



# School Bus Safety Audit Best Practice Checklist

On January 31, 2024, Governor Mike DeWine announced the release of the [Ohio School Bus Safety Working Group Report](#). This report, a comprehensive examination of all aspects related to school bus safety in Ohio, contains 17 recommendations intended to improve the safety of children being transported by school buses.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ([NHTSA](#)) reports that school buses are one of the safest vehicles on the road. NHSTA also acknowledges, though, that children are at the greatest risk when approaching or leaving school buses. The Ohio School Bus Safety Working Group was made aware of this risk and focused one of their recommendations around this concern by advising districts to complete a comprehensive audit of their transportation practices with a focus on maximizing student safety throughout the transportation process. This recommendation provides:

*School districts should conduct safety audits of their bus routes, bus stops, and school pick-up/drop-off sites on school property to reduce safety risks and mitigate the severity of school bus crashes.*

Safety should always be a priority when mapping bus routes, stops, and a student's designated place of safety. Everyone – from school bus drivers to all staff in schools and districts and members of the public - plays a critical role in the safe transportation of students to and from school. Therefore, it is important for schools and districts to include as many viewpoints as possible when they conduct their annual transportation safety audits.

This document is intended as a starting point to assist districts with conducting more comprehensive annual transportation safety audits. Schools and districts are encouraged to use the School Bus Safety Audit Best Practice Checklist Template to start local discussions about the unique safety concerns they face in their routes, stops, and school zones. *As this template is only a starting point, districts are encouraged to determine which items are relevant for their local needs, as well as to consider what additional items need to be added to ensure a comprehensive review tailored to the individual district.* Reviewing and modifying the School Bus Safety Audit Best Practice Checklist Template to fit each school and district's concerns will help ensure Ohio's students are safe when transported by school buses. The final checklist may also need to be reviewed annually in the event new safety concerns have arisen that have not yet been addressed on the checklist. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Pupil Transportation team with questions and concerns. We all have a role to play in helping ensure the safe transportation of Ohio's students.

## School Bus Safety Audit Best Practice Checklist

Name:	School/District:	Date:		
<b>SECTION 1: SCHOOL ZONE</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments:</b>	
School driveways are wide enough and well maintained to accommodate the wide turn of a school bus.				
School zone signage is present, visible, and well maintained.				
School zone roadway is properly marked as a no passing zone.				
School zone advance warning signs and flashing signs are adequately placed and operating during appropriate hours.				
Temporary street closure and one-way streets are accounted for (if applicable).				
School buses are parked bumper to bumper or diagonally when loading or unloading on school grounds. When parked bumper to bumper allow enough space to operate and use emergency exits.				
School zone has adequate barriers from traffic (guardrails, edge line rumble strips, etc.).				
Students are not crossing roadways to get to or from the bus on school grounds.				
School loading zones are designated curbside to minimize other motor vehicles passing the bus while students are present.				
Driver remains on the bus while loading and unloading. (unless it is a special needs or pre-school route).				
Parent and school bus drop-off and pick-up locations are clearly designated.				
Assistants are present to help students enter and exit vehicles.				
The building staff supervises students in the loading zone.				
School buses are never required to back up while in the loading zone.				
Parent and other vehicles are kept separate and prohibited in the school bus loading zone.				
Motor vehicles are separated from pedestrians and bicyclists.				
School zone infrastructure encourages walking, bicycling, and carpooling as applicable.				
Curb striping and pavement markings clearly delineate the flow of students and traffic.				

