

R277. Education, Administration.

R277-600. Student Transportation Standards and Procedures.

R277-600-1. Authority and Purpose.

- (1) This rule is authorized by:
 - (a) Utah Constitution Article X, Section 3, which vests general control and supervision over public schools in the Board;
 - (b) Subsection 53E-3-501(1)(d), which directs the Board to establish rules for bus routes, bus safety and other transportation needs;
 - (c) Sections 53F-2-402 and 53F-2-403, which provide for distribution of funds for transportation of public school students;
 - (d) Section 53F-2-417, which directs the Board to make rules to implement rural school district transportation grants; and
 - (e) Subsection 53E-3-401(4), which allows the Board to make rules to execute the Board's duties and responsibilities under the Utah Constitution and state law.
- (2) The purpose of this rule is to specify the standards under which school districts may qualify for and receive state transportation funds.

R277-600-2. Definitions.

- (1) "ADA" means average daily attendance.
- (2) "ADM" means average daily membership.
- (3) "AFR" means a school district's annual financial report, one component of which is the AFR for all pupil transportation costs.
- (4) "Annual Program Report" or "APR" has the same meaning as defined in Section R277-484-2.
- (5)(a) "Approved costs" means the Board approved costs of transporting eligible students from home to school to home once each day, after-school routes, approved routes for students with disabilities and vocational students attending school outside their regularly assigned attendance boundary, and a portion of the bus purchase prices.
 - (b) All approved costs are adjusted by the Superintendent consistent with a Board approved formula per the annual legislative transportation appropriation.

(6) "Deadhead miles" means miles traveled while operating a bus with no passengers on board.

(7) "Extended school year" or "ESY" means an extension of the school district or charter school traditional school year to provide special education and related services to a student with a disability, in accordance with the student's IEP, and at no cost to the student's parent or guardian.

(8) "Hazardous" means in a state of danger or potential danger, which may result in injury or death.

(9) "Local school board" means a local school district board of education.

(10) "Multipurpose passenger vehicle" or "MPV" means any motor vehicle with less than ten passenger positions, including the driver's position, which cannot be certified as a bus.

(11) "Public route" means a road, thoroughfare, walkway, or highway.

(12) "Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee" means the committee described in Subsection 53F-2-403(5).

(13) "Pupil Transportation Schedule A1" means a report submitted annually to the Superintendent covering all estimated miles and minutes of to and from pupil transportation within an LEA.

R277-600-3. General Provisions.

(1)(a) The Superintendent shall use state transportation funds to reimburse school districts for the costs reasonably related to transporting students to and from school.

(b) The Board shall define the limits of a school district's transportation costs reimbursable by state funds in a manner that encourages safety, economy, and efficiency.

(2) Allowable transportation costs are divided into two categories:

(a) A Category costs include expenditures for regular and special education bus routes established by the school district, and approved by the state.

(b) B Category costs include other methods of transporting students to and from school.

(3) The Superintendent shall develop a formula to allocate A Category costs based on a calculated rate.

(4) The Superintendent shall approve reasonable and necessary B Category costs on a line-by-line basis.

(5) The Superintendent shall develop a uniform accounting procedure for the financial reporting of transportation costs, which shall specify the methods used to calculate allowable transportation costs.

(6) The Superintendent shall develop uniform forms for the administration of the transportation program.

(7)(a) An LEA shall record all student transportation costs, including accurate mileage, minute, and trip records.

(b) An LEA shall maintain records and financial worksheets during the fiscal year for audit purposes.

R277-600-4. Eligibility.

(1) The Superintendent shall only disburse state transportation funds for transporting eligible students.

(2) The Superintendent shall determine transportation eligibility for elementary students (k-6) and secondary students (7-12) in accordance with the mileage from home, specified in Subsections 53F-2-403(1) and (2), to the school attended by assignment of the local school board.

(3) A student whose IEP identifies transportation as a necessary related service is eligible for transportation regardless of distance from the school attended by assignment of the local school board.

(4) A student who attends school for at least one-half day at a location other than the local school board designated school is not eligible for transportation for distances up to one and one-half miles.

