

Texas Education Agency

# **School Transportation Allotment Handbook**

Effective Beginning with 2014–2015 School Year

Office of School Finance  
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# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>SECTION 1: WHICH STUDENTS MUST BE PROVIDED TRANSPORTATION?.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SECTION 2: WHICH STUDENTS ARE ELIGIBLE TO BE REPORTED FOR ALLOTMENT PURPOSES? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1 What Is a Regular-Program Student? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.2 What Is a Special-Program Student? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>SECTION 3: WHAT TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION, OR ROUTE SERVICES, ARE ELIGIBLE TO BE REPORTED FOR ALLOTMENT PURPOSES? .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.1 What Are Regular Route Services? .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Regular Route Services: Transportation to and from School.....	13
Regular Route Services: Transportation to and from Academic Courses .....	15
<b>3.2 What Are Special Route Services? .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Special Route Services: Transportation to and from School.....	15
Special Route Services: Transportation for Auxiliary or ESY Services .....	15
<b>3.3 What Are CTE Route Services? .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3.4 What Are Private Route Services?.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>SECTION 4: HOW DOES OUR DISTRICT REPORT TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION? .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.1 How Does Our District Access the Required Reports? .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.2 What Information Is Needed for the Route Services Report?.....</b>	<b>19</b>

Required Ridership and Mileage Information.....	20
Required Bus Pass or Bus Card Information .....	22
<b>4.3 What Information Is Needed for the Operations Report? .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Required Cost Information .....	22
Required Mileage Information.....	24
Required Vehicle Information.....	25
<b>SECTION 5: WHAT DOCUMENTATION MUST OUR DISTRICT KEEP?.....</b>	<b>27</b>
Route Descriptions.....	27
Eligible Rider Rosters .....	27
Official Counts of Eligible Riders for Regular-Route-Service Routes.....	28
Hazardous-Traffic-Area Policy.....	28
Operations Report Documentation .....	28
Documentation Related to Transportation to a Grandparent’s Home or Child-Care Facility .....	28
Documentation Related to a Bus Pass or Bus Card Program.....	28
<b>SECTION 6: WHAT PROCEDURES MUST OUR DISTRICT FOLLOW IN DETERMINING TRANSPORTATION REPORT DATA? .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>6.1 How Does Our District Determine Whether a Student Lives Two or More Miles from Campus for Reporting Purposes? .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>6.2 How Does Our District Ensure That Hazardous-Traffic-Area Service Is Eligible to Be Reported?.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6.3 How Does Our District Develop a Route Description? .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>6.4 How Does Our District Calculate the Number of Days a Route Was Operated?.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>6.5 How Does Our District Conduct an Official Count of Eligible Riders? .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>6.6 How Does Our District Determine Average Daily Ridership for a Route?.....</b>	<b>32</b>

6.7 How Does Our District Calculate the Daily Mileage to Be Reported in the Route Services Report? .....	34
6.8 How Does Our District Calculate Mileage to Be Reported in the Operations Report? .....	34
<b>SECTION 7: WHAT REQUIREMENTS MUST STUDENT-TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES MEET, AND WHICH VEHICLES MAY BE USED FOR WHICH PURPOSES? .....</b>	<b>37</b>
Vehicles Used for Routes Serving 10 or More Students .....	37
Vehicles Used for Routes Serving 9 or Fewer Students .....	37
Vehicles Used to Transport 14 or Fewer Students to School-Related Activities .....	38
<b>SECTION 8: WHAT REQUIREMENTS MUST VEHICLE DRIVERS MEET? .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>SECTION 9: WHAT TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION ARE INELIGIBLE FOR ALLOTMENT PURPOSES? .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>SECTION 10: HOW IS OUR DISTRICT’S TRANSPORTATION ALLOTMENT DETERMINED? .....</b>	<b>43</b>
10.1 How Is Funding for Regular Route Services Calculated? .....	43
10.2 How Is Funding for Special Route Services Calculated? .....	44
10.3 How Is Funding for CTE Route Services Calculated?.....	44
10.4 How Is Funding for Private Route Services Calculated? .....	45
<b>SECTION 11: HOW DOES OUR DISTRICT ESTABLISH AND OPERATE A BUS PASS OR CARD PROGRAM? .47</b>	
11.1 What Must Our District Do to Establish a Program? .....	47
11.2 Which Bus Passes and Cards Are Eligible for Reimbursement?.....	48
11.3 How Does Our District Document Student Eligibility and the Eligibility of Bus Passes or Cards for Reimbursement? .....	48
11.4 What Information Must the Required Standard Operating Procedures Include? .....	50

11.5 How Does Our District Report Program Information in the Route Services Report?.....	51
<b>SECTION 12: HOW DOES OUR DISTRICT ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY TO REPORT TRANSPORTATION FOR ALLOTMENT PURPOSES? .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>SECTION 13: HOW DOES OUR DISTRICT HANDLE CONTRACTING OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES? .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>SECTION 14: MAY OUR DISTRICT CHARGE STUDENTS FOR TRANSPORTATION? .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: POSTAL ADDRESS, EMAIL ADDRESS, AND FAX NUMBER FOR TEA SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION UNIT.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: HELPFUL LINKS .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>INDEX.....</b>	<b>63</b>

# Introduction

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**Note on terminology:** In this handbook, “school district” and “district” mean a school district, county unit system, charter school, or other local education agency.

Under state law, your school district may establish and operate an economical public school transportation system.<sup>1</sup> As an alternative, your district may contract with another school district<sup>2</sup> or with a mass transit authority, commercial transportation company, or county juvenile board<sup>3</sup> to establish and operate such a transportation system. State law also entitles your district to state funding for certain transportation of eligible students.<sup>4</sup> This state funding is known as the transportation allotment.

This handbook provides information primarily about:

- which students and which types of transportation are eligible to be reported in the School Transportation Route Services Report for transportation allotment purposes,
- the two reports your district must make to receive its transportation allotment,
- the transportation documentation your district must keep locally,
- bus and bus-operator requirements, and
- requirements for receiving a transportation allotment for bus passes or cards issued for student transportation.

**Note on using this handbook:** If you are in one section of the handbook and click a link to another section, you can return to the original section by pressing ALT + the left-arrow key.

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Education Code (TEC), [§34.007](#)

<sup>2</sup> TEC, [§34.007](#)(a)(2)

<sup>3</sup> TEC, [§34.008](#)

<sup>4</sup> TEC, [§12.106](#)(b) and [§42.155](#)





# Section 1: Which Students Must Be Provided Transportation?

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The only students that your school district is **required**<sup>5</sup> to provide transportation to are:

- certain students receiving special education who would be unable to attend classes without special transportation services and
- certain students eligible under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act who would be unable to attend classes without special transportation services.

The students who meet these criteria are described in more detail in [2.2 What Is a Special-Program Student?](#).

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<sup>5</sup> 34 Code of Federal Regulations, §104.33 and §300.101 (requirement to provide free appropriate public education); TEC, [§12.109](#)



## Section 2: Which Students Are Eligible to Be Reported for Allotment Purposes?

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The following students are eligible to be reported for transportation allotment (funding) purposes:

- “regular-program” students who receive [eligible transportation services](#)
- “special-program” students who receive [eligible transportation services](#)

Your school district may provide transportation to ineligible students. However, the transportation of ineligible students may not be reported for allotment purposes.

### 2.1 What Is a Regular-Program Student?

A regular-program student is one who does not require specialized transportation to access his or her academic program. Specialized transportation is transportation that is provided separately from transportation for regular-program students.

### 2.2 What Is a Special-Program Student?

A special-program student is a student with a disability who requires specialized transportation<sup>6</sup> to access his or her academic program and certain other related services<sup>7</sup> and who **either**:

- meets all three of these requirements:
  - the student is eligible under the TEC, [§29.003](#), and Part B (Public Law 101-476) and Part H (Public Law 102-119) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990 and subsequent amendments;
  - the student would be unable to attend school and benefit from his or her special education program of instruction (including extended school year programs and community-based transitional life skills training) or developmental, corrective, and other supplementary supportive services without being provided special transportation as a necessary related service, as determined on an individual (case-by-case) basis; and
  - the student has the requirement for special transportation properly documented by a duly authorized admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee in the student’s individualized education program (IEP) as a required related service to be provided by the district; **or**

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<sup>6</sup> Specialized transportation is transportation that is provided separate from regular program students.

<sup>7</sup> TEC, §§[29.001–29.005](#) and [42.155\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (g)

- meets all three of these requirements:
  - the student is eligible under Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and subsequent amendments;
  - the student would be unable to attend school and benefit from his or her academic program of instruction without being provided special transportation as a necessary related service, as determined on an individual (case-by-case) basis; and
  - the student has the requirement for special transportation properly documented by the district in the student’s Section 504 accommodations plan.

