10 ESSENTIAL
Ways To Schedule
Safe School Bus Routes

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While a few one-off states have instituted statewide policies for school bus routing, most of these decisions are made at the local school district level.

If your school is not one of the few that benefits from state government policies, it's likely you're spending a lot of resources planning school bus routes. Because you are tasked with balancing what is ideal for your students' safety with the reality of time and money, school bus routing tends to get rather complicated.

While your primary goal is establishing the safety of pick-up and drop-off locations, you must also consider how to create more efficiency in terms of your school's budgetary limitations.

The following are 10 ways to ensure your scheduled school bus routes are safe.

1. Avoid "Danger Zones"

School bus "danger zones" are the areas around a bus or stop where dangers exist for students getting on and off the bus. For the safety of all of your students, it is imperative that your scheduled school bus routes knowingly avoid bus stops near areas of high risk, such as sex offenders' homes, drug zones and known gang areas.

Danger zones also exist in the form of traffic patterns. Determine where to load and unload students based on the location of streets with lower traffic volume. Be sure to avoid multi-lane roads where pedestrians are at most risk of injury.

2. Achieve Unified Communication With Your Bus Drivers

No route is a static, one-dimensional line from point A to point B. There are many factors that affect the safety and efficiency of your bus routes, from planned roadwork to weather-related incidents.

Whether it's upcoming construction that completely shuts down a route or a fallen tree blocking a road after a bad storm, your drivers need the most up-to-date information to keep students safe. Maximize your visibility by letting your knowledgeable drivers add their valuable input about the areas they navigate on a daily basis.

3. Manage Rerouting Around Travel Restrictions

Awareness and management of active travel restrictions is central to effectively maintaining safe school bus routes. Manual management of the following can be challenging:

- Routing around roadblocks
- Turn restrictions based on bus size
- Speed limits based on time of day
- Discovering every known area of traffic congestion
- Avoiding multi-lane roads and divided highways

With the technology of school bus routing software, your drivers can receive alerts in real-time, and your maps are always updated with new roads and developments. With accurate updates, you're able to quickly and effectively reroute buses to safer roads that get students home safely.
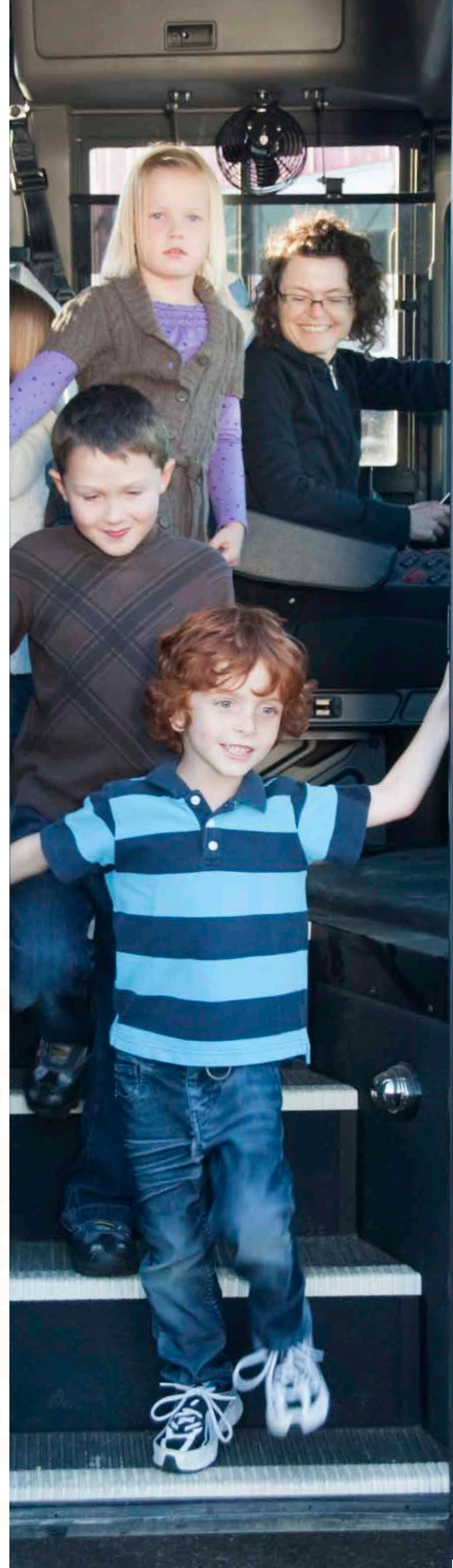
4. Make Sure Maps Are Accurately Updated

Inefficiencies abound when your maps are not accurately updated, which compromises student safety. You need the ability to easily modify your service area maps so that your transportation staff has insight into any new routing issues such as construction and one-way roads.

