



Needham Public Schools

Pupil Transportation Procedure Manual

1. INTRODUCTION

The Needham Public Schools Transportation Program provides transportation services to and from school to Needham-resident students attending public and private schools within the Town of Needham, to Boston area METCO students attending school in Needham, and to enrolled students attending approved out-of-district schools. In addition, Needham Public Schools provides extracurricular transportation to athletic events, on field trips, and other fee-based charter services.

The District owns and operates three yellow school buses, ten 7D pupil transportation vans and one multi-function school activity bus. The District also contracts with Michael J. Connolly & Sons Transportation to provide yellow bus service within the Town of Needham, with Van Pool for special needs and other 7D pupil transportation, and with Local Motion for transportation to and from the Boston area.

The bus is considered an extension of school and riders, therefore, are subject to the same rules and expectations as in school.

2. PROGRAM OVERSIGHT & CONTACT INFORMATION

The Director of Transportation is responsible for overseeing all school transportation programs in Needham, in partnership with the Departments of Special Education and METCO. Contact information is provided below:

Transportation Office:

Emery Grover School Administration Building
1330 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
Hours of Operation: 8 am - 4pm, M-F
transportation@needham.k12.ma.us

Shane Marchand
Director of Transportation
Shane_Marchand@needham.k12.ma.us
781-455-0400 x 11234

Diana Baccari
Transportation Secretary
Diana_Baccari@needham.k12.ma.us
781-455-0400 x 11242

METCO Transportation:

Leslie Smart
Assistant METCO Director & METCO
Transportation Coordinator
Leslie_Smart@needham.k12.ma.us
781-455-0480 x 33318

Special Education:

To report a student's absence:
transportation@needham.k12.ma.us

For questions about your child's transportation
Preschool: 781-455-0416 x 55140
Grade 1-8: 781-455-0400 x 11233
High School: 781-455-0800 x 22770

Concerns, Complaints & Appeals
Report a Concern at this [link](#)

Anne Gulati
Assistant Superintendent for Finance &
Operations (Complaints & Appeals)
1330 Highland Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
Anne_Gulati@needham.k12.ma.us
781-455-0400 x 1120

Subscribe to our Listserv: <https://lists.needham.k12.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/transportation>
Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NeedhamPSTrans>
Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NeedhamPSTrans/>

3. SCHOOL INFORMATION

Broadmeadow Elementary

Andy Garlick, Principal
120 Broadmeadow Road
Needham, MA 02492
School Hours: 8:20 am - 2:45 pm
Early Release: 8:20 am - 12:15 pm
Tel: 781-455-0448

Eliot Elementary

Karen Bourn, Principal
135 Wellesley Avenue
Needham, MA 02494
School Hours: 8:20 am - 2:45 pm
Early Release: 8:20 am - 12:15 pm
Tel: 781-455-0452

Sunita Williams Elementary

Michael Kascak, Principal
585 Central Avenue
Needham, MA 02494
School Hours: 8:20 am - 2:45 pm
Early Release: 8:20 am - 12:15 pm
Tel: 781-455-0461

Mitchell Elementary

Greg Bayse, Principal
187 Brookline Street
Needham, MA 02492
School Hours: 8:20 am - 2:45 pm
Early Release: 8:20 am - 12:15 pm
Tel: 781-455-0466

Newman Elementary

Jessica Peterson, Principal
1155 Central Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
School Hours: 8:45 am - 3:10 pm
Early Release: 8:45 am - 12:40 pm
Tel: 781-455-0416

Needham Preschool

@ **Newman Elementary School**
Rebecca Sparrell, Director
School Hours: 8:50 am - 11:20 (Half Day am)
School Hours: 12:30 pm – 3:00 (Half Day pm)
School Hours: 8:50 am - 3:00 (Full Day)
Early Release: 8:50 am - 11:20
Delayed Opening: 12:30pm – 3:00
Tel: 781-455-0416 x 55140

High Rock School (Grade 6)

Jessica Downey, Principal
77 Ferndale Road
Needham, MA 02492
School Hours: 7:40 am - 2:10 pm
Early Release: 7:40 am - 11:30 am
Tel: 781-455-0455

Pollard Middle School (Grades 7-8)

Tamatha Bibbo, Principal
200 Harris Avenue
Needham, MA 02492
School Hours: 7:50 am - 2:20 pm
Early Release: 7:50 am - 11:40 am
Tel: 781-455-0480

Needham High School

Aaron Sicotte, Principal
609 Webster Street
Needham, MA 02494
School Hours:
Mon - Thrus: 8:00 am - 2:35 pm
Fri: 8:35 am - 2:35 pm
Early Release: 8:00 am - 11:55 am
Tel: 781-455-0800

St. Joseph School

Dr. Joseph Barnes, Ed.D., Interim Head of School
90 Pickering Street
Needham, MA 02492
School Hours:
Grades K-5: 8:05 am - 2:30 pm
Grades 6-8: 8:00 am - 2:40 pm
Early Release: 8:00 am - 12:15 pm
Tel: 781-896-2571

4. YELLOW SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM

a. ELIGIBILITY FOR BUSING

All children in Grades K-6 who reside more than two (2) miles from the school they attend are eligible for free morning and afternoon transportation services between school and home, or between school and an assigned bus stop. Children in Grades 7-12, and K-6 students who reside two (2) or fewer miles from school are ineligible for free service, but can purchase a seat on a space-available basis.

All transportation is offered on a round-trip basis; seats are not assigned on a one-way basis.

i. MEASURED DISTANCES

1. For purposes of determining eligibility, the Needham Public Schools will measure distance from school to an individuals' home using the Town's GIS system.
2. The measurements shall be made from "portal to portal" over a commonly traveled route. Portal to portal shall mean the distance between the intersection of the public way and the private way to the individual home, and the entrance way of the school building that the child is entitled to attend. Where there is more than one entrance way to the school building, either entrance may be used for measuring distances, provided both of the entrances are ordinarily accessible. A commonly traveled route shall mean a sidewalk or public way which, in the ordinary course, is open and accessible to school transportation vehicles and pedestrian traffic. School transportation vehicles are not required to travel over non-public ways.
3. If a parent requests a re-evaluation of the measured distance, the Transportation Director will recalculate the measured distance using the following guidelines. Eligibility reviews typically are completed within one week of the initial request.
 - a. Recalculate the distance using the Town's GIS system.
 - b. Advise the parent in writing of the outcome of the re-calculation and subsequent eligibility determination.
 - c. Parents may appeal an adverse eligibility determination according to the appeals process described in Section 8.f below.