Students who receive special education or have Section 504 plans but **do not** require specialized transportation to participate in their education programs are considered regular-program students for transportation purposes.

## Section 3: What Types of Transportation, or Route Services, Are Eligible to Be Reported for Allotment Purposes?

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The following types of transportation, also referred to as **route services**, are eligible to be reported for transportation allotment purposes<sup>8</sup>:

- [regular](#) route services
- [special](#) route services
- [career and technical education \(CTE\)](#) route services
- [private](#) route services

The following subsections describe these route services in detail.

### 3.1 What Are Regular Route Services?

Regular route services are:

- transportation of regular-program students to school at the beginning of the school day and from school at the end of the school day and
- transportation of regular-program students during the school day to attend required academic courses that are not offered at the students' campus of attendance.

#### *Regular Route Services: Transportation to and from School*

Your school district may report transportation to school at the beginning of the school day and from school at the end of the day for the following types of regular-program students:

- a student who lives [two or more miles](#) from the student's campus of regular attendance
- a student who lives in a [hazardous traffic area](#), as designated by your school board, that is within two miles of the student's campus of regular attendance
- a student who is transported to or from a grandparent's home that:
  - is designated by the student's parent,
  - is two or more miles from the student's campus of regular attendance or is in a hazardous traffic area, and
  - is at a district-approved stop on a district-approved route in accordance with your school board's policy<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> TEC, [§42.155](#)

**Important:** It is your district’s responsibility to determine whether a home meets these requirements. Your district may not report transportation to and from such a home until it has determined that the home meets these requirements.

- a student who is transported to or from a state-recognized<sup>10</sup> child-care facility that:
  - is designated by the student’s parent,
  - is two or more miles from the student’s campus of regular attendance or is in a hazardous traffic area, and
  - is at a district-approved stop on a district-approved route in accordance with your school board’s policy<sup>11</sup>

**Important:** It is your district’s responsibility to determine whether a child-care facility meets these requirements. Your district may not report transportation to and from such a facility until it has determined that the facility meets these requirements.

- a student whose grade level your district does not provide and whom your district transports to and from a neighboring district for educational services that are provided through an agreement between the districts<sup>12</sup>
- a student who:
  - has been identified as homeless<sup>13</sup> by your district’s homeless coordinator;
  - is being transported back to his or her school of origin or the last campus the student attended; and
  - at the time of the student’s identification as homeless, resides two or more miles from the campus to which the student is being transported (school of origin or last campus attended) or resides in a hazardous traffic area within two miles of the campus

Note: Homeless students transported back to the school of origin or last campus attended in a neighboring district are **not** considered interdistrict voluntary transfer students.

Note: Direct questions about identifying homeless students to the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO) (<http://www.utdanacenter.org/theo/>).

Transportation from school at the end of the day includes any transportation from school to home that your district provides for students who stay after school for extracurricular activities, after-school programs, or other purposes. Please see the examples provided in [6.6 How Does Our District Determine Average Daily Ridership for a Route?](#) to ensure that your district avoids double-counting of students in average daily ridership in providing this transportation.

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<sup>9</sup> TEC, [§34.007](#)(b) and [§42.155](#)(k)

<sup>10</sup> A state-recognized child-care facility is one that is licensed, certified, or registered by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. (Texas Human Resources Code, [§42.002](#)[3])

<sup>11</sup> TEC, [§34.007](#)(b) and [§42.155](#)(k)

<sup>12</sup> TEC, [§25.039](#)

<sup>13</sup> according to the criteria found in 42 United States Code, §11302 and §11434a

### ***Regular Route Services: Transportation to and from Academic Courses***

Your district may report transportation of regular-program students during the school day between the students' campus of attendance and another instructional site within the district for the students to attend:

- required courses, including dual credit courses, that they are enrolled in but that are not available at the students' campus of attendance or
- required courses, including dual college credit courses during the school day, that they are enrolled in but that are not available at the students' campus site inside or outside your district.

This transportation does **not** include transportation for extra- or cocurricular activity trips, field trips, athletics practice, sporting events, school club meetings, band or cheer competitions, or animal shows or competitions. It also does not include between-campus transportation for meals.

## **3.2 What Are Special Route Services?**

Special route services are:

- transportation of special-program students to school at the beginning of the school day and from school at the end of the school day
- transportation of special-program students to attend:
  - prescribed services during the regular school year and school day or
  - extended school year (ESY) services required by the students' IEPs

Note to transportation administrator for the Texas School for the Deaf: Transportation that your school provides is considered and should be reported as special route services.

### ***Special Route Services: Transportation to and from School***

Your district may report specialized transportation of a special-program student to the student's campus of attendance at the beginning of the school day and from the student's campus of attendance at the end of the day, during the regular school year, if the student's IEP or Section 504 accommodations plan requires this transportation. The student's campus of attendance may be a campus in a neighboring district or a regional day school, as specified in the student's IEP by the student's ARD committee.

Transportation to ESY services must not be reported as transportation to and from school. It must be report as transportation for ESY services.

### ***Special Route Services: Transportation for Auxiliary or ESY Services***

Your district may report:

- specialized transportation of a special-program student during the regular school year and school day for the student to receive:
  - education services, including community-based instruction, required by the student's IEP or Section 504 accommodations plan or

- noninstructional support services, such as developmental or corrective supplementary services, including health exams, diagnostic testing, counseling, and therapy, required by the student’s IEP and
- specialized transportation of a special-program student to and from IEP-required ESY services (these services may be provided during the summer).

Transportation for ESY services includes transportation to school at the beginning of the student’s school day and from school at the end of the day.

### 3.3 What Are CTE Route Services?

CTE route services are transportation of regular- or special-program students during the school day to attend a **TEA-approved CTE course**<sup>14</sup> that is not available at the students’ campus of attendance and is provided at:

- another secondary public school campus or work-based instructional site inside or outside your district,
- a campus in a neighboring district with which your district has a cooperative agreement, or
- a state-regulated public or private postsecondary educational institution or proprietary trade or technical school under a contract for CTE instruction.

Transportation reported as CTE route services must be transportation to attend a CTE course or CTE courses that make up only a part of the student’s instructional day. Transportation to a school at the beginning of the day or from school at the end of the day must not be reported as CTE route services.

A district administrator must confirm that a course is a TEA-approved CTE course before your district reports CTE route services related to the course.

### 3.4 What Are Private Route Services?

Private route services are transportation to school at the beginning of the school day and from school at the end of the school day **by privately owned or commercial transportation** for regular- and special-program students whom your school district determines to be eligible. It is transportation for which your district provides grants.<sup>15</sup>

In the case of private route services, an eligible regular-program student is one whom your district has determined is experiencing extreme hardship in getting to and from school because the student:

- resides in a geographically isolated area two or more miles from the nearest available school bus route (as measured along the shortest route that may be traveled on public or private roads) **and**
- lives two or more miles from his or her home campus (as measured along the **shortest** route that may be traveled on public roads).

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<sup>14</sup> You can find a list of TEA-approved CTE courses in Code Table C022 of the [PEIMS Data Standards](#).

<sup>15</sup> TEC, [§42.155](#)(e) and (g)



In the case of private route services, an eligible special-program student is one whom your district has determined is experiencing extreme hardship in getting to and from school. Eligibility may be established by a student's IEP if:

- transportation is included as a required related service,
- the ARD committee determines that transportation by a parent or the parent's designee is in the best interest of the student in completing his or her education program, **and**
- the ARD committee's determination is included in the IEP.

Your district must determine eligibility for private route services on a case-by-case basis. It must not base eligibility determinations on parent requests. The unavailability or inconvenience of district-operated route services does not constitute an extreme hardship.

If a parent or the parent's designated agent is providing transportation, the TEA recommends that your district's school board execute a written contract with the parent or designated agent that stipulates the terms of reimbursement and requires the parent or designated agent to maintain proof of adequate liability insurance coverage for transporting persons for compensation. If transportation is provided by a parent's agent, your district should require the parent to provide a signed statement of authorization and keep the statement on file.



## Section 4: How Does Our District Report Transportation Information?

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Your school district provides the Texas Education Agency (TEA) with information on the district's transportation program through two annual reports:

- the School Transportation **Route Services Report** and
- the School Transportation **Operations Report**.

The Route Services Report asks for information on riders and route services that were eligible to generate transportation allotment funding.

The Operations Report asks for cost and mileage information for all student transportation, regardless of whether the transportation was eligible to generate transportation allotment funding.

**Your district must submit both reports to the TEA to receive transportation allotment funding** for a given school year.

**Important:** The information your district includes in one of the reports must reflect the information included in the other. For instance, if the Route Services Report shows that your district provided special route services, the Operations Report should show costs for providing special route services.

