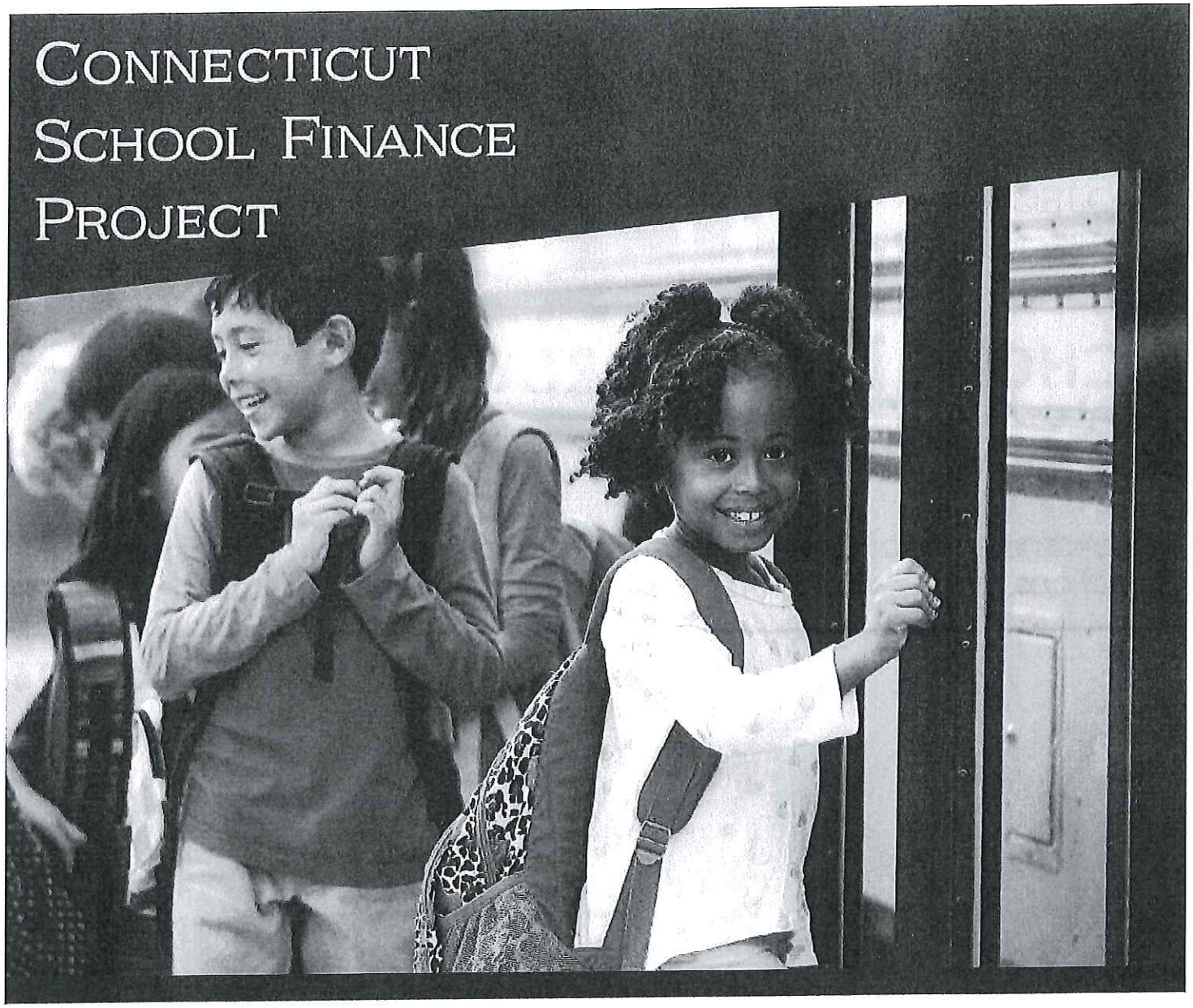
Attachment F

Connecticut School Finance Project:

School Transportation for Connecticut Students

CONNECTICUT SCHOOL FINANCE PROJECT



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FOR CONNECTICUT'S STUDENTS

An examination of Connecticut's student transportation policies and practices, and comparison with geographically similar states

November 2016

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Introduction

School transportation is costly and those costs continue to rise. The national average, per-pupil expenditure for transportation of students at public expense has increased 30 percent since 2000, in cost-adjusted dollars.[1] In Connecticut, the average per-pupil cost of student transportation is $885.78,[2] which has increased 42.2 percent since 2000.[3,4] At the same time as costs have increased, state-level funding for transportation has decreased in Connecticut, and in 2016-17 the state legislature eliminated the majority of state funding for public school transportation.[5,6]

Because public education is fundamentally decentralized in the United States, individual states have a wide variety of systems for administering and funding elementary and secondary schools. The requirements and mechanisms for funding school transportation are also highly variable from state to state.

In order to better understand best practices in school transportation requirements and funding structures that could possibly be used in Connecticut, it is necessary to examine these structures, as they currently exist in comparison states. Connecticut is a small state with the fourth highest population density in the United States.[7] Because transportation needs vary greatly depending on the geography of a region and how far students live from school, it is useful to analyze the policies and practices of states with similar needs. The comparison states reviewed in this report are Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, which were selected due to their geographic proximity or geographic similarity to Connecticut. Each of the comparison states is in the top nine states with the highest population densities in the country.[8] A brief summary of Connecticut's current school transportation practices is also included.

