



Designing funded bus routes for Directly Resourced schools

Information for Directly Resourced (DR) schools on how
their funded school bus routes are designed

October 2025

DR schools (or networks of schools) receive bulk funding from the Ministry to organise and manage their own school transport assistance for their eligible students. Information on the eligibility criteria can be found on the Ministry's website.

Note: We no longer accept new applications for DR school transport assistance funding.

Ministry-funded bus routes

DR schools can choose how to provide assistance to their eligible students, as long as they comply with their funding agreement with the Ministry. DR schools can choose to run their own bus routes, pay travel allowances or use a combination of a bus service and travel allowance.

Part of a DR school's bulk funding is based on the number of kilometres that their Ministry-designed funded bus routes have.

The funded routes are designed using the Ministry's mapping software, in accordance with our guidelines. ArcGIS can differ from other mapping software, such as Google Maps, which may map routes differently.

These routes are hypothetical as they are used for funding purposes only. This means that turning locations and vehicle manoeuvres are not considered. However, weight restricted roads and bridges, fords and paper roads are considered. Funded routes are designed to the maximum distances allowable within the route design guidelines.

Key design principles:

- Funded routes are designed to transport as many eligible students as efficiently as possible.
- A minimum of eight eligible students is required for a funded route to be considered.
- Funded routes are designed to typically travel along main roads, and travel as far as the fourth furthest eligible student on any given road.

- Funded route design takes the following into consideration:
 - o location of eligible students
 - o number of eligible students
 - o timetables, which include bell times and travel times
 - o Ministry cost limits

Key roles in designing DR funded bus routes

Roles	Responsibilities
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designs Ministry-funded bus routes for eligible students within current policy parameters • Undertakes route reviews to ensure they are still fit-for-purpose • Approves new routes or changes to current routes • Engages with schools on proposed route changes
Fundholder school (single DR school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides current student data to the Ministry • Decides how funding is used to provide assistance to their eligible students
Fundholder school (DR network of schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides current student data to the Ministry • Leads and co-ordinates engagement with network schools • Decides how funding is used to provide assistance to their eligible students, in consultation with network schools
DR network school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides current student data to the Ministry

How do you decide where the funded route travels?

While a minimum of eight eligible students is required for a funded route to be considered, where the funded route is designed to travel to depends on the location and number of eligible students.

When we design funded routes, we ensure that all parts of the route benefit four or more eligible students. This means that the funded route will only go as far as the student who lives the fourth furthest on that road.

Funded routes are usually designed to travel along main arterial roads; however, they may travel on side roads if:

- there are four or more eligible students living on or around the side road
- the distance to the home of the furthest eligible student is at least 2.4 kilometres from the main route

If DR schools choose to not run a school bus into an area that we've designed a funded route to travel into, the DR school is responsible for paying a transport allowance to their eligible students who are disadvantaged.

Are Transfer of Eligibility (ToE) students taken into consideration when a funded route is designed?

While the locations of ToE students are not considered when designing a funded bus route, ToE students are included in capacity assessments.

How far does a funded route travels?

A funded route will only be designed to go as far as the eligible student who lives the fourth furthest from the school or on an eligible side road.

