



First Rider Program – Parent Information

Huron Perth Student Transportation Services “HPSTS” is the transportation consortium responsible for planning student transportation in Huron and Perth counties for the two Partner Boards (Avon Maitland District School Board and Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board) while observing the common operational parameters which they have cooperatively established.

The First Rider Program has been developed with the help of your local School Bus Operators and HPSTS. The Program involves both an in-class (gym/auditorium) and on-road (bus) experience.

In-class: The in-class portion will introduce parents and children to the world of school busing through a variety of resources that may include Safety Video, Public Service Announcements, and student safety discussions.

On-Road: The on-road portion will introduce parents and children to Safety in and around the bus as well as providing an opportunity for a “First Ride”

General Information

Does my child qualify for a school bus? Elementary students who live greater than 1.6 km (as measured by HPSTS Transportation software) from their designated school and who live within the attendance boundary of that school are eligible for transportation.

How do I know? By following directions on the HPSTS site www.ourschoolbuses.ca there are a number of links on the “BusPlanner Web” that will allow you to check out your child’s eligibility based on your home address. Eligible Junior Kindergarten and new students will receive a call from your local School Bus Operator regarding stop location and pick-up time after mid-August of each year.

Bus Stop Locations: HPSTS encourages parents/caregiver to accompany all Elementary students to their designated stop in the morning and to meet them at their designated stop at the end of the day. Rural stops are generally placed at the end of the home driveway, however, if there is an opportunity to safely group stops, a group stop will be created. Most town routes will have group stops set up at designated corner locations throughout the city or town keeping in mind designated walk limits.

Student Safety: Parents are responsible for the safe arrival to and from the designated bus stop location and are responsible for the behaviour of their child on their way to the stop, at the stop, and on the way home from the stop. Practice walking to and from the bus stop with your child. Show them landmarks that will help them recognize their bus stop location. Help them learn their stop description (corner of Burritt St and Albert St.).

Bus Routes: Bus routes are changed throughout the year based on current rider details. Routes for next year are created throughout the spring and summer based on school enrollment information and will be available approximately mid-August of each year.

Moving? If you are planning to move, please make sure to inform your current school. Transportation receives all of its information through daily downloads of information from the schools. Delays in updating this information at the school may delay a bus being available for your child when you move.

Bus Stop Times and Locations: Parents of new students will receive a call prior to the start of school from your local School Bus Operator. Once the student has an Ontario Education Number (OEN – provided on your child’s report card), then by following some simple instructions on the HPSTS website www.ourschoolbuses.ca parents can check this information whenever they need to.

Vehicle Types: HPSTS contracts various sizes and types of vehicles from your local School Bus Operators. These vehicles range from mini-vans, to passenger vans, to small busettes, to large buses plus wheelchair accessible vehicles. These vehicles will be assigned based on specific requirements.

Getting ready

Clothing: Dress your child for the conditions (label clothing items to identify if lost)
If they have to wait at a stop make sure they have:

- hat & mitts in cold weather
- rain gear in spring, and fall when required
- hats, sunscreen in hot weather

School bags, backpacks, etc.

Please keep in mind that your child must be able to lift the bag when full, climb up the stairs to the bus carrying or with the bag on their back, and sit with the bag on their lap or between their legs on the bus. Filled backpacks should never weigh more than the student, please keep the bag size age appropriate.

Green Tag: The Green Tag program is a voluntary program that has been developed to assist school staff and bus drivers identify Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten students in and around the school and on the bus. Please insert the correct bus information into the tag and attach the tag to a location on the backpack that is easily visible.

Equipment: Sports equipment, large projects, show and tell items, animals/bugs, musical instruments may not be able to travel with your child to school on the bus due to safety and space availability.

Skates should have skate guards and be in a bag.

Large sports items, large projects, etc. should be dropped off directly to the school for your children. Items can be picked up in the same manner or at designated parent/teacher days.

Arrivals: Parents have a responsibility for supervising their child from home to the stop in the morning and from the stop to home at the end of the day. Parents should also refresh bus stop rules with their child.

- Stay at the designated location
- No pushing or shoving
- Do not damage property at the stop location
- Do not bother animals at the stop location

Buses will have small Route signs in a side window near the entry door to indicate which bus Route that vehicle is on. Please ensure that your child can recognize the route information. If confused, please ask the driver. They can be very helpful.

