



Route Stops and Review for School Bus Drivers

Reference Guide and Test

INTRODUCTION

Every school district has protocols and safety measures that are considered when deciding school bus stop locations. These locations vary across the board. There are bus stops in typical neighborhood locations. There are bus stops on narrow, rural roadways. There are bus stops in bustling, urban areas and pretty much everywhere else you can think of.

Questions that are posed during the video will be: How are bus stop locations determined to begin with? Who approves of bus stop locations? And most importantly, what is a bus driver's role when it comes to assessing and/or re-assessing school bus stops on the route I will be driving?

The video will cover many of the issues that school bus drivers should know about the stops along their route.

PART 1: An Understanding of Route Stops and Review

- 1) School bus drivers should be aware of many issues that pertain to the bus stops along their route. These stop locations are meticulously looked at by transportation officials both within the district, as well as county, city and state officials.
- 2) There are several factors that come into play when deciding bus stop locations. Here are some of them:
 - a) Ridership demands (*Meaning the areas with the most concentrated area of students that will need to ride the bus*)
 - b) Special needs riders. (This would be students that may need assistance or a special pick up location due to physical or emotional disabilities)
- 3) Other factors would include: The local road system, traffic safety, climate, population density, topography and more.
- 4) In addition, school districts must keep in mind: areas of high crime or areas that would be in close proximity to liquor stores, bars and/or adult entertainment venues.
- 5) Although state and local policies can influence or dictate the process and placement of school bus routes, the vast majority of decisions on routing and placement of stops are

made at the district level.

6) District level regulations related to school bus stops may address issues such as:

- a) The use of private roads and/or property.
- b) Proximity of stops to railroad tracks
- c) Main arterials
- d) Corners and more.

7) When picking out bus stop locations, there are many things for transportation supervisors to consider. For instance, transportation officials will avoid setting up stops in areas such as: cul de sacs, dead ends and narrow streets. These types of locations not only make it more difficult to maneuver the bus, but also introduce additional safety issues by limiting a driver's visibility and even forcing them to back the bus up.

PART 2: School Bus Stop Characteristics

8) School bus stops and the areas surrounding them have certain characteristics. By understanding the basic characteristics of school bus stop locations, you will know when to report or reassess it.

9) **These characteristics include the condition on and around roadways where the bus stops to load and unload students.** They are designed to provide the safest environment for students to walk between home and the bus stop, as well as waiting at the stop.

10) **One of these characteristics is the selection of stops on streets with lower speeds and traffic volume.** Avoid areas where speeds are high and traffic is abundant.

11) **Many districts also do not allow for stops on multi-lane roads.** However, there are allowances for this in many areas. Once again, this determination would be made at the district level.

12) **Another important characteristic to consider is visibility.** Not only visibility for bus drivers, but also students and pedestrians. There should be enough sight distance so motorists, bus drivers and students can all see each other.

13) Stops should also be placed in locations where backing up the bus at stops and crossing railroad tracks along the route are avoided as much as possible.

14) Even the environment around the bus stop should be considered:

- a) Are there a lot of pedestrians in the area?
- b) Is there roadwork taking place?
- c) Are there always a bunch of cars parked along the roadway?

15) The district should also consider the amount of students at stops. While having multiple students at stops may convey safety, too many students increases the likelihood of behavioral problems to occur at the stop.

So what characteristics make a GOOD bus stop location?

16) One of these is to **have near sided stops whenever possible**. That means minimizing the need for students to cross the road from the stop to the bus regardless of the type of roadway. In addition, it is recommended that students should never cross at multilane roads.

17) **The stop should be at a pick up and drop off location that has adequate lighting and a clear view of students, traffic and pedestrians.** Depending on the time of year, lighting can become an issue.

18) A good bus stop location will have **sufficient space for students and parents to wait a MINIMUM of 12 feet away from the bus upon arrival to the stop.** Many districts require even more space.

19) Climate changes from region to region. **A good bus stop location will provide some protection from weather.** This also includes AVOIDING areas where weather conditions will reduce visibility or student access to the bus.

20) As you can see, there are a lot of characteristics that are used to make bus stop locations safe. Equally as important are the areas to avoid. Keep in mind that we understand there will be circumstances, allowances and other considerations. **Be sure to follow state laws and district policies.** And if you have any questions or concerns, bring them up to your supervisor.

PART 3: A School Bus Driver's Role Along Their Route

21) Part of your job as a school bus driver is obviously to know your routes. You will be the one responsible for driving them everyday. At the beginning of every school year, you should drive the route assigned to you. **You should familiarize yourself with:**

- a) street names
- b) the students you will be picking up and dropping off at each stop
- c) possible problem areas and more.

