

DECISIONS FOR MAKING BUS STOPS

The School Department receives a lot of inquiries and requests relative to bus stops. During the last school year, we received over 100 requests to make new bus stops. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, road conditions, and a number of other factors, we can not respond favorably to every request. Each request is reviewed, often by more than one person, before decisions are made.

The first thing we do when considering a bus stop is determine whether the student is eligible for transportation per the Pittsfield School Committee Policy number SRV-29, Student Transportation Services. The policy states that kindergarten students who reside in excess of one-half mile from school, elementary and middle school students who reside in excess of one and one-half miles from school, and high school students who reside more than two miles from school shall be eligible for transportation services. In addition, transportation will be provided in situations where walking routes are determined to be hazardous. Bus stops for all students may be up to one mile from their residence, according to MGL Ch. 71, §68.

The determinations for the distances are measured from the property line of the residence over regularly traveled ways to the designated bus stop or the property line of the school. While the parent/guardian is responsible for the safety of the student between the residence and the designated bus stop, every attempt is made to designate locations for bus stops which are as safe as possible under local conditions, and as considerate as possible of the continuous and smooth flow of traffic. (Stopping too frequently presents hazards to other vehicles on the road.)

Once the determination of eligibility for transportation has been made, we then look to see where the student resides and if there is a current stop within the parameters set by the policy. If there is a stop within the parameters, the student is added to that stop. If there is not a stop in that location, we then determine if there are any other students eligible and make a stop that is conducive for all students. We look at a number of other factors in making decisions on where to locate bus stops, including, but not limited to:

- age of the student(s);
- whether there are sidewalks in the area;
- whether we can centralize a stop on a corner, and not send a bus down a side street;
- if a bus must go down a side street, we must determine if the bus can turn around;
- whether we can centralize a stop if it affects multiple students

Unfortunately, it is impossible to accommodate every request based on the current number of stops per bus and the timing of the bus routes. Some routes have fewer stops but longer runs (miles) and some buses have more frequent stops with shorter routes. Because the entire network has to operate within the time constraints set by the School Committee (based on the opening and closing times for each school), we cannot make enough stops to accommodate every request. The school bus industry estimates that each stop can add 3-5 minutes to a route (it varies based on the speed of the bus before it starts to brake for the stop, the number and age of the students loading, whether students are crossing the street, and other factors).

We try to give the best possible service to students, however it is impossible to have stops at every house or to go down every side street as this will effect the time that students arrive at school. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.