### 4.1 How Does Our District Access the Required Reports?

Both reports are accessed and submitted online through the Transportation subsystem of the web-based Foundation School Program (FSP) System. The FSP System is one of several applications available within the online [Texas Education Agency Secure Environment \(TEASE\)](#). To access the FSP System, you must have a TEASE login ID and password, and have applied for and been granted access to the FSP System. If you do not have a TEASE login ID and password or have not applied for access to the FSP System, please see the instructions for accessing the system that are available on the TEA [FSP System Online Training](#) web page.

Detailed instructions for entering data in both reports are available in the help topics provided in the Transportation subsystem. To access the help topics while in the subsystem, click the question mark button in the upper-right corner of the screen.

### 4.2 What Information Is Needed for the Route Services Report?

Most of the information that the TEA uses to calculate a school district's transportation allotment is reported through the Route Services Report. When this handbook refers to students or route services that are "eligible to be reported for transportation allotment purposes," it is referring to students or

services that are eligible to be reported in the Route Services Report. This report is an annual report that your district submits after the end of the school year. It asks for ridership and mileage information.

**The report must be submitted to the TEA by August 1.** Generally, the report becomes available for data entry June 1.

### *Required Ridership and Mileage Information*

The report requires ridership and mileage information for each of the four types of route services: regular, special, CTE, and private.

#### **Regular Route Services**

For regular route services, your district must report, by route, the daily mileage and daily ridership attributable to the following:

- transportation to and from school (labeled **Home-to-School/School-to-Home** in the report) and
- transportation during the day for students to attend required academic courses (labeled **Curriculum/Academic** in the report).

For both of these categories of transportation, the report also asks for the daily mileage and daily ridership attributable to:

- service for students who live **two or more miles from their campus** of attendance and
- service for **both** students who live **two or more miles from their campus** of attendance and students who live in **hazardous traffic areas**.

However, because hazardous-traffic-area service does not apply to transportation to required academic courses during the school day, for that transportation, the two-or-more-mile mileage and ridership is the same as the combined two-or-more-mile and hazardous-traffic-area mileage and ridership.

**Note:** When mileage and ridership data are entered for only two-or-more-mile service, the report automatically populates the combined two-or-more-mile and hazardous-traffic-area service fields. If the route had additional mileage and riders as a result of transporting eligible hazardous-traffic-area students, then your district must change the daily mileage and the average daily ridership shown for combined service.

The daily ridership reported for a route providing transportation to and from school is the **average daily ridership**. For information on determining average daily ridership, see [6.6 How Does Our District Determine Average Daily Ridership for a Route?](#).

The daily ridership reported for a route used to transport students to academic courses during the school day is simply the number of different students transported on that route during the school year, as reflected on the route's [eligible rider roster](#).

Your district also must report the [number of days each route operated](#).

The report calculates the total mileage for each route automatically based on the reported daily mileage and number of days operated.

## Special Route Services

For special route services, your district must report, by route, the daily mileage and daily ridership attributable to the following:

- transportation to and from school (labeled **Home-to-School/School-to-Home** in the report) and
- transportation for auxiliary or ESY services (labeled **Auxiliary/ESY** in the report).

The daily ridership reported for a special route is the number of different students transported on that route during the school year, as reflected on the route's [eligible rider roster](#). A student who is transported on one home-to-school route for part of the year and is transported on a different home-to-school route for the rest of the year (for example, because the family moved within the district) should be included in the daily ridership for only one of the routes.

Your district also must report the [number of days each route operated](#).

The report calculates the total mileage for each route automatically based on the reported daily mileage and number of days operated.

## CTE Route Services

For CTE route services, your district must report, by route, the daily mileage and daily ridership attributable to the following:

- transportation of regular-program students and
- transportation of special-program students.

The daily ridership reported for a CTE route is the number of different students transported on that route during the school year, as reflected on the route's [eligible rider roster](#).

Your district also must report the [number of days each route operated](#).

The report calculates the total mileage for each route automatically based on the reported daily mileage and number of days operated.

## Private Route Services

For private route services, your district must report, by route, the daily mileage and daily ridership attributable to the following:

- transportation of regular-program students and
- transportation of special-program students.

The daily ridership reported for a private route is the number of different students transported on that route during the school year, as reflected on the route's [eligible rider roster](#). Most private routes have a ridership of just one student. Your district must not include the same student in the ridership for more than one private route for a school year.

Your district also must report the [number of days each route operated](#).

The report calculates the total mileage for each route automatically based on the reported daily mileage and number of days operated.

### *Required Bus Pass or Bus Card Information*

If your district operated a bus pass or card program as described in [Section 11: How Does Our District Establish and Operate a Bus Pass or Card Program?](#), it must enter the number of eligible passes or cards issued for each month of the school year and the cost of each pass.

Regardless of the type of eligible transportation for which students used bus passes or cards, your district reports the passes or cards in the **Bus Passes** subsection of the **Regular Program** section of the report.

## 4.3 What Information Is Needed for the Operations Report?

The Operations Report is also an annual report that that your district submits after the end of the school year, although it is due several months after the Route Services Report. The Operations Report asks for information on transportation costs and mileage for the school year, as well as for information on vehicles used to transport students.

**The report must be submitted to the TEA by December 1.** Generally, the report becomes available for data entry October 1.

Your district determines the start and end dates of its school-year reporting period. However, your district must not report on the same period in both the report for one year and the report for the next year. The TEA recommends using a full 12-month period (for example, August 1 through July 31) as the reporting period.

### *Required Cost Information*

The report requires your district to enter the costs that reflect the direct and indirect expenditures the district actually incurred to provide student transportation during the school year. It asks for:

- the costs attributable to transportation of **regular-program students** (except for those provided private route services) and
- the costs attributable to transportation of **special-program students** (except for those provided private route services).

Your district should make every effort to report the actual costs attributable to each program (regular and special). However, if your district did not account for costs by program during the school year, it may determine the costs to attribute to special-program students using a reasonable percentage of total time worked, miles traveled, or number of motor vehicles or routes operated.

The report asks for costs for the following expenditure/expense object code categories. See the accounting codes section in Module 1 of the TEA [Financial Accountability System Resource Guide](#) for more-detailed descriptions of these categories.

- **6100 Object Codes: Salaries and Benefits:** Cost of salaries and benefits for professional and nonprofessional employees in transportation-related roles (**excluding** on-behalf payments to the Teacher Retirement System of Texas). If an employee worked for the district in a student-transportation role and in another capacity, your district must include only the salary and benefits related to the student-transportation part of the employment.
- **6200 Object Codes: Purchased and Contracted Services:** Cost of utilities, lease of equipment, and public or commercial contracts for professional services. Your district must not include payments to parents or designated agents for private route services.
- **6300 Object Codes: Supplies and Materials:** Cost of maintenance and operation of vehicles and facilities, such as the cost of oil and fuel.
- **6400 Object Codes: Annual Depreciation and Other Operating Expenses:** Cost of the following:
  - **annual** depreciation on purchases of fixed or capital assets (vehicles, facilities, and major equipment acquisitions)
  - student-transportation-related employee travel, registration and membership fees, subscriptions, insurance, etc.

Your district must **not** include the full purchase price of a fixed or capital asset. Your district must include only the total annual depreciation of all assets as part of object code 6400. In determining estimated useful life, your district should consider the asset’s present condition, use of the asset, construction type, maintenance policy, and how long the asset is expected to meet service and technology standards.

- **6500 Object Codes: Debt Service:** Cost of **annual** interest expenses on loans and leases or lease-purchases for items related to student transportation. Your district must **not** include annual principal paid.

The following costs must be included in the report:

- route-related expenses (function code 34)
- student-transportation costs for field trips (function code 11)
- student-transportation costs for extra- and cocurricular activities and events (function code 36)
- transportation-related costs incurred for nonschool organizations and administrative and support services, regardless of their assigned accounting codes. Examples:
  - bus monitors and aides under function code 52
  - principal and interest on student-transportation vehicles under function code 71
  - “reclassified transportation expenses” under object code 6494

The following costs must **not** be included:

- costs related to district vehicles that were not used for student transportation
- costs for student transportation provided with rented, chartered, or privately owned vehicles
- costs for “on-behalf” payments to the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (under object code 6144)
- costs for payments to parents or their designated agents for students that your district authorized to receive private program transportation

Your district should round costs to the nearest whole dollar before entering them and enter only positive amounts.

### ***Required Mileage Information***

The report requires your district to enter all the mileage that motor vehicles operated by your school district or its contractor **actually** traveled to transport **students** for any purpose during the school year. It asks for this information for the following four categories:

- route-related service
- extra- and cocurricular service
- service for nonschool organizations
- “other use”

For each of these categories, your district must report:

- the mileage attributable to transportation of **regular-program students** (except for those provided private route services) and
- the mileage attributable to transportation of **special-program students** (except for those provided private route services).

