

RENFREW COUNTY

Joint Transportation Consortium



Welcome to the winter edition of the RCJTC's "Bus Stop News". This newsletter is intended to be a publication that will be distributed to all stakeholders to keep them informed of all ongoing or upcoming operational items, and to provide them with school bus related information specific to the season. In this newsletter, we will provide information about our recent operations, inclement weather/how we decide on school bus cancellations, safety measures specific to the season, important dates, and provide reminders for the coming months.

A Snapshot Summary

- We transport over 10,000 students daily.
- The [Parent Portal](#) is now mobile friendly and re-designed!
- Operators in Renfrew County continue to face a driver shortage. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a driver please visit the "Help Wanted" ad at www.onthebus.ca

Inclement Weather, and How We Make the Decision to Cancel

About Inclement Weather

Winter can be an especially tough season to travel in, especially when it comes to the combination of vehicles and snow, freezing rain, floods, emergency road closures, etc. School buses are no exception, which can make getting to and from school very challenging, and consequently lead to delays and cancellations. Bus routes cancelled due to inclement weather will be posted on our website (www.onthebus.ca) by 6:00 am, so parents have the information as early as possible to make alternative arrangements. Once the decision to cancel buses has been made, it remains in effect the entire day. Schools will still remain open to receive students. Ultimately, school bus transportation cancellations happen to ensure children are safe. Buses may be delayed or cancelled for a number of reasons such as mechanical problems or inclement weather and can happen anytime, morning and afternoon. Bus delays are posted online as soon as the information is received.

How the Decision is Made

Prior to making the decision to cancel bus routes, the general manager at the RCJTC watches for weather warnings from Environment Canada, and consults with the bus operators, who have seen "on the ground" as well they communicate with local municipalities on current and forecasted road and weather conditions.



Winter Driving Tips on How to Stay Safe on the Road!

1. **Check your vehicle:** Get your vehicle winter-ready with a maintenance check-up. Carry an ice scraper and washer fluid effective to -40°C. Try to keep your fuel tank no less than half full. Consider installing four winter tires. You might be eligible for an auto insurance discount if you use them!
2. **Plan ahead:** Plan your trip, locate your stops, and check the weather. Use your judgement too; delaying your trip may be the best option. If you're on the road when conditions worsen, find a safe place to pull well off the road and wait until the weather gets better.
3. **Be prepared:** Carry emergency supplies with you, such as a charged cell phone, non-perishable food, water, flashlight, blanket, warm clothes, jumper cables, shovel, traction mats, and sand.





Winter Driving Tips on How to Stay Safe on the Road! Continued

4. **Slow down and stay alert:** Many winter collisions occur because drivers are going too fast for road conditions. Slow down and allow extra space between you and other vehicles. Focus on your driving and put away cell phones and other distractions. Look for reflections on the road - what looks like water may actually be ice.
5. **Stay in control:** Steer gently on curves and in slippery conditions. Hard braking, quick acceleration and abrupt gear changes can cause you to skid. Avoid using cruise control on wet, snowy, or icy pavement - it reduces your reaction time and vehicle control. If you do skid, release your brakes and steer in the direction you want to go. Be careful not to oversteer.
6. **Share the road and watch for snowplows:** Avoid crowding into the lane of on-coming traffic - this can result in head-on collisions. Drive slowly near working snowplows and don't pass them - it's dangerous. Be patient and give them room. They will pull off the road when they reach the end of their route.
7. **Obey road closures:** Do not drive on closed roads - it's against the law. Always obey emergency closure signs and follow the direction of police officers. Remember, the roads are closed for your safety!



Dressing for the Cold Weather

The outdoors in the winter is the safest and enjoyed the most, when you are dressed properly. When going outside in cold weather, there are a few things to keep in mind:

First of all, **be aware of the weather.** When the temperature is just above or below freezing, the chance that you will get wet from snow or freezing rain increases. This is because the air holds more moisture at the freezing point than when the temperature is very cold. So, take a minute to check the weather forecast before you go outside. Is there precipitation, snow, or freezing rain? What is the humidity and temperature?

