



Transportation FAQ

2025-2026

The Millburn Board of Education will begin taking applications for paid subscription transportation for the 2025/2026 school year on April 14, 2025.

The fee for the 2025/2026 school year will be **\$1,595.00** per student. **Please note:** There will be no family cap for the 2025-2026 school year.. Subscription busing fees are **non- refundable**. **The deadline for applications through CommunityPass is June 13, 2025.** All applications received after June 13, 2025 will be placed on a waiting list.

Subscription Busing Rates:

Subscription busing is planned to be a self-sustaining program. The costs of providing transportation have increased significantly over the past few years and are projected to increase significantly each year. We must raise rates in order to meet the actual costs of the subscription busing program.

Of the 40 routes run by the District, approximately 25 of these routes exist only for the purpose of providing subscription busing. This means that only about 15 of the routes are fulfilling the mandated busing obligations of the District.

- Tiered routes (routes that run both a middle/high school route and an elementary tier) are projected to cost approximately \$109,519.20 a year in 25-26, or \$54,759.60 per tier. So the subscription busing program is anticipated to cost the District about \$1,368,990. With about 788 paid subscribers per year, the cost to the District of subscription busing is about \$1,737.30 per student. The Board has chosen to help subsidize the program for the 25-26 school year to reduce the increase to \$1,595 per student for the 25-26 subscription fee.
- The charges for subscription busing were held flat in 2022-2024, even though costs had increased significantly. This was due to the challenges that the program faced in light of the driver shortages, and the continued potential adjustments necessary due to COVID. With costs continuing to escalate further in 2023-24, 2024-25 and now again in 2025-26, the rates are being increased to return the program to being as close to a self-sustaining program while still contributing a small subsidy.



How has the driver shortage impacted Millburn Schools?

The current conditions for busing and bus drivers here in Millburn also mirror what's happening across the nation. The pandemic exacerbated these unfortunate conditions, along with longstanding issues in low driver pay, strict licensing requirements, and a transient employment population.

Contractors have responded by increasing driver pay. With these increased driver rates, coupled with the increasing equipment and fuel rates, contractors are finding it necessary to require new contracts rather than renewing existing routes, which are limited in rate increases by the state. Millburn has been fortunate that we have been able to maintain the increases in the past by renewing existing routes.

What is the difference between contracted and staff drivers?

The school district has 7 staff drivers who drive Millburn Township's three (3) 54 passenger buses and 7 smaller passenger buses. These buses and routes are mostly used to transport our special education population. The majority of the vehicles that are used in the district are operated by outside contractors. The contracted routes are procured through a transportation cooperative. Due to the much higher volume of busing services, they have wider access to transportation contractors and can access better pricing. The cooperative serves as our broker so they do the bidding process for us, monitor our contractors, and support us with any concerns.

Is there still a driver shortage? How will that impact Millburn's busing next year?

There is still a nationwide shortage of bus drivers, a long-simmering problem that was exacerbated by the pandemic and continues to this day. Millburn has addressed the problem each year by taking a number of measures:

- Eligibility for subscription busing remains reduced at the middle school and high school. This reduced eligibility will continue for 2025-26.
- During the 23-24 SY, the district hired additional staff to have as substitutes. When a driver calls out sick, bus companies struggle to have substitute drivers. During the 22-23 school year we had to cancel some routes during the school year. During the 23-24 and 24-25 school years, we have not needed to cancel a route due to a driver shortage. We have avoided cancellations by requiring in our contract that a permanent substitute was required, as well as having the District substitutes take over the routes which included the Transportation Supervisor, as needed. We will continue to maintain



extra staff in the 2025-26 budget to support the transportation program and anticipate continuing to do so in the future. The busing for the 2024-2025 school year has run smoothly with limited interruption in service. Most of those interruptions come due to various road closures and construction delays.

- Routes were consolidated to optimize driver availability. Additional consolidation will take place, if possible, based on the subscription busing enrollments to maximize driver availability.
- Contractors anticipate their staffing to remain intact as a result of the increased salaries they now offer.

What can we expect if a route is canceled in the morning?

The Transportation Department tries to cover the route if possible. If they are unable to find a driver, your student's bus run may be canceled and you will need to transport your child to school. Notifications go out as soon as we are made aware of the situation.

Have we considered investing in our own fleet of buses?

We have hired additional staff to assist with the current shortage. If we decided to expand the fleet further we would still be facing the same difficulty in finding drivers. There is also a current delay in accessing new vehicles. We have looked into this option which would include securing buses, additional bus drivers, bus inspections, insurance, maintenance costs, a location to park the buses, etc. that would be more than \$4 million to fund.

Transportation Eligibility and Route Development

What is mandated transportation?

