

Q. What is the School Board's policy on transporting students who reside less than two miles from their school?

A. Policy 8600 – Transportations states:

Students living more than two miles from their home school will be eligible for school district-provided bus transportation. Students who attend school out of their home school zone will not be eligible for school-district provided transportation. Students shall board the bus at the nearest designated stop and will not enter or leave the bus at any other designated stop, except upon approval of the principal or principal's designee.

District-provided transportation may be provided to students living within two miles of school if they are:

- A. Permanently disabled students, whose Individual Education Plans require special transportation.*
- B. Temporarily disabled students, upon request and verification of disability and length of time of disability.*
- C. Elementary-school students (in the sixth grade or lower) whose walking routes to school meet the state's criteria for hazardous walking conditions.*

State law requires the School Board and other governmental entities to work cooperatively to identify conditions along student walking routes that are hazardous, and requires such conditions to be inspected by a representative of the school district and a representative of the state or local governmental entity that has jurisdiction over the perceived hazardous location. If it is determined that the condition meets the criteria established in state law for hazardous walking conditions, the School Board shall provide transportation to students who would be subjected to such conditions. The School Board and superintendent shall follow state law with respect to the responsible entity for correcting hazardous walking conditions.

- D. Elementary students residing within two miles of their school may be provided bus transportation at the discretion of the Transportation Department. This transportation will only be provided if seats are available on existing buses serving the school and the student gets to an established bus stop.*

For more information, visit www.neola.com/polk-fl/SEARCH/POLICIES/PO8600.HTM.

Q. Why is my child not eligible for bus transportation if I live less than two miles from the school?

A. *According to Florida Administrative Code (FAC) 6A-3, the District shall provide transportation for each student in prekindergarten disability programs and in grades K-12 in a public school when, and only when, transportation is necessary to provide adequate educational facilities and opportunities that otherwise would not be available, and to transport students whose homes are more than a reasonable walking distance away, as defined by the rules of the State Board of Education, from the nearest appropriate school.*

A reasonable walking distance for any student who is not otherwise eligible for transportation pursuant to Florida Statute 1011.68 is any distance not more than two miles between the home and school. Students living less than two miles from their assigned school are not eligible for transportation. Such distance shall be measured from the closest pedestrian entry point of the property where the student resides to the closest pedestrian entry point of the assigned school building. The pedestrian entry point of the residence shall be where private property meets the public right-of-way. The district shall determine the shortest pedestrian route whether or not it is accessible to motor vehicle traffic.

For more information, visit: <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?id=6A-3.001> , http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=1011.68&URL=1000-1099/1011/Sections/1011.68.html

Q. What would be considered a hazardous walking condition for my child?

A. Florida Statute 1006.23 — Hazardous Walking Conditions, which covers students attending any public elementary school whose grade level does not exceed 6th grade, defines hazardous walking conditions as:

Walkways Parallel to the Road

It shall be considered a hazardous walking condition with respect to any road along which students must walk in order to walk to and from school if there is not an area at least 4 feet wide adjacent to the road, not including drainage ditches, sluiceways, swales,

or channels, having a surface upon which students may walk without being required to walk on the road surface. In addition, whenever the road along which students must walk is uncurbed and has a posted speed limit of 50 mph or greater, the area as described above for students to walk upon shall be set off the road by no less than 3 feet from the edge of the road.

The above paragraph does not apply when the road along which the student must walk is a road on which the volume of traffic is less than 180 vehicles per hour, per direction, during the time students walk to and from school, or is located in a residential area and has a posted speed limit of 30 mph or less.

Walkways Perpendicular to the Road

It shall be considered a hazardous walking condition with respect to any road across which students must walk in order to walk to and from school if:

1. The traffic volume on the road exceeds the rate of 360 vehicles per hour, per direction (including all lanes), during the time students walk to and from school, and if the crossing site is uncontrolled. For purposes of this subsection, an “uncontrolled crossing site” is an intersection or other designated crossing site where no crossing guard, traffic enforcement officer, stop sign, or other traffic control signal is present during the times students walk to and from school.
2. The total traffic volume on the road exceeds 4,000 vehicles per hour through an intersection or other crossing site controlled by a stop sign or other traffic control signal, unless crossing guards or other traffic enforcement officers are also present during the times students walk to and from school.

Student Crossings Over the Road

It shall be considered a hazardous walking condition with respect to any road at any uncontrolled crossing site over which students must walk in order to walk to and from school if:

1. The road has a posted speed limit of 50 mph or greater; or
2. The road has six lanes or more, not including turning lanes, regardless of the speed limit.

Q. Which students are not covered under Florida Statute 1006.23 — Hazardous Walking Conditions:

A. Middle school and high school students. Read the entire statute at:

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=1011.68&URL=1000-1099/1006/Sections/1006.23.html

Q. What are some alternative school transportation options and safety programs that can assist with transportation for children who live less than two miles from school?

A. The Lakeland Area Mass Transit District, operating as Citrus Connection, operates throughout the county and may be an avenue that can help with transportation. For more information, visit <http://ridecitrus.com/>.

Another option is a walking school bus. A walking school bus is a group of children who walk to school with one or more adults. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school or as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

A variation on the walking school bus is the bicycle train, in which adults supervise children riding their bikes to school. There are videos describing a walking school bus available at:

- <https://youtu.be/AhY8uRfpOAU>
- <https://youtu.be/LPUa6vK9cc>
- <https://youtu.be/6E3UGZA8C5g>

Walking School Bus Training is a statewide training program that teaches adults (parents, school staff, volunteers, etc.) how to implement a walking school bus program in their community. Learn more at http://www.fdot.gov/safety/2A-Programs/Safe-Routes%20_walkingschoolbus.shtm.

Q. Is there any other information available for families that live less than two miles from their school?

A. Yes, the Florida Department of Education provides a brochure with the title, “Are We There Yet? : Staying Safe Between Home and School.” This brochure is used to provide safety information to parents, guardians, and students. You can access this brochure at: <http://faptflorida.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Are-We-There-Yet-Rev-2010-Print-Version.pdf>