In each comparison state, the following issues in school transportation are discussed: statutory requirements, the transportation of exceptional students, the methods for funding the costs of transporting students to choice and nonpublic schools, and the policies regarding state reimbursement to districts and schools for transportation costs and the expenses allowed under these systems. In examining these issues, it is found each state has an entirely distinct school transportation system, with different basic requirements for districts, and vastly different funding systems. Some states require school districts to provide transportation to all resident students, while others do not require districts to provide any transportation at all. Some states allow districts to charge families for providing transportation services, while others prohibit this practice. One state, Rhode Island, has developed a statewide and state-administered transportation system.

In addition to the pages that follow, the school transportation practices of each state profiled in this report can be found in tables in Appendix B.

- **Charter Schools:** The local school district where the charter school is located must provide transportation for all resident students to the charter school, and is eligible for state reimbursement of the associated costs. School districts are not required to provide transportation to charter schools outside of their boundaries, although they are eligible for state reimbursement if they choose to provide it.[22]

- **Nonpublic Schools:** Local school districts are required to provide all resident students who attend private, nonprofit schools located in the district with the same transportation services afforded to students attending public schools. This only applies when the majority of students attending the private school are residents of the host district. The cost a district must incur to provide transportation to private schools is capped at 200 percent of the average per-pupil transportation cost for its public school students. State reimbursement for eligible costs associated with private school transportation is made under the same formula as general student transportation reimbursement.[23]

State Reimbursement and Eligible Expenses

Connecticut has a statutory funding formula to reimburse districts for public and nonpublic school transportation. However, reimbursements are contingent on available appropriations. In 2016, the state legislature entirely cut the primary mechanisms for reimbursement for student transportation to local district schools, charter schools, and nonpublic schools; although districts are still required to provide transportation to both types of schools.[24] Reimbursement for transportation to and from magnet schools, technical high schools, and vo-ag centers remains, to be prorated according to available appropriations.[25] The costs associated with the transportation of special education students are excluded from state reimbursement for the excess costs of educating exceptional students.[26]

When funds are available, Connecticut reimburses local school districts for student transportation using a formula that has an equity adjustment based on property wealth. First, the 169 towns in the state are ranked in descending order according to each town's adjusted equalized net grand list per capita (AENGLPC). The towns ranked 1–7 do not receive any transportation reimbursement. The towns ranked from 18–169 receive a reimbursement of 0–60 percent, based on a ranking calculated using the town's AENGLPC and population. Regional boards of education are also reimbursed using this formula, and are provided with an additional 5–10 percentage points after the rankings have been calculated.[27] In addition, there are statutory provisions for financial incentives for districts that choose to enter into cooperative transportation agreements.

Connecticut: Current Practices

Statutory Requirements

Connecticut requires local boards of education to provide "reasonable and desirable" transportation to students between the ages of 5 and 21, who have not yet graduated high school.[9,10] Connecticut does not have any statutory definition of reasonable and desirable transportation.[11] The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) offers non-binding guidelines to assist districts in setting school transportation policies, but local boards of education are not required to follow them, as long as the policies they set are within the confines of statutory requirements.[12] The CSDE recommends bus transportation be offered for students in grades Kindergarten–3 that live more than one mile from school, 1.5 miles for students in grades 4-8, and two miles for students in grades 9-12. The guidelines also list safety hazards on a child's route to school that should be considered even if the child lives under the mileage recommendation.[13]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

Connecticut statutes specify school districts must transport all special education students to and from the curb of their house and school.[14] The local board of education may also make alternative arrangements with the parent or guardian in lieu of transportation, including paying tuition, or room and board at a necessary residential facility.[15] Districts are allowed to reimburse parents if the parents transport their exceptional child to and from school, but they are disallowed from requiring parents to accept this reimbursement in lieu of district-provided transportation.[16] Special education transportation costs are reimbursable as an allowable special education cost under the special education Excess Cost grant.[17] Districts must also provide any additional transportation services delineated in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), including aides or special equipment or vehicles, etc.[18]

Choice School Transportation

- **Technical High Schools**: Local school districts must provide transportation to technical high schools to any student that resides in the district. The State reimburses a portion of these costs.

- **Regional Vocational Agriculture (vo-ag) Centers**: Local districts must either host a vo-ag center or select one to which they will provide transportation. The district may pay the costs of transporting a resident student out-of-district directly to the vo-ag center. The State reimburses a portion of these expenses to the district.[19]

- **Host Magnet Schools**: Local school districts must provide transportation for a resident student to attend a magnet school located in the district.[20]

- **Regional Magnet Schools**: Local school districts are not required to provide transportation to magnet schools located outside of the district. However, the State reimburses $1,300 to the provider of transportation to regional magnet schools, be that the school district, the magnet operator, or another contractor. In the greater Hartford region, the transportation reimbursement for magnet schools is $2,000, to assist the state with meeting court-stipulated desegregation requirements.[21]

Massachusetts

Statutory Requirements

Towns are required to provide transportation to all students in grades K–6 who live more than two miles from school, and more than one mile from the nearest bus stop. In addition, towns are required to pay tuition for a resident student to attend school in a neighboring district, if that school is closer to the student's home than the assigned school in the student's resident district. In order for a parent to request this service from the resident town, the school in the neighboring town must also be more than two, but less than three miles from the student's home. If a town chooses to provide transportation for students who they are not required to transport by law, the town may charge the parent for the transportation service.[28] Towns are allowed to utilize mass transportation systems, such as city buses or rail, to transport students to and from school. Towns are eligible to be reimbursed for transportation via mass transit for students that live over 1.5 miles from school, up to 20 cents per student, per day.[29]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