When boarding the bus:

- Line up in single file
- No pushing or shoving
- Hold the handrail
- Smile and say “Good Morning” to your bus driver
- Go directly to your seat
- Take off your backpack
- Hold the backpack on your knees
 - or place on the floor between your legs
- Sit down and wait for the bus to start moving

For group stops, parents can make arrangements with a group of parents and share the duties. Please be waiting at the stop **5-10 minutes before** the scheduled pick-up so that you don't miss the bus.

If your child has to cross the road when they get on the bus:

- Parents should assist their child in crossing the road
- Parents should help their child follow the directions of the driver
- Parents should demonstrate and refresh procedures with their child

Emergency plan:

It is important to have an emergency plan in place to keep your child safe:

- Late bus in the morning and you have to get to work
 - Fog day
 - Inclement weather
 - Bus delay
- Parent not home when the bus arrives
 - Parent tied up in traffic and bus arrives on time
 - Parent ill
 - Other unforeseen events or emergencies
- Snow day – who will look after your children
 - Count on 2-12 days per year depending on where you live
 - Generally fewer inland, more along highway 21

Emergency plans could include:

- Students having a Key to their own home (and knowing how to use it)
 - Access to a neighbours house (someone to let them in)
 - Other plans as required
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Riding the Bus

Now that your child is on the bus, there are a few things that you should know.

Bus Rules: There are a few simple rules that will keep the children on the bus safe:

- Follow the directions of the driver
- Stay in your seat and keep the aisles clear
- No eating on the bus
- No pushing or hitting other students
- Talk quietly (Use your library voice)

Students who behave in an unsafe or inappropriate manner will lose the privilege of riding the bus.

Seating: The school buses are designed so that students in Kindergarten to grade 6 may sit 3 to a seat on the school bus. The youngest students will generally sit at the front of the bus so that the driver can identify the students.

Seating Plans: To assist drivers in identifying students, some bus drivers may establish seating plans with the assistance of the school principal. Drivers may assign or reassign seats during the course of the year as situations arise.

School Bus Safety: In addition to the rules on the bus designed to keep everyone safe, the bus is equipped with the following:

- Padded high back seats – creating a compartmentalization zone
- Safety glass
- Safe bus construction – D250 safety standards
- 2-way radios
- Medical kit
- First Aid/CPR/Epipen trained Bus Drivers
- Side window, roof, and rear door emergency exits

Each fall students participate in school bus evacuation drills provided by your local School Bus Operators to prepare them in case of emergencies on the bus. Items covered include:

- Accidents
- Allergic reactions and other medical issues
- Downed power lines
- Plus other topics as required

Ride Length: Our guidelines try to limit one-way rides to one hour or less wherever possible for elementary aged students.

Arriving Home

Arrivals: Parents have a responsibility for supervising their child from home to the stop in the morning and from the stop to home at the end of the day.

For group stops, parents can make arrangements with a group of parents and share the duties.

Please be waiting at the stop **5-10 minutes before** the scheduled drop-off so that you don't miss the bus.

When getting off the bus:

- Line up in single file
- No pushing or shoving
- Hold the handrail on your way down the stairs
- Smile and say "Good Bye" to your bus driver
- Go directly to the safe zone until the bus pulls away

If your child has to cross the road when they get off the bus:

- Parent should meet the bus on the door side of the road
- Parents and students should walk out 10 paces in front of the bus before crossing
- Parents should assist their child in crossing the road
- Parents should demonstrate and refresh procedures with their child
- Parents should help their child follow the directions of the driver

Inclement Weather

In Huron and Perth counties, weather is ever changing and procedures have been developed to keep everyone safe.

Early each fall, HPSTS staff, School Principals, and your local School Bus Operators meet to update weather procedures.

Weather Procedure: On a typical day when inclement weather has been forecast, your local School Bus Operators and HPSTS staff monitor the weather patterns through a number of weather sites including DTN, a weather site paid for by HPSTS and your local Operators. On mornings when inclement weather is forecast, your local School Bus Operators go out before 6:00 AM and drive many of the roads that the buses will drive later in the morning. At that time, armed with on-road knowledge and information from the weather sites, a decision is made whether to operate buses or not. The region has been divided into 12 specific weather areas and each of the 12 weather areas has specific procedures detailing what to do in the event of bus cancellations or delays. In some areas specific bus routes may be cancelled, while others may continue to operate. In most cases, urban (in-town) routes will continue while rural (country) and Specialized Transportation routes have been cancelled. When bus decisions have been made, school decisions will then be made. In some cases, schools may be closed or they may be open for study purposes. These decisions are based on the location of the schools, staffing, weather, and many other details.

