Minnesota Department of Education

MINNESOTA SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION BEST PRACTICES

Mission Statement

To provide safe, reliable, efficient transportation services so that students arrive at school ready to learn.

District-Level Transportation Policies and Practices

- The district has a written policy (see Minnesota Statutes 123B.91).
- School district adopts local rules and regulations on operational implementation of policies.
- Minnesota School Boards have sample policies both required and recommended. Note: must be a member to access information.
- District sets a process for the public to access these policies and regulations.
- District has a written signed contract with all private providers. View sample contract form.

District Planning

- The district annually evaluates the transportation system for student safety, improved effectiveness, efficiencies and consistency (in priority order).
- The district accurately measures student distance from home to school along the most direct traveled route according to Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) guidelines. View Frequently Asked Student Transportation Questions.
- The district periodically reviews the benefits and costs of contracting versus district-owned transportation services and presents findings to the school board.
- When school districts consider significant changes in buildings, programs, boundaries or schedules, transportation system effects, including costs and student riding time are a part of the evaluation process.
- Plan and budget adequately to provide transportation services according to district standards.
- Report transportation information to the state in a timely and accurate fashion as required Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) (view MARSS Manual), Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) (view UFARS Manual), Department of Education Projection Reports, Department of Education Annual Report.

School Bus Driver Qualifications

- Annually verify that drivers meet state and federal requirements.
  - Driving record check (minimum two times a year) and keep most recent record on file, verify school bus physical examination is current, either by annual examination or by a calendar data system. View Department of Public Safety's Minnesota School Bus Driver's Handbook.

    - Conduct substance (alcohol and drugs) abuse tests as required by law, (pre-employment, random, reasonable suspicion, post-accident, return to duty and follow-up – as outlined in state and federal law). View the Federal Alcohol and Drug Test Requirements.
    - Requires daily pre-trip and post-trip inspection of each bus.
- Provide driver training in the driver competencies outlined in state law and maintain records as required by the state (see Minnesota Statutes 171.321).

Contracted districts – require that providers perform the above and report to the district annually. District shall review contractor files to ensure compliance with district, state and federal requirements.

Vehicle Safety Standards

- The district adopts and follows a bus replacement plan based on maximum age or mileage.
- Utilizes a process to identify and perform needed repairs and preventative maintenance for vehicles and equipment.
- Vehicles used to transport students, including Type III vehicles not part of the district or contractor's fleet are able to pass inspection by the Department of Public Safety at any time. See the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's School Bus Safey web page.

Contracted districts – require that providers perform the above and report to the district annually. District shall review contractor files to ensure compliance with district, state, and federal requirements.

Student Safety Standards (see Minnesota Statutes 123B.90)

- Annually train students (public and nonpublic), bus riders and pedestrians according to state statutes.
- Implement and follow school bus safety rules and disciplinary procedures to ensure safe bus rides for all.
- Provide training according to the bus rules and policies established by the district.
- Maintain records of all training.

Policies and Practices for Contracted Transportation (see Pupil Transportation Service Agreement)

- The district opens student transportation services to new carriers at least every four years.
- The district uses a competitive bid, quotation or negotiation process to choose a provider (see Minnesota Statutes 123B.52).
- The district regularly compares its rates with comparable districts.
- The district has a written, signed contract with each of the private contractors it uses to provide student transportation.
- The contract outlines requirements regarding driver qualifications, vehicle age/mileage and contractor performance.
    - The district regularly measures contract performance according to requirements of the contract.
- The contractor maintains vehicle insurance for the duration of the contract (district receives insurance certificate).

Resources

State of Minnesota

- Minnesota Department of Education: http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchFin/Trans/index.html
- Minnesota Department of Public Safety: https://dps.mn.gov/Pages/default.aspx
- Minnesota Department of Public Safety – State Patrol: https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/msp/commercial-vehicles/Pages/school-bus-safety.aspx
- Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation: http://www.mnapt.org
- Minnesota School Bus Operators Association: https://netforum.avectra.com/eWeb/StartPage.aspx?Site=MSBOA
- Minnesota School Boards Association: http://www.mnmsba.org/public/main.cfm
- Minnesota State Statutes list: http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=002386&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary
- Minnesota Statute lookup site: http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg.aspx

Federal

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/
- National Transportation Safety Board: http://www.ntsb.gov/
- United States Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration Web address for the School Bus Watch - security awareness program: http://www.tsa.gov/what_we_do/tsnm/highway/stsa.shtm
- United States Department of Transportation: http://www.dot.gov/ost/dapc/

Other Resources

- National Association for Pupil Transportation: http://www.napt.org/
- Pupil Transportation Safety Institute: www.ptsi.org
- School Bus Fleet: www.schoolbusfleet.com
- School Transportation News: www.stnonline.com