ii. ELIGIBLE STREET LISTINGS

Current eligible street listings are available on the Needham Public Schools' Transportation website.

b. BUS FEE

i. FEE APPROVAL

Bus fees are approved annually by the Needham Public Schools, typically in January for the ensuing fiscal year. Payment is due prior to the official start of school, typically in May or June (to allow for routing to occur), on a date that is determined by the Transportation Director.

ii. DUE DATE

1. The due date will be determined by the Transportation Director and published to the website at this [link](#). The due date does not apply to families who are new to Needham after that date.
2. A payment and registration will be considered “on time” if it is made online on or before the due date, postmarked by the due date, or received by the Transportation Office or before the due date.

iii. FEE AMOUNTS

1. The bus fees will be voted annually by the School Committee.
2. The current and prospective bus fees will be published to the Transportation website at this [link](#).
3. To facilitate the routing process, a \$50 fee will be assessed for payments received after the assigned due date.
4. The bus fee will be prorated for students who enroll for the bus after December 1 of each school year.
5. Financial Assistance is available under the procedures described in Section 4.b.v.

iv. REFUNDS

1. Refunds are offered only under the following circumstances;
 - a. Withdrawal before the due date (full refund.)
 - b. Families move out of Needham (prorated refund)
 - c. A student becomes eligible for free transportation based on mileage and grade (prorated refund)
 - d. A child is approved for special education transportation through the Student Services Office (prorated refund.)

v. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

1. Financial assistance is available for families who qualify under the income guidelines below. These guidelines are based on the 2022 federal Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia (published below.)

2022 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous State and District of Columbia			
Persons/ Family or Household	Poverty Guideline	Guideline x2	Guideline x4
1	13,590	27,180	54,360
2	18,310	36,620	73,240
3	23,030	46,060	92,120
4	27,750	55,500	111,000
5	32,470	64,940	129,880
6	37,190	74,380	148,760
7	41,910	83,820	167,640
8	46,630	93,260	186,520
<i>For families/ households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,720 for each additional person</i>			
<i>Source: https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines</i>			

- a. **Student Fee of \$0** - Assessed to students who are determined to be eligible for free/reduced lunch. Please download an application for free/reduced lunch from this [link](#). The application packet includes a consent form for sharing eligibility status with the Transportation program. Return the completed application packet to the Nutrition Services Department for processing.
 - b. **Family Fee of \$25** - Families whose income is less than twice the federal poverty guideline for their family size will pay a flat fee of \$25 *per family* for all student riders. As an example, if a family of three has an annual income of \$25,000, the family will pay a \$25 family fee because that income is less than the 2x guideline amount for a family of three, \$46,060 (or \$23,030 x 2.) Families seeking financial assistance should complete the application available at this [link](#) and return it to the Transportation Office.
 - c. **Prorated Student Fee** - Families whose annual income falls between two and four times the federal poverty guidelines will be assessed a prorated fee *per child* based on the ratio of family income to the 2x poverty threshold for the applicable family size. As an example, if a family of three has an annual income of \$50,000, the student will pay a fee of \$35.50 because the family's income is 108.55% of the 2x poverty level of \$46,060. The prorated fee is therefore calculated as: $\$415 \times 0.0855$, or \$35.50/student. (Please note that the fee increases to \$465 after the due date.) In another example, if the family's income were \$93,000, the family would pay the full fee of \$415/student, because their income exceeded the four-times threshold of \$92,120. At no point will a family of riders pay a combined total of less than \$25, based upon this calculation.
 - d. **Full Fee** - Families whose annual income equals or exceeds four times the federal poverty guideline for their family size will pay the full transportation fee per child.
 - e. **Family Cap of \$840** - The total amount of fees a family will pay is capped at \$840 (\$940 after due date.)
2. **To apply for financial assistance**, please complete the financial assistance form on the Transportation website at this [link](#). Return the form, along with required documents, the completed bus registration form and payment, to the Transportation Office at 1330 Highland Avenue, Needham MA 02492 via mail or in person.
 3. Please note that online registration is not available for students who wish to apply for financial assistance until after the financial assistance process is completed.

c. REGISTRATION

i. WHO MUST REGISTER?

All Needham resident families must register their yellow bus riders for the bus, regardless of mileage from school, age, fee status or financial aid. Boston-resident students participating in the METCO program must register for the bus through the METCO Program. Students who receive transportation as a related service on their IEP will be assigned transportation by the Special Education Department.

ii. WHEN TO REGISTER

1. The Transportation Director will set the date each year after which families may register their student for the bus. Typically, this date occurs at the beginning of April.
2. The date that registration opens will be published in the local newspaper and the transportation website at this [link](#).

iii. REGISTRATION DUE DATE

1. The due date and time for registrations will be set by the Transportation Director. The due date is typically in May or June, for next school year bus applications. This date does not apply to families new to Needham after that date.
2. The due date will be published in the local newspaper and the transportation website at this [link](#).
3. A payment and registration will be considered “on time” if it is made online on or before the due date, postmarked by the due date, or received by the Transportation Office or before the due date.
4. To facilitate the routing process, a late fee will be assessed for registrations and payments received after the assigned due date.
5. Bus fees are described in Section 4.b above.

iv. HOW TO REGISTER

1. Families can choose to register using either an online or traditional (paper) registration process.
 - a. The online process (offered through [MySchoolBucks](#)) is a fast and efficient method of registering, but does require a credit card to complete the process and a transaction fee will be assessed. The link and procedure for registering is found on the Transportation website at this [link](#).
 - b. The traditional paper process consists of a pdf form available on the Transportation website at this [link](#), which families can complete and return to the Transportation Office with their payment, either via mail or in person.
 - c. The traditional registration process is the only registration process available to families without a credit card, or who do not wish to have a hold placed on their funds during the process. Families who wish to apply for financial assistance may register only, but only after their application for financial assistance has been processed by the Transportation Office.
 - d. The Transportation Director may set a date to deactivate the online registration method, and redirect families to the traditional registration process, if circumstances so warrant.
2. Registrations are processed in the order that they are received.
3. The registration process is not considered to be complete until payment is made.

v. WAIT LISTS

1. Registering for the bus does not guarantee that a student will receive a seat on the bus, due to vehicle capacity limitations. After a particular bus has reached capacity, students will be placed on a wait list according to the following procedure:

- a. The Director of Transportation notifies the family in writing that their student has been placed on a wait list. While on the wait list, a student is not charged for the bus.
- b. When/if seats become available, the Transportation Director will notify those on the wait list in the order they were placed, in writing.
- c. Upon notification, the transportation fee will be assessed.
- d. Wait lists are reviewed after frequently throughout the summer and the beginning of the school year. The Transportation Department will do everything it can to find a seat for all families that want a seat. All families on the wait list will be notified one way or another, typically by the end of September.

