



2016 School District Transportation

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Eligibility:

Wisconsin Statutes Section 121.54 requires school boards to provide transportation to and from public schools to all resident pupils living more than two miles from the nearest public school they are entitled to attend. Wisconsin Statutes Section 121.54(2)(b)(1) requires a school district to transport a resident pupil to and from a private school: (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.

The two-mile limit applies to both public and private schools. However, in 1962, the electors of the school district voted to change this distance to one mile for elementary students (Pre-kindergarten to fifth grade). This distance can only be changed by a vote of the electors at the Annual Meeting or at a Special Meeting called for this purpose.

The need to draw a line at one or two miles leads to one of the most frequent concerns raised by parents each year: “Why can’t my child ride the bus? We live next door to, three houses from, a block away from, a student who does qualify for transportation.” The School Board’s Finance & Auxiliary Services Committee has stressed the importance of adhering strictly to the State Statute to assure equitable provision of transportation services.

One question asked each year comes from parents of fifth graders concerned about whether their student(s) will continue to receive transportation when they attend North Middle School as a sixth grader. As I mentioned above, the distance for determining transportation increases from one to two miles in sixth grade. We have provided North Middle School with a broad outline in the form of a map to help them answer this question. We have created a database of district addresses with transportation eligibility references for each school to assist in answering this and many other questions.

“Unusual Hazards”:

Public and private school students who otherwise walk to school must receive transportation service if the walking route is considered by the County Sheriff’s Department to contain “unusual hazards”. State law provides that the County Sheriff, at the request of a school district, is responsible for determining whether “unusual hazards” exist within a school district. The school district forwards written requests for an evaluation to the County Sheriff who observes the area in question, consults with the local police department and others who may have pertinent information. The sheriff files a written report with the school district and the Department of Public Instruction. The school district sends 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.

Unusually hazardous conditions may be more or less permanent, such as crossing Appleton Avenue at places other than where there is a crossing guard (elementary students) or temporary, such as the road and sewer construction on major streets. Temporary routes and stops are established to provide a safe means for students to travel to and from school. Once construction is finished all such routes and stops will be eliminated. Whenever new construction is begun, adjustments to routes and stops will be made once again, when necessary.

Private Schools:

As mentioned earlier, public school districts are required to provide transportation service to resident students attending private schools if the private school is located within the school district or within five miles of the school district’s boundaries, measured along the usually traveled route. In addition, the resident student must live within the attendance area of that private school. Attendance area boundaries are determined by each private school.

Wisconsin Statute 121.51(1) defines attendance areas and the impact they have on the provision of transportation services by public school districts. 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.

Students, although living outside a private school's attendance area, may receive transportation service to that private school under the school district's **Non-Mandated Transportation** policy, discussed later.

Other Services/Options:

Child Care-

- a) Transportation eligibility is based on home residence.
- b) Provider must be within school's attendance area and on an existing route.
- c) Pick-up and drop-off locations must be on the same bus route, in a consistent, every day pattern.
- d) If home and provider are not on the same route, transportation will only be available to one or the other. **Why?** A seat would be required on two bus routes for each such situation. In our district that would mean three or four additional buses each day at a cost of \$17,000 to \$20,000 each.
- e) There are other aspects of this service that can be discussed by contacting your child's school or the Transportation Office.

Joint Custody-

- a) One or both homes must be eligible for transportation service.
- b) If both homes are eligible, one must be designated as the primary residence.
- c) Transportation to the non-primary residence may be provided on an existing route, at an existing stop if space is available. In this case, seats are made available on two bus routes, if possible.
- d) Schedule must be on a consistent, everyday pattern.

Non-Mandated Transportation Service-

- a) Service is available to students not otherwise eligible, for a fee designated in Wisconsin State Statutes. The fee is the school district's average transportation cost per eligible rider.
- b) Service is available only on existing routes and at existing stops. No additional routes or stops will be added.
- c) Space must be available on the requested route.
- d) Applications may be obtained at all School Offices, our District Office, or by clicking on Transportation on the left menu bar at www.sdmfschools.org.
- e) They will be available in August of each year.

Parent Contracts-

- a) When a private school is eligible to receive transportation service and the cost of providing that service exceeds one and one-half times the public school district's average cost, the public school district may fulfill its obligation for transportation service by offering a contract to parents of eligible students. Under this contract the public school district pays the parent its average cost, as defined in State Statutes, to provide the transportation.

Chapter 220 Transportation-

- a) Transportation for Milwaukee students participating in the Chapter 220 program and attending school in Menomonee Falls is the sole responsibility of Milwaukee Public Schools.

During the course of each school year a number of questions arise about the transportation services provided by the School District of Menomonee Falls. I hope I have answered many of them. If you have questions, please contact your school of attendance or the Transportation Office at (262) 250-8851.