GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE SITING OF SCHOOL BUS STOPS

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NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
WAKA KOTAHI

New Zealand Government

NZ Transport Agency
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If you have further queries, call our contact centre on 0800 699 000 or write to us:

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HOW CAN SCHOOL BUS STOP LOCATIONS AFFECT SAFETY?

School bus travel is one of the safest ways for students to travel to and from school in New Zealand. School bus incidents are generally pedestrian related, with students getting off a school bus and crossing the road into the path of a vehicle.

Careful location of school bus stops could reduce the number of incidents of this type.

HOW CAN THESE GUIDELINES HELP?

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide advice about the siting of school bus stops, to help increase student safety.

HOW COULD YOU USE THESE GUIDELINES?

Use these guidelines to review a particular school bus stop or undertake an audit of all the stops in a school bus route.

WHAT IS A 'SCHOOL BUS STOP'?

When these guidelines refer to 'school bus stops', they mean stops where students are being picked up by dedicated school buses (rather than general bus services, where passengers include other members of the public).

These guidelines do not cover permanent bus stops approved by local road controlling authorities, although similar provisions may apply.

WHAT FACTORS MUST BE CONSIDERED TO OPTIMISE SAFETY?

There are some key factors that you should take into account to maximise safety and reduce risk.

1. The distance motorists need to see and slow down for a school bus

School bus stops should be sited where they are clearly visible to motorists. The following table is a guide to the minimum distance from which drivers should be able to see a school bus that is stopped on a road. The distance calculated allows drivers to see an object (the bus, a parent's car or a student on the road) and slow down or brake in time to avoid a collision.

SPEED LIMIT	MINIMUM DISTANCE (FOR CARS COMING FROM EACH DIRECTION)
50km/h	125m
60km/h	150m
70km/h	175m
80km/h	200m
100km/h	250m

The better the visibility of a school bus, the greater the chance motorists will see the bus and slow down to the legal limit of 20km/h.

There is a need to be pragmatic when assessing visibility. For example, if a school bus stop has less visibility than indicated in the table above, but not by much (say, by 10 to 25m), then it should continue to be used if there are no safer places nearby, or if relocation would pose other safety issues.

2. Adequate pull-in area

Adequate shoulder or lane width is needed, so the bus can pull off the road and allow traffic to pass safely. However, in some areas it is just not possible to have this extra width. In these situations, adequate visibility of the school bus stop is crucial.

3. Hazards getting to the school bus stop

Consider the hazards that students may face getting to the school bus stop. Examples of significant hazards include:

- lack of suitable road shoulder for pupils to walk along (especially when their view of approaching motorists is inadequate)
- level crossings without warning signals
- one-way bridges or bridges without pathways
- areas where the road and shoulder get icy
- roads without guardrails which are next to rivers, lakes, etc.

Sometimes a simple change to where a school bus stop is located can remove the need for students to pass a significant hazard.

4. Space for students to stand back from the road

If possible, firm, dry waiting areas, away from the road, should be available at stops.

5. Space for parent/caregiver vehicles

Approaching drivers need adequate visibility of vehicles pulling out when parents/caregivers are dropping off or collecting students from a stop.

To avoid congestion around bus stops with poor visibility at busy times, it may be necessary to limit the number of pupils using these stops. If possible, busy stops should be moved to safer locations.

6. Weather conditions

Consider conditions in winter or wet weather. If it is not possible to provide a hard shoulder for buses to pull into, it may be necessary to move the stop during winter, or make arrangements for parents/caregivers to drop their students at another school bus stop.

AUDITING SCHOOL BUS STOPS

Be pragmatic when looking at whether a stop is safe for use by a school bus, and how any problems with the siting of the stop can be addressed. There may be scenarios and solutions that are not covered in these guidelines.

At the end of these guidelines you will find example checklists to use when auditing:

- a single stop
- a school bus route.

1. Consultation

When considering whether a school bus stop is safely sited, it's a good idea to talk to the school bus operator and bus drivers for the route.

2. Safety

Be aware of your personal safety when auditing a school bus stop. For example, wear a fluorescent safety vest.

MAKING CHANGES

Where problems are identified with a school bus stop, changes may be required. These could include:

1. Changes to the location of the stop

Sometimes simple changes such as having the bus stop a short distance further on or using low-traffic side roads can enhance safety.

2. Changes to drop-off arrangements

Where it is difficult to find safe places to stop, parents may need to be asked to make alternative arrangements to see their children delivered to the nearest safe school bus stop.

3. Construction or marking

For example, the road controlling authority may put up signs warning of a school bus stop.

EXPERT ADVICE

Where there are significant concerns about a school bus stop and no practical resiting options are available, advice may be needed from the local road controlling authority (local city or district council, or the Transport Agency if the route is on a state highway).

FIND OUT MORE

The Transport Agency has produced a brochure titled ***Hike it, bike it, scoot it, skate it***. This contains safety tips and advice, and has been produced for students and parents. You can order copies using the order form on our website.

Find the *Hike it, bike it, scoot it, skate it* brochure at **www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/hike-it-bike-it-scoot-it-skate-it/**
You'll also find school bus safety information at **www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/safety-for-children/bus-safety/**

CHECKLIST: SINGLE SCHOOL BUS STOP

School bus stop location	
Maximum number of students using the stop:	
Speed limit of road:	

VISIBILITY GUIDELINES					
Speed limit 50km/h	50	60	70	80	100
Minimum sight distance (metres)	125	150	175	200	250

	MEETS CRITERIA?	NOTES
Approximate visibility for vehicles travelling on same side		
Approximate visibility for vehicles travelling on opposite side		
Is there adequate shoulder width for bus to pull off onto?		
Is there a waiting area away from the road that students can use?		
Are there significant hazards students may encounter in getting to this school bus stop? (eg one-lane bridges, level crossings, roadways with no shoulder)		
Are there likely to be winter issues with the stop? (eg the pull-in area will become muddy)		
Parking for parents/caregivers		
Maximum number of parents/ caregivers likely to park at stop		
If all parents/caregivers brought their vehicles, would the furthest vehicle meet visibility requirements? (Allow 5 metres for each vehicle)		

CHECKLIST: SCHOOL BUS ROUTE

Route	

VISIBILITY GUIDELINES					
Speed limit 50km/h	50	60	70	80	100
Minimum sight distance (metres)	125	150	175	200	250

NAME OF STOP OR LOCATION									
Speed limit of road									
Approximate visibility for vehicles travelling on same side									
Approximate visibility for vehicles travelling on opposite side									
Is there adequate shoulder width for bus to pull off onto?									
Is there a waiting area away from the road that students can use?									
Are there significant hazards students may encounter in getting to this school bus stop? (eg one-lane bridges, level crossings, roadways with no shoulder)									
Are there likely to be winter issues with the stop? (eg the pull-in area will become muddy)									
Parking for parents/caregivers									
Maximum number of parents/ caregivers likely to park at stop									
If all parents/caregivers brought their vehicles, would the furthest vehicle meet visibility requirements? (Allow 5 metres for each vehicle)									

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