d. BUS ROUTES

- i. Bus routes and stops are assigned based on student registrations received before the due date. Bus routes are designed to meet School Committee policy; maintain reasonable route length; maximize ridership; and conserve fuel. Authorized stops are located at convenient intervals in places where students may be loaded and unloaded, cross highways, and await arrival of buses with the utmost safety allowed by road conditions.
- ii. For safety reasons, students must ride their assigned bus and be picked up/dropped off at their assigned stop.
 1. Students are not permitted to board a different bus, or to be dropped off/picked up at a different stop.
 2. Students (such as friends) who are not registered for the bus are not permitted to board or ride the bus.
 3. In the event of a family emergency or medical situation, parents should contact the Transportation Department to make the necessary arrangements.

iii. ROUTE DESIGN

1. In late Spring (April or May), the Transportation Department works with the Technology Department to load the upcoming year's students (grade and residency location) into the Versatrans routing software.
2. As students register for the bus, they are added to the Versatrans software.
3. After the deadline for receiving registrations (May or June), the Transportation Director creates routes in cooperation with our contract providers, based on the location of student residences and historical ridership numbers.
4. Consistent with School Committee Policy #EEA, routes are designed to maintain a reasonable route length (of not more than one hour in duration), ensure student safety, maximize ridership and conserve fuel.
5. The following guidelines are used in developing routes:
 - a. Minimize left hand turns to conserve fuel;
 - b. Maximize number of riders per bus with a goal of 75% capacity (54 students per bus);
 - c. Create individual driver schedules as a mix of north and south side routes;
 - d. Avoid students crossing the road to embark and/or depart from the bus, when possible;
 - e. Maximize sight lines at bus stops for upcoming and oncoming vehicles, preferably 200 feet visibility in each direction;
 - f. Minimize impact on traffic and consider in-town traffic congestion points;
 - g. Minimize idling of vehicles;

- h. Site bus stops based on a worst-case scenario in regard to weather (snow banks, full foliage, etc.);
 - i. Avoid private lanes and dead-end roads;
 - j. Avoid bus stops on hills or on curves (minimizes visibility);
 - k. Avoid situations requiring a bus to back up;
 - l. Drop off areas should be in one direction in a counter clockwise direction to ensure the loading and unloading of students occurs on the right-hand side of the bus nearest the building; and
 - m. Consider the route conditions (narrow roads, location of sidewalks, safe gathering spots, site lines, etc.).
6. The routes are finalized in mid-August. Once the routes are completed, the routes are posted on the district's web site and published in the local newspaper. During the month of September, adjustments may be made to ensure appropriate arrival times at schools. If there are changes to the routes, the web site will be updated. Wait lists are reviewed after October 1 (or earlier), and students are added to the routes as space becomes available.

iv. LENGTH OF ROUTE

1. The length of a fixed route should be approximately 30 - 45 minutes, but in no case shall exceed one hour in length.
2. Emergency situations may extend the length of a route for the time necessary to respond to an emergency and transport students to their regularly assigned destinations.

v. NUMBER OF ROUTES

1. The number of bus routes will be determined annually by the Transportation Director.
2. Routes vary from year to year, so it is important for parents/guardians to review the updated route list prior to starting school or boarding the bus for the first time.

vi. CURRENT ROUTES

1. Bus routes are published in the Needham Times one week prior to school opening.
2. Continuously updated route listings are published to the Transportation website.

vii. DELAYS AND CANCELLATIONS

1. Parents may sign up to receive list serve and social media notifications from the Director of Transportation in the event of delays, cancellations or other transportation event. Contact information is provided on the first page of this document.

e. BUS STOPS

i. BUS STOPS

1. Consistent with School Committee Policy #EEA, bus stops will be located at convenient intervals along public ways in places where students may be loaded

and unloaded, cross highways, and await the arrival of buses safely. Children are assigned to stops that are within a reasonable walking distance (not to exceed one-half mile) of their homes.

2. The Director of Transportation is responsible for identifying bus stops along each route. Factors considered when siting stops include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Student safety (highest priority)
 - b. Length and timing of the bus route.
 - c. Proximity to other stops
 - d. Number of students served
 - e. Ease of access by bus
 - f. Potential weather-related complications
 - g. Bus sight lines
 - h. Traffic hazards and congestion
 - i. Route conditions (narrow roads, location of sidewalks, safe gathering spots, site lines, etc.).

ii. BUS STOP CHANGE REQUESTS

1. Parents may request a change to their assigned bus stop by completing the Bus Stop Request Form found on the Transportation website at this [link](#) and returning the form to the Transportation Office.
2. Bus stop change requests are processed on or before October 1st using the following process:
 - a. The Director of Transportation reviews each request and makes a determination based on the merits and circumstance of each particular request.
 - b. The same factors used to site bus stops (listed in Section 4.e.i.2) will be used to evaluate change requests. Given the many considerations, it is not always possible to honor stop requests, even if a bus is passing a student's residence.
 - c. If a stop request is granted, the Director of Transportation will notify all parents affected by the change in writing, and will update the published route on the website.
 - d. If a stop request is denied, the Director of Transportation will notify the requestor of the adverse determination in writing, including the reasons for denial.
 - e. Parents may appeal the decision following the appeal procedures below.

f. LATE BUSES

i. LATE BUSES

1. The District provides a late bus run to registered riders at the middle schools on Tuesday through Thursday to accommodate after school activities, academic support, and athletic participation.
2. If the late bus is needed to assist with traffic congestion and ridership, the Transportation Director may discontinue use of the late bus to assist with the regular routes.
3. When in operation, the late bus route is published on the Transportation website at this [link](#).

ii. CHARLIE CARDS

1. Boston resident students grades 6 and higher can obtain a reduced fare Charlie Card through the METCO Program Office or by contacting the Transportation Office at 781-455-0400 x11242 or email Transportation@Needham.k12.ma.us.
2. Information about the cards is available on the Transportation website at this [link](#). The S-Cards are free through a program offered by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) School Pass Program.
3. Students and families can add value to S-Cards for reduced fares, or purchase a monthly pass for unlimited travel on the subway and Local or Express buses. S-Cards can also be used to buy half-price 1-way Commuter Rail and ferry tickets. S-Cards remain active from September 1 to August 31.
4. The District no longer offers the pre-loaded M cards, which may be obtained through the MBTA Office.

g. BUS PASSES

- i. Bus passes will be mailed to all registered riders at the end of August, or upon subsequent registration.
- ii. Bus passes certify a student's eligibility to ride the bus, guarantee a place on the bus and identify registered riders. Students will ride only the bus to which they are assigned. At the discretion of the Transportation Director, seats also may be assigned.
- iii. Students must show their pass to driver each day upon entering the bus. Failure to display a bus pass could result in exclusion from the bus.
- iv. Parents of younger students may want to consider enclosing the pass in a luggage tag and attaching the tag to your child's backpack. This will keep the pass handy and allow the student to display it without delay.
- v. A student who allows another student to use his/her bus pass or sells his/her bus pass is subject to having bus pass privileges revoked.
- vi. Families who lose a bus pass may obtain a replacement bus pass at no additional charge by contacting the Transportation Office.