(5) A school district that implements double sessions as an alternative to new building construction may transport, one way to or from school, with Board approval, affected elementary students residing less than one and one-half miles from school, if

the local school board determines the transportation would improve safety affected by darkness or other hazardous conditions.

(6) The distance from a student's home to the student's school or the student's bus stop is determined as follows: From the center of the public route open to public use, opposite the regular entrance where the student is living, over the nearest public route open regularly for use by the public, to the center of the public route open to public use, opposite the nearest public entrance to the school grounds which the student is attending, or the student's bus stop.

R277-600-5. Student with Disabilities Transportation.

(1) A student with a disability shall be transported on regular buses and regular routes when possible, unless the IEP team determines otherwise.

(2) A school district may be reimbursed for the costs of transporting or for alternative transportation for students with disabilities whose severity of disability, or combination of disabilities, necessitates special transportation.

(3) During the regular school year, an eligible special transportation route from the assigned school site to an alternative program location shall be for a minimum of 15 days with primarily the same group of students.

(4) During the ESY, an eligible special transportation route from the assigned school site to an alternative program location shall be for a minimum of ten days with primarily the same group of students.

(5) ESY services shall meet the standards of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. 1401(3) and Board Special Education Rules.

(6) The Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind shall provide transportation for students who are transported to its self-contained classes, unless an exception is approved by the Superintendent.

R277-600-6. Bus Route Approval.

(1)(a) A local school board shall propose bus routes subject to approval by the Superintendent.

(b) A local school board shall provide information requested by the Superintendent prior to approval of a route.

(c) During the regular school year, an eligible route from the assigned school site to an alternative program location shall be for a minimum of 15 days with primarily the same group of students.

(d) The Superintendent may not approve a route for reimbursement if an equitable student transportation allowance or a subsistence allowance for the necessary transportation is more cost-effective.

(2) A bus route shall:

(a) traverse the most direct public road;

(b) be reasonably cost-effective in comparison to other feasible alternatives;

(c) provide adequate safety for students;

(d) traverse roads that are constructed and maintained in a manner that does not cause property damage; and

(e) include an economically appropriate number of students.

(3)(a) The minimum number of general education students required to establish full eligibility for state-supported transportation is ten.

(b) The minimum number of students with disabilities required to establish full eligibility for state-supported transportation is five.

(c) A bus route may be established for fewer students upon special permission of the Superintendent.

(4) A school district shall designate safe areas for bus stops, subject to the following, where possible:

(a) a school district shall place bus stops at least 3/10 miles apart; and

(b) a school district shall avoid placing bus stops on dead end roads.

(5)(a) A student's parent or guardian is responsible for the student's own transportation to bus stops up to one and one-half miles from home.

(b) A parent or guardian with a student that has a disability is responsible for the student's own transportation to bus stops unless the IEP team determines otherwise.

(6)(a) A school district shall report changes made in existing routes or the addition of new routes to the Superintendent as they occur.

(b) The Superintendent shall review and may refuse to fund route changes.

(7) The Superintendent may reimburse a school district for transporting another district's students across school district boundaries so long as:

(a) the route promotes efficient transportation for both districts;

(b) the route serves a group or community of students and families rather than a single student or a single family;

(c) the local school boards of both participating districts vote in an open meeting that students who reside in one district can be better and more economically served by another district; and

(d) both districts and the Superintendent maintain documentation annually of the boards' votes and the approved route.

(8) A school district may transport eligible students home after school activities held at the students' school of regular attendance and within a reasonable time period after the close of the regular school day and receive approved route mileage.

(9)(a) The Superintendent may approve atypical routes as alternatives to building construction if routes are needed to allow more efficient school district use of school facilities.

(b) Building construction alternatives include:

(i) double sessions;

(ii) year-round school; and

(iii) attendance across school district boundaries.

(10)(a) A school district may use local transportation funds to transport students across state lines or out-of-state for school sponsored activities or required field trips if:

(i) the local school board has a policy that includes approval of trips at the appropriate administrative level;

(ii) the school or school district has considered the purpose of the trip or activity and any competing risk or liability;

(iii) given the distance, purpose, and length of the trip, the school district has determined that the use of a publicly owned school bus is appropriate for the trip or activity; and

(iv) the local school board has consulted with State Risk Management.

