

Emily Buss proposes the following substitute bill:

Student Transportation Amendments

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Emily Buss

House Sponsor:

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill amends a student's eligibility for state-supported transportation.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- defines terms;
- amends a student's eligibility for state-supported transportation;
- requires a school district that receives certain transportation funds to provide transportation to certain students;
- allows a parent to petition a school district;
- allows the state board to designate certain transportation funds for a specific purpose; and
- makes technical and conforming changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

This bill appropriates \$500,000 in operating and capital budgets for fiscal year 2027, all of which is from the Income Tax Fund.

Other Special Clauses:

This bill provides a special effective date.

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

53F-2-403, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, Chapter 23

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **53F-2-403** is amended to read:

53F-2-403 . Eligibility for state-supported transportation -- Approved bus routes.

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Crosswalk" means the same as that term is defined in Section 41-6a-102.

29 (b) "Hazardous route" means a path between a student's residence and the student's
 30 assigned school that a student must travel to get to school that contains one or more
 31 of the following conditions:

32 (i) a highway the student must pass alongside or cross where:

33 (A) the speed limit is 50 miles per hour or greater; and

34 (B) there is no separated sidewalk or multi-use path;

35 (ii) a route where a student must walk on the shoulder of a road because:

36 (A) of the absence of a sidewalk; or

37 (B) the sidewalk is not separated from traffic by a curb or green space; and

38 (iii) a route where a student must cross:

39 (A) a highway with four or more lanes; or

40 (B) an intersection where pedestrian-involved crashes occur at a rate higher than
 41 the average for a similar intersection.

42 (c) "Highway" means the same as that term is defined in Section 72-1-102.

43 (d) "Middle school" means a public secondary school that provides instruction to a
 44 student between the elementary and high school levels.

45 (e) "Sidewalk" means the same as that term is defined in Section 41-6a-102.

46 [(+) (2)(a) [A] Except as provided in Subsection (2)(b), a student eligible for
 47 state-supported transportation means:

48 [(a) (i) except as provided in [~~Subsection (1)(b)] Subsection (2)(a)(ii), a student~~
 49 enrolled in kindergarten through grade 6 who lives at least 1-1/2 miles from
 50 school;

51 [(b) (ii) a student enrolled in grade 6, if grade 6 is in a middle school, and grades 7
 52 through 12 who lives at least two miles from school; and

53 [(e) (iii) a student enrolled in a special program [~~offered by~~] a school district offers
 54 and [~~approved by~~] the state board approves for trainable, motor,
 55 multiple-disability, or other students with severe disabilities who are incapable of
 56 walking to school or where it is unsafe for students to walk because of their
 57 disabling condition, without reference to distance from school.

58 (b) Subject to Subsection (3)(b), a student is eligible for state-supported transportation
 59 regardless of the distance between the student's residence and the school if:

60 (i) the student is enrolled in:

61 (A) kindergarten through grade 9, if grade 9 is in a middle school; and

62 (B) a school located in the county of the first, second, or third class as described in

- 63 Section 17-60-104; and
- 64 (ii) the student's primary walking route to school is a hazardous route.
- 65 (3)(a) A school district that receives the transportation funds described in Subsection
- 66 (5)(d) from the state board shall:
- 67 (i) use the funds to provide transportation to and from school to an eligible student
- 68 under Subsection (2)(b); and
- 69 (ii) respond to a petition described in Subsection (3)(b) within 30 days.
- 70 (b) A school district is not required to provide transportation to an eligible student
- 71 described in Subsection (2)(b) unless the school district receives specific
- 72 transportation funds the state board designates under Subsection (5)(d).
- 73 (c) A parent may petition the school district's school board to designate a specific route
- 74 to a school as a hazardous route.
- 75 ~~[(2)]~~ (4) If a school district implements double sessions as an alternative to new building
- 76 construction, with the approval of the state board, those affected elementary school
- 77 students residing less than 1-1/2 miles from school may be transported one way to or
- 78 from school because of safety factors relating to darkness or other hazardous conditions
- 79 as ~~[determined by]~~the local school board determines.
- 80 ~~[(3)]~~ (5)(a) The state board shall distribute transportation money to school districts based
- 81 on:
- 82 (i) an allowance per mile for approved bus routes;
- 83 (ii) an allowance per hour for approved bus routes; and
- 84 (iii) a minimum allocation for each school district eligible for transportation funding.
- 85 ~~[(i) Except as provided in Subsection (3)(b)(ii), the]~~ The state board shall
- 86 distribute appropriated transportation funds based on the prior year's eligible
- 87 transportation costs as legally reported under Subsection 53F-2-402(3).
- 88 ~~[(ii) The state board shall distribute state appropriations for transportation for fiscal~~
- 89 ~~years 2021 and 2022 using fiscal year 2019 eligible transportation costs described~~
- 90 ~~in Subsection 53F-2-402(3).]~~
- 91 (c) The state board shall annually review the allowance per mile and the allowance per
- 92 hour and adjust the allowances to reflect current economic conditions.
- 93 (d) The state board may designate specific transportation funds to a school district:
- 94 (i) for the students eligible for transportation funding under Subsection (2)(b);
- 95 (ii) to provide additional bus stops, capacity, routes, or drivers; or
- 96 (iii) for the purposes described in Subsection (3).

97 (e) If the state board distributes the transportation funds described in Subsection (5)(d)
98 to a school district, the state board shall distribute the funds to the school district the
99 state board determines to be in the most need of the funding to eliminate a hazardous
100 route.

101 [~~4~~] (6)(a) Approved bus routes for funding purposes shall be determined on fall data
102 collected by October 1.

103 (b) Approved route funding shall be determined on the basis of the most efficient and
104 economic routes.

105 [~~5~~] (7) A local school board may provide for the transportation of students regardless of
106 the distance from school, from general funds of the school district.

107 Section 2. **FY 2027 Appropriations.**

108 The following sums of money are appropriated for the fiscal year beginning July 1,
109 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. These are additions to amounts previously appropriated for
110 fiscal year 2027.

111 Subsection 2(a). **Operating and Capital Budgets**

112 Under the terms and conditions of Title 63J, Chapter 1, Budgetary Procedures Act, the
113 Legislature appropriates the following sums of money from the funds or accounts indicated for
114 the use and support of the government of the state of Utah.

115 ITEM 1 To State Board of Education - Minimum School Program - Related to Basic
116 School Programs

117	From Income Tax Fund, One-time	500,000
118	Schedule of Programs:	
119	Pupil Transportation - Unsafe Routes	500,000

120 Section 3. **Effective Date.**

121 This bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.