5. SPECIAL NEEDS & OTHER TRANSPORTATION

a. ELIGIBILITY

- i. The Needham Public Schools provides free transportation to:
 1. PreK-12 students who have transportation as a related service in their Individual Education Program (IEP), under 34 CFR 300.34 (c)(16). These students include post-graduate students who have not yet reached the age of 22.
 2. Other students who qualify for transportation under the McKinney Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act and other federal programs.
- ii. Transportation services include:
 1. Travel to/from school and between schools;
 2. Travel in and around school buildings;
 3. Travel to extracurricular program opportunities, if required by an IEP;
 4. Transportation supports, including monitors and nurses; and
 5. Specialized equipment, such adapted buses, lifts and ramps.
- iii. A child's IEP Team is responsible for determining whether or not transportation is required, and what type of additional supports/equipment might be needed. In making this recommendation, a team may consider:
 1. The nature and severity of a child's disability;

2. Personnel necessary to assist the child;
 3. The extent of services to be provided (bus stop, car seat, monitor, door-to-door, including precise pick up and drop off points);
 4. A description of specific circumstances for the provision of transportation outside of the school day;
 5. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) consideration;
 6. The provision of medical services for medically fragile students; and
 7. Access to a Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
- iv. If a student does not require specialized transportation as a result of his/her disability, transportation will be provided in the same manner as it would be for students who are not eligible for special education.
 - v. To initiate service for a child, the Special Education Department must first provide directing information to the Transportation Office, including information about schedule and pick-up/drop-off locations. Parents who wish to receive special needs transportation should contact the Special Education Department about next steps at this [link](#).

b. ROUTES

- i. Routes are developed by the Director of Transportation in consultation with the contract provider, and are designed to meet state and federal requirements and the student's specific needs; to maintain reasonable route length; and to conserve fuel. If approved by the Special Education Department, the Transportation Director may assign students to share a vehicle with other students, including students from other schools.
- ii. For safety reasons, pick-up and drop-off must be at the same location – consistently – Monday through Friday. While it is understandable that students often like to visit friends, other arrangements by parents/guardians will have to be made. Places of business, work, or parking lots are not acceptable pick-up and/or drop-off locations.
- iii. To accomplish efficient routes for all students, scheduling or routing changes on a one-time or short-term basis are not allowed.
- iv. Permanent changes to pick-up or drop-off locations must be requested in writing and approved by the IEP Team, including parents, in which case the IEP will be updated to reflect the new transportation plan.
- v. If a student has an after-school activity as part of her/his IEP, occurring in the Needham Schools, and the school cancels the activity, the parent will be notified about the schedule change. The parent can pick up or the student will wait with an adult monitor until the regular pick-up time.
- vi. Every attempt will be made to transport students in one hour or less each way. Exceptions are with the written request of a Team and the approval of the Special Education Department.
- vii. Only students and authorized personnel can be transported on a special education van. Parents, guardians, siblings, friends, or other individuals are not permitted to ride. While drivers are more than accommodating, they cannot provide services other than driving your child to and from school.

c. STUDENT ABSENCE & CANCELLATION OF TRANSPORTATION

- i. If a child is absent from school, or will otherwise not be taking the special education van to or from school, the parent should notify the Transportation Office to cancel transportation at Transportation@Needham.k12.ma.us. The transportation email is monitored starting at 6AM every morning. Phone calls are not always received in enough time to contact the driver.
 1. To cancel AM pickup, email the Transportation Department by **7AM**.

2. To cancel PM pickup, email the Transportation Department by **noon** or as soon as possible.

6. METCO TRANSPORTATION

METCO Transportation program information is available from the METCO Office at this [link](#).

