

Bus Transportation Study - Fall 2022

In our effort to continue to improve and to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of our families, we worked with Student Transportation of America (STA) on a transportation study in Fall 2022.

PARENT SURVEY

75 Weare School District families responded to the survey conducted in September/October. Below is a summary of the results of questions and comments. For the full survey results, please see Appendix A.

- 77% (57) of respondents had children who took the bus to school
- 91% (68) of respondents had children who took the bus home from school

Of those respondents,

- 68% felt that the length of time on the bus is reasonable
- 75% felt that the bus stop is located in a safe area
- 67% felt that the distance from the bus stop to my home is reasonable
- 77% felt that the bus driver operates the bus in a safe manner
- 76% felt that the bus driver is positive and helpful
- 43% felt that the children on the bus behave properly
- 61% felt that the bus is orderly
- 57% felt that issues on the bus are handled properly by the driver
- 45% felt that issues on the bus are handled properly by school personnel

The survey contained opportunities for comments. Of those, there were

- 17 comments of concern about the length of the bus route or pickup/dropoff time
- 5 comments of concern about the driver shortage
- 14 comments of concern about student behavior
- 4 comments of concern about the safety of specific bus stops
- 9 comments of concern about the location of specific bus stops
- 11 positive comments about bus drivers
- 10 positive comments about the bus company
- 12 positive comments about the overall safety and reliability of bus transportation

School Bus Rules

Each year, parents sign a “Bus Ridership Contract” which articulates the rules children must follow. That contract contains the following:

Students transported by school bus shall be under the authority of the bus driver. Disorderly conduct, including abusive language, or refusal to submit to the authority of the driver, shall be sufficient reason for a student to be denied transportation.

All of the bus driver’s directions must be followed

All school rules apply to the bus

Students must follow set procedures for getting on and off the bus

Students are expected to sit properly in their seat

Keep feet out of the aisle

Face forward

No standing while the bus is moving

Not throw items out the window

No eating or drinking on the bus

Taunting and teasing of others (students or bus driver) will not be tolerated
(harassment/bullying is against the law)

Keep hands to yourself

Behaviors that make the bus ride unsafe or unpleasant for other students or the driver are not allowed.

Bus discipline is an important safety-related issue. All school rules apply while riding the bus. State law allows school districts to suspend the rights of pupils to ride on a school bus when said students fail to conform to the reasonable rules and regulations. Students who receive a discipline report will be given a disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include suspension from the bus, as well as from school. As provided by state law, any bus suspension to continue beyond 20 school days must be approved by the school Board (RSA 189:9-a) If a student has been suspended from riding the bus, it is the parent/guardian’s responsibility to transport the student to and from school during the days the suspension is in effect.

Typical consequences for negative bus behavior *(depending on the age of the student and severity of the incident)*

- Bus driver response to behavior
- School disciplinary action and parent contract
- 1-3 day bus suspension
- 3-5 day bus suspension
- 5-10 day bus suspension and a meeting with child, parent and administration
- 10-20 day bus suspension and a meeting with child, parent and superintendent
- 20+ day bus suspension to be determined by the School Board

BUSES AND ROUTES

There are 14 buses that serve the Weare, Henniker and John Stark Districts. Ten (10) of the buses are for Weare students and four (4) are for Henniker students. Routes are developed to balance convenience and time. Over the last couple of years there have been times when buses were consolidated because of the driver shortage. This has resulted in longer runs for some routes. When STA is fully staffed, the designated runs will return.