(b) If school bus routes transport students across Utah state lines or outside of Utah for required to and from routes, routes are reimbursable providing a school district maintains documentation that:

- (i) the routes are necessary;
- (ii) the routes are more cost-effective; or
- (iii) the routes provide greater safety for students than in-state routes.

R277-600-7. Alternative Transportation.

(1) A district shall analyze bus routes that involve a large number of deadhead miles to determine if an alternative method of transporting students is more efficient.

(2) Approved alternatives include the alternatives described in Subsections (3) through (9).

(3)(a) The costs incurred in transporting eligible pupils in a school district MPV are approved costs as long as the costs demonstrate efficiency; or

(b) The costs incurred in paying a parent or guardian of an eligible student an allowance in lieu of school district-supplied transportation are approved costs.

(4)(a) A parent or guardian of a student may be reimbursed for the mileage to the bus stop or school, whichever is closer to the student's home.

(b) The allowance under this Subsection (4)(a) may not be less than \$0.35 per mile, nor greater than the reimbursement allowance permitted by the Utah Department of Government Operations for use of privately owned vehicles set forth in the Utah Travel Regulations.

(5) A district shall annually perform a cost-benefit analysis as part of its determination of the LEA specific reimbursement rate and make this analysis available to the public.

(6)(a) A district shall make a student mileage allowance under this Section R277-600-7 to only one student per family for each trip that is necessary for all the students within a family to attend school.

(b) If siblings are on different school schedule or ride buses that are on significantly different schedules, a parent or guardian may claim and be paid for student mileage allowances for multiple students.

(7) If a student eligible for reimbursement under this Section R277-600-7 or the student's parent or guardian cannot provide private transportation, with prior approval from the Superintendent:

(a) the Superintendent may reimburse an amount equivalent to the student allowance to the school district to help pay the costs of school district transportation; or

(b) the Superintendent may reimburse a school district costs paid for school contracted transportation, commercial bus passes, or alternative specialized transportation services.

(8)(a) A district shall measure and certify a student's mileage in school district records.

(b) A student's ADA, as entered in school records, is used to determine the student's attendance.

(9)(a) The cost incurred in providing a subsistence allowance is an approved cost under the following conditions:

(i) a student lives more than 60 miles (one way) on well-maintained roads from the student's assigned school, a parent or guardian may be reimbursed for the student's room and board if the student relocates temporarily to reside in close proximity to the student's assigned school;

(ii) payment may not exceed the Substitute Care Rate for Family Services for the current fiscal year;

(iii) adjustments for changes made in the rate during the year shall be included in the allowance; and

(iv) in addition to the reimbursement for room and board, the subsistence allowance may include the costs of up to 18 round trips per year.

(b)(i) A subsistence allowance is not available to a parent or guardian who maintains a separate home during the school year for the convenience of the family.

(ii) A parent or guardian's primary residence during the school year is the residence of the child.

(10) A school district may contract or lease with a third party provider for pupil transportation services.

(11)(a) The cost incurred in engaging in a contract or leasing for transportation is an approved cost at the prorated amount available to school districts.

(b) The Superintendent shall determine reimbursements for school districts using a leasing arrangement in accordance with the comparable cost for the school district to operate its own transportation.

(c) Under a contract or lease, a school district's transportation administrator's time may not exceed 1% of the commercial contract cost.

(12) If a school district contracts or leases with a third party provider or other LEA for pupil transportation services, it shall maintain and provide to the Superintendent upon request the following items as if it operated its own transportation:

(a) eligible student counts;

(b) bus route mileage;

(c) bus route minutes; and

(d) service to students with disabilities and bus inventory data.

R277-600-8. Other Reimbursable Expenses.