22) Every organization will train on route familiarization differently. However, **it is a good idea that you also drive your route in a typical automobile whenever possible.** The reason for this is to memorize every part of your route.

23) **Most districts will have a route sheet that you can obtain to not only memorize your route,** but also have an understanding of the number of students at each stop. The reason it is a good idea to do this in your car, is because there will not be a bus full of students and you can turn around easier in a car if you missed a turn. It is equally as important to drive your route in the bus so you can recognize turns, understand clearances and more.

24) Even something as simple as garbage day can pose a safety concern when approaching and stopping at bus stop locations. Should the stop be adjusted for that day? Would the school pick a different location entirely? These are the questions you should be asking your supervisor.

25) Other things you should be aware of along your route are:

- a) traffic signals
- b) signs
- c) blind corners
- d) Any obstruction, hazard or safety concern along your route.

26) One of the most important considerations for a bus driver is Visibility. Whether it is related to the time of day and you are driving in low light OR if it is weather related, visibility is crucial when on approach to pick up students. This is where sight distance becomes so critical.

27) **Sight distance is the CLEAR distance ahead of the bus that is visible to the driver.** Many things can affect this.

28) Weather plays one of the most critical parts. For instance, if it is extremely foggy, rainy, or contending with snowy weather, it will have a significant impact on your sight distance. **This is why it is so important to know your route thoroughly. By knowing your route, you can anticipate stops and approach them with more caution.**

29) **Many school bus routes start early in the morning. When reaching your first couple of stops, it may still be dark.** You must take this into account when approaching, stopped at and departing school bus stops. On the opposite end of that spectrum is too much light. Sunrises and sunsets can impact sight distances. Drivers must be aware of the direction that the bus is facing and be sure to approach school bus stops with caution.

30) **Curves and hills can also impact sight distance.** When coming over the crest of a hill you cannot necessarily see what's on the other side. Not only that, but also if motorists are driving over the crest and see flashing red lights, it may cause them to panic. School districts typically try to avoid placing stops right over the crest of a hill to better ensure student safety. Instead, the stop should be placed at the top of the hill to give motorists ample time to recognize the bus and stop accordingly.

31) **Problem objects are not always going to be stationary.** There may be roadwork along your route. There may also be parked cars close to the bus stop that are not always there. There can be several of these variables on any given day. **It will be your job to adjust, adapt and be extremely aware of your surroundings** when this happens.

PART 4: Reporting, Team Work and Communication

32) When you are driving your route, you may find some potential hazards. **Something else to keep in mind is that there will be times when you will need to report something to your supervisor because the stop becomes unsafe.**

33) Many districts have a report sheet that drivers can have on hand. That way the drivers can give an accurate report while out on their route. The hazard report sheet typically includes:

- a) The Route number
- b) The Bus Number
- c) Time tables of routes driven
- D) Where the possible hazard is located along the route and more.

34) Even though something may be temporary, such as road construction, it may last longer than you think. Therefore, a new stop may be required even if it is temporary.

35) Throughout the video, we went over many issues for school bus stop routes and review. We have stressed the importance of driving your route ahead of time and knowing every inch of it. We also went over the reasons why it is important to report hazards or obstructions along your route. Be sure to follow the policies of your district. And don't be shy to bring up suggestions to your supervisor. Remember, school bus drivers are the ones driving these routes everyday. Your input and suggestions are invaluable. Stay safe.

TEST QUESTIONS

1) The vast majority of decisions on routing and placement of stops are made at the district level. **TRUE or FALSE**

2) A cul de sac makes a great location for a school bus stop.
TRUE or FALSE

3) There is no reason to drive the route ahead of time if you drove it the year before.
TRUE or FALSE

4) A good bus stop location has certain characteristics that make it that way.
TRUE or FALSE

5) Visibility is one of the most critical issues for school bus drivers to contend with.
TRUE or FALSE

6) Sight distance is the distance you can see when looking in the mirrors.
TRUE or FALSE

7) Most districts will have a route sheet.
TRUE or FALSE

8) If there is a hazard, but you adjust to it, the hazard should not be reported.
TRUE or FALSE

9) Curves and hills can also impact sight distance.
TRUE or FALSE

10) A school bus driver's input and suggestions are invaluable to supervisors and trainers. **TRUE or FALSE**

ANSWER KEY

- 1) TRUE**
- 2) FALSE**
- 3) FALSE**
- 4) TRUE**
- 5) TRUE**
- 6) FALSE**
- 7) TRUE**
- 8) FALSE**
- 9) TRUE**
- 10) TRUE**