

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING PUPIL TRANSPORTATION (Form T000)**

Below, you will find some common questions concerning Transportation Services in GSCS. For each question, an answer is provided. Also, a number of answers will refer the reader to a specific department within the school district. All contact numbers and applicable web sites are provided at the end of this document. These questions will assist all levels of stakeholders including school administrators and faculty. Should you have an inquiry that is not addressed, please contact the Transportation Department @ 770-229-3725 or email us @ [businfo@GSCS.org](mailto:businfo@GSCS.org).

**Thank You**

**Todd H. Harris**

**Director of Transportation**

**Q1. Do I have to register my student(s) for transportation services before they can ride a GSCS bus?**

**A1. Yes**, all students must formally request bus services before riding a school bus.

**Q2. Are there any specific conditions that my student(s) has to meet?**

**A2. Yes**, in order to receive a bus service, a student must live in the attendance zone for the school that they attend or have a district approved transfer that allows for transportation services. The student must be registered in the school district and enrolled in the proper school. The student's address must be correct in the student information system. If you are not sure of the accuracy of your address, please contact your school or the Central Registration Office for further information. If the student's address is incorrect, his or her bus information will be incorrect. Students residing in district walk zones are not eligible for transportation services. If you have questions concerning these designated areas, please contact the Transportation Department.

**Q3. How do I request transportation services?**

**A3. You** may notify your school's front office or you may register on the GSCS Transportation Web Site. You will need the following information available:

- Student's school ID number
- Transportation needs for AM service
- Transportation needs for PM service
- Note: A district wide registration process will take place at the end of each school term, in order to gather each student's transportation needs for the upcoming school year.

**Q4. Can I request services at any time during the school year?**

**A4. Yes.** A parent can request services any time during the operational year. High school students can submit their own requests. A parent or guardian must request services for elementary and middle school students.

**Q5. Once registered, how do I confirm my student's bus information?**

**A5. There** several different ways to confirm a student's bus assignment. You may go to the district's transportation website. There is a link that will provide you with the information (E-link). You may also contact the Transportation Department or your school's front office. Efforts will be made to have this information available at each school's open house at the beginning of each school year as well.

**Q6. If the provided bus information is wrong, what do I do?**

**A6. This** will happen if your student's primary address in the student information is incorrect. There are other possible scenarios, but the good news is, most can be resolved quickly. Please call or email the Transportation Department ([bus.info@gscs.org](mailto:bus.info@gscs.org)). **Keep in mind that no bus information will be available until the student is enrolled in a school.** Simply registering with the district will not generate accurate bus information. Once a student has formally enrolled in a school, the information should be available within 24 to 48 hours.

**Q7. What if "no" bus information is available for my student?**

**A7. See A6**

**Q8. Where will my student's bus stop be located?**

**A8. That** depends on your place of residence. If you live on a roadway that has been identified as a "walk safe" area, your student will be assigned to a communal stop that serves multiple students in the same area (door to door service is not available in these areas). If you live on a roadway that has been defined as a "Walk Hazard," the stop location will be placed as close as possible to the student's actual address.

**Q9. What is a "Walk Safe" area?**

**A9. These** are roadways in our county that have either a sidewalk or a shoulder that allows students to safely walk out of the roadway (approximately 12 to 15 feet). These areas have no more than two lanes of traffic and have speed limits that are less than 50 mph. They are in safe

proximity from railroad tracks (500 feet). Students will not be required to travel on foot across bridges. These roadways will have low to moderate traffic levels.

**Q10. What is a “Walk Hazard” area?**

**A10. These** are areas and roadways in our county that are not safe for student foot travel. They have speed limits in excess of 45 mph. They have predictable levels of heavy traffic volumes. They are known for high frequencies of auto accidents. They have no shoulder area for students to safely walk on foot. Other safety elements are considered on a case-by-case basis. For example: a temporary construction project may present unsafe conditions for our students. Keep in mind that bus stop locations may be placed on these roadways but all efforts will be made to eliminate student foot travel along these roadways.

