

TRANSPORTATION

What are the plans to address bus capacity?

The Office of Transportation (OOT) is charged with providing transportation services to students in a safe and efficient manner. When this relates to bus capacity, the Office of Transportation abides by the manufacturer's rated capacity for passengers. By design, buses are rated to transport up to three students per seat. Accordingly, routes are created to optimize utilization of available seats; however, at all times, every child should have a seat while riding a bus. The Office of Transportation, as a best practice, plans for up to two students per seat at the secondary level, since students are expected to utilize more seat room than students at the primary level. Band equipment and other additional items also have an impact on available seating space. For this reason, and for safety purposes, students are discouraged from bringing items that they are unable to place in their lap and safely control while on the bus.

When a bus is reported to be overcrowded, the OOT promptly addresses this matter by collaborating with school administrators and drivers in obtaining accurate and current passenger counts. This allows a comparison of actual ridership vs. planned ridership to confirm that only assigned students are riding the bus. From this point, route adjustments are made as necessary to resolve overcrowding. Moving forward, the OOT will continue to monitor bus capacity to ensure bus efficiency and safety for all bus riders.

How is the Office of Staffing and the Office of Transportation addressing driver recruitment and retention?

The OOT has recently faced staffing challenges, which have resulted in a reduction of service levels on certain days in particular geographical areas of the county. Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) recognizes the current industry-wide challenges related to the recruitment, hiring, and retention of commercial drivers and actively engages in creative solutions to stay on the forefront of driver staffing.

The OOT closely supports the Office of Staffing (OOS) in hiring efforts to introduce more qualified drivers into the BCPS system to alleviate the current strain on service. This includes an advertising campaign with flyer distribution, magnets on BCPS vehicles, strategically placed banners, and use of specific job seeker outlets. At a minimum, recruitment events are held monthly, with the most recent on Tuesday, October 30, 2018, at Perry Hall Library, and the next on Wednesday, November 21, 2018, at the Randallstown Workforce Development Center. Driver training courses are set for November 12-16, 2018, and December 3-7, 2018. In August 2018, the OOT hosted the first staff advance meeting in many years. This was the first of several new initiatives to increase communication with all staff.

What is the process for allocating bus assignments?

School personnel enter student transportation requests into the BCPS One Student Information System (SIS). School personnel must check that transportation is requested and indicate if it will be provided from the student's home address or an alternate address, for AM and/or PM, as shown below.

BCPS SIS **Transportation** LOG OFF
Version: 5.1.4.3 (Server: local 10.4.2.65)

Home Attendance Student Grades Reports School Admin BCPS Admin

Welcome, Gary Schleicher School Year: 2016-2017 School: Afternoon MS Center

Selected Student

ID: 991087523

Name: Fife, Barney

D.O.B: 03/15/2005 [Age: 11]

Section: UnK

Grade: UnK

Status: Pending

Absent: 0 YTD%: N/A

Susp: 0

Enrollment

- ✓ Transportation
- Assign Homeroom
- Enroll Student
- Privacy Preference
- Checklist
- Siblings
- Special Services
- Withdrawal
- Promotion
- Service Learning Hours
- Student Test Scores

Request BCPS Transportation

AM Transportation Requested

PM Transportation Requested

BCPS Provided - AM

Address Type: Home Alternate

Street: 212 AIGBURTH RD

City: TOWSON State: MD Zip Code: 21286

BCPS Provided - PM

Address Type: Home Alternate

Street: 9610 Pulaski Park Dr

City: Baltimore State: MD Zip Code: 21220

Alternate Transportation (Non-BCPS Provided)

Mode: Select Mode Add

Timing:	All Days	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
AM:	<input type="checkbox"/>					
PM:	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Transportation

Transportation requests are transferred nightly from SIS to the routing software, Routefinder Pro. Routefinder Pro automatically assigns students to existing bus stops and routes. Transportation requests that do not automatically assign are reviewed manually and assigned as appropriate. Schools will be contacted if the transportation request is outside of the transported area for the school or if other circumstances need to be reviewed. It is important to note that student enrollment and requests for transportation is continuous up to and after the school year has begun.

Students requiring specialized transportation services, such as special needs, ESOL, and magnet are not routed automatically through Routefinder Pro. Routes are manually prepared, and the transportation assignments are not sent to SIS. The OOT is working on transferring these routes to Routefinder Pro and is collaborating with the Department of Information Technology and the Office of Special Education to improve the exchange of specialized student transportation information.

Explain the driver hiring and training process.