The Superintendent may reimburse a school district for the following costs with state transportation funds:

(1) salaries of clerks, secretaries, trainers, drivers, a supervisor, mechanics, and other personnel necessary to operate the transportation program, subject to the following limitations:

(a) a full time supervisor may be paid at the same rate as other professional directors in the school district; and

(b) a school district shall ensure that a supervisor's salary is commensurate with the number of buses, number of eligible students transported, and total responsibility relative to other school district supervisory functions;

(2) a school district may claim a percentage of the school district superintendent's or other supervisor's salary for reimbursement if the school district's eligibility count is less than 600 and a verifiable record of administrative time spent in the transportation operation is maintained; and

(3) the wage time for bus drivers may include to and from school time consisting of:

- (i) 10 minute pre-trip inspection;
- (ii) actual driving time;
- (iii) 10 minute post-trip inspection and bus cleanup; and
- (iv) 10 minute bus servicing and fueling;

(4) a proportionate amount of a superintendent's or supervisor's employee benefits such as health, accident, or life insurance;

- (5) purchased property services;
- (6) property, comprehensive, and liability insurance;
- (7) communication expenses;
- (8) travel for supervisors to workshops or national conventions;
- (9) supplies and materials for vehicles, the school district transportation office

and the garage;

(10) training expenses to complete bus driver instruction and certification required by the Board; and

(11) other related costs approved by the Superintendent, which may include additional bus driver training.

R277-600-9. Non-reimbursable Expenses.

(1) AFR for all pupil transportation costs may only include pupil transportation costs and other school district expenditures directly related to pupil transportation.

(2) In determining expenditures for eligible to and from school transportation, all related costs shall be reduced on a pro rata basis for the miles not connected with approved costs.

(3) Expenses determined by the Superintendent as not directly related to transportation of eligible students to and from school may not be reimbursed.

(4)(a) A local school board may determine appropriate non-school uses of school buses.

(b) A local school board may lease or rent public school buses to:

- (i) federal, state, county, or municipal entities;

- (ii) entities insured by State Risk Management;
- (iii) non-government entities; or
- (iv) entities not insured through State Risk Management.

(c) As part of any agreement to allow non-school use of a school bus, a local school board shall:

(i) require full cost reimbursement for any non-public school use including:

- (A) cost per mile;
- (B) cost per minute; and
- (C) bus depreciation;

(ii) require a non-school user to provide:

(A) proof of insurance through State Risk Management or private insurance coverage; and

(B) a fully executed agreement for full release of indemnification;

(iii) require that any non-school use is revenue neutral; and

(iv) consult with State Risk Management to determine adequacy of documentation of insurance and indemnity for any entity requesting use or rental of publicly owned school buses.

(5) A local school board shall approve the use of school buses by a non-governmental entity or an entity not insured through State Risk Management in an open meeting.

(6)(a) In the event of an emergency, local, regional, state or federal authorities may request the use of school buses or school bus drivers or both for the period of the emergency.

(b) A local school board shall grant a request under Subsection (a) so long as the use can be accommodated consistent with continuing student transportation and student safety requirements.

R277-600-10. Board Local Levy.

(1) Costs for school district transportation of students which are not reimbursable may be paid for from general school district funds or from the proceeds of the Board Local Levy authorized under Section 53F-8-302.

(2) The revenue from the Board Local Levy may be used for transporting students and for school bus replacement.

(3)(a) A local school board may approve the transportation of students in areas where walking constitutes a hazardous condition from general local school board funds or from the Board Local Levy.

(b) A local school board shall determine hazardous walking conditions by an analysis of the following factors:

- (i) volume, type, and speed of vehicular traffic;
 - (ii) age and condition of students traversing the area;
 - (iii) condition of the roadway, sidewalks and applicable means of access in the area; and
 - (iv) environmental conditions.
- (c) A local school board may designate hazardous conditions.

R277-600-11. Exceptions.

(1)(a) When undue hardships and inequities are created through exact application of these standards, a school district may request an exception to this rule from the Superintendent for individual cases.

(b) Hardships or inequities under Subsection (1)(a) may include written evidence demonstrating that no significant increased costs, less than 1% of a school district's transportation budget, is incurred due to a waiver or that students cannot be provided services consistent with the law due to transportation exigencies.

(c) The Superintendent may consult with the Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee in considering the exemption.

(2) A school district shall not be penalized in the computation of its state allocation for the presence on an approved to and from school route of an ineligible student who does not create an appreciable increase in the cost of the route.