**Q11. How do I express concerns about conditions on a roadway or at a bus stop?**

**A11. You** can communicate your concerns by accessing the applicable link on the GSCS transportation website. The Transportation Department will review and address all safety concerns. The decision to move or re-locate stops will be based on specific safety criteria that will be used for all bus stop locations. Personal issues like work schedules, changing weather, dogs and other issues not related to roadway and environmental conditions will not warrant changes in stop locations.

**Q12. If my student is assigned to a communal stop, how far will they have to walk to a bus stop?**

**A12. Safe** stop locations will be placed within a quarter of a mile (1,320 feet) from every address in “walk safe” areas, when possible. Some addresses will obviously be closer than others to the stop location, but the targeted maximum distance is 1,320 feet. There are exceptions. The Transportation Department makes efforts to remove buses from cul-de-sacs to reduce the need for buses to back up (unsafe when students are in the area). There are also roadways that are restricted for bus travel. These roadways are too narrow for buses to safely pass other vehicles. These will also include roadways that do not provide a safe turn around path (using public roadways) for a school bus and other roadways that become impassable during rain and in-climate weather. Certain bridges with rated capacity limits lower than the weight of a school bus (11 tons) may also result in additional restricted areas. The safety of our students is paramount and we do not want to knowingly place them or our employees in compromising positions.

**Q13. What are the expected responsibilities of a parent or guardian concerning travel to and from a bus stop location?**

**A13. The** district sees parents and guardians as partners when it comes to all elements of student safety. Students who are 8 years old or younger should always be accompanied by an adult to their morning bus stop and someone should meet them at their afternoon bus stop (note: Waiver Request Forms are available should a parent or guardian choose to have their student dropped without a parent or guardian present. All Waiver Requests are subject to approval by the GSCS Transportation Dept. Parents who drive to a stop should not wait in cars. Please park safely away from the bus stop location and meet your student at the bus door. Parents should also consider the emotional level of some students over 8 years old before allowing them to travel to and from a stop location alone. For older students, parents should know and reinforce safe behavior in and around any roadways regardless of where the student catches the bus. Accompanying an older student on a few trips to the bus stop will help identify any obvious hazards. All bus safety training materials provided in the classroom are also made available to parents and guardians on the district's transportation web site. Please feel free to download and share this material with your children and any others that you feel will benefit from this information. The more our parents and guardians know, the more our students will know. **Parents and guardians are responsible for their child's safety both to and from the student's designated bus stop location.**

**Q14. Can my student use an alternate bus stop location or an alternate bus on a given day or span of days?**

**A14. Yes,** if capacity on an alternate bus allows, the student may obtain a temporary "Bus Pass." This will allow them to use an alternate bus or an alternate bus stop in their school's attendance zone. Keep in mind that they may only use an **existing bus stop**. A "Bus Pass" cannot be used to establish new stop locations on an existing route. **For example:** An emergency situation has arisen and a parent needs the student to go to a family member's house. This family member must live in the same attendance zone. The student will be taken to the existing stop that is closest to the family member's house. Temporary bus passes may also be issued by the school for non-emergency situations. This is at the discretion of the principal of the school or their designee. Please see your school's administrators to identify their individual policies concerning the issuance of temporary bus passes. No "Bus Pass" will be issued for more than 10 operational days. All "Bus Pass" requests must be submitted by a parent or guardian, prior to 1 PM (1:30 for Middle School Students).

**Q15. Can my student be permanently assigned to a different bus stop?**

**A15. Yes,** the Transportation Department will allow students to choose one alternate address for bus service. The district recognizes the need for some students to use an alternate address

in the morning, the afternoon, or both, due to parent's work schedules. Each student will initially be assigned to their designated stop based on their primary address. If the parent or guardian has a need for a permanent alternate stop, you may download the proper request form from the transportation web site, or contact your school's front office. All request are subject to approval by the GSCS Transportation Department. Once approved, the transportation department will make the needed changes to the student's bus assignment. The alternate address must be in the applicable attendance zone. The chosen alternate address will be used five days per week. Only one alternate address may be used. The alternate address may be designated for just AM service, just PM service, or both. **Students may not use multiple alternate addresses based on a given day of the week. All scheduled bus services will be based on a five-day schedule.** Please note, that the use of an alternate address must be approved and documented. Service to an alternate address will not be provided on the day of the initial request. Stop locations to and from an alternate address will be assigned in the same manner as all bus stops (students may be assigned to a communal stop). Alternate bus service will not be provided to commercial addresses or day care centers for general education students. Should the need arise to change an alternate address, the parent or guardian must complete a new request form. All alternate stop assignment will remain active until such time the parent or guardian contacts the Transportation Dept.