When selecting a solution to manage your service area maps, look for software that includes simple, user-friendly modification of your maps as well as GPS receiver functionality that allows you to check in on the quality of the roads your buses use.

5. Monitor Hazardous Or Unsafe Roads

Another factor of maintaining student safety is avoiding pick-up and drop-off locations near dangers like curves and hills, low-hanging trees, on-street parked cars and snowdrifts. Visibility is a safety issue for the bus driver, other drivers, parents and students

Make sure students are not crossing hazardous roads or walking down roads without sidewalks to get on their bus or when arriving home. These conditions should be monitored in real-time to ensure safe routes.

6. Ensure Critical Student Data Is Available Any Time

As each school year approaches, you have a small window of time and limited resources to rollover students and prepare routes for the new year. Accounting for every student's profile and integrating updates and changes is a challenge.

Student data is an incredibly important factor for maintaining safety. Student information, including bullying incidents, special needs, medical data, emergency contacts, custody arrangements and daycare information needs to be updated, accounted for and relayed to the necessary people. This critical student data must always be up-to-date and available any time you need it.

7. Reduce Walk Distances To Bus Stops

One way to optimize your bus routing is to group students at bus stops for greater efficiency. However, this also means that certain students may have to walk further to reach their bus stops.

A comprehensive safe school bus routing strategy reduces walking distances for students to their stops, and keeps track if students with special needs require the bus to stop at their front door. Consider distances between home and school, the age of the students, safe walking routes and more to determine the best way to reduce walking distances.

8. Avoid Overloading Buses And Bus Stops

Another factor in safe student transportation is avoiding overloading buses or overcrowding bus stops. Large groups of peers have a tendency to get rowdy together, and putting together too many different age groups may incite unnecessary bullying. Strive to create a better balance for student numbers at pick-up and drop-off locations.

Accurately align peers by including information about each student's age when you schedule bus routes. Incidents should always be tracked and kept up to date with other critical student data so that school and transportation staff are aware of any problematic students.

9. Analyze Bell Times

A big part of efficient bus transportation management is your ability to evaluate bell times to create tiered bus routes. Maybe you have separate schools for middle and high school students, or they are all together in one building.

It must be absolutely clear who needs to be where and at what time. You need total insight into bell times and grade levels in order to optimize pick-up times at schools, confirming that your fleet is functioning with the greatest efficiency possible.

10. Eliminate Human Oversights

Manual school bus routing leaves too many opportunities for human oversights and mistakes. The flow of information for your student transportation management must be error-free to ensure safe school bus routes for all students at all times.

Trained, responsible professionals are always critical to maintaining safe school bus routes. The technology of school bus routing software complements their effectiveness, keeping errors to a minimum or eliminating human oversights altogether.

When your transportation managers aren't bogged down by data errors and lack of information, their time is freed up to focus on the exchange of information to bus drivers, parents and administration, which ultimately improves your most important student safety measures.

School bus route software opens up new safety opportunities for mapping out your routes. By seamlessly integrating, analyzing and relaying all of your vital student and routing data, bus routing software helps you reduce walking distances for students to their stops, minimize bullying incidents and avoid placing students in high-risk danger zones.

Bus routing software provides you with total visibility into where to load and unload students to maximize safety, showing real-time traffic volume, construction sites and travel restrictions. Your maps are always updated, so you're able to quickly and effectively reroute buses to safer roads that get students home safe *and* on time.

Ready to learn more about the benefits of school bus routing software to help improve student safety and optimize your transportation management? Click here to schedule a free information session, where you'll receive 10 free bus route optimizer tips in 10 minutes.

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