

ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



2026 – 2029 STUDENT TRANSPORTATION PLAN

TRANSPORTATION MANDATE

In accordance with Education Code (EC) Section 39800.1, as a condition of receiving apportionments for transportation services (under EC Section 41850.1), a local educational agency shall develop a plan describing their transportation services. The plan shall be presented and adopted by the governing board of the local educational agency on or before April 1, 2023, and updated by April 1 every year thereafter for single year plans or for multi-year plans updated when the term of a multi-year plan has ended. The plan may provide for the local educational agency to partner with a municipally owned transit system to provide services pursuant to this section to middle school and high school pupils. Nothing in a local educational agency's plan shall preclude a local educational agency from providing no-cost transit passes to pupils.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING BACKGROUND

Prior to 1981, the State reimbursed school districts for home-to-school (HTS) transportation on a sliding scale for costs up to ninety percent (90%) and covered one hundred percent (100%) of costs for transporting students with disabilities. Transportation of students with special needs is mandated when required within the students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Transportation services specified in a students' IEP are provided at no cost to the student or his/her parent/guardian.

In 2013-14, with enactment of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), State funding for HTS Transportation was established at a fixed amount, in perpetuity, based on the amount of funding each school district received in 2012-13 for both General Education and Special Education transportation. This was accomplished by providing an "add-on" (Transportation Add-On) to the resulting LCFF funding after all other factors, including COLA, were applied to the formula. Consequently, the Transportation add-on remained fixed each year.

Due to advocacy efforts by several state-wide organizations representing school districts, the 2022-23 state budget included \$637 million in ongoing additional transportation funding for school districts and county offices of education based on prior year eligible transportation expenditures and prior year Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) transportation related add-on funding. Under the 2022-23 Budget Act, local educational agencies are eligible to receive sixty percent (60%) reimbursement of their HTC transportation costs, or their current LCFF add-on, plus cost-of-living adjustments.

ABOUT OCDE'S TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

OCDE is committed to providing safe, reliable, and efficient daily home-to-school (HTS) transportation services for school district referred students attending OCDE's special education and alternative education programs located throughout Orange County. Safety is always our number one priority.

OCDE contracts with First Student, Inc., a private company, to provide student transportation services. First Student, Inc. is North America's leading school transportation provider and has more than a century of experience in providing safe and reliable transportation to students across the U.S. and Canada. They understand the priorities of today's K-12 community. Their 63,000 dedicated employees complete 5.5 million student journeys per day. They are committed to our values and always keep safety in front of mind.

Although First Student is a contracted transportation provider, they operate as an extension of the OCDE Transportation Department. Collaboratively, we provide transportation services for over 274 students.

HOW OCDE'S TRANSPORTATION WORKS

OCDE provides fee-for-service transportation to school district-referred special education students with an IEP attending one of OCDE's special education programs located throughout Orange County. Transportation services include door-to-door home-to-school (HTS) and other related transportation services for students residing in Orange, Long Beach, and Los Angeles counties at no charge to the student or his/her parent/guardian. The student's district of residence will be charged for the cost of all transportation related services including before and after school activities, extra-curricular activities, field trips and Community Based Instruction (CBI) trips where students are transported to various venues around the community to further develop their life skills.

Upon request by a participating school district, OCDE's Special Education staff notifies OCDE's transportation staff through an on-line request system that a student is placed in one of our special education programs and is need of transportation. Once the request is received and reviewed by OCDE's transportation staff and First Student staff the student is routed, parents notified of student pick up and drop off times and then transported to OCDE's special education program.

In addition to the services noted above, OCDE also provides transportation for students attending OCDE's Alternative, Community, and Correctional Education Schools and Services (ACCESS) Skyview School program. Buses are routed to pick up and drop off students at the closest, safest stop to the student's residence. OCDE also provides bus passes for ACCESS students to ride Orange County Transit Authority (OCTA) buses, the local transit authority, to and from school. OCDE also supports low income and homeless students by providing OCTA bus passes to and from school to help facilitate and encourage students' educational achievements. OCTA offers a "Youth Ride Free Program" which provides free year-round travel on OCTA buses to youth ages 6 to 18 to ride all OC fixed-route buses for free to travel to and from school, work, or fun.

ACCESSIBIITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND HOMELESS YOUTH

OCDE will continue to provide transportation for students with disabilities when specified in the student's IEP as required by law. OCDE will determine the most appropriate mode of transportation for an individual student at no cost to their parent/guardian. Transportation is scheduled so that students with disabilities do not spend an excessive amount of time on buses compared to other students ensuring arrivals and departures do not reduce the length of the school day for these students except as may be prescribed on an individual basis.

OCDE continues to provide support for students and families who are experiencing homelessness, as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Act through our ACCESS Homeless Educational Services Program. ACCESS McKinney-Vento liaisons connect students with academic support and other resources to help eliminate barriers to educational success. If transportation is needed, OCDE provides bus passes for students to ride the public

transportation bus system. Students also receive free transportation through OCTA “Youth Ride Free program.”

