



Pupil Transportation "Vehicle"

Provided by the Transportation Section within the Program Finance Division

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1. Student Transportation Reporting on MARSS

There has always been some confusion as to what transportation services are mandated by state law, how the mandates relate to the reporting of student transportation data on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) and what student data are used in funding formulas.

On MARSS, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) only collects the number of students who are transported to and from school. To and from school transportation is defined as the student's trip to school at the beginning of the school day and the trip home at the end of the school day. The school day will vary for the different types of students in a school district. The school day could begin in the morning and end in the morning as it does for morning kindergarten students or it could begin in the morning and end in the afternoon as it does for the majority of students. The school day could also begin in the afternoon and end in the evening as it does for some students in alternative programs.

Walkers or Transportation Field Does Not Apply Category

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.88 requires school districts to transport any student who lives two miles or more from school. It has always been a local school district decision on whether to transport students who live less than two miles from school. There is a MARSS Transportation Category of 00 – Walkers or Transportation Field Does Not Apply. Which students walk in a school district will vary from district to district. Some districts follow the state law and will not transport any student until the student lives two miles or more from school. All students living less than two miles from school in these districts would be classified as Walkers. Another district may transport all students who live one mile or more from school. Only students living less than one mile from school will be classified as Walkers. Another district may transport all students who live one mile from school and students who live less than one mile but would encounter some type of hazards if they walked. Very few students in this district may be classified as Walkers. Some districts transport all students regardless of the distance the students live from school. In those districts, there should be no students classified as Walkers.

Another group of students who would be given a 00 Transportation Code include those students who have surrendered their bus riding privileges for the entire school year. Minnesota Statute, section 123B.88, Subd. 2, allows parents to surrender their child's bus riding privileges. Districts can design more efficient school bus routes when they know that students will never ride the bus. Because some parents are reluctant to sign away their child's bus riding privileges, districts should assure parents that they will be able to change their mind if their child should need transportation services. The district's policy on this matter could require the parents to give the district two weeks written notice before transportation services would be reinstated.

It is recommended that school boards have a policy on which students will be transported in the district. The policy should also cover how the district measures the distance

between the student's home and the school – the starting point and ending point. There is nothing in state law or rule about how districts must measure the distance. When these issues are clearly defined in the district's policy, it will lessen the chance of disputes over transportation services and ensure that all students are treated the same.

Regular Category

The next MARSS Transportation Category is 01 – Regular. This is the largest category for most districts in the state. This category includes elementary students who live one mile or more from school and secondary students who live two miles or more from school. Many districts confuse the definition of this category with the mandate to provide transportation. The definitions for the categories are used to calculate transportation funding – they are not mandates to provide transportation service.

It is important to remember that the Regular Category, as well as other categories, requires students to live a certain distance from school. Districts must find a way to measure the distance, perhaps by using maps or by using computerized routing systems. Estimates or using city limit lines to determine eligibility are not acceptable methods of determining the distance a student lives from school.

Excess Category

The Excess Category includes secondary students who live one mile or more from school but less than two miles, and all students who live less than one mile from school and who are transported because of traffic, drug or crime hazards. Districts that have decided not to transport any student until the students live two miles or more from school will not have any students reported in the Excess Category.

There must be some hazard between the student's home and the school for a student living less than one mile from school before the student can be counted in this category. The local school board determines what conditions would be considered hazardous. Those conditions should be part of the district's transportation policy. By having the conditions listed in the board policy, it will ensure that all students are treated the same.

There does not have to be a reason for transportation (i.e., hazardous condition) for the secondary students who live one mile or more from school but less than two miles. These students qualify based on their grade level (7-12) and the distance they live from school.

The Regular and Excess public and nonpublic counts are used to calculate a district's nonpublic transportation aids. In many districts, the Regular and Excess Category students ride to and from school on the same bus routes.

Disabled Category

Students reported in the 03 – Disabled Category must have a disability and must be receiving special education transportation services or special education accommodations that are identified on the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). Special education transportation services are defined as transportation provided to a student, who, because of a disability, requires a special route or schedule. Special education accommodations are aides or equipment so that the disabled student can ride the regular bus routes. Without the accommodations, the student would be on a special route. There are many students with disabilities who can ride to and from school on regular bus routes without any special accommodations. Those students are considered 01- Regular Category students as long as they meet the distance requirements for that category.

Districts receive additional funding for the transportation of students with disabilities.

Desegregation Category

Students reported in this category must be attending schools outside their normal attendance area under a desegregation/integration plan. The student counts in this category are used to calculate interdistrict desegregation/integration transportation funding.

