

# Waller ISD Bus System Guidelines

## Regular Service

(These guidelines are for regular students only. Students in special programs are subject to different criteria. )

### Eligibility

Transportation is available for children who live two miles or more from their assigned school. The distance a student lives from their assigned school is determined by measuring from the curb at the front of the school to the curb in front of the student's home using the closest paved street. Students residing within two miles of their assigned school may have transportation available if their neighborhood qualifies as hazardous under the district's hazardous transportation rating system. For additional information, contact the WISD Transportation Department at 936-372-2116.

### Pick Up Time

Regular transportation attempts to arrive at every bus stop on time. Due to clock variances, students are asked to arrive at the bus stop five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled arrival time. Buses will load students and depart at the stop. Under most circumstances, regular buses do not wait for late students.

All buses will wait seven (7) minutes at the school in the afternoon for students to board. Students are expected to proceed immediately to the buses. Because of safety concerns regarding students and moving bus wheels, bus drivers are instructed not to stop or open the door for late students.

### Daily Service

Regular transportation is scheduled to provide service to student riders. Bus stops that do not have riders for three (3) days may be temporarily suspended to conserve district resources. Infrequent riders at historically low ridership stops should contact the Transportation Department when service is needed to verify stop time and location.

### Bus Route Design

Bus routes are created to enhance student safety while maximizing vehicle efficiency. Stops are created to allow students to wait for the bus off the main roadway if at all possible. Stops are also created to minimize students walking for long distances in highly traveled roadways without sidewalks. Whenever possible, stops are not placed in dead end streets to minimize bus accidents while backing. (Backing is a very dangerous maneuver for a school bus.) Stops are spread as far apart as criteria will allow to decrease the number of stops each bus will make and to minimize riding time for students.

Elementary students may be required to walk up to ¼ mile to a bus stop. Secondary students may be required to walk up to ½ mile. Bus routes are designed to limit student ride time to no more than one (1) hour one-way if at all possible. Most WISD students ride under 45 minutes one-way.

### Bus Capacities

Manufacturers rate school bus capacities based on three riders per seat. Waller ISD has adopted the maximum capacities of three (3) riders per seat at elementary level, and two (2) riders per seat at the secondary level.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### 1. What bus does my child ride to school?

Bus service is based on the student's physical residence address (where they actually live). There are areas that are not eligible for bus service (ex: students attending Roberts Road Elementary who live in the Ranch Country Subdivision and students who attend Holleman Elementary and live in the City of Waller.) Eligibility for bus service, bus numbers, and pick up times can be obtained by contacting the WISD Transportation Department at (936) 372-2116. (The physical address and the grade of the student will be needed in order for the Transportation Department to provide this information.)

### 2. I have a question regarding a bus stop location or pickup/drop off time. Who should I call?

The WISD Transportation Center at (936) 372-2116. Transportation personnel are trained to answer most service questions. If they do not know the answer, they will find someone who does and return your call with the answer.

**3. How will I be notified of a change to my child's stop time, stop location, or bus number?**

If the change in time is less than five minutes, the driver will notify the students of the change. If there is a change in stop location or bus assignment the Transportation Department will send written notification home with the students. The information can also be accessed on the transportation website.

**4. Who should I call if the bus does not arrive to pick up my child on time?**

Students should be at their bus stop five (5) minutes before the scheduled arrival time. If the bus has not arrived after ten (10) minutes, call the Transportation Department at (936) 372-2116. Please be ready to supply the following information: the child's name, bus number, the school he/she attends, and the stop location.

**5. Why doesn't someone call me when the school bus is running late?**

Situations such as traffic, road closures, weather, vehicle breakdowns or a late prior route can cause school buses to run late. Since the WISD Transportation Department operates 54 buses (108 routes) per day, it is impossible to contact parents when a bus is slightly late. (Also, office staff has no knowledge of which children rode the bus that day.) However, the Department is in radio contact with all of our buses and when we determine the bus will be 30 or more minutes late, we will contact the school.

**6. I get home late in the afternoon and cannot find my child. The school is closed and no one answers the phone there. What should I do?**

Call the Transportation Department at (936) 372-2116 from 5:30 AM – 6 PM on school days. If the office is closed, call the Harris County Sheriff's Department at 281-290-2100.

**7. I cannot see my child's bus stop from my house. How can I get the bus stop moved closer?**

In order to minimize the time and mileage of a run, bus stops are located at centralized locations that can be safely accessed by a significant number of students. If you have a concern about your child's safety, you are encouraged to accompany your child to the bus stop. And as a safety consideration, it is safer to have several students, instead of just one, waiting at a stop.

**8. Can the driver stop at my house to pick up or drop off my child?**

Only certain students whose needs are addressed through an IEP plan are eligible for "curbside service." "Curbside service" is normally restricted to situations where a less restrictive environment is not possible or where medical issues require this type of service. For other students, service is provided in accordance with district guidelines.