FREE TRANSPORTATION FOR UNDUPLICATED PUPILS

OCDE will continue to provide all district-referred special education students with no cost transportation services. Students are provided door to door home-to-school transportation and any related services as specified by their IEP. Students enrolled in OCDE’s ACCESS program are provided with a no-cost means of transportation via the local transit authority (bus passes or free fare).

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Listed below are the participating school districts that OCDE is providing home-to-school transportation for district-referred students attending OCDE’s Special Education and ACCESS education programs in fiscal year 2025/2026:

SCHOOL DISTRICT	2025/2026
Special Education	
ABC Unified	13
Anaheim Elementary	17
Anaheim Union High	17
Buena Park	11
Capistrano Unified	20
Centralia	2
Cypress	4
El Rancho	3
Fountain Valley	2
Fullerton	9
Fullerton Joint Union High	8
Garden Grove Unified	25
Huntington Beach City	3
Huntington Beach Union High	6
Irvine Unified	7
La Habra City	2
Laguna Beach Unified	1
Los Nietos	1
Long Beach Unified	4
Newport-Mesa Unified	9
Norwalk-La Mirada Unified	4
Ocean View	1

Orange Unified	2
Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified	6
Saddleback Valley Unified	6
Santa Ana Unified	23
Savanna	2
South Whittier	1
Temple City	1
Tustin Unified	8
Westminster	5
Whittier City	2
Whittier Union High	4
Sub Total	229
ACCESS	
Skyview	45
Total	274

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING AND FINANCE

Below are estimated annual reimbursement and program expenditure calculations projected for special education and alternative education transportation costs based on the previous year's transportation expenses:

2026 – 2027

PROJECTED SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION COST CALCULATION

Transportation Services Cost Data		
A.	Total 2026-27 Transportation Expenses (Function 3600)	\$7,244,661.00
B.	Less Capital Outlay (Object 6xxx, Function 3600)	0
C.	Less Non-Agency Expenditures (Goal 7110, 7150, Function 3600)	0
D.	Estimated 60% Reimbursement	\$4,346,796.60
E.	Less 2023-2024 Transportation Add-on From LCFF	(\$1,863,508.00)
Total Estimated HTS Transportation Reimbursement		\$2,483,288.60

BUDGETED EXPENDITURES AND OTHER FINANCING USES	
2000-2999: Classified Salaries	\$171,370.00

3000-3999: Employee Benefits	\$70,784.00
4000-4999: Books and Supplies	0
5000-5999: Services and Other Operating Expenditures	\$7,002,507.00
6000-6999: Capital Outlay	0
7000-7999: Other Outgo	0
Total Estimated Expenditures	\$7,244,661.00

2027 - 2028
PROJECTED SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION COST CALCULATION

Transportation Services Cost Data		
A.	Total 2027-28 Transportation Expenses (Function 3600)	\$8,397,140.00
B.	Less Capital Outlay (Object 6xxx, Function 3600)	0
C.	Less Non-Agency Expenditures (Goal 7110, 7150, Function 3600)	0
D.	Estimated 60% Reimbursement	\$5,038,284.00
E.	Less 2023-2024 Transportation Add-on From LCFF	(\$1,920,531.00)
Total Estimated HTS Transportation Reimbursement		\$3,117,753.00

EXPENDITURES AND OTHER FINANCING USES	
2000-2999: Classified Salaries	\$176,614.00
3000-3999: Employee Benefits	\$75,098.00
4000-4999: Books and Supplies	0
5000-5999: Services and Other Operating Expenditures	\$8,145,428.00
6000-6999: Capital Outlay	0
7000-7999: Other Outgo	0
Total Estimated Expenditures	\$8,397,140.00

2028 - 2029
PROJECTED SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION COST CALCULATION

Transportation Services Cost Data		
A.	Total 2028-29 Transportation Expenses (Function 3600)	\$8,894,147.00
B.	Less Capital Outlay (Object 6xxx, Function 3600)	0
C.	Less Non-Agency Expenditures (Goal 7110, 7150, Function 3600)	0
D.	Estimated 60% Reimbursement	\$5,336,488.20
E.	Less 2023-2024 Transportation Add-on From LCFF	(\$1,984,677.00)
Total Estimated HTS Transportation Reimbursement		\$3,351,811.20

EXPENDITURES AND OTHER FINANCING USES	
2000-2999: Classified Salaries	\$182,513.00
3000-3999: Employee Benefits	\$77,480.00
4000-4999: Books and Supplies	00
5000-5999: Services and Other Operating Expenditures	\$8,634,154.00
6000-6999: Capital Outlay	0
7000-7999: Other Outgo	0
Total Estimated Expenditures	\$8,894,147.00