Your district must round mileage to the nearest whole mile before entering it. For specific instructions on calculating the mileage to be reported, see [6.8 How Does Our District Calculate Mileage to Be Reported in the Operations Report?](#).

#### **Route-Related Service**

For this category, your district must report all the mileage for transportation of students to and from school or during the school day for academic, instructional, or educational purposes, regardless of whether the mileage was eligible to be reported on the Route Services Report for allotment purposes.

In reporting this mileage, your district must **not** use the mileage from the Route Services Report. Also, your district must **not** include any mileage attributable to the other three reporting categories.

#### **Extra- and Cocurricular Service**

For this category, your district must report all the mileage for transportation of students for school-related activities or events, such as field trips and activities for clubs, sports, and band.

#### **Service for Nonschool Organizations**

For this category, your district must report all the mileage for transportation of groups **other than students or district personnel** in district school buses. An example would be mileage attributable to contracting with a local organization such as the Boy Scouts or Lions Club for transportation to and from events.



## Other Use

For this category, your district must report all the mileage attributable to incidental operation of school buses, such as vehicle inspection, maintenance, and repair; fueling; and driver training and licensing exams.

Note: The amount of this mileage depends on fleet size, the distance buses have to travel for fuel and off-site repairs and maintenance, and how often and far buses are test driven after mechanics work on them. Other-use mileage is not typically significant but is never zero.

## Required Vehicle Information

The Operations Report also asks for the number of district or contractor vehicles that fall under each of several vehicle categories.

For each of these categories, your district must report:

- the number of vehicles used to transport **regular-program students** and
- the number of vehicles used to transport **special-program students**.

Your district must include all owned or leased motor vehicles that the district or its contractor operated on a regular basis or maintained as spare or standby vehicles during the school year primarily for **student** transportation.

Your district must **not** include rented, chartered, or privately owned vehicles.

Your district should use the following definitions in determining in which category to report a motor vehicle. The definitions of school bus types are based on those established by the Texas Department of Public Safety<sup>16</sup>.

### School Buses:

**Type A:** A Type A school bus is a van conversion or body constructed using a cutaway front-section vehicle with a left-side driver's door. It has a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of at least 10,000 pounds and no more than 19,500 pounds. The entrance door is behind the front wheels. A Type A school bus is not a single rear-wheel vehicle.

**Type B:** A Type B school bus is constructed using a stripped chassis. It has a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds. The entrance door is behind the front wheels.

**Type C:** A Type C school bus is a body installed on a flat-back cowl chassis or an integrated conventional chassis and body combination, with a hood and front fender assembly and a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds. The engine is in front of the windshield, and the entrance door is behind the front wheels. This type of bus is also known as a conventional school bus.

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<sup>16</sup> See the current-year Texas Department of Public Safety [Texas School Bus Specifications](#). This publication is adopted annually as a part of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) through 37 TAC [§14.52\(a\)](#).

**Type D:** A Type D school bus is a body installed on a chassis, with the engine mounted in the front, mid bus, or in the rear. It has a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds. The engine may be behind the windshield and beside the driver’s seat; between the front and rear axles; or at the rear of the bus, behind the rear wheels. The entrance door is ahead of the front wheels. This type of bus is also known as a transit-style school bus.

**Other Student-Transportation Vehicles:**

**Passenger Car:** A passenger car is a motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle, designed to transport 10 or fewer passengers, including the driver.<sup>17</sup> A passenger car includes a minivan or sport-utility vehicle with this capacity rating.

**Passenger Van:** A passenger van is a motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle or passenger car, designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers, including the driver.<sup>18</sup> A passenger van does **not** include a minivan or a sport-utility vehicle with a capacity of 10 or fewer.

**Motor Bus or Activity Bus:** A motor bus or activity bus is a commercial vehicle designed to transport more than 15 passengers, including the driver.<sup>19</sup>

The report also asks your district to indicate whether it uses contracted services and to specify the contractor if the district uses one. If your district contracts with a commercial contractor, a metropolitan or mass transit authority, a juvenile board, or another school district for all or part of its student transportation, your district must select the **Yes** option and enter the contractor’s name.

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<sup>17</sup> Texas Transportation Code, [§541.201\(12\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> TEC, [§34.003\(d\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> TEC, [§34.003\(e\)](#); Texas Transportation Code, [§541.201\(15\)](#)

## Section 5: What Documentation Must Our District Keep?

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This section describes the primary documentation your school district must keep locally as support for the transportation information it reports to the TEA. Your district must provide these documents to the TEA on request. You can find detailed information on how to create or compile some of these documents in [Section 6: What Procedures Must Our District Follow in Determining Transportation Report Data?](#)

**Important:** If your district’s documentation does not support the route services reported to the TEA, your district’s transportation allotment may be reduced.

The length of time your district must keep transportation documentation is set by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. For information on the retention period for specific types of transportation documentation, see [Part 13](#) of [Local Schedule SD: Retention Schedule for Records of Public School Districts](#).

### *Route Descriptions*

Your district must keep a turn-by-turn [route description](#) for each route that is used to provide eligible route services while the route is in operation.

Each route description must include the identification number or name assigned to the route.

### *Eligible Rider Rosters*

Your district must keep a roster of eligible riders for each eligible route while the route is in operation, no matter what type of route service the route is used for (regular, special, CTE, or private).

Each route’s roster must include:

- the identification number or name assigned to the route, as shown on the route description;
- each eligible rider’s name and grade level or home campus;
- if the roster is for a regular-route-service route that provides to-school and from-school service to both students who live more than two miles from campus and students who live in hazardous traffic areas, clear indication of which students fall into each category; and
- if the roster is for a CTE route used to transport both regular-program and special-program students, clear indication of which students fall into each category.

A roster must **not** include names of students who are not eligible riders, such as interdistrict transfer students<sup>20</sup>, even if those students are transported on the route.

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<sup>20</sup> TEC, [§25.035](#) and [§25.040](#)

## ***Official Counts of Eligible Riders for Regular-Route-Service Routes***

For each **regular-route-service route** that provides **to-school and from-school service**, your district must keep a record of the [official count](#) of eligible riders that it conducts at least twice during the school year.

The record must include:

- all the information required to be included in the eligible rider roster;
- the date and time of day that the count was taken (a.m., p.m., or midday if the route is run at midday to provide transportation for students in half-day prekindergarten programs);
- documentation of whether each student was present at the time of the count; and
- the signature of the driver or other assigned school official who actually performed the count, dated by the driver or official.

## ***Hazardous-Traffic-Area Policy***

Your district must keep:

- a copy of any hazardous-traffic-area policy, or update to that policy, adopted by the local school board, as discussed in [6.2 How Does Our District Ensure That Hazardous-Traffic-Area Service Is Eligible to Be Reported?](#), and
- a record of the school board's adoption of the policy or revised policy through official board action (such as minutes of the meeting at which the board adopted the policy).

## ***Operations Report Documentation***

Your district must keep:

- records of the odometer readings from the beginning and end of the year that your district is using to calculate actual mileage for each of the four Operations Report [mileage categories](#) and
- documentation showing how the district determined the mileage attributable to each category and, within each category, the mileage attributable to regular-program students and the mileage attributable to special-program students.

## ***Documentation Related to Transportation to a Grandparent's Home or Child-Care Facility***

Your district must keep documentation supporting its determination that a grandparent's home or child-care facility meets the requirements specified in [3.1 What Are Regular Route Services?: Regular Route Services: Transportation to and from School](#).

## ***Documentation Related to a Bus Pass or Bus Card Program***

Please see [11.3 How Does Our District Document Student Eligibility and the Eligibility of Bus Passes or Cards for Reimbursement?](#).

## Section 6: What Procedures Must Our District Follow in Determining Transportation Report Data?

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This section describes the procedures your school district must follow in determining the ridership, mileage, and other information required to be reported in the Route Services Report and Operations Report.

### 6.1 How Does Our District Determine Whether a Student Lives Two or More Miles from Campus for Reporting Purposes?

In determining whether a student lives two or more miles from his or her campus, your district must measure distances in a reasonably accurate and consistent manner using the shortest route that can be traveled on publicly maintained roads between:

- an established prominent landmark at the student's campus (such as the campus entrance or the student drop-off or pickup point) and
- an established landmark at the student's legal residence (such as the nearest property line, the driveway, or the front-door entrance).

(The same method is used to determine whether a grandparent's home or child-care facility is two or more miles from campus.)

Where one-way streets, no through streets, prohibited turns, or other comparable traffic restrictions exist along the route to or from the school, the distance measured from home to school may differ significantly from the distance measured from school to home. In these cases, your district may use the **longer** of the two distance measurements to establish student rider eligibility.

