



DRAFT

**GUIDELINE FOR SCHOOL
BUS ROUTES AND BUS STOPS**

9 JULY 2018

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Guideline for School Bus Routes and Bus Stops* set out the responsibilities of Council, Bus Operators, Parents/Guardians, Transport for NSW, Schools as well as Roads and Maritime Services in contributing towards the safety of students who use school bus routes and stops to travel to and from a school.

In addition, the guideline also highlights the approval process of School Bus Routes by Warrumbungle Shire Council as well as safety elements that should be considered in the assessment of a school bus stop.

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

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

This Guideline is intended to address the bus journey only. It is the parents or guardians responsibility to ensure their child gets to and from the bus stop safely.

2.1 Council Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of Council to assess and approve requests for school bus route extensions as well as road safety signage near school bus routes and stops, and where need be, consult with Warrumbungle Traffic Advisory Committee and Roads and Maritime Services on the request.

Council are also responsible for the design and maintenance of designated bus stops on Council owned land. A designated bus stop is considered a stop that is used by school buses as well as public transport and is located within town 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 between bus user parents and/or guardians and bus operators, with a location outside of town perimeters.

If Council receives a complaint on the safety of a non-designated bus stop, then Council may apply a risk assessment recommended by Transport for NSW in 2016 (*Queensland Transport, Volume 2 Guide to Road Safety, Part 5*) and if found unsafe the bus operator will be notified accordingly.

2.2 Bus Drivers and Operator Responsibilities

Bus operators must ensure that they obtain approval for all routes from Council prior to lodging an application for funding with Transport for NSW.

Bus operators must only operate on approved bus routes using a bus of approved size. The operation of a bus on a non-approved route may be a breach of the contract conditions the operator has established with Transport for NSW.

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.

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 bus stops.

Bus operators are responsible for ensuring that users and their parents/guardians are aware of the risks observed in the safety management scheme and what's required to minimise those risks.

Non- designated school bus stops are to be carefully chosen between bus operators and parents/guardians of the bus users. A risk assessment either recommended in 2016 by Transport NSW or one designed using '*School Bus Safety Guidelines (2014)*' will need to be applied to any considered non-designated bus stop locations by the bus operator to ensure the bus stops are safe to use, if the risk is too high it is the responsibility of the bus operator to choose a safer area for the non-designated bus stop.

Bus operators can consult with Council for assistance on assessing the safety of a non-designated bus stop.

Please refer to Appendix C for an example risk assessment created by bus operators in Orange City Council as a guide to create a risk assessment for non-designated bus stops.

2.3 Parental Responsibilities

It is the parents or guardians responsibility to ensure that their child gets to and from the bus stop safely.

At a school bus stop, parents are responsible for their child prior to boarding and directly after disembarking the bus. While on the bus, the child is the responsibility of the bus operator.

It is also the parents or guardians responsibility to ensure that bus users are aware of and adhere to the Transport of NSW Code of Conduct for Travel by Bus and Rail, when travelling on a school bus.

2.4 Transport for NSW Responsibilities

Transport for NSW is responsible for the funding of the school bus system. This Ministry contracts individual bus operators to provide services in both rural and urban locations for the purpose of school transport.

Transport for NSW only contracts bus operators on receiving proof of an approved route from the road authority, i.e. Council.

Once the evidence has been noted, Transport for NSW will determine the funding for the proposed service or service modification.

If Transport for NSW is funding the proposed service, then the route that has been approved by Council, must be included in the service contract with the bus operator.

2.5 School Responsibilities

Although it is the parents and guardians responsibility to ensure that their child gets to and from a bus stop safely, Schools are responsible for the safety of students where they directly embark and disembark a bus to enter and exit school grounds.

Schools are also required through the Department of Education to implement road safety education programs in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) subject 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 bus operators and parents or guardians and support bus safety education to minimise risky behaviour by students.

2.6 Roads and Maritime Services Responsibilities

It is Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) responsibility to manage State Roads and some Regional Roads, therefore any applications for bus routes or stops on roads managed by RMS need to receive RMS concurrence before Council can make a final approval.

3. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

3.1 Assessment and Approval Process for School Bus Routes

The assessment and approval of a new school bus route or the modification of an existing route is the responsibility of the local road authority 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 be approved for funding.

All requests for a new school bus route, or a modification of an existing route, should be lodged with Council, either via the 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 should consider the route's proposed use, the ability of the bus to manoeuvre and, where required, turn around.

Considerations:

- It is recommended that the approval be given for the largest bus that can be used on the route, regardless to whether that bus size is initially proposed, as it will allow greater flexibility for future operations.
- If approval is given for a route that includes a road that is not all-weather, it should be noted on the approval conditions. Wherever possible, an alternative route should also be identified. The onus is on the bus operator to determine whether the road surface is safe for use, depending on conditions at the time.

After the assessment is finalised, the applicant will be notified on the outcome.