Driver Hiring and Training Process		
Recruitment	Phase I	The OOT supports the OOS in identifying the greatest areas of need for drivers within Baltimore County. Based on this information, and using established professional contacts and leads to disseminate notices for openings, the OOS selects appropriate locations to hold recruitment events.
HR Clearance	Phase II	Once candidates have attended a recruitment event and submitted the required paperwork to the OOS and the OOT, the applicants are provided a conditional offer of employment. The applicant must then initiate and complete the fingerprinting process (expense paid by the applicant) and pre-employment physical.
Preservice Training	Phase III	<p>Once the applicant has completed the required human resources' (HR) clearance process, the OOS notifies the OOT training unit that the applicant is eligible to begin training. The OOT training unit contacts the applicant to create a training schedule. The applicant must study and obtain the CDL learner's permit prior to beginning behind-the-wheel training. BCPS offers a learner's permit training class; however, the applicant obtains the learner's on his/her own. The initial cost is paid by the applicant and is reimbursed by BCPS.</p> <p>Once the applicant obtains the CDL learner's permit and begins training, they become an official employee of BCPS. Once all classroom and behind-the-wheel coursework is complete, the employee is cleared to transition to their assigned bus lot for mentoring and, subsequently, route assignment.</p>

After the initial training (pre-service), the OOT provides various forms of ongoing training for drivers and attendants. Such training includes:

- Annual inservice provided each summer addressing safety matters, specific topical items, and other items as mandated by COMAR.
- COMAR required ride-along performance observations.
- Professional development opportunities (e.g., offered by the Office of Health Services, Office of School Climate, etc.).
- Lot meetings held by area senior operations supervisors.
- Daily guidance provided by lot-based driver and attendant mentors.
- School-based offerings for professional development and instruction on assisting specific students.

Corrective Driver Training and Development

In the event corrective actions need to be taken to address employee performance, the various strategies outlined below are in place:

- After the first preventable accident within 2 years, the employee is required to attend a Retraining course.
- After the second preventable accident within 2 years, the employee is required to attend a Driver Improvement course.
- The training unit or immediate supervisor may perform additional on-board and/or indirect (off-board) performance observations.
- As necessary and if applicable, 1:1 training may be assigned to address the needs of the individual.
- The established BCPS progressive discipline model will be initiated as deemed appropriate. The items above may be incorporated as necessary.

How are the transportation guidelines communicated to school administrators and families?

The OOT held three meetings for school administrators during the summer of 2018, as was previously done in the summer of 2017 and 2016. These meetings outline transportation guidelines, timing for route delivery, SIS and Routefinder Pro overview, and critical transportation information.

The OOT realignment included a customer service and communications supervisor, and a customer service clerk at each bus facility. The additional staff has provided a person at each bus facility to answer the phone and help manage communication with the schools and stakeholders, providing better service and improved sharing of information. Staff routinely call the schools to provide updates on bus number changes, late buses, and respond to student transportation questions.

The OOT, in collaboration with the Office of Information Technology, implemented a new VoIP call system in the main communications center at Pulaski Park for school year 2018-2019. The call system allows staff to monitor peak call times and add operators as needed. This provides customers with a quicker response time and more efficient and accurate customer service. Additionally, the OOT can gather comprehensive data on the number of calls presented, handled, average time to handle, etc.

The OOT has also begun using the BCPServe tracking and ticketing system. Staff enter and assign calls from stakeholders into the system and track progress, when the ticket is closed, and any action taken, all of which is maintained in a database for reference.

What are the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Transportation vs. school staff?

School staff are responsible for entering transportation requests into the SIS system. Once transportation assignments have been made and sent back to SIS, school staff are responsible for parent or guardian notification. The OOT staff are responsible for completing student assignments based on the transportation requests and ensuring that the stops and routes are safe and efficient. The OOT staff monitor bus routes and make adjustments as necessary to ensure safety, efficiency, and student counts. Superintendent's Rule 3410 provides a comprehensive overview of the OOT responsibilities and principal responsibilities. Both Board Policy and Superintendent's Rules 3410 and 3420 are scheduled for update and review this school year.

Please explain how the Office of Transportation handles adjustments and improvements to bus routes.

School year 2018-2019 is the third year that the OOT has utilized Routefinder Pro. At the onset, this was a planned multiyear implementation, with annual adjustments or enhancements being made to improve the routing process. Some of these include updating SIS to better integrate with Routefinder Pro, creating digital walking boundaries to be shared with the Office of Strategic Planning, and reviewing routes for accuracy and efficiency.

Routes are adjusted and stops are added based on student transportation requests received through SIS. If a student transportation request requires the addition of a new stop, a routing systems technician will contact a routing assistant and review the need for a new stop and request final approval from the senior operations supervisor. All routes created within Routefinder Pro are reviewed by routing assistants at each bus lot for safety, feasibility, and accuracy. The senior operations supervisor is responsible for the oversight, design, production, management, and updating of the routes necessary to transport students safely and on-time to school. During school year 2018-2019, an additional piece of software, Viewfinder, will be implemented. This will allow all the OOT staff at each bus facility to query the routing software, view maps, and run reports, increasing the ability to ensure accurate information.

What is the current status of the Automated Vehicle Location and the rollout of Family Monitoring Capability?

Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) has been in place on BCPS' bus fleet, as well as buses operated by our contactors, since the beginning of school year 2017-2018. The system (branded Nextraq) is the same as that used by Baltimore County Government for its operational vehicles. The Web-based system enables the OOT staff to track school buses in real time, as well as for historical information.

The OOT communications team staff routinely use AVL in their daily work with internal and external stakeholders, updating them on individual bus locations and times. Staff also use the system extensively when establishing patterns of a particular route that may require alteration. The Nextraq system does not have a specifically designed feature for a rollout to families at this time; however, the company is open to working with BCPS on such potential future enhancements. A joint pilot project has also begun with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to harvest AVL data over an extended period to gradually automate the school on-time arrival information.