**Important:** A regular-program student must live two or more miles from campus for the student's to-and-from-school transportation to be eligible for transportation allotment purposes. However, your district's policy on eligibility for transportation may be more restrictive. For example, the policy may require that such a student live farther from campus, or the policy may establish a two-mile radius or a longer walking distance from the student's campus. Note: A radius measurement may **not** be used for purposes of determining whether a fee may legally be charged for transporting students to and from school as authorized under the TEC, [§11.158\(a\)\(14\)](#).

## 6.2 How Does Our District Ensure That Hazardous-Traffic-Area Service Is Eligible to Be Reported?

To establish funding eligibility for the transportation of hazardous-traffic-area students, your district's school board must adopt a local policy that:

- defines the hazardous traffic conditions that apply to the district and exist within two miles of its campuses **and**
- identifies the specific hazardous traffic areas within the district that contain the hazardous traffic conditions that the board has defined (the specific hazardous traffic areas eligible for route service).

Your district must submit a copy of the initial policy to the TEA School Transportation Unit to establish eligibility for service that may be provided as a result of the policy. The board policy may be in any written format but must be adopted through official board action. Eligibility is effective as of the date the board adopts the policy. Eligibility is not retroactive to the beginning of a school year if the policy is adopted after the school year begins.

The board policy may be submitted by mail, email, or fax to the postal address, email address, or fax number provided in [Appendix A](#). For audit purposes, your district must also [maintain](#) a copy of the policy and a record of its adoption.

Any subsequent change to the policy must be adopted through official board action and must be [maintained locally](#) for audit purposes. However, your district is not required to submit the revised policy to the TEA.

## 6.3 How Does Our District Develop a Route Description?

Your district must follow these procedures in developing a route description:

- Create the route description at the time the route begins operation. Any format may be used as long as the description includes all required information.
- Assign the route a **unique** identification number or name, and document the route number or name on the route description.

**Note:** The TEA recommends that your district **not** assign a route the number of the bus that is normally used on the route, as the bus may be used for more than one route or may be assigned to another route midyear.

- Begin and end the route description at the location the bus or vehicle is parked so that the route description's mileage represents the **actual total daily mileage** required to transport eligible students.
- Document the path of the route, turn by turn.

- Document the mileage of each segment of the route to the nearest tenth of a mile and the mileage of the whole route to the nearest tenth of a mile. In determining mileage, use a reliable measuring device, such as a properly calibrated vehicle odometer or trip odometer.<sup>21</sup> Measure mileage for all routes in a consistent manner.

Your district may document the mileage for each route segment either cumulatively (showing the mileage for the bus's parked location as zero and the cumulative mileage for each segment) or individually (showing only the mileage attributable to each segment). Whichever method is used, if the mileage for a route segment is less than a tenth of a mile, the mileage must not be rounded up.

- Include only the mileage attributable to eligible route service and riders.
- Update a route description, making new measurements, whenever changes in the path of the route or significant changes in route mileage occur. (Keep the old description, along with any related documentation, including documentation of ridership and number of days of operation.) Assign a new unique identification number or name to the updated route.

## 6.4 How Does Our District Calculate the Number of Days a Route Was Operated?

For **regular or special route service to and from school**, the number of days a route was operated is the sum of the following, not to exceed 180 days:

- the number of days the route was in operation,
- any missed instructional days that were approved by the TEA State Waivers Unit and occurred during the time the route was in operation, and
- any staff development days that were approved by the TEA State Waivers Unit, were conducted, and occurred during the student calendar year during the time the route was in operation.

Your district must not report 180 days of operation for a route if the days listed above do not total 180 days.

If a route is a single-student route and is not run because of student absence, the day the route was not run is not included in the days of operation.

**Example:** A district had 177 days of actual route operation and had two approved staff development training days that occurred within the student calendar year. The district may report 179 days (177 + 2) as eligible days of operation.

For **all other route service**, the number of days a route was operated is the number of actual school days the route was operated, not to exceed 180 days, except as approved for certain ESY routes for special education students. Waived missed instructional days and staff development days on which

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<sup>21</sup> A properly calibrated vehicle or trip odometer is the measuring device TEA auditors are most likely to use in a review of route description mileage.

school was not held are **not** included in the days of operation. Also, if a route is a single-student route and is not run because of student absence, the day the route was not run is not included in the days of operation.

## 6.5 How Does Our District Conduct an Official Count of Eligible Riders?

For each route that is used to provide **regular route service to and from school**, an official count of eligible riders must be conducted and documented during at least two months of the school year.

Because the average daily ridership that your district reports is based on the average of these two counts, your district may wish to take an official count every month so that it can use the two highest counts in calculating average daily ridership. Your district may take counts more than once during a single month, but the two counts used to determine average daily ridership must be from two different months. All counts must be conducted in the same way. Any format may be used as long as all [required information](#) is recorded.

Your district may conduct counts in either the morning or afternoon on any school day during a month. If counts are conducted in both the morning and afternoon on the same route on the same day, the counts must be documented separately. Your district must use the higher of the two counts to determine average daily ridership. Morning and afternoon counts must **not** be combined or averaged with other morning and afternoon counts for the same route.

Eligible rider counts are not required for any routes other than those that provide regular route service to and from school. (Ridership for these other routes is reported as the number of different eligible riders that were transported during the school year.)

## 6.6 How Does Our District Determine Average Daily Ridership for a Route?

Your district determines the average daily ridership for a route providing regular route service to and from school by summing the two official rider counts (or two highest counts) and then dividing the result by two. The two counts that are used must have been conducted in two different months.

Average daily ridership must be determined separately for the two following categories:

- students who live two or more miles from campus and
- students who live in hazardous traffic areas.

**Important:** If mileage for a route or segment of a route is not reported because reporting the mileage would adversely affect [linear density](#), then the ridership for the route or segment of the route must not be reported either.

Your district may not include a student in the reported average daily ridership for more than one route (double-count the student). Otherwise, linear density is artificially inflated.



Following are examples of situations in which students might be double-counted and instructions for avoiding double-counting:

- **Your district provides route service to and from school for students placed in a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP):** Since student eligibility criteria are the same for all route service to and from school, your district should report the average daily ridership for a DAEP route as one. For each DAEP route reported, your district should report **one fewer** student in average daily ridership for one of the non-DAEP routes.
- **Your district provides midday transportation to half-day prekindergarten students:** If the a.m. prekindergarten students ride to school on a regular route with full-day students and the p.m. prekindergarten students ride home on the same type of route, your district may include each prekindergarten student as part of average daily ridership on the regular route or the midday route but not both.
- **Your district has both traditional (180-day) and year-round calendars:** Your district should report a route that is for transportation of only year-round calendar students, and that exists while the traditional calendar track is not in session, with an average daily ridership of one. For each route of this type that your district reports, your district should report **one fewer** student in average daily ridership for one of the routes that operated only during the traditional school year.
- **Your district provides transportation home for students who stay after school for tutorials or other after-school programs and do not ride their regular bus home:** Since student eligibility criteria are the same for all route service to and from school, the average daily ridership for a route used to transport these students home should be reported as one to ensure students are not double-counted. For each route of this type that your district reports, your district should report **one fewer** student in average daily ridership for one of the regular routes.
- **Your district creates, deletes, or changes routes during the school year, resulting in partial-year routes; students are reassigned routes and ride on more than one route during the school year:** If a route is in operation for only a part of the school year and the students on that route are then assigned to another reported route for the remainder of the school year, your district must **not** include the students as part of average daily ridership on both routes. The route that replaces the route or routes that are no longer operating should be reported with an average daily ridership of one, and the replaced route (or one of the replaced routes) should be reported with **one fewer** student in average daily ridership.

Example:

Route 1 has 20 eligible riders. Route 5 has 45 eligible riders. After four months, the routes are combined to form a single route, new route 5a. Route 5a operates for the rest of the school year.

The average daily ridership for Route 1 (calculated using the two highest monthly eligible rider counts while the route existed) is 18. The average daily ridership for Route 5 (calculated using the two highest monthly eligible rider counts while the route existed) is 43.

Your district reports average daily ridership of 17 (18 – 1) for Route 1, average daily ridership of 43 for Route 5, and average daily ridership of 1 for Route 5a.

## 6.7 How Does Our District Calculate the Daily Mileage to Be Reported in the Route Services Report?

The daily mileage your district reports for each route in the Route Services Report is the mileage that is shown on the route description. The report calculates the total mileage for each route automatically based on the reported daily mileage and number of days operated.

**Important:** Your district is not required to report all eligible regular route service and may choose to not report the mileage for a route or a segment of a route if the mileage would adversely affect [linear density](#). If mileage for a route or segment of a route is not reported for this reason, then the ridership for the route or segment of the route must not be reported either.