In Massachusetts, school districts must provide transportation for all special education students, including students who are enrolled in special education programs with extended day or week schedules. Districts may also reimburse parents directly for providing their own transportation to children with special education needs.[30] Special education transportation is eligible for reimbursement only if it is required in the student's IEP, and the mode of transportation specified therein is not normally provided by the school district. Eligible special education transportation costs are reimbursed through a separate formula from general transportation reimbursement.[31]

Choice School Transportation

- **Charter Schools:** In Massachusetts, towns must pay for the transportation of students that live in the town where the charter school is located. The town is required to grant the same access to transportation to charter schools located in the town as they grant to students attending local public schools in the town.[32]

- **Regional Districts and Regional Charter Schools** are required to transport all students in grades K–12, if they provide transportation to any student. These schools are then reimbursed by the State for the full cost of transporting students who reside more than 1.5 miles from the regional or charter school.[33] Charter schools are not eligible for transportation reimbursement if the host district provides a more affordable transportation option for students that reside in the town where the charter school is located.[34]

- **School Choice Programs:** There is a separate funding program for school choice programs that exists within available appropriations. Districts are eligible for reimbursement for the transportation of students that attend school in a contiguous district, and may be eligible for reimbursement for transportation to non-contiguous districts, if the method of transportation is deemed cost-effective by the state board of education.[35]

State Reimbursement and Eligible Expenses

In Massachusetts there is a statutory formula for the state reimbursement to school districts for student transportation to local public schools, but there has been no appropriation by the state legislature for this purpose since fiscal year 2003.[36] Currently, Massachusetts only appropriates state funds to support the transportation of students attending regional school districts and regional charter schools, homeless students, and nonresident vocational students. For the 2015-16 school year, Massachusetts appropriated approximately $69.1 million dollars of an entitlement of approximately $107.2 million for these three accounts.[37]

Local public schools are eligible to be reimbursed by the State, within available appropriations for pupil transportation, for two trips a day per pupil, when the student lives at least 1.5 miles from the school (or, when transporting between schools, 1.5 miles between schools). Reimbursement for an individual student is not to exceed five dollars more than the average per-pupil expenditure for transportation in the district. Towns may receive reimbursement for the transportation of students to private schools, not to exceed the per-pupil expenditure for transportation for public schools in the district. In order to qualify for state reimbursement, districts must negotiate contracts with transportation providers using a competitive bidding process, on the basis of prevailing wage rates. In addition, districts must certify to the Massachusetts Department of Education that the average number of students transported does not exceed 75 percent of the carrying capacity of the bus system used by the district, except in the case of transportation used specifically to correct racial imbalance between schools.[38]

Special education transportation reimbursement is calculated by adding the average per-pupil transportation expenditure for a student enrolled in a regular day program in the district and the amount by which the average per-pupil transportation expenditure for a student enrolled in special education services exceeds the per-pupil amount for regular student transportation in the district. This grant is capped at 110 percent of the statewide average per-pupil transportation costs for special education students.[39]

Rhode Island

Statutory Requirements

Rhode Island is the smallest state in the country, and has developed some very unique methods to leverage its size to contain student transportation costs. The state is divided into regional school bus transportation districts. The school district where a student resides is required to transport that student to any public or private, nonprofit school in the transportation district.[40] Additionally, the state administers a statewide school transportation system for students attending a variety of choice schools and programs. Local school districts are required to purchase transportation from the state system for their eligible resident students unless they can prove they can provide transportation at a lower cost than the state system, which requires obtaining a variance from the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education.[41]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

Variances are available for towns that must provide bus transportation to students entitled to a special education program only if the special transportation is necessary, and there is no similar program in the transportation region.[42]

Choice School Transportation

- **Statewide Transportation System**: The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) administers a statewide transportation system for students attending school outside their resident district. Students who attend private, parochial, charter, career and technical education centers, or other approved programs, are eligible to receive transportation via the RIDE system.[43] All districts are mandated to participate in the state system on a fee-for-service basis, unless they receive a variance from the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education to provide their own transportation to all schools within their transportation district. This system was designed to reduce the duplication of costs and routes and reduce the cost to districts for the transportation of students to choice schools.[44]

- **Charter and Technical Schools**: If they do not participate in the statewide transportation system, local school districts are responsible for the transportation of students to charter schools and technical schools within their established transportation district. However, the cost of transporting a student to a charter school or technical school, is charged to the receiving school at the same grade-level per-pupil cost of student transportation in the resident district. School districts may offer student transportation to charter and technical schools outside the established region if there is no additional cost to the resident district.[45]

- **Other Choice Schools**: Towns are required to provide bus transportation for students who attend a non-special education school outside the designated transportation region, if it is found there is no similar school in the region—and that transportation is necessary to provide an educational opportunity that the student has a right to pursue—and if the school is within 15 miles of the resident town.[46]

State Reimbursement and Eligible Expenses

In addition to managing the statewide transportation system, the State covers nonpublic, out-of-district transportation costs, and 50 percent of the costs for regional school district transportation,[47] and there is a categorical fund established for this purpose.[48] If the amount of reimbursement sought by districts exceeds the amount of funding available in a given year, the funds are prorated among the eligible districts.[49]

New Jersey

Statutory Requirements

In New Jersey, local school districts are required to provide transportation to students who reside "remote from their school," which is defined as more than 2.5 miles from school in grades 9–12 and more than two miles from school in grades pre-Kindergarten—8, or who live on a hazardous route for foot travel.[50] Districts also must provide transportation for students enrolled in universal pre-K, who live remote from their school of attendance or who meet the age and income eligibility requirements and are enrolled in targeted pre-K programs.[51]