3.2 Approval Process for Designated Bus Stops

In NSW, the approval of designated bus stop locations is regulated by the Passenger Transport Regulation (2017), section 104.

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.*

The Council is therefore the sole approval body for the location of designated school bus stops on all roads under its authority.

4. ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL BUS ROUTES

4.1 General

It is the parents or guardians responsibility to ensure that their child gets to and from the bus stop safely. The bus route should be safe for the operation of the school bus that the operator has nominated for use on that route.

In assessing any potential site for a school bus stop on that route, sound risk management assessment techniques and procedures should always be applied.

4.2 Determining the Suitability of a Route for a School Bus

When determining the suitability of a proposed school bus route the following factors should be considered:

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

Assessment should determine the maximum sized bus that can safely utilise the route. The operator should be advised of this as then they have the option of using any sized bus up to the maximum approved for the route.

Council approvals should inform the operator that the use of a vehicle in excess of the advised carrying capacity will impact on the route's approval.

4.3 Signage

When sound risk management assessment techniques and procedures have been applied, signage is not warranted on school bus routes. It is not intended that school bus warning signs be used to justify unsafe school bus stops along bus routes.

4.4 Bus Turning Area

The school bus turnaround area should be in a location where the safety of the bus occupants and other road users are not compromised.

The road in the vicinity of the turnaround area should provide sufficient visibility to approaching drivers and should be in a good condition. It is best practice that a bus turnaround be located separate from a bus stop. This is so that children are not waiting on the ground when buses are manoeuvring.

A school bus turnaround area along a school bus route may be signed where, for safety reasons, it is necessary to warn motorists of the possible presence/operation of the school bus on the road. The school bus turnaround sign should not be used to justify an unsafe school bus turnaround location.

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

5. ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL BUS STOPS

5.1 General

The locations of both designated and non-designated school bus stops should be carefully evaluated to optimise the safety of school children using the facility as well as for other road users.

Generally, school bus stops should be located and designed to:

- Maximise the safety of school children and other road users; and
- Minimise the interference to traffic flow on the designated route.

In assessing a site for its suitability as a bus stop, assessment should be undertaken from both sides of the road. This will ensure that in situations where the child may be required to cross the road either before embarking or after disembarking all factors are taken into consideration.

Sight distance should also be considered in the risk assessment when assessing the suitability of a location for a bus stop. Refer to '*Advice for choosing locations of informal school bus stops* (2016)' for guidance to measure appropriate sight distance for non-designated bus stops.

In assessing any potential site for a school bus stop, sound risk management assessment techniques and procedures should always be applied.

5.2 Types of Bus Stops

There are two different types of bus stops used by bus operators and its users, which are designated and non-designated. The type of bus stop varies depending on who uses it, where it is located, and the number of people who use it and the longevity of the bus stop.

- Designated or formal bus stops are stops that are used by public transport as well as school buses and are located within town perimeters. These stops are used by various members of the community and will be used for as long as a bus service is provided to that area. Council is responsible for the design and maintenance of this bus stop.
- Non-designated or informal bus stops are stops that are used by school buses only and are located outside of the town perimeter. These stops are used by few bus users and will only be used for a limited period of time. These bus stops are decided between a bus operator and the parents/guardians of the bus user and therefore Council are not responsible for the design and maintenance of this stop.

Council may consider improving a non-designated bus stop at a location that coincides with Council's Works Program, this decision will depend on Council's available resources at that time.

5.3 Bus Stops at Intersections

From the perspective of the bus passengers and pedestrians, a bus stop located on the departure side of an intersection is safer than located on the approach side. In this position the bus does not block the view of traffic controls and other intersection traffic.

Furthermore, the following advantages may be achieved from a departure-side bus stop:

- Reduced bus conflicts with vehicles turning left from the through road
- May suit services on both intersecting roads
- Less restriction to sight distances; and
- Shorter length requirements for bus stop approaches

On very low volume roads, a bus stop on an intersection may be appropriate, subject to the outcome of a risk assessment.

5.4 Frequency of Stops

The number of times a bus has to stop along a section of road should also be considered. It is not safe practice for a bus to pull on and off a road too frequently. It is recommended that where there are single-user sites, or newly proposed sites, within close proximity to one another, that serious consideration be given to amalgamating the two sites at the safest location along that route. Bus operators should aim to have a minimum distance of one kilometre between single-user sites.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Application of Approval for a School Bus Route

Application for Approval for a School Bus Route

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 <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
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. _____

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Appendix B – Assessment of School Bus Routes

Proposed Bus Route Inspection Report

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?

