



OSTA

Ottawa Student
Transportation
Authority

Secondary/Int Parent Blurbs for Website and Newsletter

Schools must select those messages that are the most appropriate for their school community.

Transportation Communication

OSTA is working with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB), Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) and Ottawa Public Health (OPH) to develop a safe plan for bused students for the 2020/21 school year. We thank you for your patience as we navigate these uncertain times and will continue to update parents throughout the summer and beginning of the school year.

Parents can register for email notifications through the [OSTA Parent Web Portal](#) or follow OSTA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for news, updates, safety tips, bus delays and cancellations.

Information Accuracy Affects OSTA's Planning

Are you moving? Your decisions, and school data, affect OSTA's accuracy when we plan routes. During these complex times, **it is critical that parents give their school the most accurate information AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**, to avoid extended waiting for a transportation change in the fall. OSTA is contemplating restricting changes this summer due to new processes that protect student health, and we are also anticipating increased operational pressures which will delay changes. So, get your information in to be sure your eligible child has a spot reserved on a bus.

Joint Custody and Transportation to Two Homes - Renewals

A temporary renewal form for existing variable transportation arrangements (Joint Custody) is now available [online](#). Only one parent needs to complete the renewal form, providing there are no changes to the existing schedule, including access days and stop locations.

Renewal Joint Custody Forms must be submitted NO LATER THAN June 30th

NEW Joint Custody Transportation Forms, and any joint custody transportation changes, will only be accepted AFTER September 15, and then, only if the request can be safely accommodated and there is room on the required vehicle.

Empty Seats/Courtesy Seating – Possible Suspension

In the event physical distancing becomes a requirement on yellow buses, the impact would significantly reduce available seating capacity. If this is the case, **OSTA will suspend the Empty Seat program** until such time as physical distancing on school buses is no longer required. OSTA would then resume the empty seat program as soon as it is feasible to do so. We encourage parents to plan ahead and practice walking their children to school over the summer. Check OSTA's [website](#) for information on Pedestrian Safety, Walking Routes and Walk-A-Block.

OSTA Parent Web Portal Upgrade

OSTA's Parent Web Portal (Bus Stop Finder) has been upgraded! You will notice the Parent Web Portal has a new look and feel, and buttons or input fields may be in different locations. We encourage parents to go on the [Parent Web Portal](#) and test it out in June to prepare for next school year. Instructions on navigating the new Parent Web Portal are available on our [website](#).

Choosing to Drive? Let OSTA Know

Some parents may choose to drive their children to school in the fall, rather than letting them take the bus, or may not be sending their children to school at all. **OSTA will be circulating a request for parents to opt out of transportation during COVID-19 risk mitigation** to give those who really need transportation space on the bus. All services are expected to resume to normal standards once the COVID emergency protocols have been removed.

School Zone Safety and Walk-A-Block

This year, we anticipate an increase in car traffic around schools. We encourage students to walk to school as much as possible but if walking isn't an option, then we urge parents who drive their children to school to add **Walk-A-Block** to their routine. Try parking away from the school and let them walk the last block or two. Take some time this summer to plan your route by finding the five-minute walk radius around your school using google maps or check your school website for a Walk-A-Block Map. By planning ahead, you'll get a jump start on your back to school planning!

Public Transit Training

Students may still be assigned to public transit this coming school year. If so, students new to public transit are encouraged to attend a virtual training session in August. The training session will have information on safety features of bus and train systems, using Travel Planner to find your stop and route, Presto cards and more!

Presto Cards

Students are encouraged not to travel unless it's *essential* travel, such as going to a job or to help a family member. If that is the case, students may use their School Board Presto Card until June 30th. After June 30th, students who need to take public transit for essential travel may load funds onto the card for the months of July and August. *Student Presto Cards do not need to be returned.*