New Jersey has Cooperative Transportation Service Agencies (CTSA) that provide transportation to both regular and special education students. CTSAs may also provide transportation for resident and non-resident students who are not otherwise eligible for transportation, and may charge parents for either all or part of the cost of providing these services (although they cannot charge to the point of making a profit). In addition, districts are required to use CTSAs to provide transportation to outplaced students, including special education students, unless they already participate in a shared transportation agreement or can provide transportation to those students at a more economical rate. In the case that a district is required to contract with a CTSA, the contract is exempt from competitive bidding requirements. [52]

Districts may charge parents for the services of transporting students who they are not statutorily required to transport, and parents may waive their rights to transportation if they choose. Districts may participate in interlocal agreements for the transportation of non-remote students, and may charge parents for the cost of this service. Districts may also pay parents in lieu of offering the required transportation services, in which case parents may purchase school transportation from CTSAs.[53] However, families who are experiencing financial hardship are not required to pay for transportation services. Currently, families who are eligible for free or reduced price meals under the National School Lunch Program are considered as having financial hardship.[54] In addition, local boards of education are allowed to sell advertising on the exterior of school buses.[55]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

New Jersey requires districts provide special education students with transportation in accordance with their IEP. Eligible expenses include special equipment, aides, and other assistance. If a special education student is placed in an out-of-district school, the district must provide transportation according to the school calendar of the placement, including weekends and holidays, if applicable.[56] School districts are required to evaluate their methods of transporting special education students, and other students placed out-of-district, who receive aid in lieu of transportation, to determine if a CTSA could provide more economical transportation for students.[57] There are also special transportation arrangements made for the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf.[58]

In accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento act, if a student is experiencing homelessness, the school district where the child is enrolled becomes responsible for transporting the child, even when the school is not located in the student's current town

of residence. When the school a homeless student attends is in the student's resident district, that district provides the transportation.

Choice School Transportation

- **Charter Schools:** Local districts must provide transportation, or aid in lieu of transportation, to all resident students who attend charter schools remote from their residence.[59] If a student is not remote from the charter school, the resident district must provide the same transportation services provided to students that attend its local public schools. Transportation must be provided in accordance with the charter school's calendar.[60] School districts are reimbursed the maximum allowable expenditure for private schools to transport resident students to out-of-district charter schools. If the cost of transporting a student to an out-of-district charter school exceeds the maximum allowable expenditure, the parents may pay the excess cost for the district to provide transportation, or they may receive the maximum allowable aid in lieu of transportation from their resident school district.[61] All charter school transportation policies apply as well to "renaissance" schools, a choice program specific to New Jersey.[62]

- **Nonpublic Schools:** Transportation for remote students to nonpublic, nonprofit schools is the responsibility of the district where the student resides, or that district must provide aid in lieu of transportation. Districts must attempt to utilize a CTSA to provide transportation to private schools before choosing to pay families aid in lieu of transportation. All contracts to transport students to private schools must be competitively bid, and certain guidelines must be considered that encourage regionalization and cooperative bidding to ensure efficiency for providing transportation to private schools. Resident districts do not need to pay aid in lieu of transportation to a private school if the student is utilizing a voucher to attend said school. Resident districts are not required to transport students more than 20 miles to a private school.[63]

- **Interdistrict Choice Programs:** The transportation arrangements for interdistrict choice programs follow the same funding formula as that of nonpublic schools. When the cost of transporting a student to an interdistrict choice program exceeds the maximum allowable expenditure, the family can pay the excess amount to the district to secure transportation or they may take aid in lieu of transportation. However, in the case of interdistrict choice programs, the parents must submit a written request to pay the excess costs, otherwise they will receive the aid in lieu of transportation by default.[64]

State Reimbursement and Allowable Expenses

Each local school district and county vocational school district are eligible for state transportation aid that consists of Base Aid (BA) and an Incentive Factor (IF). The formula sets cost coefficients by statute for certain pupil types, multiplies those coefficients by the number of remote students that reside in a given district, and is modified by an incentive factor that adjusts the base aid paid according to each district's percentile rank in capacity utilization. The cost coefficients were last set in 2008, and were adjusted by the consumer price index (CPI) for the following two years. Since

2011, the cost coefficients have been established in the Educational Adequacy Report which has adjusted the cost coefficients by applying the CPI for each of the two years following the first school year to which the report was applicable.[65] The current rates set in the Educational Adequacy Report are a base per-pupil amount of $442.18, an average per-mile amount for regular education students of $12.10, a base per-pupli amount for special education students of $3,082.15, and an average per-mile amount for special education students of $5.88.[66] The entire appropriation is capped at 81.4875 percent of the district's total eligible expenditures.[67]

For private school and interdistrict choice transportation, the maximum allowable reimbursement was set at $735 in 2002-03 and has been increased annually in direct proportion to the increase in the state per-pupil transportation aid amount in the prior year or the CPI for the average of New York City and Philadelphia for the prior year, whichever is greater. State transportation aid for these students is equal to the total state transportation aid payments made pursuant to the regular student transportation aid, divided by the number of students eligible for transportation. Any additional costs incurred by a school district, due to the increase in the maximum amount of nonpublic school transportation costs per pupil, are borne by the state.[68]

