

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

The Easthampton School Committee is responsible, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, for providing transportation to certain students who reside in Easthampton and attend public and private schools within the city. The School Committee is also responsible for providing transportation to vocational and special education students who reside in Easthampton and attend approved programs outside of Easthampton.

To fulfill this responsibility, the Easthampton School Committee establishes this policy in order to provide transportation in an equitable, efficient, and safe manner.

Section IA – Eligibility

The Easthampton School Department will have bus transportation available to the school of attendance for students who meet the following criteria:

- A. Students attending a public or private school within Easthampton:
 - Students in grades Kindergarten through five (K-5) who reside more than one and a half (1.5) miles from their school of attendance
 - Students in grades six through twelve (6-12) who reside more than two (2.0) miles from their school of attendance
 - Mileage for eligibility purposes will be measured by the Easthampton School Department from the front of the home to the school of attendance along the shortest route.
- B. Students approved for attendance at vocational programs outside of Easthampton:
 - All students approved for attendance in grades nine through twelve (9-12) vocational programs outside Easthampton
- C. Students approved for attendance at special education programs will be transported in accordance with A and B above unless their Individual Education Plan specifies otherwise.
- D. Students of choice attending Easthampton Public Schools are not eligible for transportation from and to any location in or out of Easthampton.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students having physical or mental disabilities in accordance with the American Disabilities Act.

Students not meeting the above criteria who have extenuating circumstances may appeal to the Superintendent.

Section IB – Fill the Bus Program

As early in the fall as possible, the Superintendent of Schools will present to the School Committee the degree to which the bus company can accommodate additional students under the mileage limit for that school year. This will be done in increments of 1/10 mile by each grade level group until the capacity limit is reached on any one bus. The capacity limit is determined by providing busing for the maximum number of students without undue change to the bus routes and reasonable timing of bus schedules. This new requirement will remain in effect only until the end of the school year. Each fall, the School Committee will adhere to the eligibility requirements in Section I.

Section II – Temporary Bus Passes

The building Principal may issue one-day bus passes to students, including walkers, on an emergency basis, on a space available basis. The bus pass will allow a student to be transported on a bus route other than the student's regular bus route for that one day or allow a walker to be transported for that one day.

To receive a temporary bus pass, the parent must request such in writing of the building Principal, explaining the emergency situation. If approved, a pass will be issued by the Principal to the student. The student will turn the pass in to the driver as the bus is boarded. The Principal will also inform the bus company of the situation prior to the use of the pass. Temporary bus passes will not be used to circumvent School Committee policies.

Section III – Bus Fees

State law requires we provide free bus transportation to all students in grades K-6 living beyond two (2) miles from their assigned school. The law does not require busing for students in grades 7-12. In addition, by law, students on free or reduced lunch cannot be assessed a bus fee. Easthampton does provide additional busing than is required by law, however, some of it may be at a fee.

This will be the bus fee and bus pass policy for parents (guardians) who choose to have their students ride the bus in a year where bus fees are assessed:

- Students in grades K-5 living more than two (2) miles from their school – free
- Students in grades K-5 living between 1.5 and 1.99 miles from their school - fee
- Students in grades K-5 living under 1.5 miles from their school - fee as “fill the bus” seats are made available
- Students in grade 6 living more than two (2) miles from their school – free
- Students in grade 6 living under two (2) miles from their school - fee as “fill the bus” seats are made available
- Students in grades 7-12 living more than two (2) miles from their school - fee
- Students in grades 7-12 living under two (2) miles from their school - fee as “fill the bus” seats are made available

Students will be sent letters in August regarding their eligibility status. Letters will include information about assessment for bus fees.

Students assessed bus fees will be billed and given the opportunity to purchase bus passes before the start of the school year, paying all at once or with a payment plan.

Passes will be provided for all students who pay the fee or who are eligible through the free bus state requirements. Families with more than one student riding a bus requiring a fee will be assessed an adjusted fee with a family cap. Fees will be determined during the budget process and parents (guardians) will be informed of the assessment determination in the June prior to the assessment.

Section IV – Field Trips , Athletic, and Collaborative Vocational Transportation

Transportation policies, such as bus capacity and discipline code, shall apply to transportation provided for field trips, extra-curricular activities, transportation to and from collaborative vocational programs, and athletic events. Bus fees, other than those charges collected from students for certain events, do not apply for this transportation.

Section V – Bus Evacuation Training

In accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws, all students will receive bus evaluation training every school year. All students will receive such training regardless of whether they are transported to school by bus or are walkers. This will ensure that all students know how to evaluate a bus should the need arise during a field trip or athletic event. Students will receive classroom instruction three times (3) a year and will do bus drills twice (2) per year.

Section VI – Complaints

All complaints concerning school transportation should be reported to the building Principal. The Principal will work with the student(s), parent(s), and/or bus driver to resolve the matter. If a matter cannot be adequately resolved by the building Principal, it will be referred to the Superintendent of Schools. These matters will then be dealt with by the Superintendent of Schools in collaboration with the Bus Contract provider.

Section VII – Appeals Process

All transportation policies are subject to approval by the Easthampton School Committee

Anyone who is aggrieved by this policy and/or its interpretation by the School Department should use the following procedure:

Level 1: The matter should be addressed in writing to the Superintendent of Schools.

Level 2: If not resolved at Level 1, the parent(s) may request a hearing with the School Committee.

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2nd Reading 12/13/07

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