Ineligible Category

Students reported in this category are not eligible for transportation services, but the district has decided to provide the service anyway. Students reported in this category could include the transportation of students who live less than one mile from school even though there were no hazards between the students’ homes and the school.

Minnesota Statute, section 123B.36 allows school districts to charge a fee for to-and-from school transportation services for any student who lives less than two miles from school. However, this section also requires the districts to take into consideration a family’s ability to pay the fee. Many districts have adopted the program eligibility levels determined by the Food and Nutrition program for the free and reduced-price meal program. If a student qualified for a free meal, the student would qualify for a free ride on the school bus. If a student qualified for a reduced-price meal, the student would qualify for a reduced fee to ride the school bus.

School districts that have started charging students a fee for transportation must report the fee-paying students in the Ineligible Category. The school board has decided that only students living two miles or more from school would be eligible for free transportation services.

If the school district contracts for school bus service, the school district may decide to have the contractor arrange the transportation service for any student living less than two miles. If the school district is not involved, the contractor and the parents will have to

work out fee amounts. The contractor is not bound by the same law as the school district in considering a family's ability to pay for the transportation services.

Special Transportation Category

Selected students who do not have an IEP or have an IEP that does not require special education transportation adaptations or accommodations may be assigned MARSS Transportation Code 06. Special transportation is transportation that deviates from the normal scheduled transportation routes and is required to transport the students to and from school. They include students who are homeless, students who are attending care and treatment programs, and students who have 504 Accommodation Plans where transportation is listed as an accommodation. If a student is experiencing any of these situations and rides a regular scheduled bus, use MARSS Regular – 01 for coding purposes.

2. School Bus Safety and Special Education Transportation Committees

The School Bus Safety Committee and the Special Education Transportation Committee are a great networking means for school safety directors, special education transportation coordinators, contractors and other interested parties. The committees meet the third Wednesday of the month at various locations across the state. The School Bus Safety Committee meets first at 9:30 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. and the Special Education Transportation Committee meets from 11:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m at the same location.

The School Bus Safety group discusses topics related to student safety training, school bus driver requirements and vehicle safety. LeAnn Livingston is the chairperson, her e-mail is llivingston@forestlake.k12.mn.us.

The Special Education Transportation Committee discusses issues related to transporting students with IEPs and the related service of transportation. Kala Henkensiefken is the Chairperson, her e-mail is kala.h@isd181.org.

Everyone is invited to attend these informative meetings. Please contact the chairpersons for meeting locations.

2. Public and Nonpublic Pupil Transportation Communication Guidelines

These guidelines are provided to maintain and improve effective communications between public and nonpublic schools regarding pupil transportation. They are intended to be advisory and supportive to the communication process. They were originally created by the Public/Nonpublic Transportation cooperation Committee in 1995 and are still valuable today.

Equal Treatment Law

In 1969, the Legislature passed the equal treatment transportation provisions on Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.84 through 123B.87 (also known as the “Fair Busing Bill”). The policy statement in these statutes says:

...“it is in the public interest to provide equality of treatment in transporting school children of the state who are required to attend elementary and secondary schools pursuant to chapter 120A, so that the health, welfare and safety of the children, while using the public highways of the state, shall be protected.”

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.86 subd. 1 states:

“A district shall provide equal transportation within the district for all school children to any school when transportation is deemed necessary by the school board because of distance or traffic condition in like manner and form as provided in sections 123B.88 and 123B.92, when applicable.”

Equal treatment means that transportation shall be provided for nonpublic school students the same as it is provided for public school students. Thus, while the configuration of service may vary given the students, the transportation system must be the same. Also, equal treatment must be provided to all types of nonpublic school students.

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.78 subd. 2 states:

“When transportation is provided, manner and method of transportation, control and discipline of school children and any other matter relating thereto shall be within the sole discretion, control and management of the school board.”

Although this statute vests final authority in the school board to make these determinations, it is widely recognized that nonpublic schools need to be involved in the decision making process. The setting of attendance areas, standards and processes should be inclusive to avoid subsequent dispute.

Public School and Nonpublic School Consultation Guidelines

Meetings. Minnesota Rule 3520.1500 requires that school districts meet at least once a year with nonpublic school representatives to discuss attendance areas, safety, economics, conveniences, and availability of space for the pupils. The purpose of this meeting should be to share information, gain understanding of all stakeholder needs, and through dialogue arrive at the best solutions for the issues discussed. This meeting should be scheduled early enough in the process to provide legitimate input on the issues by the nonpublic representative. Generally this would mean scheduling the meeting in the spring (around March 1) to discuss issues for the next school year.