In accordance with State Law, N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1, all public elementary school students (grades K-8) who live more than 2 miles from their school and all public secondary school students (grades 9-12) who live more than 2 1/2 miles from their school are entitled to transportation. This is known as mandated transportation. In addition, any student classified with special needs who either meet these distance requirements or for whom transportation is required in the student's *Individual Education Plan* must be transported.



Who is eligible for Subscription Busing?

Students who do not qualify for mandated transportation may apply for subscription busing.

- To qualify for subscription busing to Millburn High School, the home-to-school mileage must be greater than 1.0 miles. Ridership may affect bus availability.
- To qualify for subscription busing to Millburn Middle School, the home-to-school mileage must be greater than .750 miles. Ridership may affect bus availability.
- There may be no bus available in neighborhoods that are close to the minimum distance.
- At this time there is no mileage limit for the elementary schools.
- You can determine whether you qualify for mandated busing or subscription busing by emailing the transportation department at busing@millburn.org or thomas.lauton@millburn.org.

How is the distance between a student's home and school measured?

Per NJ Code: "For the purpose of determining eligibility for student transportation, measurement shall be made by the shortest route along public roads or public walkways between the entrance of the student's residence nearest such public roadway or public walkway and the nearest public entrance of the school which the student attends."

This measurement is for eligibility purposes only and is not necessarily the travel path to or from school. The measurement is based on the computer program housed in the district's transportation office, and/or the use of a "walking wheel," which measures in feet.

What is the difference between courtesy busing and subscription busing?

Some clarification on busing terminology:

- Mandated Busing: The state of New Jersey requires busing of students who live BEYOND 2.5 miles from their high school; and BEYOND 2 miles from their elementary or middle school.
- Courtesy Busing: a district may choose to provide busing to students who live closer to the schools than the state requires. Millburn Township does not provide "courtesy busing."
- Subscription Busing: Since Millburn does not provide courtesy busing, a subscription (fee for busing) plan is offered to those who do not live in a mandated busing zone.



- Contract Routes: These are the routes that the contracted companies run for a district, with their buses, training and providing the drivers, conducting maintenance, and complying with all state laws.

Can you explain how the buses are scheduled?

By law, we are required to tier (or pair) routes to maintain efficiency. Based on schedules in Millburn, this means pairing an elementary school route with either a High School or Middle School route. In other words, a bus runs either a Middle or High School route first, and then the same bus runs an elementary school route. Routes are tiered both in the morning and afternoon. Buses are tiered with elementary schools based on where the bus finishes its high school or middle school route so the bus arrives as early as possible in the afternoon. This helps avoid students waiting for long periods after dismissal.

Why are other districts' subscription busing rates less than Millburn's?

Not all districts offer subscription busing. Most other districts that do offer subscription busing only offer a limited number of seats, those that may be available after the mandated seats are filled. In other words, only the limited vacant seats available after mandated students are scheduled, are offered as subscription busing on a first-come/first-serve lottery basis.

Subscription busing is not a mandated program that must be funded. Millburn has made the decision to offer optional subscription busing for students who are not mandated for busing per the mileage requirements of the state. In its decision-making, the Board has included in its recommendation to maintain a program of subscription busing so long as it is self-sustaining. Unlike other districts, Millburn is contracting transportation solely for the subscription program.

What if the district decided to cancel the subscription busing program?

There would be no busing to the K-4 elementary schools, except for students from The Upton, since all other students in our elementary schools live less than the 2 miles required by the state. The only other mandated routes would be for students attending the Washington, Middle, and High schools, who live more than 2 miles from Washington and Middle Schools, and 2.5 miles from the High School.



Additional Transportation Information

What additional Busing Information and Reminders should parents know?

- Students are to be at their bus stop, 10 minutes before the pick-up time on the bus pass. A route can be shorter if few children are riding on a certain morning, etc.
- Times listed in PowerSchool are estimates and may fluctuate on a given day.
- Please be aware that elementary buses do not actually begin their afternoon routes until about 15 minutes after dismissal time. Once buses arrive, students are then checked onto the buses and seated safely with seatbelts.
- Traffic, street closures, and roadwork projects can lengthen the bus schedules.
- For neighborhood schools, the scheduled route time averages 20-30 minutes. For the district-wide schools, the route time may be as long as 40-45 minutes.
- If you are registered for busing, please use the bus to reduce traffic at the schools, and around town.
- If you are mandated for transportation but do not plan on using the service, please notify the Transportation Department in writing.

If my child is currently receiving subscription busing and the route is canceled on a single day, will we be reimbursed?

We may reimburse parents at the daily round-trip rate (\$8.86) per day if the bus is unavailable for an extended amount of time due to having no driver available for that route. Reimbursements may be done at the end of the school year.

Where can I find more information on student transportation?

The following link is to the NJ Department of Education: School Finance of Student Transportation: [School Finance: Student Transportation](#)

Have additional questions?

Email them to busing@millburn.org