## 6.8 How Does Our District Calculate Mileage to Be Reported in the Operations Report?

Your district must record the odometer readings of its student-transportation vehicles at the beginning and end of the year for use in calculating Operations Report mileage. Your district must keep track of the mileage attributable to each of the four Operations Report [mileage categories](#) and, for each category, the mileage attributable to regular-program students and the mileage attributable to special-program students. All mileage that motor vehicles operated by your district or its contractor **actually** traveled to transport **students** for any purpose during the school year must be included, regardless of whether the mileage was eligible to be reported on the Route Services Report.

Methods your district may use to keep track of this mileage include:

- maintaining a log book for each vehicle that is kept in that vehicle and
- maintaining a trip log for each trip made by a vehicle and storing all trip logs in a central location (this method may be especially useful for documenting extra- and cocurricular mileage).

Your district may determine the actual mileage attributable to route-related service by 1) keeping track of the actual mileage attributable to the other three categories and the mileage attributable to regular-program and special-program students and 2) performing the calculation shown in the following example:

Example for determining mileage for route-related service by subtracting mileage for other reporting categories from total mileage:

	<b>Regular</b>	<b>Special</b>
<b>Total Actual Miles</b>	124,367	32,428
<b>Extra- and Cocurricular Miles</b>	<u>– 33,418</u>	<u>– 1,312</u>
<b>Balance</b>	90,949	31,116
<b>Nonschool-Organization Miles</b>	<u>– 0</u>	<u>– 0</u>
<b>Balance</b>	90,949	31,116
<b>Other-Use Miles</b>	<u>– 2,654</u>	<u>– 231</u>
<b>Route-Related-Service Miles</b>	88,295	30,885

To obtain an Excel file that your district can use to make the calculations shown in the example above, contact the School Transportation Unit at [schtrans@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:schtrans@tea.state.tx.us).

The only case in which your district may determine Operations Report mileage in a way other than by using odometer readings is if your district does not have the odometer readings necessary to calculate actual mileage because of extraordinary circumstances. In that case, your district must use a reasonable estimate for the mileage and document the method for determining the estimated mileage.



## Section 7: What Requirements Must Student-Transportation Vehicles Meet, and Which Vehicles May Be Used for Which Purposes?

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Vehicles used to transport students on routes must be:

- owned, leased, or rented by your school district or its approved contractor and
- operated by fully qualified drivers employed by the district or its contractor in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations.

The only exception to the preceding requirements is for vehicles used for private route services.

### *Vehicles Used for Routes Serving 10 or More Students*

For a route serving 10 or more students, only a school bus that complies with all federal and state<sup>22</sup> laws and regulations may be used. The only exception to these requirements is for contracted route services provided by a mass transit authority motor bus.

Your district must ensure that students are not required or allowed to stand on a school bus that is in motion.<sup>23</sup>

### *Vehicles Used for Routes Serving 9 or Fewer Students*

For a route serving 9 or fewer students, a school bus or a passenger car may be used.

However, if a passenger car is used:

- the number of passengers in the vehicle must not exceed the manufacturer-designed seating capacity of the vehicle, and
- each passenger must be properly secured by a safety belt or an appropriate child safety seat restraint system:<sup>24</sup>
  - A child younger than five years of age and fewer than 36 inches in height must be in a child safety seat restraint system.
  - A child younger than 17 years of age who is not required to be in a child safety seat restraint system must be buckled into the vehicle with a safety belt.

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<sup>22</sup> including but not limited to the Texas Transportation Code, [Chapter 547](#); 37 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 14, [Subchapter D, School Bus Safety Standards](#); and the TEC, [§34.002](#)

<sup>23</sup> TEC, [§34.004](#)

<sup>24</sup> Texas Transportation Code, [§545.412](#) and [§545.413](#).

A passenger car is a motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle, designed or rated by the manufacturer to accommodate 10 or fewer passengers, including the driver.<sup>25</sup> A passenger car includes a minivan or sport-utility vehicle with this capacity rating.

### ***Vehicles Used to Transport 14 or Fewer Students to School-Related Activities***

Your district may use a passenger van to transport 14 or fewer students to and from school-related activities or events, such as field trips and activities or events for clubs, sports, and band.<sup>26</sup>

**Transportation to these activities and events is the only type of student transportation for which a passenger van may be used.**

If a passenger van is used for this purpose:

- the number of passengers in the vehicle must not exceed the manufacturer-designed seating capacity of the vehicle, and
- each passenger must be properly secured by a safety belt or an appropriate child safety seat restraint system:<sup>27</sup>
  - A child younger than five years of age and fewer than 36 inches in height must be in a child safety seat restraint system.
  - A child younger than 17 years of age who is not required to be in a child safety seat restraint system must be buckled into the vehicle with a safety belt.

A passenger van is a motor vehicle, other than a motorcycle or passenger car, designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers, including the driver.<sup>28</sup> A passenger van does **not** include a minivan or a sport-utility vehicle with a capacity of 10 or fewer.

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<sup>25</sup> Texas Transportation Code, [§541.201](#)(12)

<sup>26</sup> TEC, [§34.003](#)(b)

<sup>27</sup> Texas Transportation Code, [§545.412](#) and [§545.413](#).

<sup>28</sup> TEC, [§34.003](#)(d)

## Section 8: What Requirements Must Vehicle Drivers Meet?

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The driver of a school bus transporting students must meet all requirements set by statute and adopted by the Texas Department of Public Safety for school bus drivers.<sup>29</sup> One of these requirements is that a driver of a school bus with a manufacturer-rated capacity of more than 15 passengers, including the driver, have a Texas commercial driver's license with both a P endorsement and an S endorsement.

The driver of a passenger vehicle transporting students must hold a valid driver's license but is not required to meet the other requirements that school bus drivers must meet.

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<sup>29</sup> Texas Transportation Code, [§521.022](#); 37 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 14, [Subchapter B, School Bus Driver Qualifications](#) and [Subchapter C, School Bus Driver Safety Training Program](#)





## Section 9: What Types of Transportation Are Ineligible for Allotment Purposes?

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The following types of transportation are ineligible for transportation allotment purposes and must **not** be reported on the Route Services Report.

### **Transportation to and from a Head Start or Even Start Program**

Transportation provided exclusively for students to attend the federal Head Start and Even Start programs is ineligible for transportation allotment purposes. This is because students who are not enrolled as school district students and not attending district educational curriculum courses with attendance reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) are not eligible students for transportation allotment purposes.

### **Summer School Transportation**

Summer school transportation is ineligible for transportation allotment purposes, unless it is provided to a special-program student whose IEP documents a need for such transportation.

### **Transportation to and from Nonacademic School-Related Activities**

Transportation provided to regular- or special-program students to or from nonacademic school-related activities (extra- or cocurricular events or field trips) is ineligible for transportation allotment purposes.

### **Transportation of Interdistrict Voluntary Transfer Students**

Transportation provided to regular or special education students who have voluntarily transferred to or from another school district (interdistrict transfer students) is ineligible for transportation allotment purposes.



## Section 10: How Is Our District's Transportation Allotment Determined?

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School districts' transportation allotments are determined according to statute and the current biennium's General Appropriations Act.<sup>30</sup>

Your district's annual transportation allotment is the sum of its funding for the four categories of route service: regular, special, CTE, and private.

Your district's funding for each of these categories is calculated by multiplying the total eligible mileage for the category by the per-mile rate for the category, as described in the following subsections.

Note: For a district belonging to a county transportation system (such as Dallas County Schools or Bowie County Schools) or a transportation cooperative (with a designated fiscal agent district under a shared services arrangement), the per-mile rate is determined on the basis of aggregated mileage, ridership, and cost data that the system or cooperative reported for providing route services to the various member districts for the preceding school year.

### 10.1 How Is Funding for Regular Route Services Calculated?

Your district's funding for regular route services is calculated by multiplying the district's total eligible regular-route-service mileage by its per-mile rate for regular route services. If this amount is more than 110 percent of the amount of funding attributable to two-or-more-mile-only service, funding is reduced so that it does not exceed that limit.<sup>31</sup> (The Route Services Report automatically determines your district's maximum program allotment based on entered mileage.)

The per-mile rate for regular route services for a school year is determined using your district's effective linear density and its cost per mile for the preceding school year. The Route Services Report calculates your district's effective linear density and per-mile rate automatically.

**Effective linear density** is calculated by dividing the total average daily ridership attributable to students who live two or more miles from campus by the total eligible mileage attributable to transporting those students to and from school. Average daily ridership is annualized by multiplying it by 180 before dividing by annual mileage. (For purposes of calculating linear density, 180 days is used for every district regardless of the number of days the district's routes actually operated.)

