



Bus Pass Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who is eligible for free busing?

Bus privileges are provided free of charge to the following populations:

- Students in grades K-6 who live more than 2 miles from their school.
- Students who are eligible for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program and complete the required Sharing of Information form. **Families must apply for this program every year.**
- Students whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) include free busing.

Please note that even students who receive free busing must apply for and display their bus pass to the bus driver.

How is the 2.0 mile distance determined for students in grades K-6?

It is measured by using the shortest most commonly travelled route from the public way in front of a student's home and nearest entranceway of the school.

If I am not eligible for free busing how do I purchase a bus pass?

During the Springtime, an email will go out to all families with information on how to purchase a bus pass. This year, online applications are available by visiting Family ID which can be accessed via the school District website at <http://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us>.

How much does the bus pass cost and how can I pay?

Bus passes are \$400 per year, with a family maximum of \$650. You may pay by check or money order. Payments can also be made via credit card or ACH online. The online payment link can be found on the District website online payments, via Unipay. A small additional fee will be charged for online credit card payments.

Given the Hybrid Model will families receive a break on the bus pass cost this year given students are only being transported 2 or 3 days a week to school and not 5 days?

The District will still be running the same number of buses each day (10) and will be incurring additional costs to clean and sanitize the buses after each run. The District's cost will be higher than it has been in year's past. With that being said the District plans on reconciling the bus service as we approach the final quarter of the school year (April-June) and will determine at that time what discounts can be applied for this school year. However, to secure your spot on the bus and ensure we can get the school year started smoothly with the Bus Company we are asking for full payment right now.

How many riders will be able to ride each bus?

North Reading has 77 passenger buses and therefor based on the Department of Education's guidelines to adhere to social distancing we are able to safely transport 25 students on each bus, which is a one student per seat model. Students will be seated no more than one student per bench, alternating sides for each row, which allows students to maintain approximately 3 feet of physical distance. Siblings and members of the same household are able to ride on the same bus seat if necessary.

Are you doing anything to improve ventilation on the buses?

Per DESE guidelines the District will keep bus windows open at all times during operation, unless this is not possible due to extreme weather conditions.

Will students be required to wear a mask while riding the bus?

All staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear masks at all times. Exemptions for students due to medical and/or behavioral reasons – and associated protocols.

Will students be given an assigned seat on the bus?

Elementary students will be given an assigned seat on an assigned bus each day. The District is in the process of trying to arrange bus dry runs prior to the start of school on September 17, 2020, where staff members would assist students on finding their assigned seat on their bus. Middle School and High School students will board and sit in the designated seat back to front and exit the bus front to back.

Will there be Bus Monitors on each bus?

It is the District's objective to have a bus monitor for every bus to ensure strict adherence to these health and safety guidelines but it has been difficult to recruit such qualified personnel for this role.

Will there be hand sanitizing stations on each bus?

Hand sanitizer dispensers will be located at the entrance of school buses within view of the bus driver or monitor to ensure appropriate use.

How often will the buses be disinfected?

The District will be coordinating with our contracted transportation provider, NRT, Inc. to ensure vehicles are properly cleaned and disinfected. At a minimum, high-touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly after each morning route and after each afternoon route using EPA-approved disinfectants. The interior of each vehicle will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly at least once each day. The GenEon mist is designed to sanitize large, open areas without the need for surface contact or the use of harsh chemicals. The NRT, Inc. safety team has developed protocols to make this as efficient as possible, and their drivers and personnel will be trained accordingly.

Are there one-way passes or monthly passes available for purchase?

No. We contract for buses for the school year. Bus passes allow for service for the entire year.

Can I schedule monthly payments for my bus pass?

No. In order to keep the administrative costs down for bus passes we cannot schedule individual payment plans. Instead, we send out bus pass information very early in order to provide additional time for families to budget their finances. We do accept online payments and through this service you may make payment with your credit card. An additional fee will apply if you use a credit card.

Is there financial aid available?

If your family is eligible for the Free or Reduced Lunch Program you may have your bus fee waived. Applications are available starting in the month of June for the following school year at every school, at the School Business Office or online at: <https://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us/district/food-services/pages/free-and-reduced-lunch-information>. Families seeking financial assistance are

encouraged to first complete the Free and Reduced Lunch Application along with the Sharing of Information Waiver Form.

Does everyone need a bus pass?

