Transportation Support Services
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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ATTENTION PARENTS: IMPORTANT MAGNET TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION
PLEASE READ ENTIRELY

The MCPS Department of Transportation (DOT) plans school bus transportation for nearly 98,000 children annually, including nearly 7,000 eligible special education children and children in special programs. These special programs include **Centers for the Highly Gifted, International Baccalaureate, Magnet, and Language Immersion.**

Bus routes for special programs are designed to provide transportation service for all eligible students enrolled in special programs on a cooperative basis with parents. These bus routes are planned by Transportation Support Services, based on student locations and programs, as communicated by the schools. Not all programs receive the same bus services, stop locations, or have the same activities. Please check with your school program coordinator for more information about your child's program.

Keep in mind that this document is a *general* information piece. School bus routes are always subject to change as population, student locations, school and program locations, and other factors change each year. Every effort is made each year to minimize changes after school starts.

The following information is provided to help answer frequently asked questions about transportation for special programs:

(1) How are bus routes created?

Each year in June, program coordinators submit names and addresses of all students in special programs to DOT. Home address, school address, program location, and other information are assembled, and general stop locations for all students, are established. Routes for the new school year are completed by early August.

Important: Please be sure your child's address and contact information are kept current with your child's school, or the start of your child's bus service may be delayed.

(2) Where do the buses stop?

Central stops are placed at MCPS schools and other government facilities. Stops are placed at safe locations, but it may not necessarily be safe for your child to walk to and from the bus stop. Not all students will have a bus stop within walking distance of their home.

In some cases, buses serve a combination of students from various special programs. These programs may have students who are permanently or temporarily served by curb or corner stop locations. Students in the above-named special programs may board and disembark at any "central stop" on the route. We recommend that parents choose the stop location and have their child use that stop regularly.

(3) How does my child meet the bus?

It is the responsibility of the parent to transport their child or arrange safe walk routes or other transportation to and from the bus stop. MCPS operates these routes from schools or major community

centers. MCPS does not, and has no responsibility to transport students to and from their residence and the central stop location. Parents must transport or arrange a walk route, escort, car pool, bike route, group walk, or other means to transport their child. MCPS does not provide supervision at central stops.

(4) What if my child misses the bus?

MCPS buses run on a pre-set schedule and are unable to wait for late students. Students should be at the bus stop 5-10 minutes prior to the scheduled pick-up time. Buses may not return to pick up students who miss the bus. Parents are responsible for transportation when their child misses the bus. Busses are not permitted to leave the bus stop before the scheduled stop time.

(5) Will schedule changes be made?

During the first two weeks of school, no changes will be made to bus schedules for special programs. This period enables DOT to evaluate routes for efficient service. If changes to special program routes are necessary, DOT will notify schools and students in advance of the change. New stop requests may be considered if they do not deviate from the established bus route, are not in close proximity of an existing stop, if they are MCPS schools or other government facilities.

(6) Is the afternoon schedule from school the same as the morning schedule going to school?

Not necessarily. All stops are carefully weighed for safety and efficiency, fleet availability, and route effectiveness. We attempt to keep morning and afternoon routes the same, but many have different stops or route numbers for operational reasons.

(7) Are activity buses available for student after-school activities?

Late program activity buses will operate if arranged by the school or program coordinator. Established "central stop" drop-off locations are used. Parents must pick up their child at one of the established central stop locations, or make other arrangements for the child to walk or ride their bike home, perhaps with a parent-selected escort.

(8) Parent Responsibilities:

(a) Transportation to and from bus stops – Parents are fully responsible for student safety at the bus stop, and for transportation between the child's home or daycare and the bus stop.

(b) Awareness – Discuss your child's bus route and stop location. Have your child memorize their central stop location and bus route numbers, located in the 2nd window on each side of the bus.

(c) Safety – Discuss bus rules with your child. Students must remain seated while the bus is moving. Eating and drinking are not permitted on the bus. Students must be respectful of others. Severe disciplinary action, including loss of riding privileges, may result from student misbehavior. More information about school bus safety and rules can be found on the MCPS Transportation webpage at http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/transportation/ridebytherules.shtm.

(d) Missed Busses – If a student misses the bus in the morning or at school in the afternoon, parents will be responsible for transporting them. Busses are not permitted to return to pick up students who have missed the bus.

(e) Inclement Weather/Delays – Weather, traffic, mechanical breakdowns, and other issues can delay busses. Listen to the radio and be informed about delayed openings and early closings. Call your bus depot when your child's bus is more than 20 minutes late.

(f) Back-up Plan – We recommend that you have a back-up plan in case of emergency, so your child knows what to do under any circumstance.

Given wide-ranging student placements and programs, the Department of Transportation endeavors to create the safest and most efficient rides possible.
<u>As always, safety is our primary concern</u>

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