

# **BUSING: REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES AND SAFETY**

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## **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

Westmount Charter School's bus transportation system was established to provide parents with an alternative for transporting their child to and from the school. As schools of choice, charter schools are not obliged to provide transportation under the *School Act*. This notwithstanding, Westmount recognizes that busing is an essential service for our families and is committed to the operation of a cost-effective, efficient and safe bus service for its students. As such, parents have a choice as to using this optional service for their children.

The general terms under which transportation is provided are as follows:

Busing is a voluntary, fee-based transportation alternative offered to Westmount students who reside more than 2.4 km from the school, within Calgary city limits, and outside bus restricted zones.

- Routing and stops are congregated in nature and are designed to serve more than one family or community. Families are assigned to stops centrally located in their community. If there is not a community stop, then a neighboring community stop may be assigned.
- Routes and stops are created jointly by the school and the bus carrier with a focus on safety, efficiency and cost, followed by the convenience of families using the service.
- Busing is administered on a break-even basis, funded by grants from Alberta Education and user fees.
- The bus is considered to be an extension of the school and the Charter Board's policies respecting student conduct and student discipline accordingly apply.

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## **TRANSPORTATION SAFETY**

The responsibility for the safe, efficient, effective transportation of school students is shared by Westmount Charter School, our carrier Southland Transportation Ltd., the bus drivers and our parents.

### **STREET SAFETY**

School zones are in effect from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. while school is in session. The school bus loading zone at Van Horne is directly in front of the school on Uxbridge Drive. The school bus loading zone at Parkdale Elementary is along 5th Avenue along the side of the school. Both of the school bus loading zones are clearly marked with bus signs in the morning and afternoon. Parents dropping their children off at either school location should refrain from parking in either of these school bus loading zones.

All parents should review with their children the many elements of road safety, which include, but are not limited to, their education about the use of crosswalks and hand signals, the need for attentiveness and care when in traffic, and the dangers of jay-walking and running in traffic.

Children using the bus should review proper crossing procedures when disembarking at the end of the day. They should:

- Stand back at a safe distance from the bus.
- Wait until the bus leaves the stop.

- Walk to the closest intersection.
- Cross the street only when they have a clear view of the traffic in both directions and it is safe to do so.
- Attend to traffic and exercise caution.

## **BUS SAFETY**

Both Westmount and Southland Transportation want to ensure your children are safe and that their experience on the bus is a positive one. The start of each school year is a hectic time. Southland operates hundreds of routes through the city. With stops that are shared by different schools and the many new students and drivers each year, please ensure your child gets on the correct bus by looking for the Westmount Charter window sign and/or by asking the driver. Until the children and drivers are familiar with each other and their route, and throughout the year, please help your route run smoothly for both your child and your driver by:

- Arranging to have someone meet your child(ren) at their bus stop.
- Ensuring your ECS and grade one child wears his/her bus tag on their outer clothing or backpack. The information on the tag will help get your child safely home.
- Ensuring your ECS child knows his/her telephone number in case no one is at the stop to greet him/her at the end of the day. You can also add this information into the backpack.
- Ensuring you have a well-communicated back-up plan for bus delays.
- Encouraging your children to talk to the bus driver if they feel something is wrong, that they may have gotten on the wrong bus or a stop was missed. They should not get off the bus at an unfamiliar stop or with an unfamiliar attendant.
- School bus drivers are in continuous contact with their dispatcher. Finding the home of a child who is on the bus is easier than finding a child who got off at the wrong stop. If your child stays on the bus, the driver will ensure your child is looked after.
- Review and discuss the safety-related items of this Transportation Handbook.

Southland Transportation's Safety department will run evacuation drills during the school year. Parents will be advised when this is scheduled to occur if we are notified in advance by Southland.

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## **BUS RULES AND REGULATIONS**

In accordance with the Charter Board's policies, the following are the expectations for Westmount students while on the school bus or while waiting at the bus stop. These rules have been established to ensure that a safe, clean and comfortable environment is maintained for all riders.

