

Marshall Middle School Parent Paid Bus Program FAQ's

Compiled by the Scripps Ranch Bus Committee

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1. What is the Parent-Paid Bus to Thurgood Marshall Middle School (MMS) Program?

The San Diego Unified School District (District) does not provide transportation services to all students within the District. In 2008, and in partnership with the District, the community of Scripps Ranch developed a parent-paid program to provide bus transportation service for the students of Scripps Ranch to get to MMS. The parents pay for the bus service, and the District provides the buses and drivers. Over the years, the program has gone through several changes, and today the program is overseen and administered by a committee of MMS parents, the Scripps Ranch Bus Committee (SRBC). Today, there are two buses with two routes each which transport 240 students from the north side of Scripps Ranch to MMS.

2. Why doesn't the District provide bus transportation for all K-12 children?

In California, school districts provide transportation between home and school for about one in eight students. The exact share of students transported varies notably across the state, with about one-quarter of districts transporting less than 10 percent of their students and about one-tenth of districts (generally smaller and more rural areas) transporting more than half of their students. In contrast to some other states, California does not require districts to transport students who live far from school. Instead, State Law allows each district to provide pupil transportation "...whenever, in the judgement of the board, the transportation is advisable and good reason exists... ." The state grants school districts discretion over which students they will transport and how many school bus routes they will operate, however Federal Law does require the district to transport students with disabilities, those attending Federally Sanctioned Schools (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), and homeless students. Due to budget constraints and shortfalls, the San Diego Unified School District has made the decision in recent years to cut non-classroom specific services throughout the district. This has resulted in fewer bus drivers and buses and therefore fewer students being bused to school.

Source - *Review of School Transportation in California*, February 25, 2014.

<http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2014/education/school-transportation/school-transportation-022514.pdf>

3. Why do we only have two buses?

The District has allocated two buses to Scripps Ranch due to demand and budget considerations. Each year the SRBC makes a request of the District to allocate more resources to the community as demand is now considerably more than the two buses can accommodate. Unfortunately, the District budget and resources available have prevented the addition of further buses...but we will keep asking.

4. If Parents are paying for the buses why can't we simply add a bus and, if necessary, increase our payment to cover the cost?

The District budget is complex and while parents pay for students to ride a bus, the funds are not allocated in such a way as to directly cover the cost of the driver, the bus, and all associated transportation costs. Instead all funds go into the overall District Transportation budget to cover overhead, maintenance, personnel, as well as transportation expenses including, but not limited to, funding those who are provided transportation free of charge. Additionally, it is the District's Board of Trustees who sets the transportation rate for students for the entire District, and not just for Scripps Ranch alone.

5. Can we hire private buses to transport the students to MMS who are on the wait list?

Unfortunately not. Pursuant to state law any vehicle used to transport K-12 students to and from a school site, must be certified as a School Pupil Activity Bus (SPAB). This certification requirement does not pertain to privately-owned household vehicles however, any carrier that is SPAB-certified (i.e. private bus service company) must enter into a contractual agreement with the District to provide the transportation services to and from the school site. Additionally, provisions within the collective bargaining agreement between the District and the bus driver's union stipulate that when the number of District bus drivers falls below an established threshold, the District cannot enter into any SPAB agreements until the number of drivers increases over the established threshold. Currently, the number of drivers is below the threshold, so private bus companies cannot be contracted with as they will not be able to enter the school premises.

Source - California Vehicle Code, Division 1, Section 546.

http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=VEH§ionNum=546

6. Will the bus come to my house to pick up my child?

No. The bus stops are established by the District. Service is provided in accordance with District distance guidelines and is computed using the District's route-scheduling system.

Within these guidelines, every effort is made to improve route efficiency by clustering students to stops and, where possible, providing service on major streets.

7. Where are the bus stops and what time do the buses arrive/depart?

Currently, there are three bus routes:

Bus P (Round 1) – Dingeman Elementary School (11840 Scripps Creek Dr.)

Picks up at 6:33am

Drops off at 2:42pm

Bus P (Round 2) – Dingeman Elementary School (11840 Scripps Creek Dr.)

Picks up at 7:08am

Drops off at 3:05pm

Bus Q – Ellen Browning Scripps Elementary School (11778 Cypress Canyon Rd.)

Picks up at 6:38am

Drops off at 2:42pm

Bus Q – Farmingdale Neighborhood

Picks up at the corner of Farmingdale Street and Winding Ridge Dr. at 7:04am

Drops off at the corner of Swan Lake Drive and Heartwood Way at 3:08pm

8. Why isn't there a bus stop near Jerabek, South of Pomerado, or other parts of Scripps Ranch?

Over the years there has been various levels of interest in adding an additional bus which would pick-up and drop-off at Jerabek Elementary and/or the neighborhoods south of Pomerado Road. To date, there has not been enough interest to warrant a full bus for both areas (120 total seats for both areas combined). If parents in those neighborhoods wish to have the District consider adding an additional bus route to Jerabek/South of Pomerado, they would need to show the demand exists to warrant the additional route subject to the constraints detailed in #2 and #3 above.

