

Town of Los Gatos School Bus Pilot Service – FAQ

May 1, 2019

BUS OPERATIONS AND SERVICE

Q: Who provides the school bus pilot service?

The Town of Los Gatos funds, designs and supports the pilot service using its own funds and fare revenue. Congestion relief around schools is the primary goal of the service, with a focus on the streets around school that experience the highest levels of congestion. The service is not offered to all schools and all areas. The schools are not financial partners in this program.

Q: Where do the buses go? What is the bus schedule? Where are the bus stops?

In the 2019/20 school year, the service will be available to three schools, Los Gatos High, Fisher Middle and Blossom Hill Elementary. We are providing these three routes:

Route A - N. Los Gatos to Fisher and Blossom Hill

Route B - Mountains to LGHS and Fisher

Route C - LGHS to North Los Gatos afternoon only

You can find all the service information, including bus schedule, bus stop locations and route maps, on the Town's website. The information is updated regularly as needed.

<http://www.losgatosca.gov/schoolbus>.

Q: Why does Route C only run in the afternoon time?

Among many suggestions for service improvements, providing service to the high school was requested very often. However, the budget only covers two routes of service. Working with the transportation contractor, staff designed the new afternoon service using the same buses making a second afternoon trip to serve the high school. We are not able to utilize the same buses in the morning due to the schedule constraints.

Although this additional service does not meet all of the needs, it is an opportunity to quickly offer a solution in response to customer feedback at very minimal additional cost. The Town is anticipating running the service for one semester from August to December and evaluating the need in late 2019, taking customer response and the VTA service change into consideration.

Q: Who operates the buses?

Student Transportation of America (STA), Inc., has been chosen to be our school bus transportation provider. STA is North America's safest independent provider of school bus transportation services, with an industry-leading safety rating and the youngest fleet in the business. They operate more than 13,500 vehicles and are committed to providing their customers with the highest level of safe and reliable student transportation, management, logistics and technology solutions possible. STA's services are delivered by

drivers, dispatchers, mechanics, managers, technology professionals and others who are committed to STA's longstanding culture of safety and the well-being of students in their care.

Q: Why do you want passengers at the stop 5 minutes early?

State law requires drivers to stop traffic and escort children to the bus if they are not already standing at the stop. This delays our schedules and annoys the neighbors. We also do not want your kids to miss the bus by cutting it too close in the morning. Our drivers try hard to stick to the published schedule, but sometimes things happen, and they just can't be that precise.

Q: What if my child misses the bus?

All passengers are advised to arrive 5 minutes earlier at the bus stop. The bus drivers will not wait for passengers after the scheduled time. Every family should have a backup plan where kids have a way to contact a parent or neighbor that can get them to school.

Q. The Mountain route doesn't match the bell schedule of Lexington Elementary School. Can my child ride the bus to school?

Yes, any student can ride the bus with the proper pass. However, the schedule does not match the Lexington School bell schedule. The Los Gatos Union School District requires students to attend the onsite childcare (Clubhouse), if they are on campus outside of school bell time. For Clubhouse information and registration, please visit Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation's website: <http://www.lgsrecreation.org/>

BUS PASSES AND PRICE

Q: How do I buy a pass and how much does it cost?

Please register on our web page at <https://www.losgatosca.gov/schoolbus> and purchase a pass. You have the option of purchasing more than one pass for all students in your family. Fare information for School Year 2019/20 is also available on the website.

Q: Are there discounts for multi-child families?

Considering the bus pass revenue only covers 10 – 15% of the total cost to provide the service, the Town is not offering discounts for multi-child families.

Q: Do passengers need to show a pass to board the bus?

Yes. Each passenger will receive a bus pass and they must carry this pass whenever they ride the bus, even if the driver already knows them. No one can ride the bus without a pass, even if the bus is not completely full.

Q: Do you sell single or weekly passes?

