

Guidelines for Transporting Students Less Than the Minimum Distance (1½ Miles)

The “Rating Sheet for Walking Students” and “Safety Busing Check Sheet” may be downloaded through the State Department of Education Student Transportation website. Idaho Code § 33-1501 states: “Primary requirements . . . are the safety and adequate protection of the health of the pupils.” Idaho Code § 33-1006 further states: “(2) transporting pupils less than one and one-half (1½) miles as provided in Section 33-1501, Idaho Code, when approved by the State Board of Education.” The following guidelines are suggested when reviewing and evaluating “Safety Busing” applications. New safety busing sites shall be reviewed with this guideline, and all safety busing sites shall be re-evaluated at intervals of at least every three years.

1. *Width of the shoulder of the road.* Children should not be expected to walk upon the traffic lanes of a highway. The speed, number and type of vehicles traveling any of the roadways would indicate that traffic lanes are unsafe for pedestrians. Shoulder width on each side of the roadway should be at least three (3) feet and should be maintained free of snow and other obstructions.
2. *Traffic count.* There are usually more vehicles using main highways than using secondary roads. However, a traffic count can be misleading because of variations at different times of the day. Motorists hurrying to and from work during rush hours that coincide with school hours present a hazard to children. Traffic counts should be taken during times students would be required to travel the area in question.
3. *Lack of crossing guards.* Some districts provide school crossing guards at busy intersections; others provide no extra protection for youthful pedestrians.
4. *Lack of law enforcement.* Posted speed limits are often ignored unless adequate enforcement is provided. This can be hazardous to school children.
5. *Ages of children.* While certain conditions present a degree of hazard to people of all ages, older students can be expected to accept more responsibility and exercise better judgment than younger students.
6. *Railroad crossings.* Moving trains as well as trains stopped at crossings present hazards to young peoples on their way to school.
7. *Nature of traffic.* A concentration of heavy truck traffic increases the hazards of any road. Areas near large manufacturing plants or office buildings experience heavy traffic when work shifts change.
8. *Inadequate pedestrian safeguards near school areas.* Shortly before the start and close of the school day large numbers of vehicles converge on the school presenting extra hazards to children who must walk.

9. *Temporary hazards.* Construction projects, street repairs, excavations, and similar projects present additional problems and temptations to children walking to and from school.
10. *Child molesters.* Where children must walk through parks and other secluded areas, child molesters may present a hazard. However, this category is difficult, if not impossible to assess.
11. *Inadequate protection around waterways.* Where children must walk along or across ditches, creeks, rivers, etc., without adequate protection, hazardous situations and temptations to children are present, causing unsafe conditions. Length of required exposure should be factored into assessment. Walking past versus walking along open waterways present very different hazards.
12. School district administrators shall develop an objective measuring instrument, which contains a scoring element for assessing hazards encountered by students while walking from home to school routes. Districts may use the sample measuring instrument provided by SDE, a sample of which is available through its website. School districts shall reevaluate all safety busing sites within district boundaries at intervals of at least every three years.
13. SDE recommends school district board of trustees annually approve the formation of an ad hoc supplemental transportation committee for the purpose of objectively evaluating all hazardous routes under 1.5 miles from the students' home to school, using a board approved measuring instrument. It is further recommended that the ad hoc supplemental committee be made up of transportation professionals and student advocate representatives, i.e., city, county, state traffic engineers, law enforcement professionals, district pupil transportation supervisory personnel, district or other safety professionals, district and/or region PTA representatives, etc. SDE further recommends that the chairman of the ad hoc supplemental transportation committee report its recommendations to the local board of trustees at a timely scheduled public school board meeting.
14. SDE recommends that school district administrators solicit route evaluation requests from all interested patrons via school administrators.
15. SDE recommends that the objective measuring instrument and the related scoring element be used in determining an appropriate "cut off" for safety busing purposes when the scoring element used indicates hazards that are "reasonable" for students to encounter during their walk to and from school. The philosophy for this recommendation is based on the assumption that all students must encounter "some hazards" during the course of their travel from home to school. The intent of the objective measuring instrument is to prioritize and/or weight hazards.

16. SDE recommends that each local school district evaluate and implement a pedestrian safety program. This program should teach students of all ages how to deal with hazards to use existing pedestrian facilities, and follow safe walking practices. This should be a continuing program with positive reinforcement throughout the school year.
17. SDE encourages each school district and local governmental agency to upgrade their school zones as changing hazards suggest and to employ crossing guards, install signing, and upgrade pavement markings where appropriate.
18. SDE recommends that each school create or update a school route plan to provide for an orderly review of the school area traffic control needs. The plan should consist of a simple map showing streets accessing the school, existing traffic controls, established school routes, and crossings. The number of school crossings should be limited to the fewest possible required to safely accommodate the demand.