



SEPTEMBER 2020 Transportation Plan

Safe Return to Class

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TRANSPORTATION PLAN

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REV. 1.4 – 2020-09-015

1. INTRODUCTION

As we prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, one thing is certain, this school year will not likely resemble anything that we have seen before. Our focus will remain on the safe transportation of students to and from school, notwithstanding the environment that surrounds us. Consultation of government issued directives and dialogue with community partners has been and will remain critical in our approach. Anticipating changes, and having the ability to adapt and respond to changes in our environment at a moments notice is critical in the current pandemic. This plan should be read in conjunction with individual school board return to class plans. Every effort has been made to ensure consistency. Any discrepancy or conflict should be reported to the NPSSTS or the school board in order that we may address the concern.

2. NPSSTS PREPARATIONS

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the NPSSTS has had no less than four variations in its business continuity planning, and is currently in the early phases of Recovery. Key operational staff are returning to the office environment to deal with the arduous task of route planning. Routes for a “Conventional” return to classes and transportation have been prepared, pending additional data from school board surveys. “Adapted” model routing will be completed upon receipt of the data from each member school board. Therefore, transitioning from one model to another will be relatively easy and could be done in short order, given the receipt of the data and a reasonable period of time provided to prepare the routes. This is due to the efforts of NPSSTS staff and the four member school boards while working from home since March.

These efforts will also permit us to have resources available to respond to whatever schedule and model may be mandated by the Ministry at any point in the future. Much time and effort has gone into rider data analysis, consultation with other consortia, community partners, operators and school board officials in ensuring that all available resources have been reviewed and that decisions are made on the best information available at the time.



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3. PHYSICAL DISTANCING ON A SCHOOL BUS, FACE COVERING AND SEATING

Prior to boarding the bus parents/guardians should ensure that students have sanitized their hands using alcohol based sanitizer and reinforce the need that they use good hygiene practices like coughing and sneezing into their sleeve. Items like used facial tissue should only be disposed of in a proper container upon arrival at the school or at home and not discarded anywhere on the bus.

The interior space on a school bus varies on the size and therefore the number of seats available to passengers. The need to allow for 2 meters in all directions would seriously diminish the number of passengers permitted under these guidelines to the degree of making transportation to school on time near impossible. Therefore, the use of masks by riders is critical in order to mitigate risks to fellow riders and the driver.

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit has mandated the use of face coverings in enclosed public spaces, effective July 24, 2020. This includes Private Business Transportation (e.g. company vehicle), Private transportation (e.g. taxis, rideshare services); and public transportation (e.g. bus or train). This includes all persons who enter a public place or service with some exceptions including persons with a disability and children under the age of two years; or children under the age of five years either by birth age or mental development who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver.

Busses are a different scenario than school from an infection prevention and control (IPAC) perspective because there are multiple students from multiple cohorts potentially mixing with each other. If physical distancing is respected on school buses, the capacity of the bus is greatly reduced. To increase capacity on buses, school buses can be considered “public” transportation and be covered under the mandatory mask wearing directive. Equitable access to non-medical masks in the school setting is an important consideration.

As part of their planning, the Ministry of Education has included the procurement of cloth masks for students, with direction to boards to ensure that students who cannot afford a mask are provided one.

Therefore, in a “conventional” model, buses will be permitted to load to their normal ridership and the mandatory mask directive will be respected. In the event that a young student cannot be persuaded to keep their mask on, they may be seated on a bench by themselves using



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the back of the seat in front of them as a physical barrier. The seat across the aisle should have only one student. These situations should be reported to the principal upon arrival at the school, or to the parent if the event occurs on the ride home. Buses will be equipped with a small supply of spare masks in the event a student needs a replacement mask.

In the event of an “adapted” model being required where stricter social distancing measures are mandated, buses will only be permitted to transport one student per bench with the exception of siblings who can share a bench.

In both instances, all student transportation vehicles will have seating plans developed to minimize contact between students, seating siblings together, and then students from the same cohort together.

School Boards who have developed an *Exemption to Mask Wearing* process will provide information to the NPSSTS with respect to approved applications. NPSSTS will update the student information using the “equipment” field in BusPlanner © in order for operators/drivers to access through Bus Planner© Web.

4. SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION

Wherever possible, transportation for students with special needs will continue without interruption. Additional PPE may be required for drivers, monitors, and if integrated with other students, those students as well. Each case will require a separate evaluation taking into consideration the safety of everyone involved.

5. LOADING AND UNLOADING

Physical distancing at the pickup point is the responsibility of the student and parents/guardians. This should be reinforced in the weeks prior to the first day of school as parents prepare them for the school year. This should also include unloading at the end of the day and further enforcement of the personal precautions including the use of a face covering until they can maintain a safe distance or arrive home.

Consideration will be given to minimizing the number of students at stops, having regard for the additional time required for the extra stops, total ride time, and the ability to meet prescribed arrival times at the school. Schools will establish their own unloading practices subject to the guidance documents from various agencies consulted. In addition, schools will



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require loading strategies to minimize the contact between students of other grades and bus routes. The NPSSTS will provide each school with the bus “line up” and schedule for end of day loading in order to facilitate the planning of this task.