WEARE BUS 1			
WMS	38 riders <i>(average)</i>	46 minutes	74 miles a day
CWES	29 riders <i>(average)</i>	35 minutes	3 backing turnarounds
WEARE BUS 2			
WMS	47 riders <i>(average)</i>	40 minutes	72 miles a day
JSRHS	39 riders <i>(average)</i>	45 minutes	4 backing turnarounds
WEARE BUS 3			
WMS	28 riders <i>(average)</i>	50 minutes	77 miles a day
CWES/JSRHS	55 riders <i>(average)</i>	44 minutes	3 dirt roads 4 backing turnarounds
WEARE BUS 4			
WMS	28 riders <i>(average)</i>	28 minutes	53 miles a day
JSRHS	49 riders <i>(average)</i>	47 minutes	3 backing turnarounds
WEARE BUS 5			
WMS	28 riders <i>(average)</i>	37 minutes	73 miles a day
CWES	39 riders <i>(average)</i>	44 minutes	3 backing turnarounds
WEARE BUS 6			
WMS	44 riders <i>(average)</i>	47 minutes	104 miles a day
CWES	60 riders <i>(average)</i>	35 minutes	1 dirt roads 3 backing turnarounds
WEARE BUS 7			
WMS	57 riders <i>(average)</i>	45 minutes	90 miles a day 1 dirt road
JSRHS	45 riders <i>(average)</i>	38 minutes	3 backing turnaround

WEARE BUS 8			
WMS	57 riders <i>(average)</i>	46 minutes	79 miles a day 1 backing turnaround
JSRHS	53 riders <i>(average)</i>	40 minutes	
WEARE BUS 9			
WMS	57 riders <i>(average)</i>	42 minutes	79 miles a day 2 backing turnaround
CWES	39 riders <i>(average)</i>	35 minutes	
WEARE BUS 10			
WMS	40 riders <i>(average)</i>	30 minutes	82 miles a day 1 dirt road 2 backing turnaround
CWES	60 riders <i>(average)</i>	32 minutes	

HENNIKER BUS 1			
HCS/JSRHS	39 riders <i>(average)</i>		3 dirt roads
HENNIKER BUS 2			
HCS/JSRHS	(AM) 55 riders <i>(ave)</i> (PM) 55 riders <i>(ave)</i>	(AM) 40 minutes (PM) 30 minutes	101 miles a day 1 backing turnarounds
HENNIKER BUS 3			
HCS/JSRHS	(AM) 63 riders <i>(ave)</i> (PM) 77 riders <i>(ave)</i>	(AM) 75 minutes (PM) 75 minutes	4 backing turnarounds
HENNIKER BUS 4			
HCS/JSRHS	(AM) 58 riders <i>(ave)</i> (PM) ___ riders <i>(ave)</i>	(AM) 50 minutes (PM) 80 minutes	backing turnarounds

DRIVER RECRUITMENT

Student Transportation of America (STA) has 14 drivers. In Fall 2022-2023 they were down 2 drivers. While they have been able to recruit drivers, the training process is demanding and time consuming and sometimes this results in the loss of a recruit.

BUS DRIVER INITIAL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- DOT Physical
- Pre-Employment Drug Screening
- Fingerprinting/Criminal Clearance Certificate
- NH School Bus Certificate
- 10 hours Classroom and Written Test
- CDL License
 - 25 Classroom Hours (approximately)
 - 35 Hours Behind the Wheel (approximately)
 - 3 written tests
 - FMOSA Entry Level Drivers Training Certification
 - Road test

ONGOING DRIVER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- Policies Review
- Safety Best Practices
- Emergency Procedures
- Right-to-Know
- Blood Borne Pathogens
- Bullying Prevention
- Transporting Students with Special Needs
- Suicide Prevention

EPA School Bus Grant

STA received 1.58 million for 4 electric buses and infrastructure to use on behalf of SAU 24.

The rural nature of the districts contributed to receipt of the rebate.

POs must be submitted by April 2023.

Buses have a 120 mile range.

Buses are supposed to be on the ground in Weare by October 2024, but that may be too aggressive a timeline because of the backorder on bus manufacturing.

Anticipate that each bus will cost about \$400,000 to build and needs to run five years. Anticipate cheaper maintenance and fuel.

Buses are owned by STA.