There are good reasons to have more than one meeting annually to address issues as they arise or in a timely manner, and to develop a cooperative relationship between public and nonpublic representatives. Minutes/notes communicating the actions and the discussions which occurred in the meeting should be circulated to the school board and the nonpublic schools.

Participants. All relevant individuals in the process should be consulted, or at least included in the communications generated from the cooperative work. For example, public school district officials, all nonpublic school officials, public and nonpublic parents and school transportation staff (or contractor). It may also be important to involve others such as church authorities, depending on the sensitivity of the issue and its importance in the community. A part of the process should include agreement on whose responsibility it is to provide these communications.

What should be included? The issues to be addressed by the public/nonpublic transportation communication process include anything related to pupil transportation. For example:

- School calendars
- School start times
- Attendance areas
- Permanent closing or opening of schools
- Grade changes
- Transportation policy issues
- Student behavior rules and processes
- Changing demographics
- Severe weather policies
- Emergency response plans
- Student lists
- Special bus arrangements (day care, scouts, one-day changes)
- State reporting
- Bus driver procedures and training
- Student safety education
- The effect of new or revised laws

Attendance Area

Setting attendance areas for nonpublic schools can be an area of special difficulty. By the Attorney General's ruling, school districts have the authority and responsibility to set school transportation areas for nonpublic schools as they do for public schools. When setting nonpublic transportation attendance boundaries, the school district should involve the nonpublic community in the process. This might involve a process outside of the regular annual meeting because of its detailed nature and long term-effects. Once boundaries are set, they may remain for long periods of time, so it is imperative that this process provide for input by all parties if the decisions are to be accepted. During this process, all parties affected should be encouraged to submit proposals and be invited to comment on the proposed plans prior to decision and implementation.

Further Suggestions

The following are some additional suggestions:

To the Public School District:

- a) Recognize private school constituencies as customers who may also at some point use the public school system.
- b) Realize that good communications and a good relationship with nonpublic constituencies will help blunt criticism of the public schools and will help build an influential base of support for the public schools. Keep communication open as possible so that all parties can have input.
- c) Advise school bus contractors and drivers that equal treatment is the policy, not just a verbal commitment.
- d) Share information with the nonpublic schools. Send out board minutes, newsletters, and other publications, and ask that they do the same.
- e) When setting meetings, as for input on the agenda and interest areas.
- f) Give the nonpublic schools ample time when asking for their input or choice.
- g) Follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law.
- h) In the matter of nonpublic attendance areas, involve the nonpublic schools in the change process. Ask for their plans and proposals, and work with them to come to an acceptable result.

To the Nonpublic School:

- a) Recognize the limitations that the law provides for transportation service and work with the public school district to make it the best possible for all students.
- b) Communicate transportation issues and processes to your parents and constituents. Solicit their comments and pass them on.
- c) Work to understand how school districts are reimbursed and plan accordingly.
- d) Help the parents understand the meaning of equal transportation. It does not mean equal dollars, equal time on the bus or even the same bus stops. Also, address the limitations that attendance area place on transportation.
- e) Work toward a good relationship with the public school district staff and administration.
- f) In the matter of attendance are changes, work with the other affected nonpublic schools to develop and submit timely proposals, and then work with the school district to find and acceptable result.

3. School Bus Safety Poster Contest

Each year, the Minnesota Pupil Transportation Association (MAPT), the Minnesota Association of School Bus Operators (MSBOA) and the School Bus Safety Committee sponsors the Minnesota School Bus Safety Poster Contest. This year's state safety poster contest will be hosted by the Anoka Hennepin School District.

The theme this year is: **"I See the Driver – The Driver Sees Me!"** It is meant to remind students about the need to look carefully for the drivers signal before crossing the street.

Contest Objective: To encourage students to **THINK** about all elements of school bus safety. The contest presents opportunities for school bus safety activities. It also provides an ideal opportunity to discuss pupil transportation safety themes while working on, or critiquing student posters.

Who May Enter: Any student enrolled in grades Kindergarten through 8th Grade in a Minnesota public, parochial or other private elementary or middle school may submit an entry.

Poster Contest Entry Address and Deadline: All entries **must be received** at the following address **by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 5, 2011**. Any poster received after the deadline will not be considered for judging. All entries should be mailed flat. Do not roll or fold entries.

Mail Entries to:
Cindy McKay
7855 157th Avenue NW
Ramsey, MN 55303

All state entries received by the deadline and meeting the criteria listed below will be judged on Wednesday, April 20, 2011. Notification to state winners will be sent out shortly thereafter.