(3) There is an appreciable increase in cost under Subsection (2) if, because of the presence of ineligible students, any of the following occurs:

- (a) another route is required;
- (b) a larger or additional bus is required;

- (c) a route's mileage is increased;
 - (d) the number of pick-up points below the mileage limits for eligible students exceeds one; and
 - (e) significant additional time is required to complete a route.
- (4)(a) An ineligible student may ride a school bus on a space available basis.
- (b) An eligible student may not be displaced or required to stand in order to make room for an ineligible student.

R277-600-12. Rural School Transportation Reimbursement Program.

(1) The Superintendent shall annually determine which LEAs are eligible for rural school transportation reimbursement using the criteria described in Section 53F-2-520.

(2) The Superintendent shall measure eligibility based on:

- (a) the most recent October 1 UTREx submission; and
- (b) the prior year's transportation data submitted in accordance with Section R277-484-3.

(3) By November 1 annually, the Superintendent shall notify an LEA that the LEA may seek reimbursement.

(4) An LEA eligible for reimbursement shall:

(a) provide evidence to the Superintendent in the first year of the LEA's eligibility that the LEA has provided transportation to and from the school for the past five years;

(b) submit to the Superintendent in the first year of the LEA's eligibility the LEA's current year pupil transportation Schedule A1 by December 30; and

(c) in subsequent years of eligibility, submit all transportation reports in accordance with Section R277-484-3.

(5) Submission of the pupil transportation Schedule A1 shall constitute an annual application and request for reimbursement by an LEA with an eligible school.

(6)(a) The Superintendent shall calculate and process reimbursements to LEAs once a year.

(b) The Superintendent shall determine allowable costs eligible for reimbursement taking into account:

- (i) eligible routes; and

(ii) eligible miles and minutes as reported on the pupil transportation Schedule A1.

(c) The Superintendent shall reimburse an LEA based on the LEA's percentage of total unreimbursed eligible costs submitted.

(d) If the annual appropriation is insufficient to fund all submitted eligible cost payments, the Superintendent shall prorate the reimbursement up to the amount of the appropriation.

(7) An LEA shall permit the Superintendent to review accounting ledgers, student records, and transportation records upon request in order to determine:

(a) a school's eligibility in accordance with Subsection (1); and

(b) allowability of an LEA's submitted costs.

R277-600-13. Rural School District Transportation Grant Program.

(1) The Superintendent shall annually determine which school districts are eligible for the rural school district transportation grant program using the criteria described in Subsection 53F-2-417(2).

(2) The Superintendent shall measure school district eligibility based on:

(a) the prior year's transportation data submitted in accordance with Section R277-484-3; and

(b) the most recent county classification.

(3)(a) By November 1 annually, the Superintendent shall notify a school district that the school district may apply for a grant and the amount of available grant funds based on the prior year eligible miles for unreimbursed costs associated with activities described in Subsection 53F-2-417(3).

(b) The Superintendent shall prorate an eligible school district's award amount up to the amount of the appropriation.

(4) A school district eligible for the grant program shall:

(a) provide assurance within the school district's application that matching funds from the school district's board local levy will be utilized for the purposes outlined in Subsection 53F-2-417(1); and

(b) report revenue from the board local levy and related expenditures for the grant program in the school district's Annual Program Report for that specific fiscal year.

(5)(a) The Superintendent shall process the grant award in the state's grants management system

(b) The Superintendent shall allocate funds to eligible school districts once a year.

(6) A school district shall permit the Superintendent to review accounting ledgers, student records, and transportation records upon request in order to determine:

(a) a school's eligibility in accordance with Subsection (1); and

(b) allowability of an LEA's submitted program costs.

(7) If a school district does not comply with the requirements of the grant program, the Superintendent may impose corrective action in accordance with Rule R277-114.

KEY: school buses, school transportation

Date of Last Change: April 7, 2023

Notice of Continuation: June 4, 2021

Authorizing, and Implemented or Interpreted Law: Art X Sec 3; 53E-3-501(1)(d); 53E-3-401(4); 53F-2-415; 53F-2-403