**9. Why can't the bus come down my road?**

The district attempts to provide service on all state-, city-, or county-maintained roadways. However, there are many subdivisions where the roadways are privately owned by the subdivision and school buses are either not allowed into the subdivision, or the subdivision has limited school buses to specific roads, or there is no room to turn a bus around. For questions about a specific road, please call the WISD Transportation Department at 936-372-2116

**10. What if I want my child to go to a different school from the one located near where we live. Can they ride the bus?**

Bus service is provided for students in the attendance area in which the student lives. *No bus service is provided for inter- or intra-district transfer students.*

**11. I want my child to go to the baby sitter/home with friend, what do I need to do?**

Send a note to the school office by your child. If a bus goes to the babysitter's/friend's area and there is room on it for your child, a BUS PASS will be issued to your child. If the bus does NOT go there, or is full, no bus pass will be issued. No child will be allowed to ride a different bus without a Bus Pass.

**12. My child's bus is overcrowded. Can some children be placed on another bus?**

Waller ISD has adopted the maximum capacities of three (3) riders per seat at elementary level, and two (2) riders per seat at the secondary level. It is our goal to fully utilize all the space on all of our buses, and when all the seats are occupied, the bus may seem crowded. But it will not be over capacity.

### **13. What can be done to improve school bus safety?**

*Education and knowledge* will help keep our children safe. Children are safer when they understand and follow all bus safety rules. Parents should insist that their children cooperate with the bus driver in order to insure a safe ride. And an informed driving public will comply with the law and not pass a stopped school bus with flashing red lights.

### **14. How many passengers does a bus hold?**

A conventional bus holds 71 passengers. The new transit style with the flat front holds 77 passengers. WISD levels of service allow 68 students on elementary routes. The maximum recommended capacity for secondary students is 50 passengers per bus. Standees are not allowed on WISD school buses.

### **15. Why are school bus seats spaced so close together?**

The purpose of spacing school bus seats so close is to contain the child in a cushioned compartment with only a minimum amount of space between energy absorbing surfaces.

In the 1970's, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Highway Safety Administration determined that the safest and best arrangement for school bus seating would be a "compartmentalization" concept. Under this concept, the student is 'compartmentalized' between the high, wide, and thick foam padding of the seats. Seat backs are higher, wider, and thicker than before. All metal surfaces are covered with foam padding. Seat backs must also have a steel inner structure that springs and bends forward to help absorb energy when a child is thrown against it. The seat is required to be anchored to the floor so strongly that it will not pull loose during this bending action. The floor must be so strong that it will not be bent or torn by the pulling action of the seat anchors.

Finally, if the seats are too far apart, a child could be thrown too far before being cushioned, and/or could be thrown outside of the bus compartment altogether. The rule today states "that the seat back be no farther than 24" away from a defined point."

### **16. Why aren't seat belts required on school buses?**

Seat belts in school buses are not required by law because research by the Department of Transportation and others has determined that compartmentalization is a more effective solution. (see Question # 15).

Compartmentalization is more manageable than seat belts. The protection exists without depending on any action by the children or extra supervision by the drivers. Meanwhile, seat belts require discipline and supervision to keep them clean, unraveled, and in use.

Conventional seat belts, which are lap restraints, are not suitable for small children whose abdominal area and bone structure are not developed to take the force of the lap belt alone. Small children would also need the help of chest harnesses, which adds to the complexity of a proper seat belt solution. However, neither of these problems arise with compartmentalization.

Compartmentalization works equally well for one (1), two (2), or three (3) students per seat. Today's seats may contain three small children, or two large ones, or any combination in between, and arranging seat belts to properly handle any combination is difficult, if not impossible. The only viable solution with seat belts is to restrict each seat to two students and two belts - which has the disadvantage of sharply reducing the carrying capacity of bus fleets.

Compartmentalization, once it has done its job, leaves students free to evacuate the bus. Seat belts could leave students strapped in, upside down, or unconscious in burning or flooding buses.

### **17. What is a bus safety report?**

A bus safety report is part of the four-step discipline process used on WISD school buses. Parents are notified in writing and by phone if a child breaks a bus safety rule.

Students are expected to know and follow all bus safety rules in order to assure everyone of a safe ride. For more information, consult the WISD Student Handbooks.

### **18. My child left a jacket (books, instrument, etc.) on the bus. How can he get it back?**

The drivers must check their buses after each run. Items left on the bus by students will be held by the driver and may be claimed by the child. Fragile, expensive items are taken off the bus in the evening for their

protection, but the driver will bring them back on the bus the next morning to be claimed. If an item is not claimed by the next day, the driver will turn it into the Transportation Office. From there it will be sent to the school's lost and found, or it will be retained in the Transportation Office if it is not known to which school the item belongs.