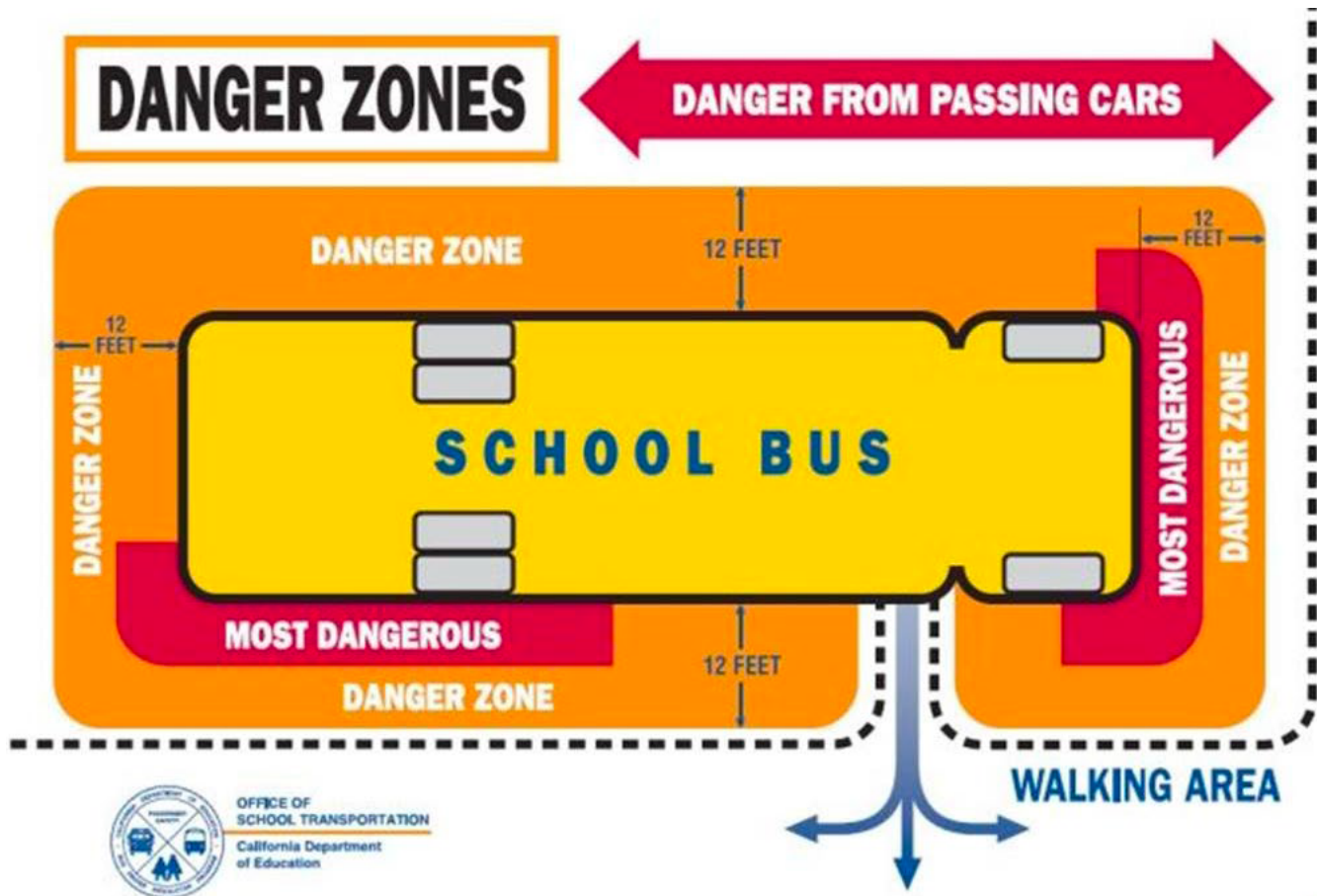
7. EXTRA-CURRICULAR AND CHARTER TRANSPORTATION

- a. The Transportation Program offers charter transportation for field trips and other extra-curricular events during the school day, as well as transportation to after-school athletic activities or Town of Needham programs.
- b. To charter a bus for a field trip or extracurricular activity, click the [link](#) to request a charter/field trip bus. Advance notice of 72 hours is required for all charter request and there is a 24-hour cancellation policy to avoid charges. Pricing is based on a combination of mileage, wait time and tolls (if applicable), with a minimum two-hour charge per trip.
- c. Beginning in the Spring of 2022, the District will start operation of a Multi-Function Student Activity Bus (MFSAB), which is a pupil transportation vehicle that can be driven on a volunteer basis by school staff to extracurricular events.
- d. MFSAB users must complete a Consent and Release Google Form (available on the Transportation website) as a precondition for using the bus.
- e. Procedures governing the use of the bus are published separately and are available on the Needham Public Schools Transportation website.
- f. Needham Public Schools does not make vehicles and drivers available for rent or lease to private entities.

8. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

a. BOARDING BUSES & VANS

- i. Only Needham Public Schools students and staff shall board a Needham bus or van. Any parent, guardian or non-Needham Public School student boarding the bus without specific permission from the Transportation Coordinator, shall be treated as a trespasser.
- ii. Buses will turn on the **yellow flashing lights** to indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. The **red flashing lights** and extended stop arm indicates that the bus has stopped, and that children are getting on or off. (Note - MFSABs do not come equipped with flashing lights.)
- iii. The following provides safety guidelines for boarding the bus. A visual map of the danger zones around a school bus is displayed below (copied from the California Department of Education):



1. When boarding a bus or van, students should:
 - a. Be at the bus stop 5 minutes before the scheduled pick up time;
 - b. Stand on the sidewalk or other designated area at least six feet back from the curb, while waiting for the school bus. Students waiting for the bus shall respect other people's property, respect the right of other people to pass on the sidewalk, and display manners that indicate consideration and safety for others.
 - c. Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop, the *red flashing lights* are on and the driver has opened the door and indicated to the student it is time to board the bus;
 - d. Board the bus in an orderly manner, single file. Younger students should board first.
 - e. Use caution in wet or snowy weather as the steps may be slippery;
 - f. Never pass behind the bus, be sure the bus driver can see you always;
 - g. Only cross the street once the driver has indicated it is safe to do so;
 - h. Use the handrails to avoid falls; and
 - i. Greet the bus driver.
 - j. Show their bus pass (yellow buses only.)
2. When exiting a bus or van, students should:
 - a. Remain seated until the bus has come to a complete stop and the driver has opened the door at your designated stop;
 - b. Proceed to the front of the bus promptly and orderly;
 - c. Use the handrails to avoid falls, be mindful of clothing and backpack straps so they are not caught on the seats or handrails;
 - d. Use caution in wet or snowy weather as the steps may be slippery;

- e. Remove earphones/earbuds before exiting the bus;
 - f. Step off the bus and take at least five giant steps (10 feet) away from the bus;
 - g. Cross the roadway in front of the bus while the blinking lights are on and the stop sign is extended. Pass at least 10 feet in front of the bus and look for traffic in both directions before crossing the roadway.
 - h. Never run beside a bus, chase after a bus, pick up anything that has fallen near the wheels of a bus, or cross the roadway behind the bus. Be sure the bus driver can see you always;
 - i. Walk directly home by the safest route; and
 - j. Beware of moving vehicles and pedestrians exhibiting unusual behavior.
3. To ensure the safety of the students entering and exiting the bus, all parties must pay attention to these guidelines and be mindful of the environment surrounding the bus. If a driver notices anything out of the ordinary during the course of the route or is told about an incident by a student, the driver will radio the Transportation Director. Drivers will report all student conduct issues using the procedures established below.

b. RESPONSIBILITIES

The safe transportation of students is a shared responsibility of students, parents/guardians, bus drivers, bus monitors, and administration. The following responsibilities apply equally to pupil transportation buses and vans (collectively referred to below as ‘school buses.’)

i. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Be obedient and respectful toward other students, the driver, monitors and passing vehicles. Do not annoy or distract the driver from driving;
2. Keep hands to oneself and be respectful of others’ personal space;
3. Use cellphones and electronic devices in a responsible and private manner, i.e., use headphones, do not videotape. *Needham Public Schools assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of electronic devices or other personal property);
4. Upon entering or exiting the bus, be alert to traffic, always cross in front of the bus and refrain from walking behind the bus;
5. Remain seated while the bus is in motion; do not stand until the bus comes to a complete stop at the designated stop;
6. Remain silent at railroad crossings when the driver’s door is opened to listen for any oncoming trains (buses only.)
7. Report misbehavior or destruction of property to the driver or other school officials;
8. Refrain from play-fighting, teasing, pushing, hitting, fighting, swearing or throwing objects;
9. Do not open windows or the rear exit emergency doors without the permission of the driver. (The rear exit emergency doors should only be opened in case of an emergency, or as directed by the driver.)
10. Do not throw items out the windows;
11. Do not use loud voices, profanity or obscene gestures;
12. Do not extend arms, legs, head or other body parts out of the window;
13. Do not vandalize, destroy or deface school property, or the property of others.
14. Do not eat, drink or chew gum on a bus. The bus must be kept neat without litter.

