



OSTA

Ottawa Student
Transportation
Authority

Effective Date:

Policy Code – Version: TBD

Policy Name: Request for Variable Transportation

Approved by motion of Board on

Cross Reference: Transportation Eligibility T18, Public Transit T7, Stakeholder Responsibility T10, Access to Empty Seats T1, Transportation Service T14

Related Forms: F1 – Application for Access to Empty Seats on School Bus Vehicles
F? – Request for Variable Transportation, F? – School Year Calendar

Policy Statement

1. OSTA shall provide variable transportation to students in a joint custody arrangement and having two homes in a way that addresses safety concerns for all parties and meets all other eligibility requirements as specified in Transportation Eligibility T18.
2. OSTA shall establish and manage a variable transportation procedure that:
 - a. Facilitates the request for variable transportation,
 - b. Addresses safety concerns during transportation, at the bus stops and at the school,
 - c. Clarifies each stakeholder's responsibility, and
 - d. Provides a clear explanation for approval or denial of request
3. OSTA shall select the most appropriate mode of transportation for the student and shall address any medical or special needs s/he might have.
4. The proposed weekly or bi-weekly schedule shall be consistent 5 days per week.
5. It shall be the parents'/guardians' responsibility to ensure the student embarks the assigned vehicle and disembarks the vehicle at the right stop, at all times, regardless of mode of transportation selected by OSTA.

6. OSTA shall have the final discretion in determining the ability of the school and/or bus company(ies) to accommodate the request for variable transportation. Some applications may be denied for safety or operational reasons.
7. OSTA shall have the right to withdraw services in its sole discretion, if the safety of the student is compromised unduly after variable transportation has begun.

Procedure

OSTA will endeavor to accommodate students in a joint custody arrangement and having two homes and require transportation under the following procedure:

Application – Request for Variable Transportation Form and Calendar

1. Both addresses must be within the attendance boundary for the student's board-designated school and within the transportation boundary for said school;
2. The parents/guardians must complete the "Request for Variable Transportation" Form xx, available at www.ottawaschoolbus.ca.
3. For safety concerns and to ensure that both parents/guardians are aware of the variable transportation arrangements, **both parents'/guardians' signatures are required for consideration**. Separate forms may be completed and signed by each party. A single form signed by both parties is not necessary providing the information on separate forms is identical.
4. The application form for Request for Variable Transportation requires the submission of an application once and will carry forward for that student from year to year at the school listed on the form, providing that the OSTA has not been advised of any relevant changes to the custody arrangements.
5. A school calendar having the transportation schedule clearly marked 1 (for one home address) and 2 (for the other home address) must be completed and submitted with the signed Request for Variable Transportation form.
6. Childcare address may be used as a substitute for home address. However, the childcare address must then also meet the eligibility requirements as stipulated in Transportation Eligibility T18.

7. The weekly or bi-weekly schedule must reflect the same pick up and drop off addresses consistently on given days 5 days a week. 1 = the first home and 2 = the second home. ½ or 2/1 indicates a transition from one home to the other, where the morning pick up may be different than the afternoon drop off. Acceptable schedules are as follows:

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
2/1	1	1	1	1	1/2	2	2	2	2
2/1	1	1/2	2	2	2/1	1	1/2	2	2
2	2	2/1	1	1	1	1	1/2	2	2

8. Should there be a change in address or cancellation of service required, a new application for Variable Transportation must be completed and signed by both parties.
9. Should custody arrangements change, it is the responsibility of either of the parents/guardians to advise OSTA of the change, in which case the variable transportation may be suspended pending review of the circumstances and/or new application for variable transportation.
10. If variable transportation to two homes is suspended for whatever reason, transportation will be provided automatically to the student based on the registration address on file at the school board, and based on transportation eligibility.
11. Parents are expected to carefully consider the capability and maturity of their child to manage the alternating schedule, given that the school will not guarantee boarding assistance on a daily basis and the bus driver is not responsible for managing alternating schedules.

Timelines for Applications

12. Application forms are due by June 15 for a September start.
13. Late applications (submitted between June 15 and September 15) for variable transportation to a second home address will be processed after September 15 and/or throughout the year. In the interim, transportation will be provided from the home address listed at the school board, providing it meets all eligibility requirements.
14. Due to the complexity of scheduling, the number of stakeholders required to provide input, and communication to service providers, processing of late applications and assignment of variable transportation may take up to 15 business days to complete. Transportation to the home address on file with the school board may occur within 3 days, as per current practice.

