

Community School Transportation Funding



Fall 2025



**Department of
Education &
Workforce**

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Introduction

Community schools wishing to accept transportation responsibility for students attending their schools should reference [Ohio Revised Code \(ORC\) 3314.091](#) for the requirements to accept transportation responsibility. Community schools may own and operate their own yellow school buses or may contract for yellow school busesⁱ. A community school must use transportation payments solely to pay the costs of providing or arranging for the transportation of students who are eligible as specified in [Ohio Revised Code 3327.01](#), which may include payments to a parent, guardian, or other person in charge of a child in lieu of transportation.

A school district is not required to provide transportation for any student enrolled in a community school if:

1. The district board of education has entered into an agreement with the community school's governing authority that designates the community school as responsible for providing or arranging for the transportation of the district's students to and from the community school; or
2. The community school has notified the district that it will be accepting responsibility to provide or arrange its students' transportation.

ⁱRecent legislative changes (HB 33, 135th GA) effective October 3, 2023, authorize a community school to own and operate, or contract with a vendor that supplies, a vehicle originally designed for not more than nine passengers, not including the driver, to transport students to and from regularly scheduled school sessions if certain requirements are met. For more information see: ORC 4511.76 (E)

Two Options for Community Schools to Assume Transportation Responsibility

Community schools may provide transportation directly to their students rather than receive transportation services through the students' resident school districts ([ORC 3314.091](#)). To assume full responsibility for transportation and receive transportation funding, a community school (and/or governing authority) must follow the process outlined below. All documents and questions regarding the process should be submitted to the schoolbus@education.ohio.gov mailbox.

A. Community School – District Agreement

1. A school district and community school may enter into an agreement under which the community school will transport its students ([ORC 3314.091\(A\)](#)).
2. For an agreement to be effective, it must be certified by the Department of Education and Workforce as having met the requirements in [ORC 3314.091\(A\)](#). An executed copy must be submitted to the Department by September 30 for review and certification. The agreement must specify:
 - a) Qualifications for transportation services to be provided or arranged, such as residing a minimum distance from the school. For an agreement
 - i. The community school will provide transportation free of charge for each of its enrolled students who are required to be transported under [ORC 3327.01](#).
 - ii. The community school may provide or arrange for enrolled students who are not eligible for transportation and may charge a fee up to the actual cost of the transportation service.
 - b) The transportation provided by the community school complies with all provisions of the Revised Code and all rules adopted under the Administrative Code pertaining to pupil transportation. See [ORC 3314.091\(E\)](#) and the section entitled "Obligation to Adhere to Law and Rules" below for additional information.
 - c) The sponsor of the community school consents by including the sponsor's signature on the agreement.

B. Notification of Intent to Transport and Relinquishment of Intent

A community school may assume transportation responsibility, without entering into an agreement with the students' resident school district, by notifying the school district that it will be providing or arranging its students' transportation ([ORC 3314.091\(B\)](#)). The community school must inform the district board of education by the first day of August of its intent to assume transportation responsibility. For a new community school that intends to open during the upcoming school year, the notice must be sent to the district by April 15.

A community school that accepts transportation responsibility is required to accept that responsibility for an entire school year. This acceptance remains in effect for subsequent school years; however, circumstances may change and a community school may relinquish its responsibility to provide transportation services in subsequent school years. If so, the governing authority must submit written notification to the district board of education that the governing authority is relinquishing the responsibility.

- A governing authority may not relinquish responsibility for transportation before the end of a school year and must submit the notice relinquishing responsibility to the district board of education by January 31. A copy of the notice should be emailed to the Department of Education and Workforce at: schoolbus@education.ohio.gov.
- If the community school relinquishes the responsibility to transport, it still will be responsible for transporting eligible students through the remainder of the current school year following the January 31st notification. This allows the school district reasonable time to prepare transportation for its students enrolled in the community school.
- If a governing authority fails to notify the school district by the January 31 deadline, the community school remains responsible for providing transportation services for eligible students for the following school year.
- In subsequent years, the community school must notify the public school of any plans to reassume transportation services in the same manner as described previously.