**Q16. What happens if I live on a roadway that is restricted from bus travel?**

**A16. In** the event that a student resides on a roadway or in an area that is deemed inaccessible for school buses, a stop will be located as close as possible to the student's address without requiring the bus to enter the restricted area or roadway. The parent or guardian will be responsible for providing safe travel to the designated stop location. The distance to the stop will be subjective since the length of these restricted roadways varies. The district understands that this may be an inconvenience at times but we must consider the safety of all riders and the integrity of our route schedules. The district is aware that some of the restricted roadways have been utilized in past years but it has not been without undesirable consequences. We greatly appreciate your understanding concerning these safety-based decisions and the daily efforts that you take to ensure your student's safe travel to and from the bus stop.

**Q17. Can my student simply choose to use another AM or PM stop location as long as it is on the same bus route?**

**A17. No**, the district requires that all students utilize their permanently assigned bus stop unless they have received a temporary "Bus Pass" from their school. Allowing students to choose bus stops can compromise the capacity levels on given buses. It also frequently results

in lost students. The district is dedicated to providing service to and from the student's designated permanent stop. This ensures that both parents and school officials know when and where a student boarded or exited a bus. This is a safety issue and is designed to ensure that all students are dropped at the proper locations.

**Q18. If I have changed addresses, can I transport my student to another bus stop or attendance zone and continue to place them on a school bus?**

**A18. No**, it is important that every parent or guardian provide accurate student information to the school and the Central Registration Office, regardless if the move requires the student to change schools. Remember, a proper bus assignment depends on an accurate primary address. Please avoid driving students to bus stops outside of their attendance zone or neighborhood. This can easily result in students being left in areas that are not familiar to them.

**Q19. What do I do if my student misses the bus in the morning?**

**A19. Occasionally**, a student may run late and the bus has already passed. The district is also aware that a driver may unintentionally miss a bus stop or possibly run early or late. It is our intent to arrive at our scheduled stops within a 5-minute range (before or after) each and every day. However, unexpected conditions may arise that affect a given bus schedule. If a student misses the bus, they should return home and call their parent, school or the Transportation Department immediately. They should never attempt to run or travel in any way to another bus stop. Parents should never place the student in a car and attempt to chase or find the school bus. If operational conditions result in a student missing the bus, the transportation department will plan to return to the stop location. If the bus was on schedule and the student simply missed the bus, it will be the responsibility of the parent to transport the student to school. Dispatching buses based on late students only compromises the arrival schedule for other students. We ask that all students be at their bus stop location 5 to 7 minutes prior to the scheduled arrival time.

**Q20. What happens when it is raining? Can the bus drop my student at the driveway to keep them from getting wet?**

**A20. Unfortunately**, no, in the event that inclement weather is in the area all bus routes will remain the same. Bus routes should never divert from their scheduled path or perform bus stops that are not previously scheduled. Stops are placed to meet specific Department of Transportation (DOT) and Department of Education (DOE) criteria. Inclement weather does

not allow us to compromise these best practices. Keep an eye on the local forecast if rain is in the plan. Please ensure that your student is prepared with an umbrella or the proper garments (raincoat). Like the Boy Scouts say, “Be Prepared.”

**Q21. If extreme weather is forecasted (example: ice or snow), how do I know if the bus will run?**

**A21. The** Transportation Department is deeply involved in all decisions to either close school or delay start times in the event of extreme weather conditions. When a decision is made, district wide automated calls, emails and texts will go out to all bus riders (Bus Bulletin). Please make sure that your phone number is up to date. It is also wise to watch or listen to your chosen local news source. All school closings or delays will be made available to all available media outlets. If school remains open during these weather events, it usually affects bus schedules because of unpredictable traffic conditions. If your bus is a little late, please be patient. Again, we can expect schedules to be affected in these conditions. If school openings are delayed for a designated time period, students should simply add the additional time to their normal bus schedule. For example: If your morning bus schedule is 6:30 AM and school openings are delayed two hours, your scheduled pick up time will be 8:30 AM.

