



SEPTEMBER 2021 Transportation Plan Back To Class

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TRANSPORTATION PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2021

REV. 1.0 – 2021-08-25

1. INTRODUCTION

As we prepare for the 2021-2022 school year, we are cautiously moving toward a more familiar environment. However, our focus will remain on the safe transportation of students to and from school, notwithstanding the removal of some restrictions that were in place for schools last year. Transportation remains a domain unto itself with its own challenges. Consultation of government issued directives and dialogue with community partners continues and will remain critical in our approach. The ability to anticipate, and promptly adapt and respond to changes our environment is critical in a successful reintegration plan. This plan should be read in conjunction with individual school board return-to-class plans. Every effort has been made to ensure consistency. Any discrepancy or conflict should be reported to the NPSSTS or the school board in order that we may address the concern.

2. NPSSTS PREPARATIONS

All operational staff at the NPSSTS have returned to the office environment to deal with the arduous task of route planning. Transportation routes for the return to classes have been prepared, pending additional data from parents/ guardians and school boards. We have reviewed the measures that were in place last year and are grateful for everyone's compliance. To our knowledge, there were no transmissions attributed to student transportation to date which speaks to the effectiveness of these measures.

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

Prior to students boarding the bus, parents/guardians are asked to ensure that their children have sanitized their hands using alcohol-based (60 %+) sanitizer. Students are reminded to use good hygiene practices such as coughing and sneezing into their sleeve. Items used, such as facial tissue should only be disposed of in a proper container upon arrival at the school or at home, and not discarded on the bus.



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School vehicles can operate at full capacity. Vehicles for elementary students should reduce capacity where possible. The seat directly behind the driver in school buses should remain empty to maintain physical distancing between the driver and students. This distancing measure may not be applicable to other vehicle types such as vans or cars. Where school vehicles are able to operate at less than full capacity, students should be seated in a manner that maximizes physical distancing of 2m where possible. Windows should be opened when feasible to increase ventilation.

Ministry of Education guidance states that “Students in Grades 1 to 12 are required to wear properly fitted non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, **as well as on school vehicles.**” More specifically, “The use of non-medical masks for students in grades 1 to 12 is required on school vehicles. Students in kindergarten are encouraged to wear masks on student transportation. Exceptions should be made for students with medical conditions or special needs that prevent masking.” It further states that “At the advice of the local public health unit, schools and school boards may choose to implement additional masking measures based on local circumstances.”

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

Therefore, having considered local factors, masking will be required for all students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12. Busses are a different scenario than school from an infection prevention and control (IPAC) perspective because there are multiple students from multiple cohorts potentially mixing with each other. If physical distancing is respected on school buses, the capacity of the bus is greatly reduced. To increase capacity on buses, school buses can be considered “public” transportation and be covered under the mandatory mask wearing directive.

Equitable access to non-medical masks in the school settings is an important consideration. As part of their planning, the Ministry of Education has included the procurement of cloth masks for students, with direction to boards to ensure that students who cannot afford a mask are provided one.



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Therefore, buses will be permitted to load to their normal ridership and the mandatory mask directive will be respected. In the event that a young student cannot be persuaded to keep their mask on, they may be seated on a bench by themselves using the back of the seat in front of them as a physical barrier. The seat across the aisle should have only one student. These situations should be reported to the principal upon arrival at the school, or to the parent if the event occurs on the ride home. Buses will be equipped with a small supply of spare masks in the event a student needs a replacement mask.

All student transportation vehicles will have seating plans developed to reduce contact between multiple riders and for ease of contact tracing should someone on the bus test positive for COVID-19 and public health follow-up is required. Every effort will be made to seat siblings together, and/or students of the same class cohort.

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

4. SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION

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

5. LOADING AND UNLOADING

Physical distancing at the bus stop is the responsibility of the student and parents/guardians. This should be reinforced in the weeks prior to the first day of school as students and parents/guardians prepare for the school year. This also includes enforcement of the personal precautions including the use of a face covering until they can maintain a safe distance.