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<sup>30</sup> TEC, [§42.155](#), and Section 1 (Texas Education Agency) of Article III of the current biennium's General Appropriations Act

<sup>31</sup> per the TEC, [§42.155\(d\)](#), which limits funding of additional mileage incurred for providing hazardous-traffic-area service to not more than 10 percent of the total funding for two-or-more-mile service

Your district's per-mile rate is the lesser of:

- your district's cost per mile for the last school year and
- the rate that corresponds to the linear density grouping into which your district's linear density falls in the following schedule, which is established by the Texas Legislature:

**Rate per Mile for Different Linear Densities**

<b>Linear Density</b>	<b>Rate per Mile of Approved Route</b>
2.400 or above	\$1.43
1.650–2.399	\$1.25
1.150–1.649	\$1.11
0.900–1.149	\$0.97
0.650–0.899	\$0.88
0.400–0.649	\$0.79
Up to 0.399	\$0.68

Example: For school year 2013–2014, average daily ridership is 225, and annual mileage is 52,122: ( $225 \times 180 \div 52,122 = 0.777$ ). In this example, 0.777 is the effective linear density that is compared to the linear density groupings. The effective rate per mile for regular route service for the school year is \$0.88, provided that the cost per mile for regular route service for the school year was higher than \$0.88.

If your district has not previously had regular route service and a resulting cost per mile for services provided, the district's initial assigned per-mile rate is \$0.97.

## 10.2 How Is Funding for Special Route Services Calculated?

Your district's funding for special route services is calculated by multiplying the district's total eligible special-route-service mileage by its per-mile rate for special route services. This rate is the lesser of \$1.08 or the district's cost per mile for special route services for the preceding year.

## 10.3 How Is Funding for CTE Route Services Calculated?

Your district's funding for CTE route services is calculated by multiplying the district's total eligible CTE-route-service mileage by its cost per mile for regular route services for the preceding year.

Note: The General Appropriations Act does not address funding for CTE route services. Statute establishes the per-mile rate for CTE route services as each district's "official extracurricular travel per mile rate as set by the board of trustees and approved by the agency."<sup>32</sup> The TEA has long interpreted

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<sup>32</sup> TEC, [§42.155\(f\)](#)

this rate to be the effective cost per mile for regular route services for the preceding school year, with no prescribed maximum rate or amount set by legislative appropriation.

## 10.4 How Is Funding for Private Route Services Calculated?

Your district's funding for private route services is calculated by multiplying the district's total eligible private-route-service mileage by \$0.25, not to exceed a maximum of \$816 per eligible student rider.<sup>33</sup>

Federal law requires that the transportation of special-program students be provided at no actual cost to the student or parent. Therefore, the rate per mile that your district reimburses parents or parents' agents may exceed the per-mile amount your district is eligible to receive.

The amount that your district reimburses parents or their agents must not exceed their actual costs.

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<sup>33</sup> TEC, [§42.155](#)(e) and (g)



# Section 11: How Does Our District Establish and Operate a Bus Pass or Card Program?

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With TEA approval of your school district’s application, your district may establish a program to provide bus passes or cards for another transportation system to certain students and receive TEA reimbursement for those passes or cards. The students must be ones who are eligible to use the district’s regular transportation system but for whom the regular system is not a feasible method of providing transportation.<sup>34</sup>

To be eligible for a bus pass or card under the program, a student must meet the eligibility requirements in [Section 2: Which Students Are Eligible to Be Reported for Allotment Purposes?](#).

To be eligible for reimbursement, bus passes or cards must be used only for transportation that meets the eligibility requirements in [Section 3: What Types of Transportation, or Route Services, Are Eligible to Be Reported for Allotment Purposes?](#).

## 11.1 What Must Our District Do to Establish a Program?

If your district has not previously been approved to operate a bus pass or card program for reimbursement, it must apply to the TEA for approval to do so. To apply, your district must submit the following items to the TEA School Transportation Unit by the **July 15** before the first school year the district plans to operate the program:

- a letter of application
- a completed application form

A template letter and the application form are available on the TEA [School Transportation Funding](#) web page.

Also, your district must submit a copy of its [standard operating procedures](#) for the program by the **August 1** before the first school year the district plans to operate the program.

These items may be submitted by mail, email, or fax to the postal address, email address, or fax number provided in [Appendix A](#).

Once your district applies and receives approval to operate a program for reimbursement, it does not need to reapply in subsequent years to continue the program. However, if your district plans to change the type of bus pass or card it issues to students or add a new type of bus pass or card, it must apply to the TEA to do so. Also, your district must update its local standard operating procedures each year by August 1 and whenever local procedures change.

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<sup>34</sup> TEC, [§42.155\(l\)](#)

## 11.2 Which Bus Passes and Cards Are Eligible for Reimbursement?

The following types of bus passes and bus cards are the only types eligible for reimbursement:

- daily bus pass
- weekly or seven-day bus pass
- monthly or 30-day bus pass
- bus card (a card that is electronically loaded with a specific amount of funds or a specific number of rides)

To be eligible for reimbursement, a bus pass:

- must be of the type (daily, weekly, or monthly) specified in your district's application and
- must have actually been issued to a student.

For a bus card to be eligible for reimbursement:

- the bus card must:
  - have its own number so that that number can be assigned to a student,
  - be assigned to only one student at a time, and
  - have actually been issued to a student, and
- your district's application must have specified that it was for approval of bus cards (as opposed to passes).

The following are ineligible for reimbursement and must not be reported as eligible:

- a bus pass for a period longer than one month or a bus card loaded or reloaded with funds or rides for a period longer than one month
- a bus pass or card that your district issues to a student to replace one that was lost or stolen
- a student ID card purchased from the transit authority by the district or a student

## 11.3 How Does Our District Document Student Eligibility and the Eligibility of Bus Passes or Cards for Reimbursement?

Monthly, your district must document student eligibility and the eligibility of bus passes or cards for reimbursement using the following four items:

- a roster of eligible bus riders for the month
- a Bus Pass Issuance Log or Bus Card Issuance Log
- a Bus Pass or Bus Card Monthly Summary Form
- documentation of payment for bus passes or cards

Your district must keep these items locally and provide them to the TEA on request.



## Eligible Rider Roster

Each month, your district must create a roster of eligible bus riders listing each student who is eligible to receive a bus pass or card.

The roster must include:

- each eligible rider's name and grade level or home campus;
- the type or types of transportation for which the student will use the pass or card (for example, regular transportation to and from school and CTE transportation); and
- if a student will be using a bus pass or card for regular transportation to and from school, an indication of whether the student's transportation is eligible based on the student's living in a hazardous traffic area or based on the student's living two or more miles from campus.

If your district has not already adopted a hazardous-traffic-area policy and plans to report bus passes or cards for regular to-and-from-school transportation of students living in hazardous traffic areas, your local school board must adopt a policy as described in [6.2 How Does Our District Ensure That Hazardous-Traffic-Area Service Is Eligible to Be Reported?](#) and keep the documentation described in [Section 5: What Documentation Must Our District Keep?: Hazardous-Traffic-Area Policy](#).

## Issuance Log and Monthly Summary Form

Each month, your district must document its purchase and issuance of each bus pass or each bus card's funds using the following two documents, which are available on the TEA [School Transportation Funding](#) web page:

- **Bus Pass Issuance Log or Bus Card Issuance Log:** a form for recording the issuance of bus passes or bus card funds for the month to students by a school official

If your district issues bus passes, a district administrator must have each student sign the log when the student receives his or her pass or passes.

If your district issues bus cards, a district administrator must add funds to each bus card before the first school day of the month. A district administrator must have each student who is assigned a card sign the log to acknowledge that funds have been added to the bus card for the current calendar month and that the amount available is the amount shown on the log. The student must sign the log on the first school day of the calendar month or the first school day of the calendar month that the student is present, whichever comes first.

- **Bus Pass or Bus Card Monthly Summary Form:** a form for summarizing the bus passes or bus card rides that were purchased, issued, or returned during the month

Your district must record on this form only those passes or rides that were properly issued and accounted for on the issuance log.

**Important:** Your district must issue a bus pass or card during the same school year in which it was purchased. Any unissued passes or cards should be returned to the mass transit authority for credit. Your district should take steps to ensure that it does not overpurchase passes or cards that are nonreturnable.

### **Payment Documentation**

Your district also must maintain copies of purchase invoices **and** proof of payment applicable to each month's purchase of bus passes or bus card funds or rides, as well as copies of any credit vouchers for returned passes or cards.

If your district does not pay for bus passes or bus card rides at the time it receives them, then your district must obtain a payment receipt from the transit authority once the passes or rides are paid for. The receipt must show the invoices for which payment was received.