A key to the financial success of a program is predictability in filling a bus, which will result in congestion relief and fare revenue. To make the pilot successful, we are only offering two types of passes: annual all day and morning/ afternoon only passes. We also can't afford to spend money staffing an office to sell day passes, and risk overloading buses for our regular riders. We want to put as much money into service as we can, and as little as necessary into overhead.

Q: What if my child loses the bus pass?

If your child has lost his/her pass, you can request a replacement pass through our website. There will be a \$10 processing fee. Once purchased, the school bus driver will have the new bus pass for you within one week. Your receipt can be used as a temporary bus pass until you receive the new bus pass.

Q: Can I get a refund if things change later?

In most cases, no. Please review the Refund Policy before purchasing a pass.

Refund Policy

When you purchase a bus pass we must reserve a seat on the bus for you. Therefore the Town does not issue refunds, with the only exception that your child moves away from the School District and no bus service is available to you. In all other situations, including when the student's bus pass has been revoked due to not following the rules, no refunds will be issued.

If your child does move away from the School District and no bus service is available to you, then your refund will be pro-rated based on the number of service days left in the school year from the day the bus pass is returned to the Town and proof of change of address is provided. Refunds will be paid by check regardless of original payment method. There will be a \$20 processing fee for all refunds.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Q: How do I find out when the bus will arrive? What if the bus is late?

STA uses SafeStop, a mobile app that allows parents, students and schools to securely pinpoint the location of a vehicle on its route to and from school. The app updates in real time with stop/arrival information and includes notifications of when a student has boarded or exited the bus.

The SafeStop app is accessible from any device connected to the Internet - smartphones, tablets and desktop computers. It can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play. Customers will be provided with information to register for SafeStop.

Q: Who should I talk to about the bus route design and schedule? Who do I talk to if I have complaints or compliments about the service?

For urgent matters, customers should call STA customer service at 408-998-8275. For all other matters, you may fill out the [Feedback Form](#) for the most timely response. STA and Town staff will work together to respond to you and improve the service.

Q: What happens if my child leaves an item on the bus?

Bus drivers keep items on the bus for a few days so that the student can pick up the item the next time they ride the bus. Please remind your student to ask the bus driver if they have found any items matching the description of the student's lost item. Additionally, customers can call the STA customer service at 408-998-8275 to inquire about lost items.

SAFETY:

Please review the Safety rules with your students before purchasing a pass.

Q: Do the buses have seat belts? Do all riders have to wear their seat belts?

Yes. All our buses are equipped with lap and shoulder seat belts. All riders must wear a seat belt at all times without exception.

Q. Do children of various age groups ride the same bus?

Students of various grades can and may be mixed on school buses. The Town of Los Gatos and STA will take every step necessary to ensure that students are properly seated and supervised to maximize behavior management. The first five rows are reserved for Elementary School students.

Q: Do cars have to stop when a bus stops?

Yes! When a bus stops and its red lights and stop arm are activated, cars in both directions must stop. Where there is a divided roadway with a median, only cars moving the same direction as the bus must stop. There are significant fines for drivers who fail to yield to a school bus.

Q: What happens if there is an emergency?

In the event of an emergency or similar serious incident, the Town and the STA will dedicate themselves to securing the safety of students as a first priority and will respond to the incident accordingly. Communication to customers will be sent as soon as possible once all necessary safety and response measures have been taken and information is available to share.

DISCIPLINE

Q: How is discipline carried out on the bus?

Drivers are responsible for maintaining proper student supervision and monitoring of all students on board.

Q: What steps are taken to maintain the discipline of school bus?

A verbal warning shall be issued to students violating behavior guidelines. After a verbal warning, an Incident Report Form shall be submitted to the Town, the student's parents and the bus operator company. The Town may suspend or revoke transportation privileges without refund. Parents/guardians are financially responsible for vandalism caused by their child

Q: Can my child's bus pass be taken away?

Yes. If a child does not respond to the progressive discipline assigned, a child's pass may be suspended or revoked without refund. In this case, the Town will notify the parents in writing and request the bus pass be returned to the Town. The passenger will not be allowed on the bus if his/her pass is suspended or revoked.