### **19. To whom should I report student address or telephone number changes?**

The registrar at the student's school should be contacted as soon as possible with all address and telephone number changes. Two (2) proofs of residency are required for a change of address (one from the Document A list and one from the Document B list):

**Document A:** Clarifies ownership of property or relationship to owner of property:

- Deed
- WISD Property Tax Statement
- Current Lease agreement with property owner
- Notarized Statement regarding ownership of property

**Document B:** Provides verification of current residency on property and intent to continue residency on property.

- Current utility statement with Parent/Guardian Name and Physical Address
- Current personal business mail (no unsolicited mailings)
- Notarized statement (Affidavit of Residency) if above document does not exist

The registrar will put the information into the computerized system which will allow it to be seen by Transportation Department personnel.

### **20. What hours is the Transportation Facility Open?**

5:30 AM - 6:00 PM on school days

### **22. Do you have unanswered questions?**

For more information, call the WISD Transportation Department at 936-372-2116, or e-mail your questions or suggestions to [egarner@waller.isd.esc4.net](mailto:egarner@waller.isd.esc4.net)

## **Special Needs Transportation**

### **Eligibility**

Specialized transportation provisions are available to students with disabilities when eligibility is established through the Section 504 or Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) process.

### **Pick Up Time**

Special Needs Transportation attempts to arrive at every bus stop on time. Due to clock variances, students are asked to arrive at the bus stop five (5) minutes prior to the scheduled arrival time. Buses will load students and depart the stop. Special Needs Transportation will wait up to three (3) minutes at the stop for the student to load.

### **Daily Service**

Students in special programs are subject to different route criteria. Please contact the WISD Transportation Department at 936-372-2116 for additional information.

### **Special Needs Service**

Waller ISD is pleased to provide quality educational services for children with special needs. The mission of the WISD Transportation Department is to ensure that every child arrives at school and returns home safely, with care and thought given to his/her individual needs. The success of our department is the result of our commitment, skill, knowledge, understanding, and ability to communicate. All drivers and assistants participate in frequent in-service training to expand and improve their driving skills, and to upgrade their knowledge of helping children with special needs.

In the WISD Transportation system, everyone works hard to communicate needs and changes. When changes occur, routes must be revised and time changes are communicated to all parents.

For eligibility decisions made during the school year, the driver will call the parent within three (3) days to:

1. introduce him/herself and the assistant
2. tell the parent how and when they can reach the driver
3. establish times and location for the child's pick-up and drop-off

Parents can support the WISD Transportation Department mission by:

1. attending educational meetings at the school that concern their child
2. completing the Special Needs Transportation Information Sheet
3. ensuring that a responsible person is home when their child is picked up in the morning and brought home in the afternoon. (Drivers assume responsibility at the door of the bus in the morning and will not release the child until they see the responsible person after school.)
4. having their child ready to board the bus within three (3) minutes of the scheduled time each morning
5. calling 936-372-2116 and making an appointment to speak with the driver rather than delay them in route to transport other students
6. teaching the child to follow the bus rules. (A copy will be provided to parents.)
7. notifying the WISD Transportation Office (936-372-2116) as early as possible when your child will not be attending school. Failure to ride 3 consecutive days will result in suspension of service until the parent/guardian calls the Transportation Office and reinstates the service.
8. sharing information with the driver and/or assistant regarding changes in schedule, medical status, or major personal disruptions that would seriously affect the child's behavior
9. communicating in writing any medical information, medication, or student health status changes which would affect the child's transportation
10. being open to information from the driver or assistant regarding their observations and concerns
11. making sure the child goes to the restroom before boarding the bus
12. maintaining consistent day care (Frequent changes adversely affect bus schedules for all students assigned to the bus.)
13. remembering that students in wheelchairs must have properly operating lock brakes, foot rests, arm rests, and a safety belt.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **1. What happens if I'm not home to receive my child after school?**

If no one is home to receive your child when the driver arrives, the driver will continue with the route, keeping your child on the bus until the other children have been transported. Then the driver will make one more attempt to leave your child at your home. If no one is home after the second attempt, the driver will return the child to his/her campus.

#### **2. Why does it take up to three days to begin transportation services for a new student?**

When a student is added or dropped from a driver's list, the time of pick-up and drop-off changes for all students on the bus. The parents of the other students need to be informed in order for them to adjust to a change in pick-up and drop-off times. (The Transportation Department does this as quickly as possible). The driver also needs information about new students before transporting them. The three (3) day lead between notice and start of transport allows for this necessary processing of information.

#### **3. Why must my child be on the bus so long?**

Door-to-door service requires the drivers to go to multiple locations (as many as 10 - 12) spread out over a large geographic area, then transport students to locations that are occasionally far away from the child's home attendance school. Unless there are special circumstances, the goal of the WISD Transportation Department is for no student to be on the bus for more than 1½ hours each way.