Obligation to Adhere to Rules

Except when arranged through payment to a parent, guardian or person in charge of a child, transportation provided or arranged for by a community school and its governing authority pursuant to [ORC 3314.091](#), requires the community school to adhere to all provisions of the Ohio Revised Code and all rules adopted under the Ohio Administrative Code pertaining to the drivers, authorized vehicles, construction, design, equipment and operation of school buses and other vehicles transporting students to and from school.

Contracting with a third party for the provision of pupil transportation services does not relieve the community school from the responsibility of ensuring compliance with all rules and codes.

This may include, but is not limited to:

1. Purchasing and maintaining appropriate yellow school buses and other authorized pupil transportation vehicles or purchasing appropriate contracted services.
2. Presenting school buses to the Ohio State Highway Patrol for annual and “spot” inspections.
3. Obtaining and maintaining a private pupil transportation license from the Office of Licensing and Commercial Standards of the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

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4. Employing appropriately licensed, certified, and qualified drivers and transportation director/supervisor/coordinator; and
 5. Reporting transportation information to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce as required.

All records pertaining to pupil transportation are subject to review by state agencies, not limited to the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Public Safety/Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Ohio Auditor of State.

The community school is obligated to comply with all Ohio laws and administrative rules (found in [OAC 3301-83](#)) governing pupil transportation. Individual drivers who violate traffic laws may be subject to criminal misdemeanors under [ORC Chapter 4511](#) and/or bus driver certification suspension or revocation under [ORC 3327.10](#). To review the disqualifying offenses, please refer to [OAC 3301-83-23](#).

The Office of Licensing and Commercial Standards at the Ohio State Highway Patrol will address questions about private pupil transportation licensure. Contact the Ohio State Highway Patrol at (614) 466-4056.

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce Pupil Transportation Office will address questions about pupil transportation operation and safety rules. Contact the Pupil Transportation Office at (614) 466-4230 with any questions.

Ridership and Transportation Funding

1. Community schools that enter into an agreement with a school district under [ORC 3314.091\(A\)](#), or that accept responsibility for transportation by notifying a district under [ORC 3314.091\(B\)](#), are required to provide or arrange for transportation free of charge for each of its enrolled students who are required to be transported under [ORC 3327.01](#).
2. Community schools are required to provide or arrange transportation free of any charge for any disabled student enrolled in the school for whom the student's individualized education program developed under Chapter 3323. of the Revised Code specifies transportation. [OAC 3301-51-10](#).
3. **Payments under Community School – District Agreement Option A :** If a school district board and a community school governing authority elect to enter into an agreement under [ORC 3314.091\(A\)](#), the Department will make payments to the community school according to the terms of the agreement for each student actually transported. See: [ORC 3317.0212\(I\)](#).
4. **Payments under Community School - Notification Option B:** If a community school governing authority accepts transportation responsibility under [ORC 3314.091\(B\)](#), the Department will make payments to the community school for each student actually transported or for whom transportation is arranged by the community school calculated according to [ORC 3317.0212\(I\)](#). To qualify for the payments, the community school shall report to the department, in the form and manner required by the department, data on the number of students transported or whose transportation is arranged, the number of miles traveled, cost to transport, and any other information requested by the department.
5. **Annually Report Ridership and Transportation Costs to the Department:** Whether the community school is transporting under [ORC 3314.091\(A\)](#), or assumes responsibility to do so by notification under [ORC 3314.091\(B\)](#), the governing authority needs to comply with ridership and expenditure data report requirements (see [ORC 3314.091\(C\)](#) and [OAC 3301-83-01](#)) in order to receive funding. The Department will provide more details including sample driver student count sheets, T-1 student reporting instructions and T-2 expense reporting instructions. The community school annually is responsible for submitting T- 1 student counts and T-2 transportation expenses in the department's transportation data collection system. The community school will sign and submit the information electronically through the OH|ID application.

Rider Count

The number of eligible students the community school transports to school each day during the first full week of October that school is in session determines transportation funding. Enrolled students in grades kindergarten through 12 who ride the community school bus during count week are eligible. The students transported by a school district to the community school should not be included in that count.

