

Returning to the Road

A Checklist for School Bus Transportation to Safely Return to Service

As your school or district makes plans to return to campus this fall, transportation departments have a steep road ahead of them to ensure the health and safety of their pupils and drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The close proximity of students in seats and the enclosed space of the bus makes home-to-school transportation nothing less than challenging. And the reality is that once you get this figured out for the return to school this fall, be ready for more changes. The constantly evolving definition of the standard of care for students this year will change, and change again, as we learn more about the coronavirus and preventative measures for infection.



Use the checklist below to guide your decision-making process for returning to the road this fall.

- Familiarize Yourself with State Guidelines**
Research your state's Department of Health and Department of Education guidelines for the safe transportation of students upon returning to school.
- Familiarize Yourself with County Guidelines**
In many states, counties will define specific criteria for schools to operate within upon their return. Check with your county's health department and office of education for additional guidance.
- Review Bus Routing and Bell Time Planning**
Prepare scenarios for hybrid school schedules such as half days or several days on / several days off. Evaluate the needs of your students and assess your routes to determine what will work for your school and stakeholders.
- Plan for New Disinfection Protocols**
Transportation departments will need to adopt disciplined disinfection routines including fogging, wipe-downs between routes, and overnight cleanings. Determine your routines and locate resources for the procurement of necessary supplies.
- Plan for Physical Distancing on the Bus**
Your state and county's guidance will dictate the requirements for physical distancing on the bus. Will your department choose to skip seats or adopt limitations such as one person per seat or assigned seating? Once these decisions have been made, draft boarding and de-boarding instructions for your riders.
- Train Your Drivers**
Plan for additional training for your drivers and transportation staff to become familiar with all new policies including disinfection routines and safety guidelines.
- Train Your Riders**
Educate your bus riders and their families about the new rules for school transportation. Post signs on the bus to remind them of the rules and develop enforcement plans to ensure the new procedures are followed.
- Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Drivers and Staff**
Determine what supplies your drivers and staff will need. These may include masks, face shields, or gloves. Plan to order supplies early in anticipation of shortages and shipment delays due to increased demand.
- Plan for the Onboarding of New Staff and the Retention of Vulnerable Populations**
Investigate the use of staffing agencies to fully-staff your department in the event that substitute or additional drivers are needed. Stay informed on FMLA and approved leaves of absence for vulnerable staff.
- Execute Fleet Analysis and Procurement**
Expedite your department's fleet replacement plans to achieve the capacity needed to implement social distancing measures on buses. Look into leasing options and fleet right-sizing and analysis to achieve the procurement of the appropriate assets by the start of your school year.

How Can We Help?

Strategic School Consultants provides consulting services for schools and districts of all sizes. Our team is experienced about the inner-workings of schools and is ready to partner with you to get your bus fleet back on the road this fall. Contact us by email at ryan.hahn@strategicschoolconsultants.com or by phone at 800-293-8380 to begin a conversation with our team.