New York

Statutory Requirements

All non-city school districts must provide school transportation for all children grades K–8, who live more than two miles from the school they attend, and all children grades 9–12, who live more than three miles from the school they attend, up to a distance of 15 miles. City school districts are not required to furnish school transportation, but if they choose to do so, they must provide equitable transportation within similar mileage standards to nonpublic schools as they do public schools. City and non-city districts are required to provide transportation to students with disabilities. School districts may choose to transport students who live outside the mandated limits, with express approval from voters in the district, but if so service must be offered in equal measure to all resident students. Districts operating on contingency budgets must continue to provide school transportation in accordance with the most recent, voter-established mileage limitations, including previously approved athletic and field trip transportation.[69] School districts are allowed to utilize, and are eligible for reimbursement for, the use of mass transit systems to provide student transportation.[70]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

All school districts must provide transportation for all resident students with disabilities in accordance with the student's IEP. There are no minimum or maximum allowable mileage caps for the transportation of special education students if transportation is specified in the student's IEP.[71] The resident district is also responsible for transporting special education students to charter schools, at the charter school's request and in accordance with the student's IEP. However, if the charter school has elected to directly provide special education services to the student, then the charter school becomes responsible for the transportation of that student. The charter school may pay to have the resident district provide transportation of special education students for which the charter school provides special education services at cost.[72]

Choice School Transportation

- **Charter School Transportation:** For the purposes of school transportation, charter schools are considered nonpublic schools.[73] Local school districts must provide resident students who attend charter schools with transportation services on the same basis as they provide transportation of private school students, in accordance with statutory minimum mileage requirements relating to city and non-city districts.[74]

- **Common School Districts:** The cost of transporting students within common school districts in grades K–8 is not eligible for state reimbursement.[75]

State Reimbursement and Allowable Expenses

New York provides transportation aid for the following general expense categories:

- Transportation expenditures made in transporting students to and from school once daily, including students who stay late for extracurricular activities
- Transportation of students to and from Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)
- Transportation to and from approved shared programs in other districts

- Transportation to and from occupational programs operated within the district
- Expenditures for operating district-owned buses, buses under contract, and public mass transit carriers[76]
- Allowable operating and capital expenses include salaries, equipment, supplies, insurance, repairs, benefits, and retirement[77]
- Limited reimbursement for transportation to academic summer schools[78]

A non-allowable decimal, based on a historical record of students, is used in place of the actual cost of non-allowable miles, and is also applied to the purchase of buses. The decimal is recalculated every three years. Non-allowable expenses include:

- Transportation provided to students who live under 1.5 miles from school and students who attend out-of-district schools
- Expenditures for transportation provided for field trips, athletics, and other excursions

School districts receive transportation reimbursement for allowable expenditures based on the highest aid ratio result of three separate aid ratio calculations. The maximum aid ratio is 90 percent and the minimum aid ratio is 6.5 percent. In addition, districts with fewer than 21 students per mile are eligible for a sparsity adjustment.[79] Students who attend universal pre-K and are transported using available vacant seats on existing bus routes, will not increase the non-allowable pupil deduction.[80]

Transportation aid for capital expenses is apportioned based on assumed amortization schedules using a statewide interest rate. Allowable capital expenditures include:

- Retroactive assumed debt service for bus leases and purchases
- Retroactive assumed debt service for garage rentals
- Prospective assumed debt service for bus purchases and leases
- Prospective assumed debt service associated with allowable transportation equipment purchases[81]

Delaware

Statutory Requirements

In Delaware, school districts are required to transport students in grades K–6 who live more than one mile from their school, and in grades 7–12, who live more than two miles from school. Districts must also transport students who reside under these mileage guidelines if they live on an identified hazardous route.[82] There is an extensive verification process to request transportation due to a potential hazard.[83] Each local district has a defined attendance area for transportation that does not overlap with any other district, except in the case of regional vocational-technical schools.[84]

School districts may apply to the Delaware State Department of Education to provide allowances in lieu of transportation to families. Requests must be signed by the caregiver of the student and certified by the district superintendent or the school principal. When adequate public transportation is available, the public rate is used. When there is no adequate public transit system, a private conveyance allowance is calculated by multiplying the prevailing state mileage rate for the distance to and from school, or the actual distance traveled. In the case of carpools, the driver is the payee.[85]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

Transportation for special education students must be provided in accordance with the student's IEP. Families may seek private placement with financial aid, including tuition for special education and related services. Daily transportation to and from a private day program is funded through the special education budget. If a special education student attends a private program, as required in the IEP, transportation must follow the school calendar of the outplacement. Salaries for transportation aides are also included but require the approval of the Delaware State Department of Education.[86]

Students experiencing homelessness must continue to receive transportation to their school of origin if they so choose. The district of origin is responsible for organizing extended transportation for homeless students if their housing situation leads them to reside temporarily out-of-district. The Delaware State Department of Education provides guidance and strategies regarding the transportation of homeless students, but districts are allowed to make whatever adjustments are necessary to provide a homeless student with the necessary transportation arrangements.[87]

Choice School Transportation

- **Charter Schools** must provide their own transportation at the same level as is provided to students attending local public schools in the district in which the charter school is located. Area bus stops may be used outside the school district in which the charter school is located to transport nonresident students.[88]

- **Private Schools** are responsible for the supervision and administration of their own family transportation allowance provided by the Delaware State Department of Education, and act as their own fiscal agents. This allowance is only provided for eligible students, who reside over the required transportation mileage caps. Funds

provided under this allowance can be used by families to pay for tuition, school-provided transportation, or other costs of attendance. If the school reimburses families directly, and the family has multiple children attending the same school, the family is reimbursed based on the number of trips to and from school, rather than per child in the family. In the case of carpools, each family receives its usual reimbursement.[89]