- Students are responsible for their conduct to the bus driver and ultimately to the Principal. Serious or continued violation of these rules may lead to the loss of riding privileges and possible suspension from school.
- The driver is in full charge of the bus and the drivers' directions must be obeyed.
- The driver may, upon his/her so choosing, assign specific seats to students at any time.
- Students must conduct themselves in a quiet and courteous manner, showing consideration for the comfort and safety of others.
- Eating is not permitted on any regularly scheduled school bus. Drinking of water is permitted.
- While the bus is in motion, students must not extend arms or heads out of windows, try to get on or off the bus, or move about within it.
- Students must not throw waste or other materials on the floor or out of the windows.

- Students must not yell, scream or use offensive language.
- Students must not push, shove or otherwise engage in rowdy behavior.
- Students may play portable music devices using personal headphones only.
- Students will be held accountable for willful damage to a bus.
- When necessary, in accordance with Provincial Standards, students in grades ECS through six may be required to sit three to a seat, students in grades seven through twelve will sit two to a seat.
- All items brought aboard the bus must be of adequate size to sit on the students lap. Students must be able to hold all items on their laps. No loose items such as large band instruments or unsecured sporting equipment are permitted, including skis, skateboards, skates and balls.
- The driver reserves the right to report any misconduct to a Principal or designate.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Completing the Transportation agreement on the school's secure website and ensuring that an accurate and current address, phone number, and email address are provided.
2. Ensuring children are punctual and arrive at the designated pick-up location five minutes prior to the scheduled stop time. DO NOT wait in your vehicle as the driver may not see you.
3. Ensuring children are respectful of property owners, and do not use private property as a gathering point at their pick up/drop off location.
4. Ensuring children are properly dressed for inclement weather.
5. Paying for any willful damage caused by their child while riding to and from school.
6. Ensuring their child knows how to recognize their bus stop and find their way home safely.
7. Ensuring that Kindergarten and first-time riders have their name, address and telephone numbers attached to their clothing, especially for the first few weeks of school.
8. Escorting and meeting their young child at the bus stop and ensuring their child's safety while traveling to and from their bus.
9. Ensuring children have appropriate medication, if required, and understand what to do if they need to use the medication.
10. Establishing emergency procedures for students, so that they know what to do if:
  - The bus is late or does not arrive
  - No one is home, or
  - There is an emergency school closure.

The safety of our riders and the efficiency of Westmount's busing service is greatly enhanced by the knowledge and respect of the policies and procedures of this Handbook. Please become familiar with its contents. In addition to the adherence to our transportation policies and procedures, we ask our parents to:

- Report any behavioral difficulties your child has experienced with fellow riders to school administration. Westmount will not tolerate bullying or misconduct and must be advised of any potential difficulties.
- Report any difficulties you experience with your driver to Southland Transportation.
- Copy Transportation Services on any service correspondence you have with Southland. It is critical that Westmount be kept abreast of activity occurring on your route.
- Likewise, our drivers are asked to report to Westmount their observation of any parent who approaches a driver with a request to alter a route, tries to stop the bus at an unscheduled stop, pulls in front of the bus, or otherwise endangers the safety of the bus and/or its riders. The safety of your children is our number one priority. Any of these actions could result in possible suspension of busing for your child.

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## **COMMUNICATION**

Email is the primary way in which Transportation Services communicates with its bus riding families (i.e. individual requests and questions, changed route sheets, specific route updates and wider audience news on

items such as updated policy or procedures). If you are not receiving emails on busing and your student is registered for the bus, please send an email to [schoolbus@westmountcharter.com](mailto:schoolbus@westmountcharter.com) to ensure that we have a valid email address on file. We ask that families provide email addresses other than Hotmail accounts. Hotmail accounts are unreliable and we are not notified of their transmission errors.