Secondly, **dress in layers.** Layers allow you to be more flexible to changing weather conditions and your own activities. Layers create an airspace between your skin and the cold and this space is what insulates best. Layers are also looser, allowing for better blood circulation which helps to maintain body temperature. Layering also applies to hands and feet.

Lastly, make sure to **adjust your clothing to the activity.** Before starting an activity, remove a layer of clothing. You will be cold for a moment, but as you start to move you will warm up. This will help you avoid overheating and dampening the clothing with sweat. Once the activity is done, put the layers back on. Also, try to stay out of the wind and you will stay warmer. When you go back indoors, make sure you hang up your coats and outdoor pants, and place your scarves and mittens somewhere warm to dry.

Important Dates

December 20th: It's the last day of school before Christmas Break!

Reminders

Parents:

RCJTC will provide information on bus cancellations and/or delays via:

- Parent Portal on [Website](http://www.onthebus.ca) (www.onthebus.ca)
- [Twitter](https://twitter.com/RCJTC_Trans) (@RCJTC_Trans)
- [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/RCJTC) (RCJTC)
- [iTunes](https://itunes.apple.com) with iPhone App (Verify with "RCJTC")
- [Google Play](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.rcjtc) App (Verify with "RCJTC")
- [Email](mailto:parents@rcjtc.ca) to parents who subscribe for notifications

Public:

Always be watchful of the vehicles close to you, and always stop 20 meters away from the school bus.



Getting Your Child to School in the Cold Weather

Bundle Up and Don't Rush. After ensuring that your child is dressed properly, make sure your child(ren) are at the bus stop at least 5 minutes before the scheduled bus arrival time in the morning. If you meet your children in the afternoon, make sure that you are at the stop at least 5 minutes before the scheduled bus arrival time.

Equip Your Feet. Wear footwear appropriate for the winter conditions. Avoid footwear with slick (no tread) soles when walking on wet surfaces, snow or ice. Following snowfalls, municipalities' maintenance teams need time to service all their roadways, sidewalks, and trails, so there will be times when students must walk in potentially slippery or snowy conditions.

Put Down the Phone. Not looking at where you are walking could have disastrous results. When walking on snow or ice covered surfaces, watch where you are walking, take shorter, more deliberate steps, or do the "penguin shuffle" in icy areas.

Rely on a Light. Consider a flashlight or flashing keychain/band if your child(ren) are wearing all dark clothing on dark mornings.

Expect Delays in Snow and Icy Road Conditions. Have just a little patience. School bus drivers are well trained in driving in winter weather. However, snow and icy road conditions may result in buses being delayed. Safety is every driver's top priority and extra time may be needed to get to and from each stop.

Practice Patience. During this time of year it is always advisable to slow down, give yourself more time. You should always try to avoid being rushed.

Always Keep Your Distance. A build-up of ice and snow can create a safety hazard for children waiting at the bus stop. Ensure that your child(ren) understand the importance of standing back from the curb as the bus approaches the bus stop.

Remember to go Hands Free. Have your child(ren) place their school books and lunches in their backpack. Your child(ren) will find it easier to walk through the ice and snow and to board the bus with their hands free to use the bus handrail.

Emergency Planning. Review morning and afternoon procedures with your child(ren) so they will know what to do if their bus is late or cancelled. It is important for families to have backup arrangements in place of an emergency.

Daytime Winter Walking is Healthy. Students have been walking to school for decades in winter conditions and while it may take a little longer to walk during winter, the effort is worth the additional benefits! Walking outside in cold air can reduce stress, increase serotonin (the happiness hormone), and even though the action may be slower, walking in snow leads to greater heart conditioning and increased endurance over time.



Throughout the school year we need to remember safety tips in and around the bus, for our own safety!

Set aside some time this week to talk to your child about bus safety, and their behaviour on the bus. Here are a few resources you can use:

New to bussing?
Earn Buzzy the Bee's Safety Certificate!

<http://vimeo.com/229625011>

Grades 1 to 4 |
Earn Buster's Safety Badges!

<http://vimeo.com/229631702>

Grades 4-8 |
Do you know who So-teria is?

<http://vimeo.com/230603498>

For all ages |
Enjoy Ontario's school bus safety videos
<http://vimeo.com/oecmsbrs>