**Q22. How do I express concerns or get information about my student’s transportation services?**

**A22. The** Transportation Department is here to address any concerns and answer all questions that parents or guardians may have. There is a Transportation Concern link available on the GSCS Transportation web site. This is the most effective and timely way to communicate your concern.

**Q23. Due to behavior problems, my student has been suspended or expelled from the school bus. Who should I call concerning the events?**

**A23. Just** like the classroom, the district has designed a discipline matrix for addressing school bus behavior issues (Safe Rider Program). Schools use this to assess each individual situation, and the principal or their designee assigns a particular level of discipline according to the level of behavior and the number of offenses. The driver and the Transportation Department are responsible for reporting non-compliant and un-safe behavior. We provide all available evidence to the principals or their designee. The transportation department will not reverse or reinstitute services once a principal has identified the appropriate level of disciplinary action.

**Q24. Does the district have video cameras on school buses?**

**A24. Yes,** there are cameras on all GSCS buses. These units are used for numerous reasons but they are primarily used to verify student behavior events and ensure student safety. Not every behavior event warrants the viewing of a video. They are most frequently used for serious behavior events when a student is facing a suspension or expulsion. Like any technology, the video units are not 100% effective in every situation.

**Q25. I am an employee of the school district. I utilize the district policy that allows me to place my student in the school in which I work or the defined feeder pattern for other grade levels. Can my student ride the bus?**

**A25. Yes,** under certain circumstances, if a bus is available. Employee's students may ride connecting buses between specific schools (see Board policy JBC-R 1), if an existing connection is available and capacity allows. If a connecting bus is not already scheduled, the parent is responsible for all transportation services. Parents who receive student transfers or placement approvals for schools other than the school in which they work or the approved feeder pattern, are responsible for the student's transportation. Again, please refer to Board Policy JBC-R 1 for questions concerning the approved feeder patterns for the school in which the employee works. In some other specific circumstances, connections may be available. However, the Transportation Department strives to be equitable with all services and will only approve services that fall under the current policy. We thank you for your understanding.

**Q26. Once** my student is enrolled in a school and registered for a bus, can they ride that same day?

**A26.** Students cannot ride the day they are registered for a bus. Neither can students ride on the day they change addresses, unless they are permanently assigned to an existing communal stop location. Many times, the assignment of new riders creates the need for additional stop locations. It can easily alter the route path as well, changing the pickup and arrival times for existing riders. If the student requires a new stop, or the planned bus route has to be changed, a 24 to 48 hour waiting period is required. This allows us to communicate the change to the driver, evaluate the new stop location for any safety concerns and notify existing riders of any measurable schedule changes. If the student will be assigned to a communal stop that already exist, the school may issue a bus pass until the permanent assignment is made.



**Contact Information:**

- 1) Transportation Department (Phone) – 770-229-3725
- 2) Transportation Department (Fax) – 770-227-8940
- 3) Transportation Department (Email) – [bus.info@gscs.org](mailto:bus.info@gscs.org)
- 4) Transportation Department (Web Site) - [http://www.spalding.k12.ga.us/pages/GSCS\\_District-Central/Departments/Transportation2](http://www.spalding.k12.ga.us/pages/GSCS_District-Central/Departments/Transportation2)
- 5) GSCS District (Web Site) - [http://www.spalding.k12.ga.us/pages/GSCS\\_District-Central](http://www.spalding.k12.ga.us/pages/GSCS_District-Central)
- 6) GSCS Central Registration (Phone) – 770-229-3710 (Choice Number 1)

You may access the Transportation Department's web site from the District's web site as well. Simply choose "Departments" and then choose "Transportation." All documents and forms are available for download. Follow the links on the left side of the page.