This count is for five consecutive days of **ACTUAL** riders during that period. The average daily ridership is reported to the Department of Education in the department's transportation data collection system. The count is to be taken either on the first conveyance (from home to school) or on the final conveyance (from school to home), whichever is the greater number. A [sample T1 count sheet](#) may be found on the Department's website. A school must submit a request to change the date of data collection if it does not have normal attendance during the first full week of October.

Rider Reporting

The community school is responsible for reporting the ridership of each of its students as counted above through the department's transportation data collection system during the first full week of October school is in session. Community school should not report all of their enrolled students as riders, only students who were **ACTUALLY** transported by a community school.

Through department's transportation data collection system, community school reports:

1. If the community school provided transportation for the student during the first full week of October that school was in session by checking the appropriate box.
2. Which day(s) of the week transportation is being reported by checking the appropriate box(es).

Instructions to the T1 ridership report may be found on the [Department's website](#). Community schools must electronically complete data entry via the department's transportation data collection system by November 1 of each year. This report collects required data including the type of transportation provided, grade levels and the walk limit upon how far they live from the school. a.) WITHIN ONE (1) MILE: Enter the number of students who reside less than one (1) mile from their school of residence. b.) 1 MILE OR MORE: Enter the number of students transported who reside one (1) mile or more from the school they attend.

Expenditure Reporting

By August 31 following the end of a school year, the community school is required to report **ACTUAL** pupil transportation expenditures to the Pupil Transportation Office through the T-2 report by submitting it through the department's transportation data collection system.

Certification

The community school annually will certify the ACTUAL number of pupils transported and the total daily miles traveled for routine school transportation. The data for this report shall be the average number of pupils enrolled and regularly transported to school during the first full week of October that school is in session.

Data Validation

The Pupil Transportation Office will review transportation data entered into Department's transportation data collection system. The review occurs before the data is processed for payment.

In an effort to share the process and promote fiscal responsibility, the Department may request supporting documentation from public school districts and community schools (and/or governing authorities) when necessary.

If problems exist in the data or in the data collection, the Department will work with community schools to correct the problems.

FTE Review

The Department's staff will review the original source documentation for the school that provides its own transportation during the Full Time Equivalency (FTE) review. The transportation daily count sheets from the reporting period showing the number of riders will be compared to the average riders reported in the department's transportation data collection system. Any discrepancies will need to be corrected and may affect funding.

[The Community School FTE Review Manual](#) is available on the Department's website.

Payment

The Department will calculate transportation payment. For community schools who assume transportation responsibility in accordance with [ORC 3314.091\(B\)](#), the Department shall make payments to the community school for each student actually transported or for whom transportation has been arranged by the community school. For community schools that enter an agreement with the school district board of education in accordance with [ORC 3314.091\(A\)](#), the Department shall make payments to the community school according to the

agreement for each student actually transported, in accordance with [ORC 3317.0212\(I\) \(1\)](#). Transportation payments are included in the monthly community school payment. For the first year a community school provides transportation, payments will not begin until transportation data has been finalized in the Department's transportation data collection system. In subsequent years, funding will continue as an estimated payment based on the prior year's data until the current year's data is available. All transportation funding paid to the community school is required by law to be used for the transportation.

Record Retention

The community school should retain original source documents substantiating rider counts for a minimum of five years for auditing purposes.

Transportation Consortium

The governing authorities of two or more community schools may enter into an agreement to establish a consortium for the purpose of providing or arranging transportation for students enrolled in the participating schools. Each consortium shall designate one of its participating schools as its fiscal agent. ([ORC 3314.093\(A\)](#)).

A consortium shall act on behalf of each participating community school with regard to student transportation and shall comply with all applicable laws, including sections [3314.091](#) and [3327.02](#) of the Revised Code.

A consortium may do either of the following:

- (1) Enter into an agreement with a school district that has students enrolled in participating schools under division (A) of section [3314.091](#) of the Revised Code;
- (2) Unilaterally accept responsibility for the transportation of students enrolled in participating schools under division (B) of section [3314.091](#) of the Revised Code.

The Department of Education and Workforce shall calculate and make payments to a consortium as if it were a community school.

The consortium's fiscal agent is responsible for reporting all data necessary for the department to calculate payments under section [3317.0212](#) of the Revised Code on behalf of all participating schools. This data must be reported to the department using the department's data collection system.