A delineated queuing lane on roads adjacent to the school is used to avoid blocking non-school traffic.			
All traffic in the loading zones is one way only.			
Crossing guards are in place in the school zone.			
Crosswalks are appropriately marked at all intersections.			
Monitoring and enforcement of drop-off and pick-up policies.			
<b>SECTION 2: TRANSPORTATION ROUTE ZONE</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
Bus stops are not placed at or near intersections or other significant hazards whenever possible (e.g., railroad crossings, low visibility locations).			
Drivers are informed of registered sex offenders living near bus stops. Bus stops are located away from sex offenders' homes when possible.			
Drivers are required to report any route hazards (e.g., construction, road closures, low-hanging limbs, blind curves, railroad crossings, blind spots, and narrow roadways or bridges).			
Bus stops provide sufficient visibility for pedestrians and drivers (sight distance can be impacted by sunrise/sunset, curves, hills, vegetation, parked vehicles, approaching vehicles, snow drifts, etc.).			
On routes where insufficient sight distance is unavoidable, local transportation authority has posted warning signs where needed.			
Routes do not include stops on dangerous roadways or poorly maintained roads.			
Routes are chosen on streets with lower traffic and lower speeds.			
Routes minimize or avoid multi-lane roads.			
Routes choose roads with sidewalks or pedestrian paths or, if unavailable, roads with sufficient space to walk alongside the roadway.			
Street names and route names are clearly labeled.			
Bus stops are not placed too close together to ensure proper stop procedures are performed (i.e., ambers and reds sequenced).			
Number of students per stop is considered.			
Policies are determined for handling mid-block stops versus corner stops.			

Turnarounds are minimal, clearly visible in both directions and noted on the route sheet. The bus should be visible to other motorists five hundred feet in both directions and should not cross a lane of traffic while backing.			
If backing is required on the routes, drivers load students before the bus performs the backing procedure. Stops that require the school bus to back up are avoided when possible. If impossible to avoid, pick up students before backing occurs. During the return trip, only drop off after backing up and positioned to drive the bus forward.			
Student crossovers are avoided when possible.			
Students and parents have adequate pathways to walk home from the bus stop when possible.			
Left turns and other high-risk scenarios are avoided when possible (e.g., crossing divided highways with no traffic lights).			
Students who cross the roadway are noted on the route sheet.			
Students have a driver assigned designated place of safety on their residence side of the road.			
Special guidelines for kindergarten students are included (e.g., door-step pick-up).			
The designated place of safety is safe and noted on the route sheet (e.g., no risk of poor visibility, no crossing dangers, students are clear of the danger zone as the bus arrives).			
Place of safety has sufficient space for parents and students to wait at least 20 steps from the roadway.			
Surrounding environment has minimal distractions that could prevent students from being ready to board the bus at the time of arrival.			
Students with special needs may have individual transportation plans, which include the designation of the school bus stop. Establishing a bus stop waiting area to best serve the student may be required (e.g., driveway stop, wheelchair loading accessibility, aide assistance).			
The student waiting area provides sufficient room for all students to wait safely.			
Student waiting areas have proper illumination.			
Student waiting areas have adequate protection from weather when possible.			
Bus stops are not located near an intersection, merge lane, turn lane, or dedicated pull-out area.			

Contact the county engineer or ODOT for assistance with roads with small berms, steep ditches, and any other conditions that may increase the likelihood of rollovers.			
<b>SECTION 3: SCHOOL BUS OPERATION</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
Substitute drivers are familiar with the routes they may be assigned to drive.			
Drivers are required to conduct a dry run in a school bus before the start of the school year or when assigned to a new route to re-evaluate route safety concerns.			
Drivers are not permitted to alter their routes without supervisor authorization.			
Drivers are required to update their routes when changes occur; supervisor approval should be noted.			
All routes are approved by the Board of Education pursuant with <a href="#">OAC 3301-83-13</a> .			
Each bus has a detailed route sheet on board.			
If a significant route hazard is present, it is noted on the route sheet (e.g., construction, road closures, low-hanging limbs, blind curves, railroad crossing blind spots, and narrow roadways or bridges).			
Route sheets should include a detailed sequence of stops before a turnaround.			
Drivers are not permitted to discharge students anywhere other than an approved stop unless authorized by leadership/supervisor.			
Kindergarten and preschool-age children are identified on the route sheet, and a review of local policy for receiving the child has been reviewed (e.g., some students may wear a backpack tag, and parent/guardian may be required at the bus stop).			
Severe weather emergency routes and designated places of shelter are determined ahead of the school year (e.g., fire dept., library, retail store, school building). Include in district emergency operations plan.			
Drivers have access to IEPs for riders who identify transportation as a related service and are instructed that the information is confidential and may not be shared.			
Drivers are made aware of students with medical issues that may arise during bus routes.			