Pre-Judging: Please observe the Poster Contest rules when submitting posters from your students. We ask that you forward only the top two or three winners of each category from your classroom, building, district or transportation provider contest. Please do not submit all entries from a classroom, building or district.

Poster Contest Rules: Poster Themes must be Original and Correct in Safety

Concept: Every poster and slogan must harmonize with the theme: **“I See the Driver – The Driver Sees Me!”**

(Contestants must illustrate above theme only, and the theme must be exactly as shown above.) Drawings must be original, correct in safety concept and the exclusive work of the student entering the contest in idea, design and execution. All artwork should be positive in approach, demonstrating only proper school bus safety behaviors. At least a part of a yellow school bus must be present in the poster. Instructors/parents should supervise all work created.

Minnesota School Bus Safety Poster Contest Poster Specifications: Completed poster size must be 12" X 18" with a 1" border left blank at the bottom. There must be a 3" x 5" card/entry blank securely fastened to the back of the poster which includes the student's name, grade, age, teacher's name, school name and school address. Please print clearly. Posters may be illustrated on the vertical or horizontal axis.

Designs should be submitted on quality tag, poster illustration board or heavy paper construction paper may be used but winning entries must be mounted on quality tag poster. Lamination is not permitted, and will disqualify the poster. Cut paper/stencils **(freehand or pre-drawn stick-on stencils) are not permitted** and will disqualify the poster.

There is no limitation on the use and number of colors. There is no limitation on the type of media such as print, crayon, felt pen, etc. used on the poster design; however, wood, plastic, glass or metal should not be part of the poster. Collage materials should not be used. Glued on pieces will disqualify the poster.

The contest theme must be printed on the poster following the guidelines below. Poster designs may not incorporate any copyrighted characters (i.e., comic and/or television characters), photographs, and magazine or newspaper illustrations.

Do NOT roll posters. They must be mailed/delivered flat.

Lettering and Drawing: Freehand drawn letters only may be used on the poster design. **Stenciled, pre-printed, manufactured stick-on or press-on letters or tracings may not be used and will disqualify the poster.** Lettering should be clearly legible, even if used as part of the poster design.

Judging and Prizes: Posters in the state contest may be judged by individuals from MAPT and MSBOA organizations, local law enforcement, Minnesota Department of Public Safety and Minnesota Department of Education and Minnesota State Highway

Patrol Representatives, Minnesota Safety Committee members as well as school bus drivers.

Criteria for the selection of award-winning posters are:

- a. Relationship of the poster design to the school bus safety practices.
- b. Originality of the poster and how the idea is expressed in the poster design.
- c. Artwork and its execution.
- d. Visual impact of the poster design.
- e. Compliance with contest rules.

All rules regarding poster specifications, themes, lettering, etc. must be followed. The penalty for non-compliance will be disqualification of the poster. All state entries become the property of the National School Bus Safety Week Committee. The right to modify any poster for reproduction is reserved by the NSBSW Committee.

State Contest: This year's poster contest winners will be selected and recognized in each of the following categories: K, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades and Special Needs Students K-3, 4-6, 7-8 grades. The student in the winning grade for each of these categories will receive a certificate of recognition and a \$35 gift card to Borders. If the entry is forwarded to the National Contest, the student will receive instead a \$50 gift card from Borders.

National Contest: The winning posters from the 12 state categories will then be re-grouped into the following categories for judging and forwarding to the national contest: Division #1 - Grades K-2; Division #2 - Grades 3-5; Division #3 - Grade 6-8; Division #4 - Special Education; Division #5 - CAD (Computer-Aided Drawing). Only one poster in each category will be forwarded to the National Contest. All entries that are forwarded to the national contest become the property of the National School Bus Safety Week Committee, and are not returned.

National Contest Prizes are as follows: 1st Place and Overall Winner \$1000 Savings Bond; 1st Place Winners of remaining 3 divisions \$ 500 Savings Bond; 2nd Place Winners of each 4 divisions \$ 250 Savings Bond; 3rd Place Winners of each 4 divisions \$ 100 Savings Bond; 1st Place Winner - CAD division \$ 100 Savings Bond

The National School Bus Safety Poster Contest is sponsored by the National Association for Pupil Transportation, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, the National School Transportation Association and the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute.

Posters selected for final judging in the National Contest will be reviewed by the national board of judges, comprised of prominent individuals in the field of pupil transportation safety.

The winning poster will be used for national distribution in 2012.

NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY POSTER CONTEST 2011 ENTRY BLANK

Student Name: _____
Grade: _____ Age: _____ Teacher's Name: _____
School: _____
School Address: _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Student Home Address _____

We hope that you will utilize this contest as a mid-year opportunity to remind all students about the importance of bus safety. Please forward this dated information to your classroom teachers and bus drivers. If you have questions about the poster contest, please contact Cindy McKay at mckay4@comcast.net

Thank you!

6. Ads in School Buses

Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.93 allows the Department of Education to establish a state wide program for advertising on school buses. The Department of Education has not established such a program.

The statute does not prohibit individual school districts from entering into contractual agreements with advertisers to place advertisements on the interior of school buses and to keep any revenues generated by such contracts.

Any advertisements placed in the interior of a school bus must comply with the conditions established by the Minnesota State Patrol and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety. The ads should not impair driver visibility, cause driver or motorist distraction, or interfere with the ingress/egress or safety equipment of the bus.

The Minnesota Department of Education will not request the removal of advertisements from the buses of any school district that contracts with an advertiser, as long as the advertisements meet the conditions set by the Minnesota State Patrol.

Advertisements on the outside of the bus are prohibited under Minnesota Statutes, section 169.441.

7. Best Practices

As a result of an audit by the Office of Legislator Auditors (OLA), MDE staff worked in cooperation with the department's Transportation Issues Committee to respond to the OLA recommendations. The Committee consists of school district transportation administrators, school bus contractors and other interested parties. The group developed a set of Best Practices for Student Transportation, which provides an outline of oversight issues school districts should consider while administering their student transportation programs.

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 Minn. Stat. § 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. (see sample contracts).

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. <http://education.state.mn.us>.
- The district periodically reviews the benefits and costs of contracting vs. 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), <http://education.state.mn.us>. Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards, (UFARS), <http://education.state.mn.us>.

School Bus Driver Qualifications

- Annually verify that drivers meet state and federal requirements. Driving record check (minimum twice 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 <http://www.transportation.spps.org/sites/55dfc1c3-5f80-48fe-a4f0-a74b50105325/uploads/MnSchbusdriversHandbook.pdf>
- 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) <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/safety-initiatives/drugs/drug-testing-guide.htm>
- 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 Minn. Stat. § 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. <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/patrol/comveh/schoolbus/index.htm> (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 Minn. Stat. § 123B.90)

- Annually train students (public and non public), bus riders and pedestrians according to state laws.
- 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 sample contract

- 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 Minn. Stat. § 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>
- Minnesota Department of Public Safety: <https://www.dps.state.mn.us/>
- Minnesota Department of Public Safety – State Patrol: <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/patrol/comveh/schoolbus/index.htm>
- Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation: <http://www.mnapt.org/home/htm>
- Minnesota School Bus Operators Association: <http://www.msboa.com>
- Minnesota School Boards Association: <http://www.mnmsba.org/public/main.cfm>
- Minnesota state statutes list pertaining to the pupil transportation program: <http://education.state.mn.us>
- 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.nts.gov/>
- United States Dept 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

8. Safe Routes to School

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is a growing network of more than 500 non-profit organizations, government agencies, schools and professional groups that are working to set goals, share best practices, secure funding and provide detailed policy input to implementing agencies for advancing the Safe Routes to School national movement. Their mission is to advocate for safe walking and bicycling to and from schools, and in daily life, to improve the health and well-being of America's children and to foster the creation of livable, sustainable communities.

[More information on Safe Routes to School can be viewed on the Safe Routes to School National Partnership website.](#)

9. Charter School Transportation

A charter school has the option of providing its own transportation or using district-provided transportation. A charter school after its first fiscal year of operation must notify the district in which it is located and the Department of Education of its decision on transportation services for the 2011-12 school year by March 1. For a charter school in its first fiscal year, the deadline is July 1.

Form ED 02425-05 is available to assist a charter school in notifying the department of its choice. The form must be completed for each site and returned to the Department by March 1, 2011, and July 1, 2011, for first year charters. Form ED 2425-05 can be found on the department's web site at: <http://education.state.mn.us>.

If a charter school provides any student transportation services, it must use vehicles and drivers that comply with all the statutes and rules governing pupil transportation.

10. Awards Program for Special Education School Bus Drivers and Assistants

The Minnesota Special Education Transportation Committee, in cooperation with the Minnesota Association of Pupil Transportation and the Minnesota Department of Education, is sponsoring the seventh annual awards program to identify and recognize the best school bus drivers and transportation assistants serving Minnesota students with special needs. There will be separate awards for the top rated school bus driver and transportation assistant. View the nomination form.