



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

School Student Transport Scheme



Information for parents and students

The NSW Government is committed to providing support for students to access education. The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) is a key component of this.

The SSTS (the Scheme) provides subsidised travel for eligible school students on rail, bus, ferry and long distance coaches. A subsidy is also available for transport to and from school in private vehicles in areas where there is no public transport.

The Ministry of Transport manages the Scheme through its regional offices located in Newcastle, Parramatta and Wollongong. Transport operators issue passes to eligible students, and schools also play an important role in verifying students' eligibility and liaising with transport providers.



Eligibility requirements

The Scheme can only be used for travel between home and school, and for approved travel commencing between the hours of 6.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Monday to Friday on school days. It does not extend to activities such as school excursions, sports and work experience or attendance at joint secondary/TAFE programs, multi-campus high schools, Saturday schools, pre-schools, mini-schools (except for full-time geographically isolated distance education students), before and after school care or child minding premises.

To be eligible for the Scheme an applicant must be:

a resident of NSW

4 years and 6 months of age or older *and* enrolled as one of the following:

- an infant student (K-2) regardless of the distance between their home and school
- primary student (Years 3-6) who lives more than 1.6 kms (radial distance) from school, or 2.3 kms or more by the most direct practical walking route to the nearest entry point to the school
- secondary student (Year 7-12) who lives more than 2 kms (radial distance) from school, or 2.9 kms or more by the most direct practical walking route to the nearest entry point to the school
- a TAFE student under 18 years of age at 1st January of the year of application who is:
 - * enrolled in a full-time TAFE course for a minimum of 20 hours a week
 - * not employed
 - * living more than 3.2 kms from the college by the most direct practical walking route *and*
 - * attending the college closest to their home where enrolment is available.

How to apply

- 1 Application forms are available from the school or TAFE. Forms must be completed and signed by a parent or guardian if the student is under 16 years of age.
- 2 A separate application must be lodged for each part of the trip undertaken with a different transport operator. For instance, a journey using the services of two bus operators and CityRail requires three applications. If a trip is undertaken on two separate services of the same transport operator, only one application is necessary.
- 3 The completed application form(s) should be returned to the school or TAFE, which will verify that the student is enrolled. Schools also do an initial check on the student's eligibility on radial distance grounds.
- 4 The school will forward the application form(s) to the transport operator, who will assess whether the student meets the distance eligibility criteria.
- 5 If eligible, the operator will issue the student with a pass, which indicates that it is solely for travel under the Scheme. In some cases (such as in rural areas) passes are not issued, as the operator knows the students. In the Greater Sydney area, students may be issued with a 'Tcard', the new public transport smart card.

A new application must be completed when a student:

- enrolls in kindergarten
- progresses from Year 2 to be an eligible student in Year 3
- progresses from Year 6 to Year 7
- changes name, school and/or address
- applies for an additional travel pass in a joint/dual custody situation.

Unsuccessful applications

Applicants can reapply for the Scheme through the Ministry of Transport if the operator rejects their application. They should reapply in writing to the nearest Ministry of Transport regional office setting out the reasons why the student should have access to the Scheme. These may include safety or medical issues.

If the application is also rejected by the Ministry of Transport, and the applicant believes there are special circumstances that should be taken into account (such as safety or hardship issues), they can appeal. The regional office will provide information at the time of rejection on how to appeal the decision.

Appeals are assessed by the School Student Transport Scheme Appeals Panel. Members of the Panel include representatives of the Department of Education and Training, the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, the Council of Catholic School Parents or the NSW Parents' Council and a member with expertise in safety.



Private vehicle conveyance

Where there is no public transport available (mainly in rural areas) parents can apply for a subsidy towards transporting students to school by private vehicle. To be eligible, travel must be made from home to school or transport pick-up point (e.g. bus stop, railway station) both in the morning and afternoon.

Application forms for private vehicle conveyance are available from the school. The completed application form should be sent to the address given on the application form.

Boarding school students

There is a range of travel assistance available to eligible students who attend boarding school. Boarders may either have a pass for daily travel or for vacation/weekend travel, but not for both.

Travel by State Rail

Students can travel home at weekends or vacations using State Rail's regular scheduled services on its train and coach network.

Long distance coach travel

A refund for up to nine return journeys in a year between home and school is available. Long distance coach travel is only available for boarders who do not have access to State Rail's regular scheduled services on its train and coach network.

Regular timetabled bus services

Boarders may be carried free of charge on regular timetabled bus services for visits to and from home at weekends or vacation periods.



Country school bus services

If there is space available, boarders may travel free of charge on regular school bus services for visits to and from home at weekends or vacation periods.

Private vehicle conveyance

Where no organised public transport is available, a subsidy may be paid towards the cost of providing transport for boarders. Similar conditions apply as for non-boarders.

Student responsibilities

When completing an application for subsidised travel under the Scheme, parents and guardians acknowledge that students have been made aware of the Codes of Conduct. The Codes of Conduct were developed in conjunction with the bus industry, CityRail, representatives of parent groups and education authorities. They aim to ensure both the safety of students and the comfort of other passengers by outlining the behaviour required of students when travelling to and from school.

The Codes of Conduct are printed on the School Student Transport Scheme application forms. Parents/guardians are asked to discuss these simple rules with their children so that they understand the standards of behaviour required of students.

