



**Southwestern Ontario Student
Transportation Services**

mybigyellowbus.ca
Tel No: (519) 649 1160

September 15, 2020

Parents and guardians are asked to prepare for alternate transportation arrangements in the event of school bus service disruptions.

Bus cancellations and delays happen due to inclement weather in specific geographic areas and operational matters like construction, mechanical issues, and traffic congestion. These are posted in the morning and the afternoon each day on www.mybigyellowbus.ca. Please review [Public Notification of School Bus Delays and Cancellations](#).

We also recommend you put the **BusPlanner Delays** app on your smartphone. You can receive push notifications to your device if your student's bus run is delayed or cancelled. This is the fastest way to receive information. [Instructions are available here](#).

Bus delays and cancellation notifications are also sent by email. If you solely rely on email notifications, note that STS is not responsible for the timing of email because each email service has different firewall and delivery restrictions that STS does not control.

Unfortunately, we are experiencing driver shortages in the area. Bus contractors have had difficulty building up a list of supply drivers to cover open routes or absences. The reality of driver shortages means route cancellations will be unavoidable, and this will be disruptive to families. This is not something we have experienced in this area before.

In the event of route cancellations, the contractors will post the cancellations to the website as early as possible, per the normal practice. Families can choose from the following sources to find out about service disruptions:

- Check mybigyellowbus.ca frequently – make it a regular part of your morning and afternoon routine.
- Download the **BusPlanner Delays** app and subscribe to your student's bus run for push notifications.
- Subscribe for emails in the Parent Portal at mybigyellowbus.ca

If a school bus route does not have a permanent driver and there is an insufficient list of supply drivers, the route could be cancelled for multiple days. In such instances, STS will provide special notification to the parents/guardians of the students assigned to the affected run(s).

Bus contractors continue to recruit and train school bus drivers. If you or someone you know would like an opportunity to work part time and support your community by helping kids get to and from school safely each day, [call the local branch of the bus contractor near you](#).

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this unprecedented time.



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Previously Released: August 24, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services update on resuming operations for September.

[Bus Registration](#) closed as of August 14. Any bus registrations submitted after August 14 will not be processed before school starts and parents should have alternate arrangements in place.

Bus timetables will be posted in the [Parent Portal](#) as of August 25. Please note, STS will continue to make routing changes to address bus loads right up to the start of school – check the Parent Portal on Labour Day weekend to confirm pick up times.

We cannot stress the importance of knowing your Student Number prior to attempting to set up a Parent Portal account. You must have that information, or you will not be able to login. Visit our website and click on [“How to Find Your Student ID Number”](#) before August 25. Write it down or save it in your smartphone – you will need it in the future.

To set up a Parent Portal account, you will enter your email and set your own password. You must then respond to the confirmation email to active your account. (check your spam or junk folders) Once you have confirmed your account, login using your email address and password and add your student(s). For this step, you must have the [Student ID Number](#). Follow the on-screen prompts and view the transportation timetable.

Click here for detailed instructions for [How to Set Up A Parent Portal Account](#).

Bus routes normally take a while to settle over the first couple weeks of September and we expect this year will require even more time for routines to be established. Please be patient with your bus driver as everyone adapts to the changes required for the fall. **Buses may run off schedule or late for many reasons during the first few weeks. Download the [BusPlanner Notifications App](#) to receive notifications about your bus sent to your smartphone to stay informed.**

If you do not have access to the internet, the school can provide your transportation information over the phone when the offices reopen.

Please note, due to the many changes required to address COVID 19, we are experiencing an extremely high volume of calls and email contacts. Please check out our [website](#), [Twitter](#) feed and [Facebook Page](#) for information and self-serve wherever possible. You can also read our [Ready to Roll](#) operational plan and check out our [STS News Updates](#), published weekly. We also introduced an FAQ – Bus Service During COVID 19 page on our website which will be updated regularly.



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Previously Released: August 14, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services update on resuming operations for September.

[Bus Registration](#) continues until August 14, 2020. Email notifications will be issued to families who submitted the Registration form today:

- If the form contained correct data as provided by the parent, the process has completed and the timetables will be posted in the [Parent Portal](#) at [mybigyellowbus](#) as of August 25.
- If the parent submission had errors, it must be manually processed by STS. This has created a backlog. The errors may include wrong or no Student ID number, misspelled name, error in birthdate, incorrect address, incorrect postal code, no student record with the school board, not eligible for transportation.

Any bus registrations submitted after August 14 will not be processed before school starts and parents should expect to make alternate arrangements unless expressly notified by STS that a bus seat is available.

Bus timetables will be posted in the [Parent Portal](#) as of August 25. Please note, STS will continue to make routing changes to address bus loads right up to the start of school – check the Parent Portal on Labour Day weekend to confirm pick up times.

