



Transportation FAQs for Families

1. How do I determine which bus my child should ride?

Routes are available in E-LINK, an online mapping tool that allows families to enter their home addresses to find their attendance area school, bus number, nearest bus stop and pick-up and drop-off times. To access E-LINK, visit the [“Transportation” page of the school district website](#).

2. What should I do when my child needs to get off the bus at a different stop?

Students are allowed to depart the bus only at their assigned stop. Exceptions to this policy can only be made by pre-arrangement with a note from the parent/guardian. For elementary students, the note must be delivered to the school, where a bus pass will be issued. Middle school, mid-high and high school students can give the note to the bus driver.

3. Why is my child’s bus late?

Weather, traffic, substitute drivers, maintenance difficulties and unforeseen incidents are responsible for delays in the arrival of school buses in the morning and afternoon. Traffic in Lake Stevens is increasingly complex—especially in the south end of the district near Highway 9 and 20th Street. These areas are heavily impacted any time there is traffic on I-5 or the trestle. The Transportation Department does everything possible to keep buses running on schedule every day. In the event that your child’s bus does not arrive as scheduled, please allow 10 to 20 minutes before calling the Transportation Department or your child’s school.

4. How will I know when my child’s bus is late?

When a bus is running late, the driver notifies a dispatcher in the Transportation Department. From there, the Transportation Department notifies the appropriate school(s). There are as many 50-70 students on each bus. At this time, it is not feasible to contact parents about late buses. Parents will be called by the school if their child’s bus is more than 30 minutes late, or if the bus becomes inoperable due to maintenance issues or a traffic accident. It is essential that your child’s school have your accurate contact information, including cell phone numbers (if applicable).

5. Why are there only 30 students riding some buses and my student's bus is crowded?

Decisions regarding bus routes are made by careful planning based on information from the school registration, previous similar routes and other data. Most routes are fixed during the summer months and changes are made after the first two weeks of school, if not sooner. Distance from school, number of buses and drivers, and grouping of students and neighborhoods are also considered. Sometimes it is just not possible to have the exact same number of students on every run.

6. Why can't the bus drive further into my neighborhood?

School buses come in various sizes ranging from 25 to 40 feet long, 20,000-26,000 pounds, 12-13 feet high and 6-10 feet wide. The length is what limits the school bus to be maneuvered in cul-de-sacs and tight places. Smaller buses can turn in a shorter radius, while longer buses cannot maneuver the same circle without backing the bus, which is avoided in routing if possible. Routes are designed to be safe and convenient to the majority of students within reasonable limits.

7. My child has to be at the bus stop very early in the morning. How are route times determined?

We try to design routes that make effective use of our resources while paying attention to the length of time students ride the bus. If your child lives the furthest from school on his/her assigned route, it is likely he/she will be picked up first in the morning and may be dropped off last in the afternoon. In many ways, this is a similar situation to the public transportation rider who lives at the start (or end) of a transit route. Our longest current route(s) take a little over one hour to complete from the start of the route to the last stop.

8. How do you decide when it is too dangerous for school buses to transport students to school due to inclement weather? Who decides? How is the public notified?

In emergency situations, such as snow and icy weather conditions, our top priority is the safety of students. We also recognize that snow days disrupt family schedules and the school year may have to be extended. The decision to close schools is not an easy one. The process is complex and involves many people.

Our district's geography is taken into account when the decision is made. One part of our area may be clear while other areas are struggling with several inches of snow. It is not possible to close some schools in the district while leaving other schools open. To help make the best possible decision, weather forecasts are monitored throughout the process. District staff members drive the roads beginning at 3 a.m. checking schools and routes that are frequently impacted and report road conditions to the superintendent by 5 a.m.

We also consult with neighboring districts regarding road conditions into Lake Stevens. After careful scrutiny and analysis, one of the following four options is decided:

- Schools start on time
- Schools start on time with limited bus service
- Schools start two hours late
- Schools are closed

When the decision is made, the information is listed on the district website and FlashAlert, www.flashalert.net. Local TV, radio and newspapers pull information from FlashAlert. Messages will also be posted to the [district's Facebook](#), and [Twitter pages](#). [Snow bus routes](#) are posted on the district website under "Transportation." Additionally, parents can listen to a recorded update by calling their child's school or the district office and selecting option #8—the school closure line.