 4K child, they will be picked up at their home (at the mid-day) and bused to the Early Learning Center at Ben Franklin (BF) Elementary School. At the end of the 4K day, they will board the shuttle bus to SL, then walk home from there.

Q17: I heard that there is a shuttle to and from my daycare center at the mid-day. Is this accurate?

A17: Yes, this is accurate. The District will drop-off (ONLY) 4K students at your daycare center and pick-up (ONLY) 4K students at your daycare center in the mid-day (in place of their home).

Q18: What about before and after school? Is there a shuttle for my 4K child from my daycare center (which is not bus eligible) to the Early Learning Center at Ben Franklin (BF) Elementary School in the morning and from the Early Learning Center at BF in the afternoon?

A18: If your daycare center pays to create this stop, then the District will pick-up 4K students at your daycare center in the morning (and drop-off 4K students in the afternoon). Families must pay the non-mandated busing fee for each student rider, which allows their child to ride to (or from) any of our elementary schools.

Q19: If a 4K student is eligible for a bus, can they get on the bus and go to a daycare facility instead of taking them to their home?

A19: For (early) morning and (late) afternoon bus rides, this is ONLY possible if the daycare facility is in their home school boundary AND if the daycare facility is more than one-mile from their home school. The mid-day bus rides are different in that the 4K buses drop-off and pick-up from anywhere in the district, therefore it is possible to be picked-up or dropped-off (at the mid-day ONLY) at a daycare facility rather than the home.