15. Do not bring animals, glass objects, nuisance items or hazardous materials on the bus (excluding service animals);
16. Do not smoke (including e-cigarettes) or bring tobacco of any kind on the bus.
17. Do not bring or consume alcohol, drugs or any controlled substance onto the bus;
18. Under no circumstances should firearms, explosives, or weapons be brought onto a bus.
19. Students in possession of illegal contraband, including alcohol, drugs, or weapons are subject to suspension and/or expulsion from school.
20. Do not bring large musical instruments, large art projects, athletic equipment or other large objects on the bus. Lunch boxes, smaller musical instruments and small athletic equipment that can easily fit in a student's lap or under the seat are allowed, but must be kept out of the aisle. A list of allowed/ prohibited items is presented below.

Musical Instruments

Allowed	Not Allowed
Violin	Bass
Viola	Baritone
Piccolo	Euphonium
Flute	Tuba
Clarinet	Baritone Saxophone
Oboe	Keyboards of any Type
Trumpet	Xylophone - over 30 inches
Bassoon	Drums/ Cymbal Sets (Percussion Kits)
Alto Saxophone	Guitars
Mini Baritone	Cello (with Permission)
Xylophone - under 30 inches	
Drum Practice Pad	
Pbone (Beginner Trombone)	
Bass Clarinet	
French Horn	
Trombone	
Tenor Saxophone	
Any instrument in a case that the student can hold securely on his/her lap and/or is under 30 inches in height and /or 14 inches in width.	Any instrument in a case that the student cannot hold securely on his/her lap and/or is over 30 inches in height and /or 14 inches in width.

Art Projects & Athletic Equipment

Allowed	Not Allowed
	Large Art Objects
	Large Sports Equipment
	Skateboards
Any item that the student can hold securely on his/her lap and/or is under 30 inches in height and /or 14 inches in width.	Any item that the student cannot hold securely on his/her lap and/or is over 30 inches in height and /or 14 inches in width.

ii. PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Have students at the bus stop five (5) minutes prior to expected arrival time. Buses will not wait at the stop for you to arrive.
2. Review bus safety protocols with your child (i.e., strangers, danger areas around the bus, etc.) Be mindful of daylight savings time, in terms of the visibility of your child at the stop.
3. Discuss appropriate bus behavior with your child. Proper student conduct is outlined in this manual, and on the Needham Public Schools' website.
4. Watch for the bus to arrive. Remind students to wait until the vehicle has come to a complete stop, the door has opened, and the driver motions the student to board. Your child should move immediately to find their seat.
5. Assist children to enter and exit the vehicle.
6. Get to know other parents/ guardians at your stop and on your route;
7. Sign up to receive notifications from the Transportation Office about changes, delays or cancellations in the route.
8. Keep the Transportation Office contact information handy;
9. Introduce yourself to the driver, and advise the driver of any medical issues involving your child (e.g., EpiPen use, etc.), if appropriate.
10. Do not confront the driver or distract the driver from the completion of their route;
11. Do not board the bus for any reason;
12. Engage in 'good neighbor' policies with the bus:
 - a. Yield to a school bus;
 - b. Never pass a bus when the red stop arm/sign and/or the yellow flashing lights are on;
 - c. Never 'chase' the bus on foot or by car;
 - d. Abide by the "Do Not Enter" and/or "Bus Only" signs at your school;
13. Avoid gift giving to the driver and/or monitors;
14. Browse lost and found at the front of the bus or at Newman Elementary School.
15. Report any concerns or complaints about the driver or the Transportation Program following using the procedures outlined in Section 8.f below.
16. Additional responsibilities of elementary student parents/ guardians:
 - a. Kindergarten - Parents/guardians are expected to meet the bus at the bus stop. If a parent/ guardian is not present at the stop, the student will be brought back to the elementary school for parent/ guardian pickup.
 - b. Grades 1-5: Parents/guardians are strongly recommended to be at the stop when the bus arrives, or be visible to the driver. Students will be dropped off at the stop, however, and not returned to school, in the event that a parent/guardian is not waiting.
 - c.

iii. DRIVER/ MONITOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The bus monitor and/or bus driver shall have the full authority as well as responsibility for control of the conduct of students while they are on the bus.

1. Maintain a safe driving record, a valid license with applicable endorsements, and attend required safety trainings;
2. Exercise sound judgment and prioritize the safety of passengers at all times.
3. Obey applicable traffic and parking regulations, ordinances, and laws.

4. Require disembarked passengers to pass in front of the bus when crossing a street. (M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 7B.)
5. When passengers board or exit the vehicle, the school bus red signal lights must flash continuously. Make sure all passengers are safely seated, restrained or disembarked, before deactivating the red signal lights. Stop arm use is additional required for school buses. (M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 7B.)
6. Ensure passengers of passenger vans and 7D transportation vehicles wear seat belts (always) and use appropriate child restraint devices. Child restraint devices are required for passengers under the age of eight (8), unless the child measures more than 57 inches in height. (M.G.L. c. 90 s. 7D, M.G.L. c. 90 s. 7AA)
7. Ensure the maximum vehicle capacity is not exceeded and that only Needham Public Schools and staff are passengers in school vehicles.
8. Display the school bus sign in the upright position when transporting students (vans only.)
9. Refrain from operating a moving school bus while using a cell phone or an electronic device (drivers can be subject to a fine: M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 7B.) Drivers should pull off the road and stop the bus to use a cell phone, radio or other electronic device;
10. Drivers are prohibited from smoking, consuming alcoholic beverages, using controlled substances or possessing contraband while on board the bus.
11. Prevent unnecessary idling of a school bus on school ground (M.G.L. c. 90, s 16B);
12. In the case of an emergency, ensure that all protocols are followed.
13. Do not refuel while students are on the bus (M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 7B.)
14. Conduct daily pre-trip and post-trip inspections and report promptly in writing to the Transportation Director any defects or deficiencies using the bus. (Circle checks are required by M.G.L. c. 90, s 7B(16)) The daily post-trip check should include an inspection of the interior of the bus, including behind and underneath each seat.
15. Follow the assigned bus route unless a modification is approved, in writing, by the Transportation Director.
16. Be courteous and respectful toward students and parents/ guardians
17. Set clear student behavior expectations for the bus. Drivers are responsible for maintain order on a bus, and for reporting disciplinary issues to the appropriate school authorities.
18. Know the students on the bus by name;
19. Check bus passes;
20. Introduce yourself to the families of the students;
21. Learn to recognize parents/ guardians waiting at the bus stop or front door for students;
22. Maintain appropriate demeanor always, including appropriate language;
23. If a confrontation occurs, request that the student/parent/guardian contact the Transportation Office for further discussion. Do not engage the individual;
24. Observe the confidentiality of student information and will not discuss students with anyone other than a parent/guardian, the child's teacher or appropriate school official.
25. Do not leave the vehicle unattended, while pupils are in the vehicle.
26. Do not allow anyone but the driver to occupy the driver's seat.
27. Direct pupils to immediately take their seats, upon boarding.
28. Never leave a vehicle unattended with keys in the ignition, or left anywhere in the vehicle.
29. Keep the bus clean and in good, safe working order

