

REGULATION MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Related Entries: ACG-RA, COB-RA, COF-RA, COG-RA, EBI-RA, EEA, EEA-RA, IGN
Responsible Office: Chief Operating Officer

Operation and Care of MCPS Buses

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for the operation and care of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) buses

II. BACKGROUND

MCPS bus operators and bus attendants provide safe and efficient transportation for MCPS students by adhering to all applicable federal, state, and local laws governing the safety and operation of motor vehicles. MCPS Department of Transportation (DOT) employees are expected to act in a professional and responsible manner at all times, providing quality service to students and exhibiting exemplary conduct among the motoring public of Montgomery County.

III. DEFINITION

- A. *Authorized passengers* are passengers on a scheduled route or field trip with appropriate authorization from the director of DOT/designee and/or the principal/designee.
- B. *MCPS property* means any school or other facility including grounds owned or operated by MCPS, MCPS buses, and other MCPS vehicles and the facility and/or grounds of any MCPS-sponsored activity involving students.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Bus Operator Responsibilities
 - 1. MCPS bus operators are responsible for the safety of passengers transported on MCPS buses.

2. Operating a safe vehicle is one of the most important duties of the operator. If the bus is in an unsafe condition, it should not be moved and the appropriate supervisor for transportation should be notified as described in section IV.C. below.
3. Bus operators and attendants are to present a neat, clean personal appearance and dress appropriately at all times.

B. Student Discipline

1. Students are responsible for their behavior and self-control on the bus and at bus stops at all times.
 - a) Bus operators and attendants, if assigned, are responsible for encouraging safe riding practices, enforcing and addressing disciplinary issues, and instructing how to safely get on and off buses.
 - b) Student violations of behavior and safety rules are further addressed in the *Student Code of Conduct in MCPS* and MCPS Regulation EEA-RA, *Student Transportation*.
2. Students are not removed from the bus for disciplinary reasons while en route. If the behavior is a threat to the safety of other students, the bus operator will pull to the side of the road in a safe location and will call the dispatcher for help. A supervisor and law enforcement will be dispatched immediately.
3. Using MCPS Form 555-3, *School Bus Disciplinary Report*, the bus operator reports misbehavior of students on the bus to the principal of the school and the cluster transportation supervisor.

C. Vehicle Inspection

1. It is the responsibility of the operator to see that the bus is kept clean inside and outside.
2. Prior to operating any bus, the operator performs a pre-trip inspection, and completes the pre-trip inspection report as specified by state and federal laws and regulations, to assure that the vehicle and all associated equipment are in safe operating condition. The pre-trip inspection report log should be properly completed, and any damage to the vehicle should be recorded and reported to the appropriate supervisor. The pre-trip inspection log is carried

on each bus and is updated prior to leaving the parking location on each run segment. Bus operators surrender log books upon request of supervisors and administrators.

3. Mechanical defects of any kind must be reported to the shop supervisor immediately if continued safe operation of the bus is impacted, or upon return to the depot if safety is not immediately impacted.
4. The operator and the attendant must inspect the bus as soon as safely possible after each run segment or field trip, to ensure that students and personal property are not on the bus.
5. Prior to leaving the bus, the operator and attendant, if assigned, complete the post-trip inspection.

D. Vehicle Operation

1. Bus operators are permitted to pick up and discharge passengers only at locations designated on their route sheets.
2. Layover locations are established with supervisor approval.
3. Buses are not to be left unattended with engines running. Operators must remove keys from ignition switches whenever they leave their buses, except while in MCPS depots.
4. All operators shall properly use the lap and shoulder belts whenever the bus is in motion.
5. The operator will be in the driver's seat at all times when there are students on the bus, except while assisting students getting on or off the bus, at which time the bus will be properly secured.
6. Buses shall not be operated with the service door, wheelchair lift door, or emergency door open.
7. Passengers and bus attendants are not permitted to—
 - a) stand or sit in the step well, or
 - b) stand forward of the white line in the front of the bus.

8. Under no circumstances shall the aisle or emergency door be blocked by musical instruments, equipment, or any other object.
9. Operators shall report any over- or under-loads to the appropriate supervisor.
10. Buses shall not be operated with safety equipment disabled or otherwise compromised.
11. Bus operators shall not use personal mobile devices, including headsets, as defined in MCPS Regulation COG-RA, *Personal Mobile Devices*, while operating the bus. Bus attendants shall not use personal mobile devices when students are onboard. Use of the DOT two-way radio is permitted only when safe to do so.

E. Speed Limits

1. School buses may not exceed the posted speed limit.
2. No bus shall exceed a speed of fifteen miles per hour while on school grounds.

F. Loading and Unloading

1. Transportation cluster managers are responsible for establishing loading and unloading procedures at each school.
2. When approaching a school bus stop, the operator shall turn on the amber warning lights approximately 150 feet before coming to a stop. While stopped to pick up or discharge students, the red warning lights shall be activated except in designated school driveways.
3. A bus shall not pass another bus that has its red warning lights in operation.
4. After picking up students in the morning, bus operators shall not permit students to leave the bus except at school. In the afternoon, bus operators shall not permit students to leave the bus at any location other than a regularly established stop.
5. Students shall not be permitted to direct traffic.