Consideration will be given to minimizing the number of students at stops. Consideration will be given to the time required to accommodate the additional time needed for stops, total ride time, and the ability to meet prescribed arrival times at the school. Schools will establish their



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own unloading practices subject to the guidance documents from various agencies consulted. In addition, schools will require loading strategies to minimize the contact between students of other grades and bus routes. The NPSSTS will provide each school with the order and schedule of buses for end of day loading in order to minimize contact between cohorts.

6. SCHOOL SCHEDULES AND ROUTING

In the event that school scheduling must be changed, the NPSSTS will be prepared to adjust routing within reasonable notice, having regard for the need to advise operators and parents/guardians of the change. There are many factors to consider including but not limited to:

- a. The number of school boards involved;
- b. The number of schools involved;
- c. The number of students involved;
- d. The number of school buses and drivers required;
- e. The number of school buses and drivers available; and
- f. The impact on shared transportation and the use of transfers.

7. CLEANING OF SCHOOL BUSES

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

8. PPE ON THE BUS

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



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Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum 60% alcohol concentration will be provided and should be available on the vehicles for use as needed. Drivers are responsible for the handling of the hand sanitizer, and for distribution as needed. The seat immediately behind the driver should be kept vacant to allow for physical distancing between the driver and students for the duration of the Route. Additional PPE will be provided as available to drivers and monitors for specific challenges in loading and unloading students with special needs. This includes face shields, gloves and disposable gowns.

9. MONITORING RIDERSHIP – CONTACT TRACING

Students will be assigned to a seating plan, which will be recorded and maintained to assist with contact tracing in the event someone on the bus tests positive for COVID-19. In consultation with school administration, drivers will develop and amend seating plans as required. In order to ensure the most effective and efficient contact tracing, drivers will, to best of their ability:

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

10. SELF-SCREENING

All drivers must self-screen each day prior to attending work. Use the following link to access the Self-Assessment Tool: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>.

Operators will provide staff with a checklist to perform daily screening. Any driver experiencing new or worsening symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must not report for work and should seek appropriate medical attention as required, including getting tested at a COVID-19 testing centre. If a symptomatic individual tests positive for COVID-19, they must continue to self-isolate at home and follow the directions of the public health unit. Information with respect to the return to work is available at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-self-isolation-and-return-work>.



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Proof of a negative test is required prior to resuming work for symptomatic individuals. Additionally, symptoms must be improving x24h prior to return to work and the individual must have no fever x24h without using fever-reducing medication.

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

11. RIDER WHO DISPLAYS SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

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

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

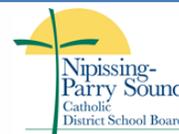
For further details please go to:

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

In partnership with the NBPSDHU, the NPSSTS has developed an information sharing procedure in the event that contact tracing is necessary. Upon request, the NPSSTS will provide the necessary information needed to expedite this important work.



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12. NON-COMPLIANT BEHAVIOURS

Any conduct on the part of a student that does not comply with these directives will be dealt with by school administrators. The goal is to have students succeed and comply with these necessary measures.

13. AMENDMENTS TO THE PLAN

We continue to deal with an ever changing landscape and our ability to adapt at any moment is critical. These measures are subject to change as new information on transmission, variants and risk mitigation strategies become available.

14. COMMUNICATION

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

15. DISTRIBUTION

Parents/Guardians via www.npssts.ca
Member Boards
School Bus Operators
North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit
NPSSTS Staff
Moose Deer Point First Nation
Nipissing First Nation Education and Bus Lines
Henvey Inlet First Nation



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16. RESOURCES

1. **COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools (2021-2022)**
https://www.ontario.ca/document/covid-19-health-safety-and-operational-guidance-schools-2021-2022?utm_campaign=%2Fen%2Frelease%2F1000652%2Fontario-further-improving-school-ventilation&utm_term=public&utm_source=newsroom&utm_medium=email
2. **Face Coverings – North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit**
<https://www.myhealthunit.ca/en/health-topics/facial-coverings-non-medical-masks.asp>