Yes, every rider must have a bus pass. **There are no exceptions.** In addition, students will be assigned a specific bus number which will be printed on the back of their bus pass. Students must ride the bus they are assigned to each day. Students will not be permitted to ride on a different bus unless they have received permission from the School Principal's Office. This will only be permitted in rare circumstances.

I lost my bus pass. What should I do?

Replacement passes are sold in the School Business Office for a \$15 fee. We only accept checks or money order.

How do I find out where and when the bus stops will be located?

Bus routes and stops will be published approximately 1 week prior to the start of school in the North Reading Transcript. The bus stops are also available at the North Reading District website that may be found at <http://www.north-reading.k12.ma.us/business-office/pages/bus-transportation>. Bus stops for elementary students are generally located at established neighborhood locations. Bus stops for middle and high school students tend to be outside of neighborhoods at major intersections. If you feel there is an extraordinary circumstance that would justify reevaluation of a bus stop location, please put your concern in writing. A few weeks after the bus routes have settled we will review your request.

Are the bus stops for Middle and High School at the same locations as they were for elementary School?

No. Bus stops will likely be farther from your house than they were for elementary school. The buses have to provide service to the entire town for middle and high school. It isn't possible to provide the same level of neighborhood service. Middle and High school students may be as far as 1 ½ miles from their bus stops.

Is bus service provided to all streets and neighborhoods?

The short answer is no. Streets that are not accepted by the Town of North Reading, unpaved roads and/or areas that buses cannot safely traverse are examples or areas that do not receive bus service. However, the School Department works closely with the Public Safety Department and the Safety Officer in these instances and reserves the right to provide bus service within these areas of Town at the School Department's discretion. In areas where bus service cannot be provided, buses will pick up and drop children off at the nearest bus stop. We encourage parents to participate in car pools in these instances.

Does the presence of sidewalks affect the bus stops?

Yes. Neighborhoods that have the benefit of sidewalks will have bus stops spread out farther. However, neighborhoods with no sidewalks will have bus stops situated in closer proximity.

The bus drives right passed my house. Why can't you add a stop, it will only take one minute?

Unfortunately, it would add a considerable amount of time to the bus routes if we agreed to such requests for everyone.

What time should I arrive at the bus stop?

Each route has an approximate time listed for the first pick-up. Please note that at the beginning of the school year this can vary by as much as 15 minutes. It is recommended that you arrive earlier than the average time listed (at least 15 minutes) until a time pattern is established.

What are the bus arrangements for Kindergarten students?

When possible, bus stops are provided close to kindergarteners' homes at the mid-day drop-off or mid-day pick-up. The morning pick-up and the afternoon drop-off are located at the normal neighborhood stops, along with children in grades 1 to 5. In order to benefit from the mid-day bus stop privileges you needed to have acquired your pass before June 5th. Bus passes acquired after this date will result in delayed inclusion of your home on the specialized kindergarten route system.

Please note that **full day** kindergartners do not have mid-day bus service, therefore, there is no "door-to-door" service. Parents must be present at bus stops for all kindergartners and are not to be left unattended when dropped off at home. If parents are not home, the students are to be returned to the school or the Central Office, located at 189 Park St.

Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns regarding my child's bus transportation?

Rosaly MacKillop is the designated Transportation Coordinator with the North Reading School District. Rosaly can be reached via telephone at 978-526-5252 or via email at rmackillop@nrpsk12.org. Ms. MacKillop logs each message and we will ensure each parent receives a response to their question or concern. In addition, parents may also contact Michael Connelly, the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, at 978-526-5270 or mconnelly@nrpsk12.org.

If there are behavior problems on the bus who can I report this to?

Behavioral or other school-related problems should be reported to the school Principal.

Can a student's conduct result in suspension from bus privileges?

Yes. Students are expected to behave in a manner which will provide for the optimum safety of the individual student as well as the other students riding the bus. When a student is reported for violating a safety rule in or around a school bus, school officials will review the situation with the student. Parents will be notified of the behavior. Depending on the situation the student can: receive a warning, receive a brief suspension from the bus or lose bus privileges for the balance of the school year. No bus user fees will be refunded in such an instance. Please review the bus pass rules and regulations with your child(ren) which can be found on the school District website.

What happens if a student has a medical need?

If a student has a medical need such as an allergy in which an epi-pen is needed, please inform the bus driver of where it is located. In the event that the student cannot administer it themselves, the drivers have been instructed to do what necessary as part of their CPR/First Aid training.

What if I lost or forgot an item on the bus?

There is a lost and found on each bus. Please contact NRT bus or speak to the bus driver regarding the lost item.