Students with Special Needs

15. Parents of students with special needs due to mobility issues, or having emotional or intellectual challenges must complete a Request for Accessible Transportation form through the principal to the school board Student Learning Support Services department

Transportation Mode

16. OSTA will determine the appropriate mode of transportation for the student.
 - a. If the most cost-effective mode is yellow bus, route changes and bus stops will be created to accommodate the student's first and/or second home addresses, as needed.
 - b. Should a small school purpose vehicle (van or taxi) be required, OSTA will evaluate the impact of having a student on and off the vehicle intermittently to determine, what, if any, impact there may be on other students in the vehicle. If there is no impact, route changes and stops will be created, as needed.
 - c. Students in grades 7-12 may be given a public transit pass as an alternative mode to yellow bus or small vehicle.
17. The parents/guardians, and the student accept all responsibility for the management of the alternating schedule, boarding the correct bus and disembarking at the correct stop location, regardless of mode of transportation selected.

Assessment Process

18. OSTA will review the information contained on the application form and schedule, and may contact either parent/guardian for more information if required.
19. OSTA will contact the school Principal for input regarding impact at the school level.
20. OSTA will contact the Superintendent in charge of Student Learning Support (or their designate) to discuss potential impacts on students with special needs within any small vehicle being considered for transportation of the student.

21. OSTA will complete an assessment and, if all conditions are met and it is deemed appropriate, OSTA will process the request and notify the parents/guardians, school and bus company (ies).
22. The following four (4) considerations are used in determining the safety of the student in a variable transportation arrangement. These factors are reflected in the assessment process.
- What is the nature of a possible safety risk?
This analysis considers what could happen to the student that would be harmful for the student because the student does not have a daily consistent bus pick up and drop off stop each day.
 - What is the severity of a possible safety risk?
This analysis considers the seriousness of the potential harm to the student because there is not a consistent pick up and drop off each day.
 - What is the probability of the safety risk?
This analysis considers the likelihood that a safety risk would actually occur.
 - What is the scope of the risk?
This analysis considers how any harm could affect other people.
23. In its evaluation, OSTA will also take into consideration any other safety concerns including the following factors: age, maturity of the child, accompanied by siblings/buddy, distance from first or second address to bus stop locations, ability for student to navigate to first or second address in the event of an emergency, environmental surroundings, (urban, rural), potential assistance of parent/guardian or other caregivers at the bus stop, frequency or complexity of schedule.
24. OSTA reserves the right to withdraw services if in its sole discretion; the safety of the student is compromised unduly.

Responsibilities of Stakeholders

21. Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians

- Complete the appropriate forms and calendar by the deadlines for submission with both signatures affixed.
- Ensure the student embarks and disembarks the assigned vehicle at the right stops and the right times.

22. Responsibilities of OSTA

- Review and assess requests, consulting with other stakeholders as required.
- Record vehicle and/or mode assignments in the planning software.
- Communicate with parties regarding approval/denial/cancellation

23. Responsibilities of School Principals/Designate

- Provide requested information to OSTA in a timely manner.
- Develop a boarding plan at the school level to support the request, if approved.

24. Responsibilities of Bus Company(ies)

- Ensure Operator(s)/bus driver(s) have current route copy, noting in approved cases, the student's name will appear on multiple bus lists.

Communication with Parties re: Approval/Denial/Cancellation

25. Upon approval of the request, OSTA will send a letter or email to both parents/guardians and the school confirming the schedule and the transportation arrangements.
26. Upon denial of the request, OSTA will send a letter or email to both parents/guardians and the school explaining how the assessment was conducted and the specific reasons why the request was denied.
27. Should OSTA determine that the student's safety is unduly at risk, and cancels transportation, OSTA will send a letter or email to both parents/guardians and the school explaining why variable transportation must be cancelled and will outline the safety risks to the student.
28. Should OSTA be made aware of changes in custody arrangements or any other information that alters the variable transportation parameters, and as a result OSTA cancels transportation, OSTA will send a letter or email to both parents/guardians and the school explaining why variable transportation must be cancelled and will outline next steps, if any.