Canceled checks, bank statements, and invoices or purchase orders that show only the quantity of cards ordered or requested are not acceptable as proof of payment. Your district must be able to show proof of payment corresponding to invoices or purchase orders. In rare circumstance, the TEA may accept as documentation of payment a transaction summary from the transit authority that shows each transaction and receipt of payment if the summary also shows the original receipt or invoice number and the actual purchase date corresponding to the original invoice.

## **11.4 What Information Must the Required Standard Operating Procedures Include?**

The standard operating procedures must include the following:

- specific procedures for how the district and its staff members will comply with the requirements of this handbook
- procedures for how the district will recover an issued bus pass or bus card from a student who is no longer eligible or has withdrawn from school
- for a district issuing bus cards:
  - detailed procedures that specify:
    - who is responsible for the oversight and day-to-day management and administration of the bus card program
    - how staff members are to manage and oversee the bus card program, including but not limited to procedures that specify how staff members are to purchase and add funds to cards, issue cards and monitor their use, and document the purchase and issuance of cards

- procedures for informing each eligible student of the following:
  - how to use the card to ride the bus
  - the student’s responsibilities in using the card, including the student’s responsibility to report the loss of a card to a school administrator as soon as the student is aware of the loss
  - authorized and unauthorized uses of the card and consequences of unauthorized use

The TEA encourages your district to:

- develop a “ridership contract” that includes this information,
  - require each eligible student’s parent to indicate the parent has reviewed the contract by signing a copy, and
  - keep the signed copy in the student’s file.
- procedures for district administrators to remove funds from and cancel a card that has been reported lost
  - procedures for how the district will handle repeated unauthorized use of a card

Your district must update its local standard operating procedures each year by August 1 and whenever local procedures change.

## 11.5 How Does Our District Report Program Information in the Route Services Report?

To receive reimbursement for the bus passes or cards it issues, your district must report the number of passes or cards it issued for each month and the cost of each pass in the [Route Services Report](#).

Regardless of the type of eligible transportation for which students used bus passes or cards, your district reports the passes or cards in the **Bus Passes** subsection of the **Regular Program** section of the report.



## Section 12: How Does Our District Establish Eligibility to Report Transportation for Allotment Purposes?

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If your school district has never provided student transportation in the past (or has provided transportation but never reported the transportation for allotment purposes) and would like to start reporting transportation so that it can receive the allotment, your district must complete an application. This application (Application for Funding) is available on the TEA [School Transportation Funding](#) web page.

Transportation allotments must be used only for providing student transportation services.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> TEC, [§42.155\(h\)](#)



## Section 13: How Does Our District Handle Contracting of Transportation Services?

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If your school district contracts with another entity (another school district<sup>36</sup> or a mass transit authority, commercial transportation company, or county juvenile board<sup>37</sup>) for that entity (contractor) to provide transportation to your district's students, **it is your district's responsibility to ensure that the contractor complies with all applicable laws and regulations and with the requirements of this handbook in providing that transportation.**

Commercial transportation contractors that provide student transportation are classified as "motor carriers" when they operate school buses that are designed or used to transport more than 15 passengers, including the driver. As motor carriers, they must register with the Motor Carrier Division of the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.<sup>38</sup> School buses operated by a commercial contractor that have a manufacturer-rated capacity of more than 15 passengers are classified as commercial vehicles. A contractor (motor carrier) that operates school buses with a capacity of more than 15 passengers, including the driver, must have and show proof of liability insurance. Direct any specific questions about motor carrier requirements to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles' Motor Carrier Division.

Your district should ensure that any contractor is informed of and understands all requirements related to providing student transportation, including documentation requirements.

Your district also should ensure that a contract it enters into:

- clearly outlines the contractor's responsibilities and
- provides for your district to have access to the contractor's documentation of compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and with the requirements of this handbook.

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<sup>36</sup> TEC, [§34.007\(a\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>37</sup> TEC, [§34.008](#)

<sup>38</sup> Texas Transportation Code, [§643.051](#); 43 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 218, [Subchapter B](#)





## Section 14: May Our District Charge Students for Transportation?

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If your school district chooses to provide transportation to and from school to students who live within two miles of their campus and do not live in a hazardous traffic area (students whose transportation is ineligible for allotment purposes), your district may charge those students for their transportation.<sup>39</sup>

However, your district **may not** charge students whose transportation **is** eligible for allotment purposes if the district reports any transportation for allotment purposes.<sup>40</sup>

If your district charges a fee, the district must adopt reasonable procedures for waiving the fee if a student is unable to pay it.

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<sup>39</sup> TEC, [§11.158\(a\)\(14\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> TEC, [§11.158\(a\)\(16\)](#)



## Appendix A: Postal Address, Email Address, and Fax Number for TEA School Transportation Unit

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Postal Address: School Transportation Unit, Office of School Finance  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 North Congress Avenue  
Austin, TX 78751

Email Address: [schtrans@tea.state.tx.us](mailto:schtrans@tea.state.tx.us)

Fax Number: 512-305-9165



## Appendix B: Helpful Links

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TEA School Transportation Funding web page:

[http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147484107&menu\\_id=645&menu\\_id2=789](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147484107&menu_id=645&menu_id2=789)

TEA Mailing List Administration web page:

<http://miller.tea.state.tx.us/list/>

*(Sign up for the **State Funding Updates** mailing list to receive messages related to state funding, including transportation funding, such as reminders that a particular report has opened for data entry.)*

TEA FSP System web page:

[http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=8085&menu\\_id=645&menu\\_id2=789](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=8085&menu_id=645&menu_id2=789)

TEASE logon page: <https://seguin.tea.state.tx.us/apps/logon.asp>

TEA web page with State Funding Division contact information:

[http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6957&menu\\_id=645&menu\\_id2=789](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6957&menu_id=645&menu_id2=789)

Texas Constitution and Statutes: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Index.aspx>

Texas Department of Public Safety Texas Specifications for School Buses:

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/schoolbus/sbtexspecs.htm>



# Index

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## A

admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee, 11  
average daily ridership  
    how to determine, 32

## B

bus pass or card program, 47  
    applying to operate, 47  
    documentation, 49

## C

child care facility  
    transportation to and from, 14  
cost per mile, 44

## D

days route was operated, number of, 31  
documentation  
    bus pass or card program, 49  
    eligible rider roster, 27  
    hazardous-traffic-area policy, 28  
    how long to retain, 27  
    official count of eligible riders, 28  
    related to Operations Report, 28  
    required, general, 27  
    route description, 27

## E

effective linear density, 43  
eligibility  
    route services, 13  
    student, 11  
    transportation, 13  
eligible rider roster, 27  
eligible route services  
    career and technical education (CTE), 16  
    private, 16  
    regular, 13  
    special, 15  
    types of, 13  
eligible students, 11  
    regular program, 11  
    special program, 11  
eligible transportation, 13  
    career and technical education (CTE), 16  
    private, 16

regular, 13  
special, 15  
types of, 13

## F

fees  
    charged to students, 57  
Foundation School Program (FSP) System  
    applying for access to, 19  
funding eligibility  
    establishing, 53

## G

General Appropriations Act, 43  
grandparent's home  
    transportation to and from, 13

## H

hazardous traffic area, 30  
    policy, 28  
hazardous-traffic-area policy, 28  
    how to adopt, 30

## I

individualized education program (IEP), 11  
ineligible transportation, 41

## L

linear density, 43  
    and option to not report all eligible mileage, 34

## M

mileage  
    calculating for Operations Report, 34  
    calculating for Route Services Report, 34

## O

official count of eligible riders, 28  
    how to conduct, 32  
Operations Report, 22  
    object codes, 22  
    required cost information, 22  
    required mileage information, 24  
    required vehicle information, 25

## **P**

per-mile rate for regular route services, 43  
per-mile rate per mile for regular route services, 43

## **R**

reports  
    Operations Report, due date, 22  
    Operations Report, information needed for, 22  
    required, 19  
    Route Services Report, due date, 20  
    Route Services Report, information needed for, 19  
required transportation, 9  
route description, 27  
    how to develop, 30  
route services, 13  
Route Services Report, 19  
    required ridership and mileage information, 20

## **S**

school bus drivers, 39  
school buses  
    definitions of types, 25  
    driver requirements, 39  
School Transportation Unit, TEA  
    address, 59

email address, 59  
phone number, 59  
Section 504 of Federal Rehabilitation Act, 12  
    Accommodations Plan, 12

## **T**

transportation allotment, 43  
    calculation of, 43  
    for CTE route services, 44  
    for private route services, 45  
    for regular route services, 43  
    for special route services, 44  
transportation funding, 43  
    calculation of, 43  
    for CTE route services, 44  
    for private route services, 45  
    for regular route services, 43  
    for special route services, 44  
two or more miles  
    measuring, 29

## **V**

vehicles other than school buses  
    capacity requirements, 37  
    definitions, 26







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