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Previously Released: August 10, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services prepares for back to school.

Planning for bus service for September is underway and is dependent on the final plans from the London District Catholic School Board and Thames Valley District School Board.

To date, STS has taken the following steps to prepare for the new school year:

- Implemented mandatory bus registration to manage the number of students assigned to each bus.
- Identified “Drive to 5” and “Walk a Block” destinations to decrease traffic at schools.
- Hosted weekly meetings with bus companies to discuss safety practices for their employees.
- Ordered PPE for bus drivers and attendants (masks & face shields) to ensure adequate supply for bus company workforce.
- Ordered sanitizer and disinfectant for enhanced cleaning of the vehicles.
- Met with public health officials to review the STS operational plan.
- Developed a series of public messages for families about school bus service.
- Centralized bus stops to provide space for physical distancing, allowing for physical exercise to the bus stop and shortening the length of time on a bus.

While route planning is in progress, the number of students assigned to each bus cannot be finalized until:

- Bus registration closes on August 14.
- The school boards advise STS of students who choose remote learning.
- Bus companies confirm sufficient drivers are available to return to work.

The Parent Portal will open in late August for people to check the transportation timetable. As the routes will still be subject to change, we highly recommend that families check their transportation timetable again the weekend before school starts.

Parents should know:

- A school bus is a shared space and strict physical distancing is not possible on board.
- Bus drivers and bus attendants will be wearing masks at all times and face shields when students get on and off the bus.
- Students in grade 4 – 12 are required to wear a mask on board and students in grades JK-3 are *strongly recommended* to wear a mask.
- School bus stop locations are not supervised and maintaining physical distancing at bus stops is the responsibility of the student and caregivers.
- To support contact tracing, students can only use their assigned bus stop, bus run and seat on board.
- Parents should discuss appropriate bus behavior and etiquette with their student before school starts.
- Parents must perform a health check on their student each day before they board the bus. Parents must keep their students off the bus if they feel unwell.



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Previously Released: July 31, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services launches a mandatory bus registration process for September.

Bus registration for eligible students is now open. Registration for school bus service will close on August 14. Only students registered will be permitted to board the bus.

Registrations received after August 14 will not be processed until end of September and families must make alternate arrangements.

Bus registration forms will be processed for students who are already registered in the school database and with addresses that matches the submission form and the school database.

The Parent Portal will open in late August so people can view their transportation timetable. Expect changes to bus pick up and drop off times and bus stop locations. The Parent Portal will remain closed until upgrades are done this summer.

The STS website, www.mybigyellowbus.ca, has been updated with a series of “How To’s” to answer the most common questions:

- How to Register for School
- How to Change Your Address
- How to Find Your Student ID Number

On July 30, the Ministry of Education updated their Guide to Reopening Schools - <https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-reopening-ontarios-schools>. We strongly recommend that you review the most recent Guide for information, which has changed since its first release.

STS is reviewing the updated guidelines to determine transportation plans for September. More information will be provided shortly.

Masks are Mandatory

- Bus drivers and bus attendants will be wearing procedural masks on board all school purpose vehicles.
- Students in grades 4 – 12 are required to wear a mask/face covering on board school purpose vehicles.
- Students in JK – grades 3 are *strongly encouraged* to wear a mask/face covering on board school purpose vehicles.



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Previously Released by email beginning July 21, 2020

The Letter to Parents/Guardians about Bus Registration is posted online here:

<http://www.mybigyellowbus.ca/bus-registration-process>

The letter is available translated into 9 languages.



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Previously Released July 16, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services launches a mandatory bus registration process for September.

Ministry of Education guidelines regarding physical distancing on school buses will reduce capacity throughout the transportation system by approximately 60%. Given the decreased capacity on buses, and to support contact tracing efforts in the fight against COVID-19, student riders will be assigned to transportation based on registration only.

As students return to school, every seat on the bus is vital. Some families will choose not to use bus service and by implementing a registration-based approach, STS can make sure that every available seat is maximized.

- Beginning the **week of July 20, STS will email instructions to families of students who are eligible for bus service and are already registered** for school in September.
- **After July 29, Transportation Registration will be available at mybigyellowbus.ca** for those who may not have received the email but are transportation-eligible and registered at school.
- Transportation Registration will be closed on August 14 and final transportation arrangements will be posted in the Parent Portal at mybigyellowbus.ca in late August.

A Transportation Registration hotline will be available next week to assist people without internet access.

The Registration does not apply to students who use specialized transportation to meet their unique needs as that process is already underway for next year.

STS is committed to ongoing communications with families as we prepare for September and will post weekly news updates online.



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Previously Released July 10, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services is preparing routes for September.