6. RETURN TO SCHOOL SCHEDULES AND ROUTING

Subject to any strategy for school opening, and in order to ensure the ability to “pivot” from one schedule to another, the NPSSTS will prepare routing to meet both the “conventional” and “adapted” models. NPSSTS will be prepared to move from one model to the other within reasonable notice, having regard for the need to advise operators and parents of the change. These plans include but are not limited to:

- a. Students at all grade levels in a conventional model;
- b. Students at all grade levels in the adapted model;
- c. Elementary grade students in a conventional model and secondary students in the adapted model.

7. CLEANING OF SCHOOL BUSES

The Ministry of Education will be providing supplies to bus operators for this purpose. This includes the disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces (for example, handrails, window sills, seats and seatbacks) a minimum of twice daily (e.g. after each run). MSDS and instructions on use should be included with the products received. The NPSSTS Safety Officer will coordinate the procurement of these and other PPE products.

8. PPE ON THE BUS

Drivers and monitors will be provided with the appropriate PPE required to ensure their safety and follow the recommendations in the Federal Guidance for School Bus Operations. Medical masks and eye protection (e.g. face shields) will be provided for school bus drivers, school bus monitors and student aides. Eye protection and masks for drivers should not interfere with the safe operation of vehicles and is intended to protect drivers during close contact with students, such as during boarding and exiting.

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be provided and should be available on the vehicles for use as needed. It is not intended for automatic use by students upon boarding but to be used by the driver for their purposes. The seat immediately behind the driver can be kept vacant to



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allow added protection. Additional PPE will be provided as available to drivers and monitors for specific challenges in loading and unloading students with special needs. This includes face shields, gloves and disposable gowns.

9. MONITORING RIDERSHIP – CONTACT TRACING

Students should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept to assist with contact tracing in the case of a student or driver contracting COVID-19. Drivers, in consultation with school administration will develop and amend seating plans as required. In order to ensure the most effective and efficient contact tracing, drivers will, to best of their ability:

- a. Ensure that students adhere to the seating plan;
- b. Ensure that only students listed on the manifest are permitted to board the bus. Should a student who is not on the manifest be permitted to board for safety reasons, the driver shall document the incident and advise the NPSSTS as soon as possible;
- c. Maintain records of the seating plan; and
- d. Submit a copy of any changes to a seating plan to their employer for filing and retention for a minimum of 60 days.

10. SELF-SCREENING

All drivers must self-screen each day prior to attending work. Operators will provide staff with a checklist to perform daily screening. Any driver experiencing new or worsening symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must not report for work and should seek appropriate medical attention as required, including getting tested at a COVID-19 testing centre. If a symptomatic individual tests positive for COVID-19, they should continue to remain in isolation at home and follow the directions of the public health unit. Proof of a negative test will be required prior to resuming work. Use the following link to access the Self-Assessment Tool: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>.

Parents should perform daily screening of their children using the checklist provided by the school board or health unit before putting them on a bus. Students who are experiencing new or worsening symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must not attend school and should seek appropriate medical attention as required, including getting tested for COVID-19 at a testing centre.



Consortium Members
Membres du consortium





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11. RIDER WHO DISPLAYS SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

Should a driver identify a student who is displaying symptoms of illness, the student should be provided with a surgical grade mask and seated alone in the first vacant row, to the right of the driver. The driver may consider moving other students to ensure greater distancing between the student displaying symptoms and other students or themselves. In addition, the driver shall:

- a. Contact their dispatcher who will advise the school or parent, as the case may be, to request that the student be met at the bus by the principal or parent/guardian whether on the morning or afternoon run;
- b. Advise him/her of their concerns;
- c. To reduce the possibility of spread to other students, consideration will be given to have the bus go directly to the school. In this case, the bus company will post a route delay in the system. A second bus can be dispatched to complete the route as would be done in the case of a motor vehicle collision.
- d. Document the incident and advise the Operator who will report the incident to public health authorities unless previously reported by the principal.

For further details please go to:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-guidance-school-outbreak-management>

12. NON-COMPLIANT BEHAVIOURS

Any conduct on the part of a student that does not comply with these directives will be dealt with in the same manner as any other discipline issue on the bus. The goal is to have students succeed and comply with these necessary measures. School administrators are the best equipped persons to deal with such issues.

13. AMENDMENTS TO THE PLAN

We are living in an ever changing landscape and our ability to adapt at any moment is critical. These measures are subject to change as new information on transmission and risk mitigation become available.



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14. COMMUNICATION

The Transportation Plan shall be posted on the NPSSTS website in order to ensure access by members of our community.

15. DISTRIBUTION

Member Boards
Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium
School Bus Operators
North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
NPSSTS Staff
Moose Deer Point First Nation
Nipissing First Nation Education and Bus Lines
Henvey Inlet First Nation

16. RESOURCES

1. **Guide to reopening Ontario's schools**
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-reopening-ontarios-schools>
2. **Approach to reopening schools for 2020-2021 school year**
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/approach-reopening-schools-2020-2021-school-year>
3. **Face Coverings – North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit**
<https://www.myhealthunit.ca/en/health-topics/facial-coverings-non-medical-masks.asp>
4. **COVID-19 & Reopening Schools – Frequently Asked Questions, Version 1 – Last updated: July 24, 2020, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit.**
5. **COVID-19 guidance: school outbreak management**

