

**2025-2026 PARENT'S  
SCHOOL DISTRICT ROUTE  
TRANSPORTATION  
HANDBOOK**

**STOP FOR SCHOOL BUSES**



**Signature page at end of handbook. Please sign and return page to your bus driver.**

Adopted:  
Added

**TRANSPORTATION DIRECTORY**

BUS BARN 622-5392  
Bus Barn Toll Free # 1-800-884-7492

| <b><u>Drivers</u></b>                   | <b><u>Cell</u></b> | <b><u>Home</u></b> |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Paul Benhart, Transportation Supervisor | 465-8941           |                    |
| Darrel Benjamin                         | 750-2369           | 622-3637           |
| Marvin Brodock                          | 788-5555           | 622-5329           |
| Harry Buckingham                        | 949-0848           | 622-3293           |
| Justin Cartwright                       | 231-2454           |                    |
| Thad Kaiser                             | 291-1770           |                    |
| Jim O'Hara                              | 799-2992           |                    |
| Vicky O'Hara                            | 899-4529           |                    |
| Kim Singer                              | 621-3676           |                    |
| Wes Skerritt                            | 621-3880           | 622-3879           |
| Jeff Tackes                             | 231-4833           | 622-5383           |
| Karie Thomas                            | 836-0914           |                    |

| <b><u>Administration</u></b>                 | <b><u>Work</u></b> | <b><u>Home</u></b> |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| Patrick Hould, Dist. Supt. & MS/HS Principal | 622-5112           | 621-0979           |
| Jamie Ball, Activities Director              | 622-5112           | 622-3700           |
| Roxie Benjamin, Elem. Principal              | 622-3721           |                    |
| Cali O'Hara, Business Mgr.                   | 622-5691           |                    |

**Trustees - Transportation Committee**

|                                 |          |          |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Darin Arganbright - Chairperson | 899-0264 | 622-5286 |
| Brant Hasbrouck                 |          | 761-8761 |
| Dusty Schuler                   |          | 788-8882 |
| Will Scott                      |          | 366-9289 |

**Sheriff's Office** 622-5451

**INTRODUCTION**

Each year School District Number One travels more than 450 miles per day to provide transportation to over 125 elementary and high school students. Every effort is made to assure the parent and student that the school bus ride is as safe as possible. This handbook does not cover rules and policies for extra and co- curricular pupil transportation.

Parents and school bus passengers are asked to read and discuss the contents of this bulletin.

You, as parents and passengers, can help make each school bus ride a safe one. May we have your cooperation?

### **SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

Transportation by school bus is not mandatory. This service is provided for those who wish to ride under the terms set up by the board of trustees.

The following information for parents and students states the regulations governing riding. Non-Compliance may be met by refusal to transport. It is expected that all concerned will read this handbook, and in case there are questions, ask for explanation in order that there be no misunderstanding.

Information regarding school bus service may be obtained by calling the numbers on the inside front cover.

The Transportation Program is set up to provide bus service:

1. To public school students, grades K-12 who live three (3) or more miles from school. (Montana Law provides methods of financing for transportation for these eligible students through taxation.)
2. Patrons must not expect the bus to stop at every street or lane or deliver to your door. Transportation is a group service and not an individual taxi service.
3. The bus operation will be similar to the plan followed last year. Buses which meet the State Highway Patrol inspection will be used and drivers will be certified according to regulations of the State Department of Public Instruction.

## SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

All school bus drivers in School District #1 receive periodic instruction in the safe methods of operating a school bus. New drivers receive instruction in the operation of buses, rules and regulations of the transportation program, and in the direction of school bus passengers.

School Bus Driver Qualifications (MCA 20-10-103; ARM 10.64.201)

Montana law dictates that a school bus driver shall:

1. **AGE & EXPERIENCE** - Is not less than 18 years of age;  
(ARM adds: Have five years of licensed driving experience;)
2. **CHARACTER** - Is of good moral character;
3. **CDL LICENSE** - Is the holder of a valid commercial driver's license;
4. **DOT LICENSE** - Has filed with the district a satisfactory medical examination report, on a form approved by the United States department of transportation or by the superintendent of public instruction, signed by a certified physician licensed in the United States.

(A Montana commercial driver's license [CDL] requires a valid DOT physical good for two years.