State Reimbursement and Allowable Expenses

Delaware reimburses local districts, charter schools, and state or contracted transportation vehicles using the same formula. Reimbursements are made within available appropriations and, when directed by the state legislature, local districts must fund the assigned portion of their transportation costs.[90]

The school transportation reimbursement formula is regulatory rather than statutory and is approved by the state board of education. The formula is required to take into consideration school bus cost and depreciation, fixed charges, operations, maintenance, and wages.[91] Statute provides a detailed accounting of allowable expenses, payment schedules, and requirements for contractors. Allowable expenses include advertising, communication systems, fuel, leasing and rental, safety materials, salary, wages, shop facilities, and sidewalks. Excluded from allowable expenses are:

- Transportation to field trips, between schools, or for special programs,
- Transportation to or from athletics, practices, contests, band events, etc.,
- Transportation to or from post-secondary classes,
- Transportation to or from federal programs,
- Alternative school transportation that is less efficient than a shuttle
- Out-of-district choice school transportation, or transportation out of the attendance area,
- District-provided transportation to charter schools outside the district.[92]

Maryland

Statutory Requirements

Transportation in Maryland is administered at the district level.[93] All school systems are required to provide transportation to and from school for all public school students. However, decisions regarding bus routes, non-transport areas (areas where students are not provided busing), hazard busing, magnet school busing, and special needs busing are determined by the district's transportation department. Non-transport areas are generally established by a radius that extends from the school site.[94] The local school system is entirely responsible for the safe operation of its student transportation system, and must designate a supervisor of transportation to oversee said system.[95]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

All local school systems are required to provide transportation to all students, including students with disabilities but are allowed to create their own policies regarding how this transportation is offered.[96]

Choice School Transportation

There are no separate statutory requirements relating to the transportation of students to schools of choice. Public school districts are not required to provide transportation for charter school students, however charter schools may opt to provide student transportation and may charge parents for this service.[97]

State Reimbursement and Allowable Expenses

In 2015 the state of Maryland provided $258,379,695 in aid for student transportation, which is distributed according to a statewide formula. The formula consists of two basic parts: a base grant that is adjusted annually and a per-pupil grant based on the number of students with special transportation needs.[98]

Each county's base transportation grant equals its base grant in the prior year, increased by the lesser of the change in the transportation category of the Baltimore-Washington CPI or eight percent. Each jurisdiction is guaranteed a minimum one percent annual increase in its base grant. However, since 2011, the annual increase in base grants has been statutorily capped at one percent for all districts. School systems experiencing increases in enrollment receive an additional grant amount equal to the district's enrollment increase over the prior year, multiplied by the total per-pupil transportation aid from the prior year. The sum of the base grant and the enrollment adjustment become the subsequent year's new base grant.[99]

Since 2008, the per-pupil amount for students with special transportation needs has been $1,000. Somerset County also receives a $35,000 block grant to support ferry transportation of island residents to mainland schools.[100]

Pennsylvania

Statutory Requirements

With the exception of charter school students, Pennsylvania law does not require school districts to provide school transportation to students. All transportation decisions are made locally, however, when a district does provide transportation, it must be free to all students and paid by district funds.[101] Districts are only allowed to provide transportation to resident students in grades K–12 to public or nonprofit schools within 10 miles of the district. Districts must provide identical transportation to private schools. Districts may appropriate funds for the purposes of transporting students via common carrier mass transit systems, but these services are not subject to state reimbursement.[102]

Transportation of Exceptional Students

Districts may offer transportation to special education students, or they may provide room and board in lieu of transportation. If free transportation is not provided by the school district to special education students or those students requiring early intervention, a body entitled an "Intermediate Unit" becomes responsible for providing transportation required under IDEA.

Choice School Transportation

- **Charter Schools:** Districts of residence must provide transportation to charter schools located within 10 miles of the district for elementary school students who live more than 1.5 miles from the charter school, and for secondary school students who live more than two miles from the charter school. If the student is determined to live on a hazardous route, the mileage limits do not apply. In addition, if the district provides transportation to students attending local public schools, who live under the required mileage limits, the district must also provide these services to charter school students. Districts are eligible for reimbursement for the transportation of charter school students.[103]

State Reimbursement and Allowable Expenses

School districts are reimbursed for student transportation using a formula that is determined by multiplying the approved reimbursable transportation by the district's aid ratio.[104] Maximum allowable costs under the formula are subject to a prorated reduction on the basis of cost-per-utilized passenger capacity mile for those students transported by the district for whom reimbursement is not authorized by law.[105] Maximum allowable costs are also subject to an annual percentage increase or decrease determined in accordance with the CPI for the preceding calendar year.[106] Reimbursement is only available for the following allowable expenses:

- Transportation of elementary school students who live more than 1.5 miles from school,
- Transportation of secondary school students who live more than two miles from school,
- Children in residential care,
- Special education student transportation,
- Transportation to technical schools,
- Transportation of students who live along a hazardous route.[107]

Excess cost reimbursement is available for the transportation of exceptional students.[108] Districts are reimbursed $385 per pupil for charter school and private school transportation.[109]

Reimbursement is also available for capital expenditures associated with student transportation. The basic annual allowance for each vehicle used during the full school term is $540, except for vehicles with a capacity of 10 or less students, in which case the allowance is $360. An additional allotment is provided by a multiplier based on the approved rated capacity of the vehicle and the age of the vehicle. If the vehicle is used for less than a full term, or only for one-way travel, the allowance is calculated by multiplying the approved utilized passenger capacity miles of service by $3 per 1,000[110] miles for a district-owned vehicle, or $3.50 per 1,000 miles.[111] Maximum allowable costs may not exceed the amount reported for the actual operation of vehicles, prorated by the ratio of approved annual mileage traveled to the total annual mileage.