Once these decisions are made, this information is then posted on the HPSTS website www.ourschoolbuses.ca on the “Cancellations and Delays” tab. Principals will also post this information on the school twitter account which is available on the school website.

Facebook and Twitter notices can be accessed directly from your device as they are posted.

While we suggest using these methods as they are posted by school Principals and are the most current and accurate, this information is also available through local radio stations and local radio station websites.

If buses are cancelled in the morning, buses will not run in the afternoon either.

Please be aware that in Huron and Perth counties, weather can be very unpredictable due to lake effect weather. Please monitor the HPSTS website www.ourschoolbuses.ca to check for weather updates throughout the day. If weather conditions deteriorate during the day to a point where it is unsafe to allow the buses to depart, the students will be kept at the school and parents will be notified.

The only exception to direct cancelling of vehicles is during fog situations when buses may be delayed for 2 hours if fog is present. After this 2 hour delay buses may either run or will be cancelled. Please have an Emergency plan in place for your child if buses are cancelled. If snow is on the ground and fog is in the air, buses will usually be cancelled as the fog does not usually dissipate in these conditions. Please follow information updates from HPSTS as updates or updated twitter messages from the school.

Parent Responsibilities: Even though your local Operators will make the decision whether to operate buses on any specific day, parents make the final decision whether to put their children on the bus or not. If a parent chooses not to put their child on the bus and/or not attend school, the school must be contacted with this information.

Alternate Transportation

Alternate Transportation: The HPSTS office may authorize alternate transportation stops for child care, split families, or other situations provided that the arrangements have a regular schedule. It should be noted that Caregivers at Alternate Transportation locations must adhere to parent expectations and must assist students to and from designated stops and must monitor children at the stop. Before agreeing to a caregiver at an Alternate Transportation location, please ensure that they are willing and able to meet this important responsibility.

Alternate transportation may be permitted providing that it does not:

- Provide transportation outside of the school attendance boundary where the child is registered
- Increase the size of the vehicle currently on the route
- Add additional stop locations in Urban areas
- Provide service for social (birthday parties, play days etc.) activities
- Allow more than two (2) designated stop locations (home, caregiver, relative, etc.) per Eligible Custodial Address

Granting of alternate transportation does not guarantee transportation to the designated location:

- Student may have to meet a bus at a group stop location
- Student may have to walk to or from the stop up to the allowable distance
- Parents may have to meet the bus at an existing stop within the attendance boundary as routes are not altered to accommodate Alternate requests.

School Bus Safety

Additional Safety Information can be found:

- Ministry of Transportation of Ontario
 - <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/schoolbus/schoolbus.shtml>
 - <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/schoolbus/smarts.shtml>
- School Bus Safety Videos
 - <https://vimeo.com/oecmsbrs>

Video Cameras: HPSTS has contracted with your local School Bus Operators to provide video cameras on all school vehicles for monitoring purposes. Cameras provide evidence to support observations and to keep students, drivers and bus monitors safe on the bus.

Bus Transfers: In some locations, due to routing challenges, students may be required to transfer from one bus to another to arrive at their home school. Transfer locations are generally school sites that allow for access to local school staff to assist in the event that your child requires some assistance. Please refresh procedures with your child in the event that bus transfers are required.

Contact Information: Please make sure that all contact information is updated **at your school** as soon as it changes. HPSTS downloads the information from the school student database each day and supplies contact information to your local School Bus Operator. This includes all of your important numbers; home, cell, work, etc. We want to be able to contact you if there is an emergency.

Moving? If you are planning to move, please make sure to inform your current school. Transportation receives all of its information through daily downloads of information from the schools. Delays in updating this information at the school may delay a bus being available for your child when you move.

Safe Schools Policy: Both Partner Boards have adopted a Safe Schools Policy. Links to this policy can be found on the HPSTS website www.ourschoolbuses.ca or on the Board websites.

Code of Conduct: Both Partner Boards have adopted a Code of Conduct. Links to this policy can be found on the HPSTS website www.ourschoolbuses.ca or on the Board websites.