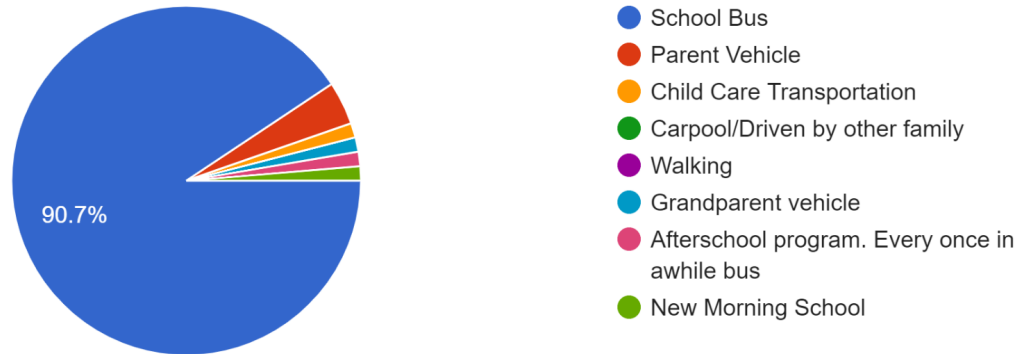
Diesel buses cost about 100,000. Electric \$400,000

Last year of our current contract is 2024-2025

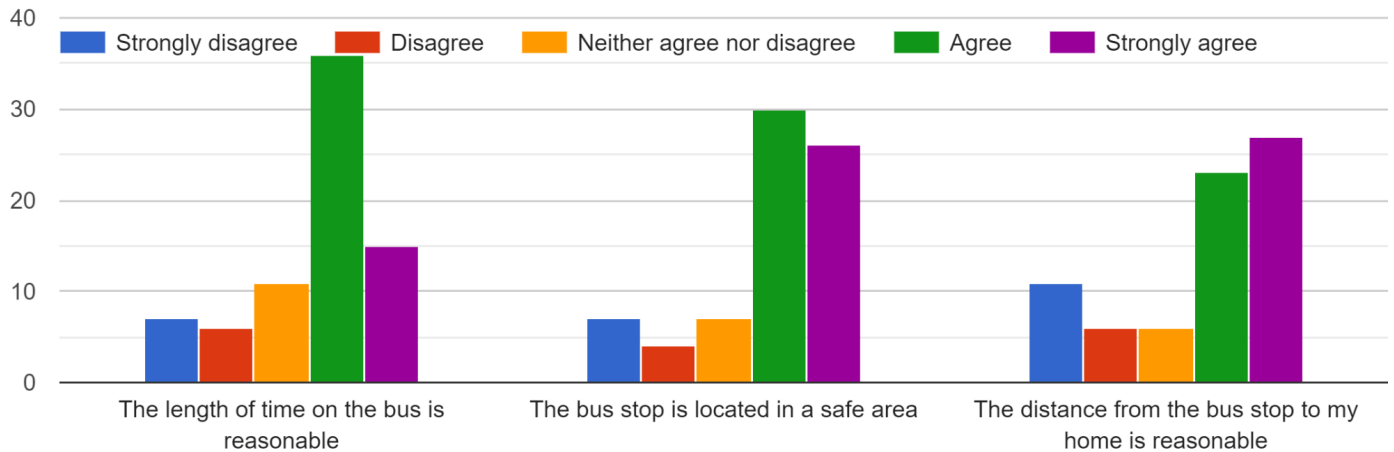
APPENDIX A

What is the main mode you plan to have your child(ren) use to travel FROM school for 2022-2023?

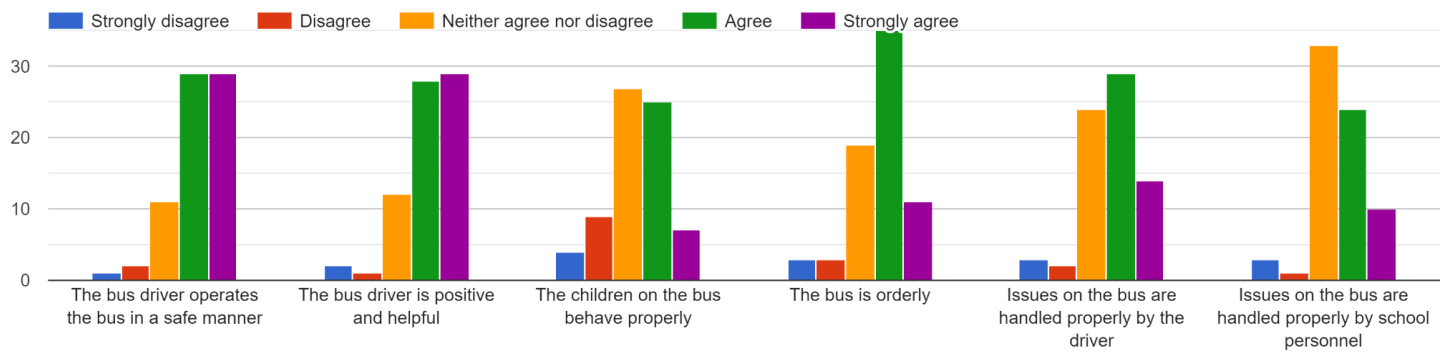
75 responses



If your child rides the school bus, please give feedback on the following areas your child(ren)'s experience on the bus

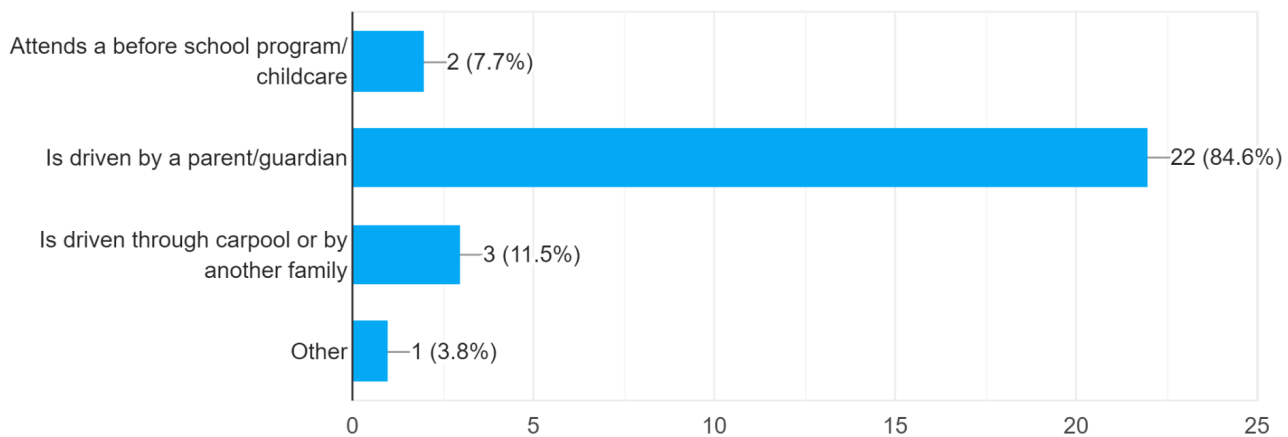


If your child rides the school bus, please give feedback on the following areas your child(ren)'s experience on the bus



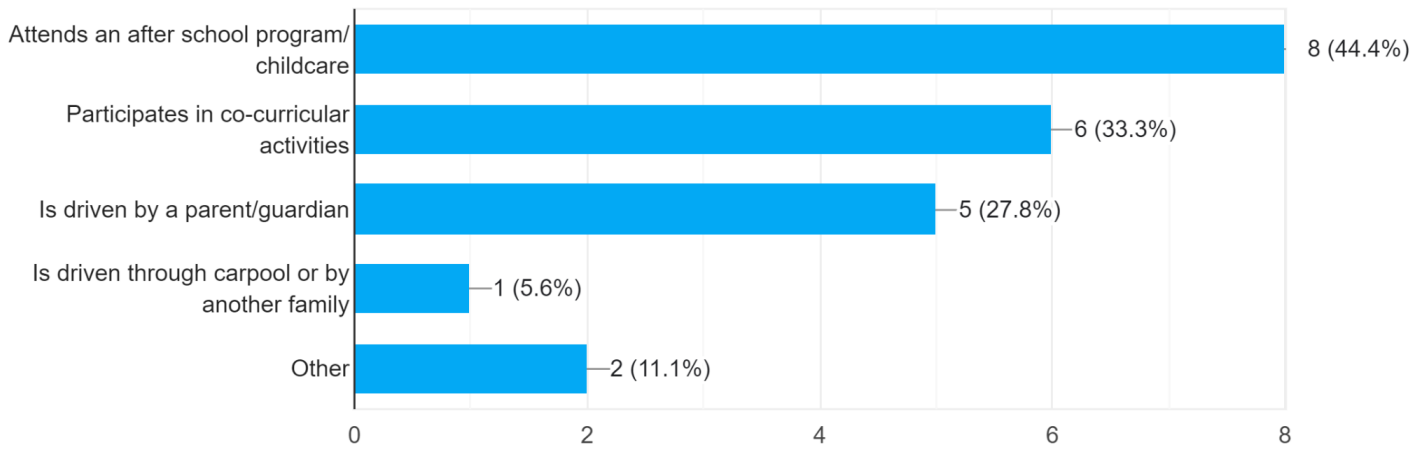
If your child(ren) does not usually ride the school bus to and/or from school, how does your child(ren) get TO school? (check all that apply)

26 responses



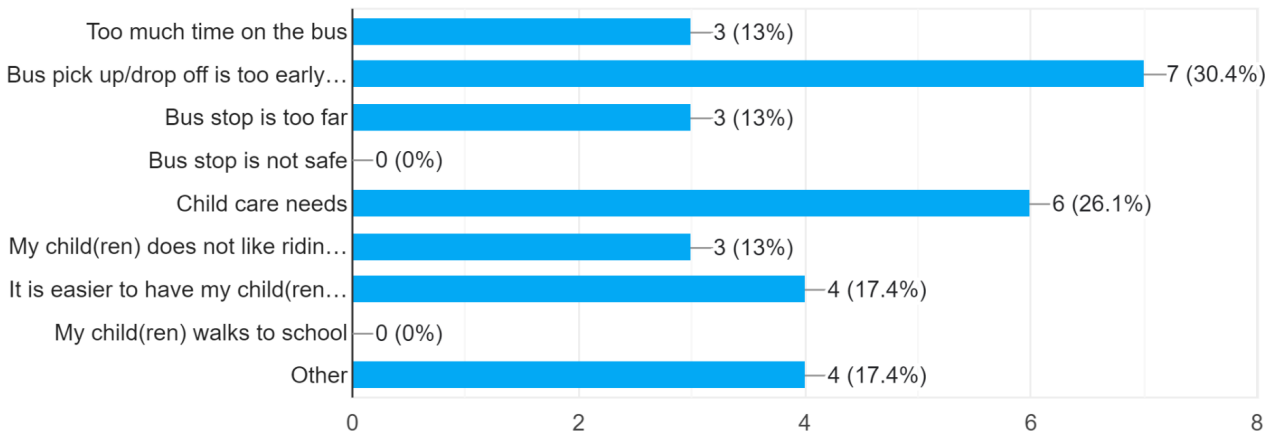
If your child(ren) does not usually ride the school bus to and/or from school, how does your child(ren) get FROM school? (check all that apply)

18 responses

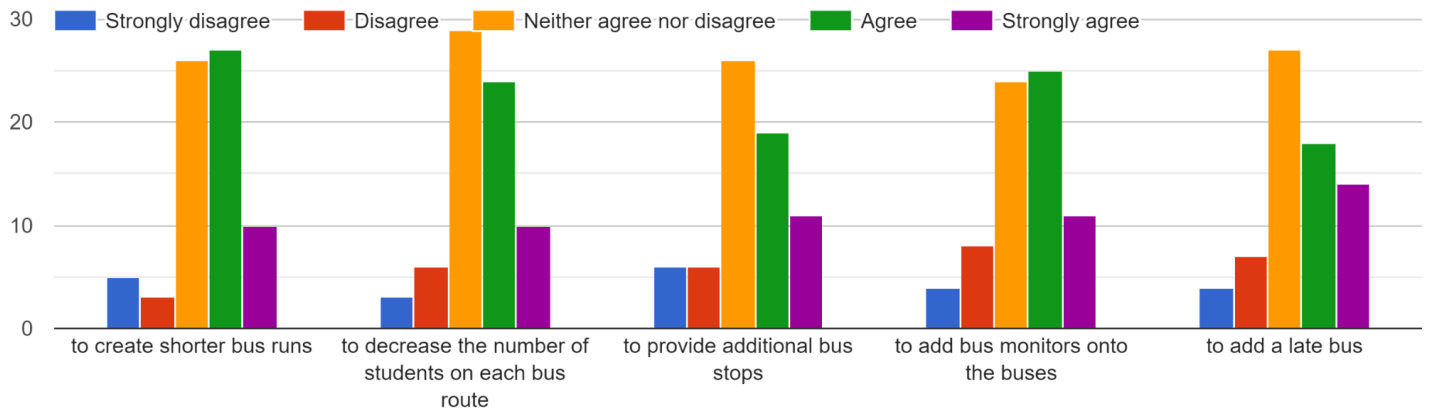


If your child(ren) does not usually ride the school bus to and/or from school, what are the reasons? (check all that apply)

23 responses



Changes to bus routes and bus stops impact the budget. Please share your feedback on the following possible changes. (Note: These are not changes that are necessar...ould support an increase in the transportation budget...



SURVEY COMMENTS

TIME/LENGTH OF TRIP/DISTANCE (17)

(Lufkin Rd bus stop) bus is late by 15+ minutes on drop off. Kids spend 40+ min on bus (7 min by car)

6:35 is super early to be at a bus stop, and it's not always on time.

Distance

Distance of bus stops to the homes

You never know what time they are coming on the way home

For being about 5 minutes away from the actual school, she is on the bus for 30 mins plus, seems long.

Weare is widespread so some busses run for awhile or are very early

I only drop my son off in the morning because he would otherwise be on the bus for 30 minutes and the school is 1 mile away.

My son's on the bus for 45 to 50 minutes

My daughter gets on the bus at 6:35ish and doesn't arrive at school until 7:15/7:20! That is an unbelievably long time to be on a bus in my opinion.

The distance a bus needs to drive is much greater in such a large town.

Having a large town (land wise).

The town is large and spread out. The budget needs to be appropriate for how spread out we are. That and the town allows far too many building permits to be issued each year. Too many people moving into town.

Size of the town

Student feels the bus ride is very long.

Weare is a huge town and hard to accommodate

Weare is cheap and staggers school times so my daughter has to be at the bus stop before 7am, that's ridiculous!! This is not the bus companies fault but rather budget and it just sucks.

NOT ENOUGH DRIVERS (5)

Driver shortage and communication on times buses are being late

Enough bus drivers, it is a large town

Finding substitute drivers and large number of students on some buses

Not enough drivers

when there are sub drivers

STUDENT BEHAVIORS (14)

Behaviors and bus training so we don't have to run as many sped buses.

Child behaviors. Bullying particularly. Not much drivers can do though other than address issues as they come up.

As of now, our experience has only been positive. I do worry about bus issues that may pop up. I would be very happy to see monitors on buses. I feel like a bus driver has a lot to manage and that a lot can happen on the bus. The bus driver should have to only focus on driving and bus monitors should assist with behaviors.

Kids not following bus safety rules... They know them, they just dont care

Also, a bus driver needs to keep his/her attention on the road. Bus monitors are needed to make sure children are making safe choices. Monitors must sit towards the middle of the bus, not up front, talking to the driver.

Too many children on the bus and they can't always watch the children and the road at the same time. Bud monitors on each bus would be super beneficial.

Children scream a lot

My child has heard plenty of curse words on the bus

Last year there were issues where my son felt intimidated/threatened/pick a bad feeling by a student on the bus and he didn't know what to do, so he hid. He got in trouble for hiding instead of finding out the root of the problem. Spent the summer shoring him up, really hoping for a good year this year.

My daughters say there are difficult behaviors on the bus that don't change. Reservoir Drive, bus 3

last year WMS Admin did not care whatsoever about school or bus behavior and following through with discipline

There has not been an issue on the bus that had to be handled by school personnel

My child just says "it's good"

Parents. Parents expect way too much from one person- who is driving the bus. The driver can't watch every child AND pay attention to the road, it's impossible

SPECIFIC STOP CONCERNS (17)

Safety

- Balch Hill Rd corner of Mtn School Rd
- Hilbren Road
- Hatfield and Meadow.
- Route 77

Distance

- Reservoir drive/Collins Landing
- Corner of Winslow Rd. And Craney Hill Rd.
- Upper Craney
- Holly Hill (2)
- Lull Road/Old Francestown Road (2)
- Fox Hollow Drive
- Oak Hill/Oak Ridge

I live on reservoir drive and have to walk all the way up to Collins landing with my 1st grader even though the bus drives right by my driveway.

It's on the top of a hill, where cars can't see the whole area Balch hill rd corner of mtn school rd

Our bus stop is at the corner of Winslow Rd. And Craney Hill Rd.

My daughter has to walk up a steep hill with no real side of road to walk on especially in the winter months when snowbanks are high and overflowing, people fly down the hill and large dump trucks up and down all day.

it's dangerous in my opinion

Wish they could turned around at 95 upper Craney in weare as she is the only one on at this stop but will make Emery lane work

The Hilbren Road stop at the bottom of the hill is incredibly unsafe in winter conditions

The Holly Hill stop needs a second one further down the road.

Our stop is Hatfield and meadow. It hasn't happened this year yet, but in past years in adverse weather, the bus has slid passed the stop because it is in the middle of a steep hill. The bus stop is a considerable distance from our house and we can not see the bus stop from our home

Our stop is located at the corner of lull rd and Old Francestown Rd. We live roughly 1 mile from the stop and I am uncomfortable with my girls walking home alone.

The bus stop is close to a mile from my house and is at the corner of Old Francestown Road and Lull Road in Weare. I live on a well traveled town maintained road. There are neighbors around us that have children in the school district as well. There is no reasonable excuse that there cannot be a bus stop closer/safer for my children to use. It is too far for them to walk to a from in the winter time and is unreasonable to expect them to walk a mile up hill every day before and after school. The situation makes it very hard/impossible to get my children to and from the bust stop and keep normal job hours. It just proves that the school district is more concerned about their budget than the safety of my two kids. As I said in a previous survey, if the logging trucks and other tractor trailers can drive past my house 12 months out of the year why can't a school bus pick my kids up at a reasonable bus stop?

This year - we are "inactive" so the bus does not stop on our road - even tho they drive on it. (Fox Hollow Drive) . Last year they would pick up at the beginning of the road and drive down the road and go around the circle and back on 77... It Would be safer for the bus to stop at the circle not where people are pulling into our road at 50/40 mph.

The stop is a mile from our house and he is the only student at the oak hill oak Ridge stop

The Bus drops my son off too far from the house because we live on a dead end.

There has been a few times that my daughter has had to cross OVER route 77 bc the bus driver forgot her stop and drove past it.

Theres enough children on the road that would benefit from them being drop off at their houses .Theres a culdesac for easy access to turn a bus around and safe enough spots to drop the children off .

We are the last house on Holly Hill Farm Road and we have to go about 1/2-3/4 mile to get to the bus stop.

We need more bus stops. I need a bus stop closer to my house for my children to use. There should be something available that is a safe distance for them to walk to.

OTHER (13)

- Late Bus (3)
- Safety App (2)
- Younger children with older children(2)
- Communication (2)
- Bus runs late
- Different school times make the routes inefficient

Late bus to school

Many families have difficulty picking up kids at 2:40, from after school clubs or activities, without having to pay for an after-school program.