9. How many students do the buses carry?

Each bus carries 60 students.

10. How much does the bus program cost?

The District sets the rate for the bus program and you will be billed directly by the District. The current annual rates for bus transportation are listed below but are subject to change by the District.

1st student riding - \$500

2nd student riding - \$250

3rd, and all subsequent students riding - FREE

If your family qualifies for the Free Lunch program, there is no charge by the District for transportation services. Please note that neither the SRBC nor MMS collects any money related to the bus program nor does either organization have any influence over the fees charged by the District.

11. How do I register for the bus program?

Each year in April the SRBC holds an online registration for the following year's program. ALL families wishing to be included in the program MUST register. This includes BOTH new families wishing to use the bus and families with returning riders. If a returning rider is not registered for the following year's program their seat will be given to the next eligible rider.

Please bookmark our website (<https://srbuscommittee.blogspot.com/>) to keep up to date with registrations and information regarding the bus program. Information is also available on the Scripps Ranch Civic Association website under Committees – Advisory Groups – Bus Committee. The SRBC does its best to get the word out about registration through social media, the SRCA Newsletter and through the local elementary schools.

12. When is registration?

Each year, registration takes place in the latter part of the month of April.

13. How and when do I pay for the bus program?

You can choose to pay in full at the beginning of the school year, or you can pay by semester. You will be billed directly by the District and payment can be made by credit card, check, or through PayPAMS - once an account is set up - under "Transportation". If you have any questions related your bill, you can contact Linda Knipple at 858-496-8701 or lnipple@sandi.net.

Please be aware that non-payment for bus services will result in students losing their assigned seats the following year. It is the responsibility of each family to ensure their payments are made to the District.

14. How does registration and the lottery work?

Each April the SRBC will open the online registration form. All returning riders, siblings of returning riders, and new families to the program MUST register EACH year they want to be considered for a seat on one of the buses. The online form will allow the names of up to three students to be entered as well as contact information for each family – if you have more than three children please let us know.

Once registration closes, the SRBC will hold a public lottery where the selection order is established for new, non-sibling riders, by which the SRBC will assign open seats. The selection order is established by using a random number generator for all received online entries. Any riders not selected for an open seat will remain on a Wait List in the order as established at the Lottery. The SRBC will keep the Wait List updated throughout the year and on their website: www.srbuscommittee.blogspot.com.

As seats become available the registration numbers will be crossed through to indicate the rider has moved from the wait list to the rider list. You may notice that numbers are not necessarily crossed off in order. This may be because families have chosen not to fill an available seat on a bus route that is not convenient to their home, or have decided to remove their student from the program/Wait List altogether.

15. Do I need to be present at the lottery to have my place on a bus reserved?

No. The lottery only establishes the order that the SRBC follows when assigning students to the various routes. Your place in the lottery is established whether you are present or not. The SRBC will contact you when seat assignments have been completed letting you know if you have secured a seat or where you are on the Wait List.

16. What is a “priority status” for bus riders?

In accordance with the SRBC Bylaws, there are two priority seating classifications:

- All returning riders who rode the bus the previous year are reserved a seat as long as they register for the program each year they are a student at MMS and their account with the District paid in full.
- All siblings of returning riders are also reserved a seat on the bus as long as they register for the program each year they are a student at MMS.

All other students who do not qualify under these categories are placed in a lottery for the open seats.

17. Why were the priority categories established for returning riders and their siblings?

The SRBC committee voted to follow the precedent created by the original bus committee to allow returning riders and their siblings priority status. In deciding this it was felt that families with riders on the bus would have a more difficult time establishing or joining an established carpool if they did not secure a seat on the bus in subsequent years at MMS. The Committee also considered that it would create a problem for families to have one child ride the bus, yet have to drive another child to MMS; therefore, siblings of returning riders are automatically admitted into the program to assist families and also reduce the number of personal vehicles entering/exiting the campus.

18. How are decisions made that effect the bus program?

The SRBC is responsible for all decisions related to the selection of students for each of the bus routes according to the published Bylaws which were created and approved by the publicly-elected committee in 2017. Each year in May, a public election is held for all positions on the committee. As long as you are the parent or guardian of a student attending MMS you are eligible to run for election for the positions of Vice Chair, Secretary or one of the four Members-At-Large seats. The position of Chair is also up for election each year however, to provide continuity, the Bylaws require this position to be filled by an existing committee member.

The SRBC holds public meetings each month (except for July and November) where different issues and aspects of the program are debated and voted upon by the committee after hearing from those present.

All decisions related to where the buses pick up and drop off students, how many buses are allocated to the community, and all billing issues are decided by the District Transportation Department.