5. **BASIC FIRST AID CARD** - Has completed a basic first aid course and holds a valid basic first aid certificate from an authorized instructor;
6. **OTHER** - Has complied with any other qualification established by the board of public education;
7. **CERTIFICATE** - Has filed with the county superintendent a certificate from the trustees of the district for which the school bus is to be driven, certifying compliance with the driver qualifications enumerated in this section; and
8. **EXPIRATIONS AND RENEWAL** - A school bus driver certificate remains valid until the earliest expiration date of the commercial vehicle operator's endorsement, the first aid certificate, and/or physical examination. A new certificate must be issued to the driver when any of the above items expires and is renewed. (ARM)
9. **Bus Drivers** must receive 15 hours of continuing education training each year.

10. Random Drug Testing will be completed in accordance with Policy 5228P.

Safety meetings with the bus drivers are held throughout the school year and the entire fleet has continuous over-the-road supervision.

1. The school bus driver has the responsibility and the authority to maintain discipline on the school bus.
2. The school bus driver has the authority to assign seats whenever he/she feels that such action is appropriate.
3. The School District expects to be compensated for any malicious damage caused to a school bus by a student.
4. The riding privilege of a student may be suspended or revoked for violation of any of these rules or for conduct which is detrimental to the safe operation of the school bus.
5. Good conduct aboard the school bus is of extreme importance. Riders should regard the bus as another school room and act accordingly, except that conversation in normal tones is permitted.

Drivers are required to report misbehavior on the school bus to building principals. Such reports will result in one of several possibilities. Examples are:

1. a warning about misbehavior.
2. assign to a different seat.
3. temporary suspension of riding privileges (pending contact of parents.)
4. permanent revocation of riding privileges.

The above listed items are not process, but an example.

## **RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The following rules and regulations have been developed to insure the safest, most enjoyable, and efficient transportation for your children.

### **Prior to Boarding the School Bus:**

1. Be on time and waiting for the bus at the approved school bus stop.
2. Stay out of the road while waiting for the bus.
3. Do not participate in horseplay or destroy surrounding property.
4. Wait for the school bus to come to a complete stop before attempting to board the bus.
5. Do not run toward the bus in an effort to be the first to board the bus. Wait for the driver to signal you to cross the road, then walk to the bus to begin boarding.

### **PUPIL RESPONSIBILITIES/REGULATIONS**

1. There will be no pushing or scuffling while the bus is loading.
2. Pupils will go immediately to a seat and sit down upon entering the bus.
3. Pupils will keep arms, hands, head and all parts of the body inside the bus when in motion.
4. Pupils will not throw objects out of the bus while it is standing or moving.
5. Pupils will keep books, packages, equipment or other objects out of the aisles at all times. Articles should either be placed under the seat, on the racks, or held in the laps of the pupils. Use storage units first, if available.
6. Talk should be in conversational tones at all times. There should be no shouting or loud talking which may distract the bus driver. Riders should not carry on unnecessary conversation with the driver.
7. Scuffling, playing or fighting on the bus will not be allowed. This may endanger the lives of all the pupils.

8. Pupils will remain in their seats at bus stops until the bus is completely stopped. Pupils should be at the bus stop at the time the bus is scheduled to arrive.
9. When it is necessary for a pupil to cross the road at a bus stop, the crossing should be made only in front of the bus, after looking both ways to make sure no traffic is approaching from either direction and upon signal from the driver.
10. Pupils should instantly obey any command or suggestions from the drivers.
11. Profanity, vulgarity or indecent language will not be tolerated.
12. Repeated acts of misconduct may result in the revocation of riding privileges.
13. Malicious damage to the bus will result in immediate refusal to transport the guilty party, plus restitution.

### **Seatbelt Program**

1. It is the goal of Fort Benton Public Schools to provide the safest student/passenger transportation system available.
2. Fort Benton Public Schools requires that all students/passengers riding the school district buses comply with state law regarding the use of seatbelts.
3. If a school bus is equipped with seatbelts for students/passengers in accordance with FMVSS No 222, then a student/passenger being transported in a seat with seatbelts must be properly restrained with a seatbelt.
4. Drivers, coaches, teachers, or chaperones will announce prior to the bus leaving that each student/passenger needs to be in their seat and properly restrained with a seatbelt.