6. When adult supervision is required, as stated in MCPS Regulation EEA-RA, *Student Transportation*, the bus operator shall not discharge a student if the adult is not present.

G. Authorized Passengers

1. There shall be no unauthorized passengers on the bus.
2. Animals (other than service animals, as set forth in MCPS Regulation ACG-RA, *Service Animals in Schools*), unprotected glass objects, firearms, weapons, or explosives shall not be transported on buses at any time.

H. Fueling

1. A bus shall not be fueled while students are on board.
2. Buses always should be operated in a manner that conserves as much fuel as possible.
3. Bus operators are to eliminate unnecessary idling to reduce diesel exhaust, improve air quality, and reduce operational costs.

I. Railroad Crossings

1. Maryland law requires that every reasonable effort shall be made to eliminate the need for a school vehicle carrying passengers to cross a grade-level railroad crossing, and further that a school vehicle with students on board may not be routed across an uncontrolled high-speed railroad crossing.
2. MCPS requires that MCPS school buses shall not cross a main line railroad grade crossing while in Montgomery County.
3. The procedure for crossing spur line railroad tracks while in Montgomery County, and all railroad tracks outside the county, is established by state law. To implement the state law, MCPS school bus operators, upon approaching a railroad crossing shall –
 - a) reduce speed gradually as the crossing is approached,
 - b) activate the four-way hazard lights and turn off the master warning light switch approximately 100 feet before stopping,

- c) come to a complete stop 15 feet to 50 feet before the first track,
- d) open the service door, the driver's window, signal the students to be silent, and turn off all noise-making devices, such as heaters, fans, and radios,
- e) look and listen in both directions. If line of sight is limited, move slowly until visibility is adequate and then stop.
- f) If it is safe to cross and there is sufficient room on the other side of the tracks for the bus to completely clear the tracks, the bus operator shall –
 - (1) proceed completely across the tracks in the starting gear,
 - (2) once across all tracks, close the window and the service door, and reactivate the fans, heaters, and radios, and
 - (3) turn off the hazard lights and turn on the master warning light switch.

J. Disciplinary Actions for Bus Operators and Bus Attendants

Infractions and disciplinary actions specific to bus operators or bus attendants are addressed in Maryland law and DOT's *Just Cause Standards for Bus Attendants and Bus Operators* (JCSBABO), in addition to those set forward in the *MCPS Employee Code of Conduct*.

K. Alcohol, Tobacco, or Other Drugs

- 1. MCPS employees are expected to adhere to federal, state, and local laws regarding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and demonstrate through their actions, deeds, and teachings that they do not encourage or condone alcohol, tobacco, or other drug abuse.
- 2. Montgomery County Board of Education Policy IGN, *Preventing Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Abuse in Montgomery County Public Schools*, affirms the Board's commitment to keeping the possession, use, and distribution of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs off MCPS property, as defined above in section III.B.
 - a) Alcoholic beverages are not allowed on MCPS property at any time.

- b) The use of tobacco in any form is not allowed on MCPS property.
- 3. MCPS implements an alcohol and controlled substances testing program for all school vehicle drivers and trainees in compliance with federal and state law. A controlled substances test is administered as part of the application process and prior to an offer of employment as a school vehicle driver trainee.
- 4. All MCPS bus operators are subject to federal and state requirements for pre-employment, random, reasonable suspicion; and post-accident alcohol and other drug testing. The testing programs apply to all employees who hold commercial driver's licenses, and who operate commercial vehicles for MCPS, even if they drive such vehicles only infrequently.
- 5. Bus operators and other MCPS employees subject to the testing program shall not consume alcoholic beverages at any time that may affect their ability to operate a bus, and never within eight hours of reporting to work.
- 6. Maryland law further prohibits the use of legal controlled substances by bus operators while on duty, unless the use is according to the instructions of the prescribing physician who has advised the bus operator that the substances does not adversely affect the bus operator's ability to safely operate a school vehicle.

L. Accidents and Citations

- 1. Bus operators and attendants receive accident prevention training as set forth in Maryland law.
- 2. DOT will provide training and maintain guidelines and procedures for handling accidents so that injured students/staff are cared for promptly, further injury is prevented, students are reunited with parents/guardians as quickly as possible, and correct and timely information is disseminated to all appropriate parties. Accident scene responsibilities, notification, and reporting requirements will be consistent with state and federal requirements and are further described in MCPS Regulation EEA-RA, *Student Transportation*.
- 3. Infractions of laws or established procedures are subject to investigation and disciplinary action further described in JCSBABO.

4. All accidents are reviewed by the Bus Accident Review Board as further described in MCPS Regulation EBI-RA, *Review of Preventable Accidents and the Bus Accident Review Board (BARB)*.
5. All citations are the responsibility of the operator.

M. Cameras on MCPS Buses

Persons on MCPS property, including passengers on school buses, may be subject to audio and video camera surveillance with posted notification, and any student or employee may be disciplined based on evidence gathered through such audio and video surveillance.

Related Sources: *Annotated Code of Maryland*, Transportation Article, §21-703;
Code of Maryland Regulations §13A.06.07

Regulation History: Formerly Regulation 215-2, July 2, 1981, revised December 1986; reprinted April, 1988; revised February 7, 2000; revised April 21, 2010; revised July 16, 2018.