Findings

The survey of comparison states shows the components of Connecticut's school transportation and reimbursement system are similar to other states, but there are opportunities for the State to consider additional options that may support districts with the cost of student transportation. Of the comparison states, Connecticut's current funding system is most like Massachusetts, where districts are required to transport students within certain mileage requirements, there is a funding formula based on district characteristics in statute, but the State has ceased to appropriate funds to support districts in transporting students—except in the cases of certain schools of choice. However, Massachusetts allows districts to charge families for the service of providing school transportation outside of the statutory requirements, and allows for districts to use public mass transit systems in place of operating a separate system of school buses.

It is unlikely Connecticut will deregulate districts to the point of not requiring they provide any transportation, like in Pennsylvania. However, because there are no longer state appropriations for most student transportation, there is now more pressure to make changes that will assist districts in funding student transportation. Thus, there is a moment of opportunity to consider new options to assist districts in managing and funding school transportation.

Practices Connecticut may consider are listed in Appendix A, and include the following:

- Offering regional transportation services, as seen in Rhode Island and New Jersey;
- Utilizing public mass transit systems for school transportation, where available, as seen in Massachusetts, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York;
- Charging parents for transportation services when they live under the statutory mileage guidelines, as seen in Massachusetts and New Jersey;
- Increasing the distance from school a child must reside before the district is required to transport them;
- Limiting special transportation services for special education students to those required in a student's IEP, as seen in New Jersey, New York, Delaware, and Massachusetts;
- Reducing the statutory mandates for if and how districts provide transportation, as seen in Pennsylvania and Maryland;
- Increasing state appropriations to support transporting students to schools of choice.

Appendix A

State	Requires districts to provide transportation	Allows Districts to charge families	Allows use of public mass transit systems	Provides regional or statewide transportation service	Limits special transportation based on student's IEP	Requires districts to transport students to charter schools
Connecticut	☑	☒	☒	☑*	☒	☑
Delaware	☑	☒	☑	☒	☑	☒
Maryland	☑	☒	☒	☒	☑	☒**
Massachusetts	☑	☑	☑	☒	☒	☑
New Jersey	☑	☑	☒	☑	☑	☑
New York	☑	☒	☑	☑***	☑	☑
Pennsylvania	☒	☒	☑****	☒	☒	☑
Rhode Island	☑	☒	☒	☑	☒	☑

**Certain regions and schools in Connecticut are provided with regional transportation through Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs).*

***In Maryland, all state transportation is the responsibility of the local district, however districts are also able to make their own policies regarding school transportation, including that of charter school students.*

****Certain regions and schools in New York are provided with regional transportation through Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).*

*****Pennsylvania allows the use of public mass transit systems to transport students, but these are not eligible for state reimbursement for school transportation.*

Appendix B

Connecticut

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement
• Requires local boards of education to provide "reasonable and desirable" transportation for students ages 5-21 who haven't graduated high school. • No definition of "reasonable and desirable." • State Department of Education offers guidelines to assist districts in setting transportation policies, but boards of education are not required to follow them as long as the district's policies fall within the confines of statutory requirements.	• Districts must transport all students with exceptional needs to and from the curb of their home and school. • Districts allowed to reimburse parents if they transport child to and from school but cannot require parents to do so in lieu of district-provided transportation. • District must provide any additional transportation services defined in a student's IEP. • Transportation costs are reimbursable as allowable special education cost under CT's Excess Cost grant.	• **Charter Schools:** Local school district where charter school is located must provide transportation for all resident students to the school; local district is eligible for state reimbursement. • **Regional Vo-ag Centers:** Local districts must either host or select one to which they will provide transportation. District may pay vo-ag center directly for the costs of transporting a resident student out of district. State reimburses district for a portion of these expenses. • **Host Magnet Schools:** Local districts must provide transportation for resident students attending a magnet school in the district. • **Regional Magnet Schools:** Local districts are not required to provide transportation to out-of-district magnet schools. However, the State reimburses provider of transportation to regional magnet schools $1,300 per student and $2,000 for magnets in the greater Hartford region. • **Technical High Schools:** Local districts must provide transportation to technical high schools for resident students, and the State reimburses a portion of the costs. • **Nonpublic Schools:** Local districts must provide transportation for all resident students attending private, nonprofit schools located in the district. This only applies when the majority of students attending the private school are residents of the host district. The district is eligible for state reimbursement as well.	• State has funding formula to reimburse districts for public and nonpublic school transportation. However, reimbursements are contingent on available appropriations. • State legislature entirely cut the primary mechanisms in 2016 for reimbursements for student transportation to local district schools, charter schools, and nonpublic schools, although districts are still required to provide transportation. For transportation to and from magnet schools, technical high schools, and vo-ag centers, reimbursement remains but is prorated according to available appropriations. • As funds permit, the State reimburses local districts for student transportation using a formula containing an equity adjustment based on property wealth. • Statutory provisions for financial incentives also exist for districts that choose to enter into cooperative transportation agreements.

