



POLICY

11.7.1

SCHOOL BUS ROUTES AND STOPS

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1. POLICY OVERVIEW

TITLE: Policy for School Bus Routes and Stops

NUMBER: 11.7.1

ADOPTION: 20 August 2020
This Policy commences from the date of adoption by Council and replaces any other previous Policy.

PURPOSE This Policy outlines the responsibilities of Weddin Shire Council, School Bus Operators, Parents/Guardians, Transport for NSW (TfNSW), Schools, as well as Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) in contributing towards the safety of students who use School Bus Routes and Stops to travel to and from a school.

SCOPE This Policy is applicable to the approval and assessment of all School Bus Routes and Stops located on roads within the Weddin Local Government Area (LGA) of which Weddin Shire Council is the local road authority.

LEGISLATION *Passenger Transport (General) Regulation 2017*

REVIEW AND AMENDMENT This Policy is required to be reviewed in accordance with the review schedule set out in Council's Governance Document Framework.
All changes approved through the review process are to be recorded.
This Policy may be amended or cancelled by Council at any time without prior notice or obligations.

HISTORY

Version	Details
11.7.1	Adopted 20 August 2020

2. DEFINITIONS

Designated School Bus Stop: Designated or formal bus Stops are stops that are used by public transport as well as school buses and are located within the Grenfell town area perimeters. These Stops are used by various members of the community and will remain as long as a bus service is provided to the area.

Non-Designated School Bus Stop: Non-Designated School Bus Stops, also referred to as informal Stops are stops that are used by school buses only. These Stops are used by few and will only remain in use for a limited period of time.

3. INTRODUCTION

This Policy sets out the responsibilities of Weddin Shire Council, School Bus Operators, Parents/Guardians, Transport for NSW (TfNSW), Schools, as well as Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) in contributing towards the safety of students who use School Bus Routes and Stops to travel to and from a school.

In addition, this Policy also outlines the approval process of School Bus Routes by Council as well as safety considerations that should be taken into account in the assessment of a School Bus Stop.

These guidelines are consistent with Section 104 of the *Passenger Transport (General) Regulation 2017*.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

This Policy is intended to address the School Bus journey only. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure their child gets to and from the Stop safely.

4.1. Council

It is the responsibility of Council to assess and approve requests for School Bus Route extensions and, where need be consult with the Weddin Local Traffic Advisory Committee as well as the RMS on such a request.

Council is responsible for maintaining adequate road safety signage near School Bus Routes and Stops.

The design and maintenance of Designated Bus Stops on Council-owned land are the responsibility of Council. A Designated Bus Stop is considered a stop that is used by school buses as well as public transport, and is located within the Grenfell town area perimeters.

The design and maintenance of Non-Designated Bus Stops are **not the responsibility of Council** however, consideration may be given to the maintenance and/or improvement of a Non-Designated Bus Stop if it coincides with Council's Works Program. A Non-Designated (informal) Bus Stop is a stop that is chosen at the discretion of School Bus Operators in collaboration with the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of school bus users.

If Council receives a complaint in regards to the safety of a Non-Designated Bus Stop, then Council may conduct a risk assessment recommended by Transport for NSW in 2016 (Queensland Transport, *Volume 2: Guide to Road Safety, Part 5 Road Safety for Rural and Remote Areas*) and if the informal Stop is found to be unsafe the School Bus Operator will be notified accordingly.

4.2. School Bus Operators and Drivers

School Bus Operators must ensure that they obtain approval for all Routes from Council prior to lodging an application for funding with TfNSW.

School Bus Operators must only operate on approved Routes using a bus of approved size. The operation of a bus on a non-approved Route may breach the contract conditions the Operator has established with TfNSW.

Where the approved Route is not an all-weather road, the onus is on the bus Operator to determine whether the road surface is safe for use on any particular day or at any particular time.

School Bus Operators are expected to apply a documented safety management system under the conditions of the 'Bus Operator Accreditation Scheme' to minimise risk on School Bus Routes and Stops.

Operators are also responsible for ensuring that users and their parent(s)/guardian(s) are aware of the risks observed in the relevant safety management system as well as the necessary actions required to minimise those risks.

Non-Designated School Bus Stops are to be chosen with care by Operators in collaboration with parent(s)/guardian(s) of the bus users. A risk assessment such as that recommended in 2016 by TfNSW or designed using *School Bus Safety Guidelines (2014)* should be undertaken in the consideration of any potential Non-Designated Stop locations. This is the responsibility of Operators; to ensure all Stops are safe to use and take appropriate action if not. Operators can seek assistance from Council when assessing the safety of informal Stops.