5. Students/passengers refusing to use seatbelts in a legal and safe manner will be subject to school district disciplinary actions. Repeated refusal to wear seatbelts will result in suspended riding privileges from the bus.
  - a. Consequences: Any student/passenger refusing to wear a seat belt will receive one verbal warning. If escalated, they will receive a written Disciplinary Report and will be assigned to a seat next to a coach/chaperone. Further reports will result in automatic suspension from the school bus beginning with a 3-day bus suspension and increases from there.
6. There are times when it will be up to the coach/chaperones discretion if a student/passenger can momentarily unbuckle for the retrieval of items from the above storage or to talk with the coach/chaperone.
7. Benefits. Students/passengers are safer when properly restrained by seatbelts.

### **While Riding the School Bus:**

1. The driver is in full charge of the bus and students. Students will comply promptly, and cheerfully, with any request made by the driver. The driver shall stop to load or unload only at designated stops.
2. At the discretion of the driver, students may be assigned a seat and held responsible for that seat.
3. Students must be on time; the schedule does not have extra time to wait for those who are tardy.  
On Highway 87, students are to be within 100 feet of the highway and ready to board the bus. The bus will not block traffic for any length of time and will only stop long enough for students to load/unload.
4. Unnecessary conversation with the driver is prohibited since they have enough to concentrate on, without an additional distraction.
5. Outside of ordinary conversation, students will observe classroom conduct while on the bus.
6. Students will not throw waste paper or other debris on the floor of the bus.

7. Arms, legs and/or heads will not be extended out of bus windows at any time.
8. Students will not get on, off, or move about within the bus while it is in motion.
9. Any damage to the bus will be reported to the driver at once.
10. Students may not reserve seats.
11. Students will adjust windows only when instructed to do so by the bus driver.
12. Students must be absolutely quiet while the bus is stopped at a railroad crossing.
13. There will be no use of tobacco/alcohol/drugs on the bus at any time.
14. Students may not depart the bus at a stop other than their own without written or verbal permission from the parent.  
**SEE BUS DEVIATION FORM**
15. Students who have guests riding are to notify the school and driver before the guests will ride, so everyone knows who will ride, when, and where to get off. Such riders will be approved if space is available. A written note is preferred. Please fill out a bus deviation form forty-eight hours (48) prior to guest riding the bus. See bus deviation form.
16. Students will be allowed to eat food or snacks or drink beverages on the bus. Any abuse will result in a temporary suspension of this privilege. Sunflower seeds are not allowed to be eaten on any bus trips. No fountain drinks, only drinks with lids, which are re-sealable.
17. Students will not exit from emergency doors unless a bona fide emergency exists or if on practice drills.
18. Students are not to be in the aisle way when the bus is in motion.
19. It is a violation of the law for children to drive to/from the bus stop who do not have a valid driver's license. The school district discourages such

acts and is not responsible for the possible ramifications associated with this violation.

20. The pupil shall use the emergency door only in case of emergency.
21. Video games may be played on buses as long as the volume is turned off and not distracting.

### **After Leaving the School Bus:**

1. Do not run or push while unloading from the bus.
2. When crossing in front of the bus, always watch for the driver to give the "all clear" signal before crossing.
3. Students should go directly from their bus stop to their home.
4. Every attempt will be made to have the buses arrive at the unloading stops within a 10 minute time range. If, under ideal conditions, the bus arrives at 5:00 you can expect the bus between 4:55 - 5:05.

However, please realize that one late student, one car parked in the school loading zone, one lost lunch box, etc, will change all the best laid plans.

### **WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?**

The interest and assistance of each parent is a valued asset to the Transportation Program. Your interest in safety and your emphasis on proper behavior while riding a school bus is appreciated by your school bus driver. The following suggestions are ways in which you can assist the Transportation Program.

1. Insure that your children are at their bus stop five (5) minutes early.

2. Be at the bus stop five (5) minutes early to pick up your child in the afternoon. If you are late for some reason, call the school, Superintendent or the Sheriff's Office to relay the message to the driver. Students will NOT be left alone at a bus stop.
3. Dress your children in clothing appropriate for the weather conditions.
4. Encourage school bus safety at home. Caution your children regarding safe behavior and conduct while riding a school bus.
5. Establish a safety-minded example for your children.
6. Guests may ride the bus but a note must be provided by the guests' parent or legal guardian. Please deliver the note to the bus driver. It is suggested that the bus number, the name of the driver and the bus arrival time at your bus stop be recorded below for continuous reference during the year.