30. Do not record (audio or visual) students or adults on or around the bus;
31. Do not install (permanently or not) any personal device without the prior approval of the Superintendent (i.e. cameras, radios, audio/video recording devices; etc.)
32. Provide rider counts to the Transportation Director, as requested.
33. Do not use town-owned resources (vehicles, communication tools, technology, etc.) for any type of personal use; and
34. The state's Conflict of Interest Law (M.G.L. Ch. 268A) prohibits municipal employees receiving gifts and gratuities valued at more than \$50 in a single year from any source in connection with their official duties.
35. Follow the Department's procedures for driver personnel.

iv. ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Design safe and efficient routes;
2. Schedule bus emergency evacuation drills twice each year, in conjunction with the Needham police Department,
3. Inspect pupil transportation vehicles on the following schedule, as required by the RMV: Buses 3 times/year, 7D vans 3 times/year, and MFSAB once per year.
4. Ensure that all vehicles are well maintained, clearly marked with the appropriate route number/color, safely garaged when not in use, and are equipped with emergency supplies. These supplies shall include: a first aid kit, a fire extinguisher, a bodily fluid clean up kit, a seat belt cutter (vans only), a fire/evacuation blanket (wheelchair vehicles only), an EpiPen and a roadside emergency kit. (M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 7B.)
5. Ensure that drivers are properly licensed and attend the required school bus driver in-service safety training (minimum of 8 hours annually, upon initial licensing.);
6. Ensure that all drivers and bus monitors are aware of the expectations and importance of their roles, and comply with applicable rules and regulations for safe driving and responsible vehicle operation.
7. Ensure that contract school bus providers are held to the same rigorous standards as Needham drivers.
8. Implement the required program of drug and alcohol testing, in accordance with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements and School Committee policy.

c. BUS BREAKDOWN OR DELAY PROTOCOL

- i. The following procedures should be followed in the event a bus or van is expected to be delayed by more than ten (10) minutes due to traffic or weather, or in the event of a bus break down. Accidents and collisions involving a pupil transportation vehicle shall follow the Accident Protocol below.
 1. If the event of a delay:
 - a. The Transportation Director will notify the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, as well as each school's main office. The following information will be provided:
 - i. Bus number
 - ii. Driver Name
 - iii. Estimated Arrival Time or Minutes Delayed
 - b. If the delay occurs during drop off, the Transportation Director will additionally notify parents via list serve/ social media posting.
 2. In the event of a breakdown:

- a. The Transportation Director will contact state or local police to ensure the safety of students on scene.
- b. The Transportation Director will notify the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, as well as each school's main office. The following information will be provided:
 - i. Bus number
 - ii. Driver Name
 - iii. Location of Breakdown
 - iv. Estimated Arrival Time or Minutes Delayed
- c. If a breakdown occurs, the Transportation Director will additionally notify parents via list serve/ social media posting.
- d. Transportation Director will send a replacement vehicle to the scene to collect students and transport them to their destination, or will contact involved students for parent pickup.

d. ACCIDENT NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL

- i. The following procedures should be followed in the event of a collision or accident, no matter how minor, involving a pupil transportation vehicle.
 1. The driver should stop the vehicle and pull over to a safe location (if possible.)
 2. Immediately check to ensure that passengers are unharmed.
 3. Contact the local or state police via 911 call (mandatory)
 4. Contact the Director of Transportation
 5. Note the names of students and passengers on board and where they were seated at the time of the accident
 6. Obtain the following information from the scene (if practicable):
 - a. Name(s) and address(es) of the other driver(s);
 - b. Driver's license number(s) of the other driver(s);
 - c. Name(s) and address(es) of the owner(s); if different from the driver,
 - d. Registration number(s) of the other vehicle(s) involved;
 - e. Name(s) and address(es) of other driver(s) insurance company(ies); and,
 - f. Name(s) and address(es) of any witness(es) to the accident.
 7. Take accident photos of all vehicles and property involved in an accident.
 8. Do not move the vehicle until authorized by the police.
 9. Unless an injury prevents the driver from doing so, he/she must fill out a this [Commonwealth of Massachusetts Motor Vehicle Crash Operator Report](#) (Downloadable PDF) within 24 hours of the accident and submit it to the Director of Transportation. Blank forms are available in the vehicle and for download from the Needham Public School's Transportation website.
- ii. Upon notification, the Transportation Director will send a replacement vehicle to the scene to collect students and transport them to their destination, or will contact involved students for parent pickup. Injured students will be transported to the hospital by ambulance.
- iii. The Transportation Director will notify the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, as well as the Principal(s) of affected schools.
- iv. The Superintendent or Transportation Director will send a message to school leaders.
- v. The Transportation Director will contact parents. Depending on the extent of the injuries, individual phone calls will occur.

e. STUDENT DISCIPLINE

- i. Be aware that the school bus is an extension of the school itself, and rules regarding behavior are the same as in the school. School bus safety is a primary concern of the Needham Public Schools and the School Department reserves the right to take whatever action is necessary to maintain a high level of safety.
- ii. The right of a pupil to school bus transportation is a qualified right, dependent on good behavior. In case where a pupil seriously or continuously misbehaves, parents will be notified by the principal or designee of the school to which the pupil is assigned. The bus pass will be revoked if, in the opinion of the Principal, such action is necessary for the general safety and well-being of other students.
- iii. In cases where a pupil's conduct jeopardizes the safety and well-being of other students, based upon the assessment of the driver, that pupil may immediately be excluded from the bus.
- iv. A pupil who pays a fee for transportation and whose riding privileges are suspended because of violation of these rules will not receive a fee refund.

f. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

i. COMPLAINTS

1. Open communication is critical to ensuring all standards are met. The [Transportation Program Concern Form](#), on the Transportation website, is intended to facilitate the communication of transportation related concerns to school officials.
2. The Superintendent or Director of Transportation will review all concerns within two school days, after which the reporter will be notified of the status of the response. If a concern leads to disciplinary measures against a student or staff person, please be aware that this information may be confidential, and the reporter will be notified only that the matter has been resolved. If serious matters of safety are involved, the concern will be forwarded to appropriate law enforcement agencies.
3. The Needham Public Schools will not tolerate any form of retaliation against a child, a parent/guardian or staff person, based on the supposition or belief that a child, their parents/guardians, or a staff person is the source of a complaint. Such retaliation by a staff member will be the basis for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

ii. APPEALS

1. In the event that a parent/guardian has an unresolved complaint after contacting the Transportation Director, or disagrees with a determination that the Transportation Director has made, the parent/guardian may submit an appeal using the following process:
 - a. Contact the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations.
 - i. The Assistant Superintendent will investigate your complaint and respond within two days to your inquiry. If the parent/guardian has not first reported the issue to the Transportation Director, the parent/guardian may be asked to first do this, prior to the Assistant Superintendent becoming involved.
 - ii. If the Assistant Superintendent's determination does not resolve the matter in a satisfactory way, the parent/guardian may appeal to the Superintendent. The Superintendent is the final decision-making authority regarding school transportation matters.

g. VEHICLE SPECIFICATIONS, MAINTENANCE & REPLACEMENT

- i. All pupil transportation vehicles used in the District will conform to applicable laws and regulations, including, but not limited to: vehicle specifications, maximum capacity limitations, appropriate use, the use of child passenger restraints and the use of seat belts.
 1. School pupil transport (7D) vehicles shall be a passenger vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 10,000 pounds or less and a seating capacity of no more than eight (8) passengers, in addition to the operator.
 2. School buses, These vehicles must conform to 540 CMR 7.00, Minimum Standards for Construction And Equipment Of School Buses And Minimum Standards For School Pupil Transport Vehicles; M.G.L. c. 90 s 7A, 7C and 31.
- ii. Needham-owned vehicles should be inventoried annually. Contract providers must provide an updated listing of vehicles to be used in the performance of the contract with Needham.
- iii. The Director of Transportation will develop a schedule for performing major and minor maintenance on each vehicle, using qualified maintenance mechanics. Vehicles that are unsafe shall be taken out of service.
- iv. The Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations shall develop a multi-year schedule for vehicle replacement. The general standard for vehicle replacement is 100,000 miles or 7 years of service, whichever is sooner realized.

h. DRIVER LICENSING AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- i. Vehicle operators must possess a license appropriate to the vehicle being operated:
 1. School bus drivers must possess a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with a Passenger (P) Endorsement and a School Bus (S) Endorsement, as well as a School Bus Driver Certificate issued by the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU);
 2. School pupil van drivers (except MFSAB operators) require a Class D license with a valid 7D certificate;
 3. Restricted school bus operators (a yellow school bus with a maximum seating capacity of fourteen passengers) require a Class D driver's license and a restricted school bus driver certificate; and
 4. Multi-function School Activity Bus Passenger vehicles require a Class D driver's license.
- ii. While operating a school transportation vehicle for or on behalf of Needham Public Schools, drivers shall meet all applicable Registry of Motor Vehicle requirements. These requirements include, but are not limited to:
 1. School Bus Drivers
 - a. CDL with S endorsement renewal every three (3) years
 - b. DPU School Bus Driver Certificate, renewed annually and kept in the driver's possession while operating a school bus
 - c. Pass a Department of Transportation (DOT) physical on an annual basis, within 90 days of the DPU application
 - d. Pass a Criminal Records Inquiry (C.O.R.I) every year (administered by the Needham Public Schools.). (The C.O.R.I requirement for MSFAB drivers is every three years.)
 - e. Pass a Massachusetts State Ethics on-line training annually

- f. Pass a state and federal fingerprint background check upon initial hire.
 - g. Pass random drug and alcohol tests per the US DOT, required throughout employment (excluding MFSAB drivers.)
2. School Van Drivers (excluding MFSAB operators)
 - a. Class D license renewal every five (5) years
 - b. 7D Driver Certificate, renewed annually and kept in the driver's possession while operating a 7D van
 - c. Pass a Department of Transportation (DOT) physical on an annual basis, within 90 days of the 7D application
 - d. Pass an annual Criminal Records Inquiry (C.O.R.I), a sex offender registry information check (SORI) and a driving record check annually, a pre-requisite for 7D certificate renewal.
 - e. Pass a Massachusetts State Ethics on-line training annually
 - f. Pass a state and federal fingerprint background check upon initial hire.
 - g. Pass random drug and alcohol tests per the US DOT, required throughout employment.
 3. Drivers who allow their license to lapse, or to become suspended or revoked, shall be prohibited from operating school transportation vehicles that are owned or contracted by the Needham Public Schools.
 4. Drivers shall provide a copy of their license and accompanying certificate to the Director of Transportation upon initial hire, annual renewal, and upon demand. The Director of Transportation shall ensure that a copy of each driver's license is on file with the Human Resources Department.
 5. Drivers shall annually attest to reading and understanding the Driver Handbook and general Needham Public School Transportation Procedures provided by the Department. The Director of Transportation shall ensure that a copy of the annual attestation is on file with the Human Resources Department.

i. OTHER

i. GIFTS & GRATUITIES

1. The state's Conflict of Interest Law (M.G.L. Ch. 268A) prohibits municipal employees receiving gifts and gratuities valued at \$50 or more in a single year in connection with their official duties. Gifts and gratuities include, but are not limited to, honoraria, free or discounted items or services, meals, entertainment event tickets, golf or travel expenses for which payment is normally required.
2. A staff member may, however, receive a gift (or gifts) totaling less than \$50 from a single source during a fiscal year, as long as the staff member files a written disclosure with his/her supervisor that the gift was received. There are a few exceptions to this rule.
 - a. The State Ethics Commission permits teachers or other staff members to receive one class gift per year with an aggregated value of up to \$150, as long as the gift is from the entire class and the identity of the givers is not known. (No disclosure is required for class gifts.)
 - b. Staff members may receive perishable items (food, flowers) up to \$50 in value without disclosure, as long as the items are shared with members of the school community.
3. Parents are encouraged to show their appreciation to individual teachers/staff members by making a donation to their school's PTC, or to the Needham Education Foundation.

4. More information about this topic is available from the Ethics Commission's website at this [link](#). Disclosure forms also are available at this [link](#).