4.3. Parents/Guardians

As previously mentioned, it is the responsibility of parent(s) and/or guardian(s) to ensure their child is safe when travelling to and from School Bus Stops.

Furthermore, parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for their child's safety whilst at a Stop prior to boarding and directly after disembarking a School Bus. While a passenger on the School Bus, the child's safety is the responsibility of the Operator.

Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) must also ensure that their child is aware of and adheres to the TfNSW *Code of Conduct for Travel by Bus and Rail* when travelling on a school bus.

4.4. Transport for NSW

Transport for NSW is responsible for the funding of the School Bus System. This Ministry contracts individual Operators to provide bus services in both rural and urban locations for the purpose of transport to and from school.

TfNSW only contracts Operators provided there is proof of Route approval from the relevant road authority i.e. Council. Once this evidence has been received by TfNSW the funding for the proposed service or service modification will be determined.

If Transport for NSW is funding the proposed service then the relevant Route that has been approved by Council must be included in the service contract with the Operator.

4.5. School

Much like it is the responsibility of parent(s) and/or guardian(s) to ensure their child's safety whilst at a Stop prior to boarding and directly after disembarking, Schools are responsible for the safety of students on school grounds before boarding and after alighting from a school bus.

Schools are also required by the Department of Education to implement road safety education programs as part of their Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) schooling from Kindergarten through to Year 10 and as part of Crossroads in Years 11 and 12.

It is strongly encouraged that local schools liaise with School Bus Operators and parent(s)/guardian(s) in regards to bus safety education and the minimisation of risky behaviour by students.

4.6. Roads and Maritime Services

It is Roads and Maritime Services' (RMS') responsibility to manage State Roads and some Regional Roads therefore any applications for School Bus Routes and/or Stops on such a road need to receive RMS concurrence before Council can grant final approval.

5. ASSESSMENT & APPROVAL PROCESS

5.1. School Bus Routes

As previously mentioned the relevant local road authority is tasked with the assessment and approval of a new School Bus Route or the modification of an existing Route and in most cases this will be Council.

Once Council has assessed and approved a Route, Transport for NSW then makes a decision as to whether the Route or Stop will receive funding approval.

All requests for a new Route or a modification to an existing Route must be lodged with Council, either via the School Bus Operator or the funding authority (refer to Appendix A for an example of the Application Form).

In determining the suitability of a Route, Council will consider the proposed use as well as the ability of the bus to manoeuvre and, where required turn around. Generally, approval should be given for the largest bus that can be used safely on the Route, regardless of the bus size initially proposed as it allows greater flexibility for future operations. Furthermore, in the case of a Route that includes a road that is not all-weather a warning should be included as part of approval conditions as well as the identification of an alternative route wherever possible. As previously stipulated the onus is on the Operator to determine whether the road surface is safe for use given the conditions at the time.

Once the assessment is finalised the applicant will be notified of the outcome.

5.2. Designated School Bus Stops

In NSW the approval of Designated Bus Stop locations is administered according to Section 104 of the *Passenger Transport Regulation 2017*.

The *Regulation* states:

- (1) The Director-General may appoint bus stops, to be indicated by signs erected or displayed with the approval of the roads authority for the road concerned and on which the words "BUS STOP", "BUS STAND" or "BUS ZONE", or some suitable pictorial representation, appear.*
- (2) An operator of a bus service may appoint bus stops, but only in accordance with a prior written approval of the roads authority for the road concerned.*
- (3) If times are specified on a sign referred to in this clause, the sign operates only during those times, but if no times are so specified the sign operates at all times.*
- (4) In this clause, roads authority has the same meaning as it has in the Roads Act 1993.*

Council is therefore the sole body of approval for the location of Designated School Bus Stops on all roads under its authority.

6. COUNCIL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL BUS ROUTES

6.1. General

Approval requests for new School Bus Routes as well as those for the modification of existing School Bus Routes should be carefully evaluated with the purpose of ensuring the safety of school children using the facility as well as that of other road users. Furthermore, the interference to traffic flow along the included roads should be minimised when evaluating such requests.

When determining the suitability of a proposed School Bus Route the following factors are to be considered:

- Road geometry
- Pavement width
- Pavement surface
- Carrying capacity of the Route, including road structures
- Grade
- Climatic conditions
- Number of school bus services using Route
- Use of Route by heavy vehicles and/or tourist vehicles
- General traffic volumes

The maximum bus size that can safely utilise the Route should be determined during the assessment process. The Operator should then be advised so as to allow them to operate any sized bus up to and including the maximum approved for the Route. Operators should be made aware that the proposed use of a vehicle in excess of the advised carrying capacity will impact on the Route's approval.