**SEE BUS DEVIATION FORM**

**BUS NUMBER-BUS DRIVER'S NAME-CELL NUMBERS**

|        |               |                        |                 |
|--------|---------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Bus #7 | Wes Skerritt  | Pleasant Valley/Dorner | Cell#: 621-3880 |
| Bus #8 | Jim O'Hara    | East Route             | Cell#: 799-2992 |
| Bus #3 | Vickie O'Hara | Carter/Floweree        | Cell#: 899-4529 |
| Bus #4 | Karie Thomas  | Loma Route             | Cell#: 836-0914 |

**EMERGENCY WEATHER CONDITIONS**

In the event that weather conditions during the night or early morning create hazardous driving conditions, information pertaining to the closing of the schools will be broadcasted over KEIN and KMON. If buses are dispatched early during the day, due to adverse weather conditions, radio announcements will be broadcasted immediately. The bus drivers will also attempt to telephone those on their route.

All regular run buses are equipped with high band radios with capabilities to communicate with:

1. School radios located at the Elementary and High School.
2. Chouteau County Sheriff's Office.
3. KMON (761-7600)  
KEIN (761-1310)

See inside cover for other phone numbers.

The following information is copied out of the bus driver's handbook:

### **DRIVER INSTRUCTIONS FOR CANCELED ROUTES**

The following is the bus driver's procedure, in order, for route cancellation:

1. Make **every effort** to run the route. Safety is the #1 priority.
2. Receive authorization from the Transportation Director in any cancellation.
3. **Go home** and call **ALL** parents on your route. Don't relay messages to other parents, but actually speak to one person in each household.
4. Continue calling until **ALL** parents have been notified. Please call the parents in the order that you pick their children up on the route.
5. Be prepared to run the PM route even if the AM route was canceled: Please meet in the Transportation Director's office prior to the PM run to determine if the route will run.

### **INDIVIDUAL TRANSPORTATION CONTRACTS**

Your family may be eligible for mileage reimbursement from your home to the nearest bus stop/school. If you qualify, you must complete an Individual Transportation contract **prior** to June 1st each year. New residents are excluded from the June 1st deadline.

NOTES:

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## **Bus Deviation**

**The following form must be completed at least 24 hours prior to the time the requested student(s) would like to ride the bus. Students will be allowed to ride when their presence on the bus does not have an adverse affect on those students who are scheduled to that particular route, i.e. bus is already at capacity or behavior of requested student(s) is such that safety becomes an issue.**

**Route:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of student and parent making request:**

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**Name(s) of student(s) requesting to ride:**

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**Date(s) requested (specify whether evening route):**

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. .

**this is the morning or**

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**Parent Signature**

**Date**

**Driver Signature**

**Date**

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**Principal Signature**

**Date**

**ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR**

**☐ FOLLOW BUS DRIVER INSTRUCTIONS**

**☐ STAY SEATED**

**☐ FACE FORWARD**

**☐ TALK IN A QUIET VOICE**

Dear Parents:

Welcome Back! **Changes/additions of** Route drivers are listed below:

|                     |                 |                            |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Vicky O'Hara        | Carter/Floweree | Cell # 406-899-4529        |
| Wes Skerritt        | Pleasant Valley | Cell # 406-621-3880        |
| Jim O'Hara          | East Route      | Cell # 406-799-2992        |
| <b>Karie Thomas</b> | Loma Route      | <b>Cell # 406-836-0914</b> |

If you have any questions or concerns during the school year, please feel free to call me at 406-621-0979

Thank You,  
Patrick Hould,  
Transportation Director

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To Parents or Guardians:

Your child has received a copy of the student rules for riding school buses. Please take the time to go over this information with your child.

Also, please sign and return this slip to your driver for their records. Your signature indicates you have read the handbook and have discussed the contents with your child.

If your child wishes to have a guest ride the bus, there is a bus deviation form that needs to be completed prior to the date of riding.

The form can be obtained from the drivers or from the Business Office at the High School.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Transportation Department/Fort Benton Schools

Parent/Guardian Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature