

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Limited capacity bus routes to be announced next week for students returning for in-person learning

Service limited to special education, homeless, elementary and specialty school students

Oct. 9, 2020 – Transportation Services is finalizing bus routes for eligible riders who have indicated to the district they plan to return for in-person learning, and the department is preparing to notify parents of assigned routes next week.

School bus service will be limited when in-person instruction resumes on Oct. 19 due to physical distancing and its impact on bus capacity. Under the [HISD Communicable Disease Plan](#), buses will run at half capacity with just 26 students.

To accommodate the reduced capacity, bus service will be limited to special education, homeless, elementary, and specialty school students. Service may also be provided for some students in middle school as well as those who live along high-risk routes if resources are available.

Bus service will not be immediately provided to high school students, but could be provided later if health conditions improve and bus capacity increases.

“Our goal has always been to provide students with safe and reliable transportation to and from school,” Transportation Services General Manager John Wilcots IV said. “That is still our mission and we have worked hard to develop routes for as many students as we can safely accommodate.”

As students return for the district’s second six weeks of school, bus riders will be required to wear masks, sanitize their hands and scan their bus badges upon boarding, and maintain physical distancing — sitting one student per seat by the window. Seats will be filled from back to front as students board to limit contact.

Drivers must wear masks, face shields, and gloves and sanitize the bus after every student drop off, Wilcots said, noting that buses also are deep cleaned and disinfected at the end of each week. Additionally, four to six bus windows will be open whenever possible to help with ventilation.

“We’ve done our due diligence, we’ve gone through our ‘what if’ scenarios,” Wilcots said. “We’re prepared to continue to make modifications as things progress.”

Wilcots encouraged students to continue to use their bus badges, which boost student safety, provide real time ridership data, and allow parents who sign up for the service to get notifications every time their child gets on and off the bus.

The Safe Stop bus tracking app is no longer available. Upon learning this summer that the app would no longer be offered, the department launched a search for a new app that could accommodate district needs. That search is still ongoing.

Parents with questions about bus routes or safety protocols should contact Transportation Services through the [Let’s Talk!](#) platform.

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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