In assessing any potential site for a Stop on the relevant School Bus Route, sound risk management assessment techniques and procedures should always be applied.

6.2. Signage

Given sound risk management assessment techniques and procedures have been applied, signage is not warranted on School Bus Routes.

School bus warning signs should not be used to justify unsafe Routes.

6.3. Bus Turnaround Point

The school bus turnaround point should be located in an area where the safety of the bus occupants and other road users is not compromised.

It is best practice for the bus turnaround point be separate from Stops in order to prevent children waiting in the vicinity whilst the bus manoeuvres.

Sufficient visibility for approaching drivers should be maintained along the road in the vicinity of the turnaround point. The condition of this section of road should be satisfactory.

A school bus turnaround point may be signposted where, for safety reasons it is necessary to warn approaching motorists of the possible presence of a turning school bus on the road. School bus turnaround signage should not be used to justify an unsafe turnaround location.

Where suitable bus turnaround areas cannot be provided within the road reserve, Operators may seek approval from TfNSW for an alternative turnaround area in an adjoining property.

7. COUNCIL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR SCHOOL BUS STOPS

7.1. General

The location and design of both Designated and Non-Designated School Bus Stops should be carefully selected and evaluated to optimise the safety of school children using the facility as well as that of other road users. Furthermore, the interference to traffic flow along nearby roads should be minimised when selecting and evaluating these bus Stop parameters.

Safety assessments of Potential Stop sites should be carried out on both sides of the road in order to account for situations in which it is necessary for the child to cross the road prior to boarding and/or alighting from the bus.

Sight distances are an important consideration in the risk assessment of a potential Stop location. Further information in regards to measuring appropriate sight distances for Non-Designated Stops is provided in *Advice for choosing locations of informal school bus stops (2016)*.

In assessing any potential site for a School Bus Stop, sound risk management assessment techniques and procedures should always be applied.

7.2. Signage

Given sound risk management assessment techniques and procedures have been applied, signage is not warranted at School Bus Stops.

School bus warning signs should not be used to justify unsafe Stops along School Bus Routes.

7.3. Intersections

In the instance of a School Bus Stop located at an intersection the Stop should be positioned on the departure side as opposed to that of the approach. The bus does not impede the visibility of traffic controls and road users including pedestrians when stopped at this position and is therefore safer.

Further to this, a departure-side Stop at an intersection achieves the following: -

- Reduced conflicts between buses and vehicles on the through road turning left;
- Can serve multiple services on both intersection roads;
- Reduced impact on sight distances; and
- Shorter length requirements for approach to Stop.

The suitability of a Stop site at an intersection is subject to the outcome of a risk assessment and usually only occur on roads of very low volume.

7.4. Frequency of Stops

The number of times a school bus stops along a section of road should also be considered; it is not safe practice for a bus to pull on and off a section of road too frequently.

It is recommended that where there are single-user sites, or newly proposed sites within close proximity to one another serious consideration be given to amalgamating the two sites at the safest location along that Route. School Bus Operators should aim to have a minimum distance of one kilometre (1 km) between single-user sites.

8. APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE SCHOOL BUS ROUTE APPLICATION FORM

Applicants Details

Applicant's Name: _____
Address: _____
Contact Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____
Bus Company Name: _____

Bus Route Name/Number: _____
List of Road Names along the route:

A map of the route is to be submitted along with the application. Has the map been attached to this application? Yes No
Anticipated Number of Stops: _____ Anticipated Number of Users _____
Type of Bus to be used on Route: _____
Passenger Capacity: _____ Length: _____
Nominate alternative routes for any sections of the route that are not all-weather roads:

OFFICE USE: Received ___/___/___

Document No. _____

9. APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE INSPECTION REPORT FOR PROPOSED SCHOOL BUS ROUTE

Inspection Date:		Inspected by:	
Document Number:			
Road Name:			
Suburb/Village/Town Name:			
All Weather Surface:			
Pavement Width:			
Road Geometry (including road reserve):			
Grade of Road/s:			
Safety Notes for Bus Operator/s:			

Comments on Road Geometry and Pavement: _____

Heavy Vehicle Route: Yes No

Estimated AADT: _____

Bus Turnaround area? Yes No

Maximum sized bus that can use this route: _____

Does the requested route meet requirements for approval? Yes No

Are there any conditions the Bus Operator needs to follow?

10. REFERENCE MATERIAL

- Centre for Road Safety (2016), *Advice for choosing locations of informal school bus stops*.
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