Depending on the seriousness of the misbehaviour, students may be penalised if they breach the Codes of Conduct. Students may have their travel pass and/or Tcard temporarily or permanently suspended and may be required to make alternative travel arrangements. Students misbehaving on trains and railway stations may have their travel pass confiscated for up to one year and be required to buy normal tickets for travel to and from school.

CONDUCT WHEN TRAVELLING

When travelling between home and school, students must adhere to various regulations regarding passenger behaviour and the Codes of Conduct for travel by bus and or rail.

To ensure their safety and the comfort of other passengers students will:

- ✓ behave safely at all times
- ✓ respect the needs and comfort of other passengers
- ✓ behave appropriately at all times (e.g. no use of offensive language, fighting, spitting, placing feet on seats or throwing things in or from the bus/train/ferry)
- ✓ protect all property and report any vandalism
- ✓ show their travel pass or ticket when requested
- ✓ only use the travel pass for its intended purpose
- ✓ maintain possession of the travel pass at all times
- ✓ follow instructions about safety
- ✓ adhere to the law that bans smoking
- ✓ not eat and drink in prohibited areas
- ✓ keep arms, legs and other parts of their bodies inside the bus/train/ferry
- ✓ only attract the attention of the driver in case of emergency.

More information about the Codes of Conduct is available on the Ministry of Transport or CityRail website.

Operator responsibilities

Bus operators conveying students under the Scheme are contracted to do so by the Ministry of Transport. The contract requires operators to meet specific conditions, such as vehicle and driver standards, access to information on services, and lost property and complaints management. For a more detailed explanation of the contract conditions for bus operators, go to the Ministry of Transport's website listed on the back page of this booklet.

Complaints and concerns

If you have a complaint or concern about a bus service, the first step is to contact the relevant operator.

You can also lodge a complaint about a school transport provider by calling the Transport Infoline on 131500, or via the website at www.131500.com.au.

Improving the Scheme

The Ministry of Transport recognises that improvements are desirable to make the School Student Transport Scheme easier to administer, cost efficient and more responsive to educational needs. If you have ideas on how the Scheme might be improved, you can register them with the Transport Infoline by calling 131500 or by email via the website at www.131500.com.au.

Frequently asked questions

What if a student loses their travel pass or Tcard?

If your Tcard is lost or stolen, call the Transport Infoline on 131500 to cancel your card and organise a new one. A replacement fee may apply. If your travel pass is lost or stolen, you should apply for a

replacement from the transport provider concerned (e.g. the bus operator, CityRail). A fee will be charged. Students must pay the fare until a new pass is issued.

Why must students use the same modes of travel for trips to and from school?

Under the current arrangements, payments are based on the return fare, five days per week for the one operator. Generally the current system does not allow for operators to be paid a part subsidy.

Why can't students board or disembark at different locations?

Payments to transport operators are based specifically on travel between the student's home and school and not to or from other places such as after school care or a grandparent's home. Under current arrangements, the Scheme does not fund travel for multiple destinations, except by eligible students whose parents have dual custody (see question below).

I've separated from my child's mother/father. Can my child get a pass for subsidised travel from both parents' addresses?

If parents have dual custody, the child is eligible for subsidised travel from both addresses subject to the normal eligibility criteria. A copy of the Family Law Court ruling should be forwarded to the nearest Ministry of Transport regional office for assessment. If the matter has not gone to the Family Law Court, a statutory declaration from each parent that specifies time share arrangements for the child residing at both addresses should be submitted. Applications for subsidised travel for Friday afternoons and Monday mornings only (to cover weekend access visits) are not eligible under the Scheme.

My child is required to attend sporting/ excursions/work experience during school time. Why can't the bus pass be used for this?

The Scheme only provides for travel between a student's residence and the school attended. There is no provision under the Scheme to fund the carriage of students for any other purpose or to or from any other location. Students who are travelling from locations other than between home and school are entitled to travel at the normal concession fare.

When will I receive private vehicle conveyance payments?

Payments are made twice a year after the completion of the semester and are based on advice from the school on the number of days that students attended for the semester. Payment is based on the distance between home and the point at which the private conveyance terminates, i.e. the school, bus pick-up point or railway station.

Privacy

The Ministry of Transport, transport operators, schools and education authorities collect information on applicants for and recipients of the SSTS for administrative, planning and reporting purposes. The Ministry will manage your personal information in accordance with state and federal privacy laws. For more information, refer to the Ministry of Transport's website.



Enquiries

Application forms

Contact your school or TAFE college.

Local school transport services

Contact your local transport operator.

Complaints or compliments

Phone 131500 or log onto the website at www.131500.com.au.

If the school or operator cannot answer the enquiry, please contact the SSTS staff at the nearest Ministry of Transport regional office.

Parramatta Office

Level 6, 16–18 Wentworth Street
Parramatta NSW 2150
Locked Bag 5085
Parramatta NSW 2124
Telephone: 02 9891 8900
Toll free: 1800 227 774

Newcastle Office

Ground Floor, 239 King Street
PO Box 871
Newcastle NSW 2300
Telephone: 02 4929 7006
Toll free: 1800 049 983

Wollongong Office

Level 6, NRMA Building
221–229 Crown Street
PO Box 5215
Wollongong NSW 2500
Telephone: 02 4224 3333
Toll free: 1800 049 961

Additional information about the School Student Transport Scheme is available at www.transport.nsw.gov.au and www.cityrail.nsw.gov.au

For information about Tcards, see www.tcard.com.au



This information was current as at September 2004.