In a normal year, STS plans for September from early April until the end of July. Routes are reviewed to alter bus stop locations based on graduating and incoming students, program, and boundary changes. The routes are typically released to the contractors by the end of July. The balance of the summer is spent dealing with last minute registrations and address changes that were not received by the end of June and handling thousands of inquiries.

This year is very different. STS is preparing for two scenarios. Firstly, routes are being planned for “business as usual”. Secondly, based on direction from the school boards, STS is creating routes for the hybrid learning model, where students are broken into cohorts and attend school on alternating days and with a reduced number of students on each vehicle. The Ministry of Education will provide Boards with direction on the model that will be used in September and STS will be prepared for all potential models.

Whichever model is decided, students who rely on transportation and their families should be prepared for changes to the transportation system. Both bus routes and school bus stop locations are expected to change, which means last year’s pick up and drop off times are out of date. Door to door service is not provided and students must be prepared to meet the bus at its designated bus stop location, which is designed to serve multiple students in a neighborhood.

The key to planning is preparation, but STS cannot do it without families doing their part early. Families should make sure their student is registered at the proper school, and that any address changes have been reported. This should be done as soon as possible. Any requests for transportation to an alternate address for caregiving purposes should be submitted by completing the form at mybigyellowbus.ca

In late August, STS will open the Parent Portal so families can check their transportation arrangements. The Parent Portal is offline as it is being upgraded. Instructions will be emailed to families in mid-August. Parents must have the Student ID number to login.

STS is committed to ongoing communications with families as we prepare for September and will post weekly news updates online.



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Previously released on July 3, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services is preparing for changes to school bus service for September.

Guidelines have been released which will create a significant reduction in capacity throughout the transportation system compared to what has been the norm in this region. STS will be implementing changes to transportation for September that supports student safety onboard the vehicles and recognizes the new operating constraints.

In light of the ongoing pandemic, STS also recognizes that some families will choose to provide their own transportation, carpool with family members or social circle or have their student use active travel modes, such as walking, cycling or scooting to school.

For students who will use bus service in the fall, families must expect that all bus routes will be new, with different bus stop locations and pick up and drop off times. In some areas, students may be expected to travel further distances to the school bus stop. It will be imperative for families to login to their Parent Portal at mybigyellowbus.ca towards the end of summer to see their students bus schedule, just like a student timetable.

Late August is a very busy time for transportation, and this year is expected to be exceptionally busy. Families should prepare now by registering their student at school and submitting and address changes to the school office. Families should also make sure they know the Student ID number which is available by contacting the school office or in the school's portal.

STS is committed to ongoing communications with families as we prepare for September.



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Previously Released on June 26, 2020

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services is planning for modifications to transportation when school is back in session. In the weeks ahead, STS will provide more information to families of students who are eligible for bus transportation.

Each year in August, bus schedules are posted online at mybigyellowbus.ca in the Parent Portal. Every family is expected to login to access their students' bus route number, bus stop location, and pick up and drop off times. The name of the contractor who transports the student is also listed and families should record the contractor name and phone number in case service issues arise. **Checking the bus schedule is as important as checking the student's timetable.**

STS is planning routes for the fall; bus stop locations and pick up and drop off times may change significantly to reflect the final learning model the school boards select. Therefore, families should not assume their bus will be the same as last year. In fact, they should **expect that transportation will change and be ready to login to the Parent Portal when it opens in late August.**

STS will introduce a new Parent Portal later this summer, where families will create an account and add multiple students to one profile, creating an easier end-user experience. STS will announce the new Portal in the coming weeks, along with instructions for use. Families will be able to get bus delay/cancellations by email and download the app for notifications sent to their smartphones.

In the meantime, families should prepare now by making sure their **student is registered at school for September** and that address changes are submitted to the school. Families should also make sure they **know the Student ID number** which is available by contacting the school office or in the school's Parent Portal.

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services is committed to providing timely communications as we prepare to return students to school in the fall.



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Previously Released on June 19, 2020

In today's announcement, the Minister of Education laid out three possible scenarios for students to head back to school in September. More information can be found here: [Ontario Prepares for the Safe Reopening of Schools](#).

Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services is planning for potential modifications to transportation when school is back in session. STS will carefully review guidance documents and will work collaboratively with the school boards and public health officials to implement a responsive transportation system that supports the local learning model and health and safety those who rely on student transportation.

In the weeks ahead, STS will provide more information to families of students who are eligible for bus transportation. Please check your email and monitor the Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services website (mybigyellowbus.ca) and social media channels for more information as it becomes available.

We will need your support to make bus service successful as we adapt to necessary changes that may lie ahead. Southwestern Ontario Student Transportation Services is committed to providing timely communications as we prepare to return students to school in the fall.