19. Where and when does the Scripps Ranch Bus Committee meet?

The SRBC usually meets at 7:00pm on the fourth Tuesday of the month (except for July and November) in the either the Community Room or Seminar Room (depending on availability) of the Scripps Ranch Library ([10301 Scripps Lake Drive](https://www.scrippsrancho.org/10301-Scripps-Lake-Drive)). The December meeting is usually held earlier in the month to avoid the holidays. Please check the website <https://srbuscommittee.blogspot.com/> for up-to-date information, agendas and minutes.

20. Are Committee meetings open to the public?

Yes. The SRBC welcomes and encourages parents and guardians of MMS students to attend and take part in the meetings.

21. How can I get involved with the Committee?

The SRBC is always looking for volunteers to assist and take on a leadership role within the committee. Only parents and guardians of MMS students can be on the committee, so we encourage you to attend the monthly meetings, engage in the conversations, help out when the need arises, and run for a position at the May meeting.

22. If I missed the registration window, is there still a way I can get my student on the wait list?

If you missed the registration window, the SRBC can add your name to the bottom of the Wait List. Please contact the SRBC at: mmsbus@outlook.com

23. How can I keep up-to-date on the program and the Committee's work?

Bookmark the SRBC's website (www.srbuscommittee.blogspot.com) and if you can, attend our monthly meetings on the fourth Tuesday of the month in the Scripps ranch Library.

24. Do you have a website?

Yes. The SRBC website address is: www.srbuscommittee.blogspot.com.

Information is also available through the Scripps Ranch Civic Association website <https://www.scrippsranch.org/> under Committees – Advisory Groups – Bus Committee.

25. What should I do if my student loses their bus pass?

During the school year, if your student loses their bus pass, or if you have any questions related to bus passes, you or your student can contact Kathleen Tadeusiak at the MMS Office, 858-549-5400 or ktadeusiak@sandi.net.

There is a \$5 fee for each replacement pass ordered and a temporary pass will be issued by the office to be used until the replacement card is received. MMS will let your student know when the new pass is ready to collect from the office.

26. How do I get my student to MMS if they are not selected to be on one of the bus routes?

Over the years Scripps Ranch families have developed a rather robust system of carpools. Families take turns driving their own students as well as other students to MMS. To join a carpool, ask your neighbors about any and all carpools in your neighborhood. We have also seen families advertise their needs on the Scripps Ranch Civic Association Facebook page, the Scripps Ranch Information Exchange Facebook page, and other social media platforms.

27. How do I register more than 1 child?

The online form has the capacity for families to register up to three children. If you need to register more than three children, please contact the SRBC at mmsbus@outlook.com during the registration window.

28. Is the bus safe?

Riding on a school bus is one of the safest forms of transportation in the nation. Drivers are trained and continue to be trained throughout their careers and all drivers are fingerprinted and tested for drugs/alcohol prior to employment and are randomly tested for drugs/alcohol throughout their employment. All school bus drivers must hold a Commercial Driver's License, Class B with a Passenger endorsement as well as an "S" endorsement as required for school bus drivers in the United States. All California school bus drivers must hold a valid School Bus Driver Certificate and meet federal and state physical standards requirements. Drivers also demonstrate their skills to the California Highway Patrol through periodic testing so they can continue to drive a school bus.

Riding in a school bus is 172 times safer than your family car, 8 times safer than passenger trains or commercial airlines, and 4 times safer than transit buses or intercity buses. Collisions are rare because school districts, and the drivers themselves, train and work hard at driving defensively to avoid collisions. In addition, the school buses themselves are designed to withstand all but the most serious crashes without death or serious injury.

For full details of the San Diego Unified School District Transportation Safety plan please go to:

https://www.sandiegounified.org/sites/default/files_link/district/files/dept/transportation/SDUSD%20Transportation%20Safety%20Plan%202017.pdf

29. What do I do if the bus is late?

If the bus is more than 10 minutes late please go to <http://transportation2.sandi.net/latebus.htm> where information on the delay should be listed. If you do not see your child's bus listed, please call the District's Transportation Department at (858) 496-8460 and press 1 to speak to an Information Clerk.

30. Can my child ride only the morning/evening bus?

How you use your bus pass is up to you. If you only need transportation for the afternoons, then you can use it for only the afternoons. There is no requirement for a student to have to ride the bus if they choose not to do so. The SRBC does not currently have the ability to allow two separate students to "share" a bus pass or seat with one student riding only in the mornings and another student riding in the afternoons. Such arrangements create administrative difficulties at the end of each year when the SRBC begins the work of allocating students to the four routes, however it is possible this is an issue that will be discussed and voted on in the future.

31. I am number [enter number here] on the Wait List. How likely is it that my child will make it onto the bus this year?

While there is no way for the SRBC to know or guess how many students, if any, will leave the bus program, the yearly turnover rate for the bus program is extremely low. For the 2017-2018 school year, no students left the program during the year.