A late bus would be WONDERFUL for working parents whose children play a middle school sport.

Different school times creating twice the amount of bus trips during the day. i.e. bus goes to the same stops 4 times a day

Would like a safety app tracking the bus so I know my child made it to the school safely.

Putting younger kids with older kids

Elementary school age children 1st - 3rd should not be riding the bus with high school age children. Several parents have agreed that they would let their child ride the bus if they did not also take high schoolers.

I do not have an opinion since I do not work for the bus company, and we have never had an issue with transportation for our kids. I would defer to the drivers to see what they need.

Entering our address as a bus stop even after driving by several times and calling to update

The lack of communication with the bus company. I'm still trying to find out times and reactivate a stop for my youngest child.

The times. Often the morning bus runs late

We have had nothing but positive experiences with transportation.

Would like a safety app tracking the bus so I know my child made it to the school safely.

GREATEST STRENGTHS (35)

- Dedicated, friendly, and competent drivers (11)
- Bus company is easy to work with and communicates effectively (10)
- Safe, reliable, and accommodating (12)

Bus drivers are friendly

Friendly bus driver who takes charge of discipline when needed on orange route

Drivers go above and beyond to get kids home safely. They genuinely care about our children and will do what they can if any issues arise.

Love the drivers and the bus company is great to work with

Great bus drivers and typically runs on time

The drivers themselves. My kids absolutely love the middle school driver! She makes my daughter feel safe and comfortable.

There is a blonde bus driver, I believe her name is Kristen. Every bus driver should be more like her, she cares for each and every child and knows each and every child individually. She makes them feel safe, she is the definition of a great bus driver!

Our son just started school and rode the bus for the first time. We were very pleased with how kind and helpful the bus driver was to our son.

You have amazing employees

They're great!

Our consistent bus driver is fantastic. She knows how to accommodate the traffic flow around her. Bus 5

Tracy at the terminal is absolutely amazing for every interaction I have had with her! She has been very kind, helpful and understanding every time I've called her with an issue or a question.

Quick to adapt to changes

Communication is always effective

Communication on late pick ups or drop offs

Dispute all the hurdles of staffing and illness issues they still run and my kids get to school. Thank you so much for all you do and have provided during the pandemic and as we emerge from it strong and more equipped.

The buses are safe. The drivers are reliable. It's is easy to communicate with the driver directly or through the terminal. I don't worry about my kids getting to school in safely.

Easy to call the bus company and get answers

Flexibility of having a child change buses short term and be able to accommodate.

On time every day. Safe driver.

Helping students with proper busses and transportation

I appreciate the school transportation. The driver(s) know my children. The bus is timely and predictable.

I feel that most stops are in safe distances and areas.

It's a reliable way for my daughter to get to and from school

Making the students feel safe

Routes run on time

My child can be picked up at the beginning and the start of the bus route and all drivers have always asked my preference to ensure I was ok with my child crossing the busy road we live on once the bus arrives. I am sure they aren't supposed to deviate. I just have always found it sweet that they ask. I feel like they have always put safety first and we have been taking the bus for 5 years now.

The school cancels classes when it is appropriate in the winter time.

They are consistently on time

They make it easy to get kids to and from school

Coming from Manchester, and hearing about the bus issues in Goffstown and surrounding towns, I have nothing but admiration and respect for the bus drivers and think they are doing a great job. Things may not be perfect for everyone, but I could not ask for more after knowing the alternative.

We have never had an issue with the school bus in the past six years, occasionally busses are not on schedule but that is expected and understandable. The drivers on our route have always been kind to our kids and seemed to have great control over their students.

This year bus 1 for WMS has been on point usually the first week or two of school is rough but the bus pick up and drop of have been consistent from day 1! Thank you!

I used to be a bus driver for 5 years here in town until covid hit, so my answers are based off my experience as a previous driver as well as discussions with my children who ride the bus.

We need more bus routes to reduce the amount of kids on some of these buses!! 57 kids on one route is a little much...