

1. Infographic

Designed to provide an overview of the service parameters for the bussed community, it will be in circulation beginning the week of August 10.

READY TO ROLL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Making the ride a safe space for everyone

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1 SHARED SPACES

School buses are shared spaces & strict physical distancing is not possible on board. Students should be encouraged to practice good hand hygiene before boarding & respiratory hygiene while riding the bus. Typically, students will sit two per seat on a full sized bus. Students from the same household must sit together. Seats will be assigned and the seating plan must be followed.
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2 BUS STOPS

Community bus stops are designed to pick up multiple students. Bus stops are located at parks, corners and community mailboxes where there is ample space for physical distancing. Bus stops are not supervised. Maintaining physical distancing at bus stops is the responsibility of the students and caregivers.
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3 VEHICLE CLEANING

Buses will undergo additional cleaning with disinfectant, normally after the morning and afternoon routes. Between runs, special attention will be paid to the handrails, which students should hold on to when entering and exiting the bus for safety reasons.
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4 HAND HYGIENE

Transport Canada recommends students wash their hands before boarding the bus and when they get off the bus. Caregivers should incorporate handwashing into morning and afternoon routines before getting on and off the bus. Caregivers may also want to provide hand sanitizer for their student to use at the bus stop or on board.
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5 FACE COVERINGS

While on board the school bus, bus drivers and attendants will be wearing a mask. Masks are mandatory for students in Grades 4 - 12. We encourage students in JK- Grade 3 to wear a face covering. Families should instruct their student how to do so properly. Masks must be on prior to getting on the bus.
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6 HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN

Students must not board the bus in the morning if they are sick. If a student falls ill during the school day, the school will contact the caregiver to pick the student up as the student will not be allowed on board the bus in the afternoon. Caregivers should have an emergency plan in place.

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO
STUDENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

PREBOARDING HEALTH CHECKS FOR STUDENTS



Transport Canada's report states, in part: All children and drivers who experience symptoms, including mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more), need to self-isolate and stay home. If another member of a child's or driver's household develops symptoms of COVID-19, it is recommended that the child or driver stay home and self-isolate.

Parents/guardians must check their student for symptoms each morning before boarding the school bus.

Bus contractors are responsible for establishing daily health check procedures for Bus Drivers and Bus Attendants prior to starting work.

STAY INFORMED



Student Transportation Services will undertake significant route changes for September in response to COVID 19. Bus routes and school bus stops are under review. Expect changes from prior years. Bus schedules will be posted in the [Parent Portal](#) in late August.

Monitor the [mybigyellowbus](#) website, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and check your emails frequently.

Weekly STS New Updates will be posted on the website using the STS News Update link from the [homepage](#).

Resources



Transport Canada

Report: [Federal Guidance School Bus Operations during COVID 19](#)

Report: [Guidance for transit agencies and passengers in response to COVID 19](#)

Province of Ontario

Report: [Reopening Schools 2020 2021 School Year](#)

SickKids

Report: [Covid 19 Recommendations for School Reopening](#)

Local Public Health Units

[Middlesex London Health Unit](#)

[Southwestern Public Health](#)

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services

Website: [mybigyellowbus.ca](#)

2. Physical Distancing on the School Bus

School buses have only one entrance - the back door is for emergency use only. Each student will pass within approximately 1 meter of the bus driver while getting on or off the bus. Strict physical distancing of 2 meters is not achievable on a school bus and therefore other strategies to mitigate risk must be used.

The manufacturer's capacity of a full-sized school bus is 72 passengers. This assumes a portion of the riders are in junior grades, sitting three to a seat, and senior grades at two per seat. The bus has two rows with twelve bench seats per row. At two riders per bench seat, a full-sized bus would accommodate 48 passengers. Assuming each rider sat properly in the aisle seat and window seat, approximately 1 foot of space would exist between the riders, depending on their size.

The Ministry of Education's Approach to Reopening Schools in 2020-2021 school year originally suggested that consortia consider "Supporting physical distancing between students on school vehicles by considering planning parameters of one student per seat (unless the students are in the same household)" which would reduce capacity on a full sized school bus by more than 50% in many cases.¹ In the revised document released July 2020, the Ministry acknowledges that in order "to support return to school 5 days per week, school boards may be required to increase the utilization beyond one student per seat and operate closer to capacity".²

Since the original release at one per seat, other mitigations strategies have been confirmed, such as PPE for the bus driver and masks on students. It is the combination of controls which assist with the higher number of students assigned to the bus.

Action Items:

- The bench seat immediately behind the school bus driver will be left empty.
- The windows on the vehicles will be kept open, weather permitting, to support increased ventilation.
- STS will ensure contractors comply with mandatory mask usage for bus drivers and attendants.
- STS will promote mandatory masks for grades 4 – 12 and encourage JK- grades 3 to wear a mask through public education.
- STS will recognize those who cannot mask because of underlying health conditions.
- STS will ensure hand sanitizer is available on vehicles.
- STS will, wherever possible, not have actual loads which exceed 46 students, or 2 per seat.³

¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/approach-reopening-schools-2020-2021-school-year>

² <https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-reopening-ontarios-schools>

³ 60% of elementary runs for September already meet this target without registrations being finalized and without remote learners removed.

3. Time on the School Bus

When considering physical distancing constraints, another key consideration for the number of students assigned to a bus run is ride time.

It should be noted that for many urban bus runs, 15 minutes or less is the norm. For specialty program runs or county runs, ride times are typically 30-45 minutes long.

The number of students assigned to a vehicle will be higher in city runs based on density, with mitigation factors being mask use, sanitizer, ventilation, and short trips.

Based on preliminary planning for the 2020-2021 school year, approximations of ride time are:

Ride Time	Percentage of Riders
0 – 15 minutes	62%
16 – 30 minutes	26%
31 – 45 minutes	9%
More than 45 minutes	3%

4. School Bus Stop Locations

Parent/guardians are responsible for student safety to, from and at the school bus stops.

In rural areas, bus stops are typically located at the student's residence and therefore pose limited risk. In urban areas and especially in high-density residential areas, community bus stops serve multiple students, ranging from 5 – 60 assigned students.

As part of its planning process for 2020-2021, STS reviewed community bus stop assignments and adjusted where it was practical to do so. The distance students travel to a bus stop may be longer than in prior years. This provides two benefits: increased physical activity and a shorter ride time on the bus.

Bus stop locations are not supervised. Located at community mailboxes, parks and greenspaces and neighborhood corners, school bus stops are open-air environments. Physical distancing at school bus stops will be a shared responsibility amongst students in the community who use it and caregivers who accompany younger students.

Bus drivers will not perform health checks prior to students getting on the bus. The responsibility for daily health checks rests with the family. If your student is unwell, do not send them to the bus stop.

Action Items:

- STS will promote the need to maintain physical distancing at school bus stops through public education.
- STS will promote that masks should be worn at bus stop locations and/or in place upon bus arrival, prior to getting on the bus.