Route changes that impact only a rider's status (new rider, cancelled rider, change to full time from part time, move to different stop, etc.) will be communicated only to the driver and the family concerned. Updated passenger lists are sent to all families only as needed.

Route changes that impact stop locations or times will be communicated to all affected riders a minimum of 48 business hours before the effective start date. Drivers and Southland will be provided with a revised copy.

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## BUS ROUTES AND STOPS

Westmount currently operates 11 bus routes throughout the City of Calgary. The bus routes are available for viewing on our website [here](#), or under the "**+ Bus Routes**" item on the Transportation main page.

## CREATING BUS ROUTES AND STOPS

Our bus routes are reviewed and adjusted annually based on the registration information received each year by April 30th. Locations of routes and their stops are determined by Westmount in consultation with our carrier Southland Transportation Ltd.

In accordance with Westmount Charter Board's restructured transportation policy (April, 2006), the bus routes and stops are determined based upon the following criteria:

- The community of either the student's primary residence(s) or registered childcare provider of those families who live beyond a 2.4 km radius from the school and within the city limits and who registered for busing by April 30th.
- Two community stops will be considered for dual family students.
- A student may, however, access both a home community and childcare community stop if the secondary stop is concurrently used by other students(s) as their primary stop.
- Stops will not be created for extracurricular activities or at the parents' workplaces. A student may, however, access such a stop if the said stop is concurrently used by another student as his/her primary stop.
- Stops are congregational in nature, serving multiple families and communities. These congregational stops may result in the need for parents to drive their children to their bus stop in their home community. If there is no home community stop, a neighboring community stop may be assigned. Stops are not necessarily created for every community in which a rider resides.
- Where possible, stops are created at or near publicly accessible facilities such as libraries, community centers, retail shops and Calgary Transit locations.
- Westmount does not offer door-to-door, or near-to-door service, due to the distance the buses must travel and our requirement to maintain drive times and costs within policy guidelines.
- Bus routes travel along major arterial roadways and not in and out the smaller suburban streets.
- The direction of the afternoon routes is reversed from the morning route. Generally our routes are linear in nature and therefore do not support a circular path of travel. Generally, the first one on is the last one off.
- Bus service outside the City of Calgary is not provided. Parents are welcome, however, to drive their children to an existing stop within city limits.

- **Westmount Charter School has no service in the downtown core, industrial parks, and Inglewood.** This includes, but is not limited to, Bow River to 17th Ave S, 14 St SW to 6 St SE. There are many neighborhoods which Westmount does not service. Many of the newer outlying communities will not have service.
- Neighborhoods near the school are not serviced. (Such as, but not limited to Parkdale, University Heights, Hillhurst, Sunnyside).
- As well, many of the newer outlying communities in Calgary will not have bus stops. Please contact Transportation Services to inquire about your neighborhood.
- Students living in Calgary's further communities should expect minimum ride times of approx 75 minutes each way. This is a common driving time for Charter schools.
- Westmount and Southland Transportation reserve the right to alter routes and stop locations during the school year to accommodate changing rider demographics and/or to improve the flow, timing or safety of a route and/or stop.
- Routes, stops and travel times change from year to year with the changing student population.

Stops are chosen based upon a combination of the following criteria:

- Safety of the stop
- Accessibility of the roadway for bus traffic
- Distance and time of the route
- Minimization of backtracking or wandering
- The number of riding families in a community
- Centralized location of the stop for all users in the community

## STOP DISTANCE LIMITS

Under the *School Act*, section 51, a board is deemed to have complied with the provision of student transportation when the said transportation is "provided on a route that is not greater than 2.4 km from the residence of the student". Although, as a charter school, Westmount is exempt from compliance to this section, we nonetheless endeavor to create stop distances that are equal to, or less than, the 2.4 km guideline, although they are not guaranteed.