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Appendix C – Example Risk Assessment Designed by Orange City Council Bus Operators

APPLE CITY TOURS	Issue	2
	Date	Nov-2017
	Review Date	Nov-2019
	Document Owner	Managing Director
Informal Bus Stop Safety Evaluation Checklist		

INFORMAL BUS STOP SAFETY EVALUATION CHECKLIST

ROUTE NUMBER/NAME:	
ROUTE STOP NUMBER:	PM STOP
ADDRESS/LOCATION OF BUS STOP:	
ROAD SURFACE (circle appropriate):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BITUMEN / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GRAVEL / <input type="checkbox"/> DIRT / <input type="checkbox"/> CONCRETE
DATE OF EVALUATION:	
INSPECTORS NAME:	
OTHER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE INSPECTION: (list names)	

NOTES:

Bus drivers need to be vigilant when students are boarding and disembarking from the bus. Drivers should;

- Ensure they pull over in an area where it is safe for the student/s to access or disembark from the bus. If possible, this should be away from street corners or bends in the road where the students' visibility could be impeded
- Wait until the bus is stationary before opening the doors
- Wait until students are seated before leaving the pick-up zone
- When dropping students off, the driver should warn students of oncoming traffic if visible to the driver
- The driver should instruct students to remain at the drop-off point and not to cross the roadway until after the bus has departed and there is a better line of sight for those students

(Source: TfNSW School Bus Safety Guidelines for Contract Holders of Transport for NSW Rural and Regional Bus Services)

Guidance for the minimum Seconds that a vehicle approaching at the speed limit needs to be visible from beside the roadway

Speed Zone	Estimated Meters	Seconds
100 km/h	250m	9 secs
80 km/h	180m	8 secs
60 km/h	125m	7 secs

Note: Add 1-3 seconds for roads with a downgrade, curves and/or are unsealed

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APPLE CITY TOURS	Issue	2
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2. SIGHT LINE FOR VEHICLES APPROACHING FROM IN FRONT OF THE BUS:					Circle as appropriate:	
Bus stop is sighted so that it is clearly visible to motorists approaching the from in front of the bus					Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Approaching vehicles are visible from the side of the road for at least 250m (or 9 seconds)					Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Crests or corners in the road do not hinder the visibility to oncoming traffic of the bus stop					Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Trees and other vegetation do not hinder the visibility to oncoming traffic of the bus stop					Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
The bus itself is not blocking the line of sight to students at the roadside					Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Circle below the level of traffic flow observed for vehicles approaching in front of the bus:						
TRAFFIC FLOW:	Very Low	Low	Medium	High		
Does the traffic density vary depending on time of day?					YES / NO	
Circle or detail below the local speed limit and the observed visibility of vehicles approaching in front of the bus:						
SPEED LIMIT:	50km/h	60km/h	80km/h	100km/h		
VISABILITY (m):	125m	125m	180m	250m		
VISABILITY (secs):	7secs	7secs	8secs	9secs		
<i>Note: Add 1-3 seconds for roads with downgrade, curves and/or are unsealed.</i>						
Is visibility in-line with the prescribed guidelines?					YES	NO
If NO, please detail:						
If NO, please also detail any control factors in place to manage risk:						
2. RISK SCORE TALLY:					6/6	0/6

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APPLE CITY TOURS	Issue	2
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4. WAITING AREA FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN:	Circle as appropriate:	
	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Students can wait in an area well clear of passing traffic (Preferably 8m from the edge of travel lanes. A minimum of 4m is essential)		
Are there any:		
○ Steep drains	NO	YES
○ Poor draining ground	NO	YES
○ Trip hazards	NO	YES
○ Encroaching vegetation	NO	YES
There is a safe route to the bus stop?	YES	NO
There are no roadway features that would force or encourage the student/s to walk to their stop in traffic lanes or shoulders, cross un-signalised railway crossings, narrow bridges or culverts	NO	YES
Is there satisfactory area for parent parking?	YES	NO
If NO, please provide details:		
Are students able to:		
A. Safely wait within their property boundary (as bus stops right out the front); OR		
B. Safely wait with parent/guardian in their private vehicle until bus arrives; OR	YES	NO
C. Both of the above.		
D. OTHER: _____		
Is the surrounding area satisfactory for the safe crossing of the road (if required)	YES	NO
If YES, please also detail any control factors in place to manage risk:		
ONLY WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT		
AND/OR GUARDIAN.		
4. RISK SCORE TALLY:	10/10	0/10

6. ANY OTHER OBSERVED CONDITIONS OR IDENTIFIED ISSUES:

RISK LEGEND:	
Satisfactory risk score between 0-10 out of a total of 36	High Risk Rating 1
Satisfactory risk score between 11-20 out of a total of 36	High Risk Rating 2
Satisfactory risk score between 21-25 out of a total of 36	Medium Risk Rating 3
Satisfactory risk score between 26-30 out of a total of 36	Medium Risk Rating 4
Satisfactory risk score between 31-34 out of a total of 36	Low Risk Rating 5
Satisfactory risk score between 35-36 out of a total of 36	Low Risk Rating 6

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Hazard Identified	Corrective action to be taken	Hazard Priority H, M, L	Hazpak Score	Date completed

Checked and approved by Managing Director:

(Sign) _____ (Date) _____

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7. REFERENCES

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