Distance is measured by the shortest route using roadways, pathways and walkways in accordance with the *School Act*, section 51 (4)(c), as follows: "the distance of a residence from a school or from a bus route is the shortest distance measured along a traveled road or public right of way between the school site or the bus route, as the case may be, and the nearest roadway access at the boundary of the quarter section or lot on which the student's parent resides."

## ROUTE INQUIRIES AND CHANGES

Bus routes are finalized in June of the previous year. All routes are posted on the school website for viewing. Families who move residences or who wish to access busing after routes have been finalized are required to access an existing bus stop on an existing available route. If you know prior to May 1 that your family will be moving for the new school year, please advise transportation services of your new address and/or community so we can factor this into our route planning for the new school year.

Parents with questions about the routes or stops should contact Westmount Transportation Services. Under no circumstances should a parent approach a driver to make a route change request. Drivers will not alter a route and/or stop in any manner without written permission from Westmount and/or Southland Transportation.

Route change requests will only be considered for stops with safety concerns. All safety concerns brought to our attention will be handed over to Southland for their Safety department to review and recommend an alternate stop location if need be.

Please note the following guidelines:

- Route/stop change requests will only be considered for stops with safety concerns
- A request to move a stop will be considered only with the written approval of all the users at the said stop at the time of submitting the request
- New stops will not be created by nature of being “enroute” (e.g. the bus drives by the house)

Westmount and Southland Transportation reserve the right to alter routes and stop locations to accommodate changing rider demographics and/or to improve the flow, timing or safety of a route and/or stop.

Route sheets that contain the names of students who will be riding a given route will be given to the route driver before the start of school. The same list is also held by Westmount’s business office, the school office, Southland Transportation, and is given to all riding families on the said route. This allows families to familiarize themselves with fellow riders and to share in emergency response planning. Route sheets that are posted on the school’s website do not include student names.

## **BUS DROP OFF AND PICK UP**

### **Morning Pick-Ups**

Students are required to arrive at the bus stop five minutes before its scheduled departure time. Do NOT wait in your vehicle as you risk missing the bus. The bus will leave as soon as all the scheduled students for that stop have boarded. If any of the children assigned to a stop are not there at the scheduled departure time, the bus will not wait for them. Parents who arrive late to the stop will need to proceed to an alternate stop on the same or different route. All routes and stops are posted on the Westmount’s website under Transportation.

### **Morning Arrivals**

School staff will meet the buses arriving at the Van Horne campus at 8:15 AM and Parkdale Elementary campus at 8:20 AM. Students are not permitted to disembark the buses until the supervisors have arrived to greet the buses.

### **Afternoon Departures**

Buses depart Van Horne at 3:28 and Parkdale at 3:45. Once a bus has started to roll, it will not stop to pick-up a tardy student who is attempting to board his/her bus along the bus line-up. The bus supervisors have the discretion to stop a bus to load students who have arrived late to the buses, so please have your students speak with a bus supervisor if they are late getting to their bus in the afternoon. Once a bus has left the school, it will not return to the school to pick up any students who have missed the bus. The Supervising Teacher will return the student to the office and the family will be contacted.

All riders are to board quickly when they arrive at their bus. Drivers reserve the right to ask students to board the bus if they are loitering outside the bus door. A student who loiters at a bus, which is at a distance from their own bus in the afternoon line-up, runs the risk of not being able to board once the buses start moving.

### **Afternoon Drop-Offs**

Students in grades one and greater are permitted to disembark the bus alone. ECS students, however, are not permitted to disembark the bus without an attendant or preauthorization by Westmount Charter School. If an attendant is not present, Southland Transportation will attempt to contact the parents. The bus driver may take the child with them as they complete the route and will remain with that child until he/she is picked up either at a stop or is delivered to a Calgary Police Station. The child will not be brought back to the school. If the route time extends into overtime to accommodate this situation, the family will be billed the overtime fee that is charged from Southland Transportation. Please ensure your young child(ren) know their telephone number. [Backtotop](#)