Delaware

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement

• School districts are required to transport students in grades K–6 who live more than one mile from their school, and in grades 7–12, who live more than two miles from school.
• Districts must also transport students who reside under these mileage guidelines if they live on an identified hazardous route.
• Each local district has a defined attendance area for transportation that does not overlap with any other district, except in the case of regional vocational-technical schools.
• Districts may apply to the Delaware State Department of Education to provide allowances in lieu of transportation to families.
• When adequate public transportation is available, the public rate is used. When there is no adequate public transit system, a private conveyance allowance is calculated by multiplying the prevailing state mileage rate for the distance to and from school, or the actual distance traveled. In the case of carpools, the driver is the payee.
	• Transportation for special education students must be provided in accordance with the student's IEP.
	• Families may seek private placement for special education and related services.
	• Daily transportation to and from a private day program is funded through the special education budget.
	• If a special education student attends a private program, as required in the IEP, transportation must follow the school calendar of the outplacement.
	• Students experiencing homelessness must continue to receive transportation to their school of origin if they so choose.
	• The district of origin is responsible for organizing extended transportation for homeless students if their housing situation leads them to reside temporarily out-of-district.
	• Districts are allowed to make whatever adjustments are necessary to provide a homeless student with the necessary transportation arrangements.
		• **Charter Schools:** Charter schools must provide their own transportation at the same level as is provided to students attending local public schools in the district in which the charter school is located.
		• Area bus stops may be used outside the school district in which the charter school is located to transport nonresident students.
		• **Private Schools:** Private schools are responsible for the supervision and administration of their own family transportation allowance provided by the Delaware State Department of Education.
		• This allowance is only provided for eligible students, who reside over the required transportation mileage caps.
		• Funds provided under this allowance can be used by families to pay for tuition, school-provided transportation, or other costs of attendance.
		• If the school reimburses families directly, and the family has multiple children attending the same school, the family is reimbursed based on the number of trips to and from school, rather than per child in the family.
		• In the case of carpools, each family receives its usual reimbursement.
			• State reimburses local districts, charter schools, and state or contracted transportation vehicles using the same formula.
			• Reimbursements are made within available appropriations and, when directed by the state legislature, local districts must fund the assigned portion of their transportation costs.
			• Reimbursement formula is regulatory rather than statutory and is approved by the state board of education.
			• Formula is required to take into consideration school bus cost and depreciation, fixed charges, operations, maintenance, and wages.
			• Statute provides a detailed accounting of allowable expenses, payment schedules, and requirements for contractors.
			• Allowable expenses include advertising, communication systems, fuel, leasing and rental, safety materials, salary, wages, shop facilities, and sidewalks.
			• Excluded from allowable expenses are:
			  • Transportation to field trips, between schools, or for special programs,
			  • Transportation to or from athletics, practices, contests, band events, etc.,
			  • Transportation to or from post-secondary classes,
			  • Transportation to or from federal programs,
			  • Alternative school transportation that is less efficient than a shuttle
			  • Out-of-district choice school transportation, or transportation out of the attendance area,
			• District-provided transportation to charter schools outside the district.

Maryland

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement
• Transportation is administered at the district level. • All school systems are required to provide transportation to and from school for all public school students. • Decisions regarding bus routes, non-transport areas (areas where students are not provided busing), hazard busing, magnet school busing, and special needs busing are determined by the district's transportation department. • Non-transport areas are generally established by a radius that extends from the school site. • Local school system is entirely responsible for the safe operation of its student transportation system, and must designate a supervisor of transportation to oversee said system.	• All local school systems are required to provide transportation to all students, including students with disabilities but are allowed to create their own policies regarding how this transportation is offered.	• There are no separate statutory requirements relating to the transportation of students to schools of choice.	• Aid for student transportation is distributed according to a statewide formula. • Formula consists of two basic parts: a base grant that is adjusted annually and a per-pupil grant based on the number of students with special transportation needs. • Each jurisdiction is guaranteed a minimum one percent annual increase in its base grant. • However, since 2011, the annual increase in base grants has been statutorily capped at one percent for all districts. • School systems experiencing increases in enrollment receive an additional grant amount equal to the district's enrollment increase over the prior year, multiplied by the total per-pupil transportation aid from the prior year. • Since 2008, the per-pupil amount for students with special transportation needs has been $1,000. • Somerset County also receives a $35,000 block grant to support ferry transportation of island residents to mainland schools.

Massachusetts

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement
• Towns required to provide transportation to all K-6 students who live more than two miles from school, and more than one mile from the nearest bus stop. • Towns are required to pay transportation costs for a resident student to attend a school in a neighboring district, if that school is closer to the student's home than the assigned school in the student's resident district. This can only be requested if the school in the neighboring town is more than two, but less than three miles from the student's home. • If a town chooses to provide transportation for students who they are not required to transport, the town may charge the parent/guardian for the transportation service. • Towns are allowed to utilize mass transit systems, like city buses or rail, to transport students to and from school. Towns are eligible for reimbursement (up to 20 cents per student, per day) for students living over 1.5 miles from school.	• Districts must provide transportation for all students with exceptional needs • Districts may reimburse parents/ guardians directly for providing transportation for their students with exceptional needs. • Transportation for students with exceptional needs is eligible for reimbursement only if the mode of transportation is not normally provided by the school district and is required in the student's IEP. • Eligible transportation costs for students with exceptional needs are reimbursed through a separate formula from general transportation reimbursement.	• **Charter Schools:** Towns must pay for transportation of students living in town where charter school is located, and is required to grant charter schools in the town the same access to transportation as local public schools. • **Regional Districts and Regional Charter Schools:** Required to transport all K-12 students, if they provide transportation to any student. • Schools are reimbursed by the state for the full cost of transporting students who reside more than 1.5 miles from the regional district or charter school. • Charter schools are not eligible for reimbursement if the host district provides a more affordable transportation option for students residing in the town where the charter school is located. • **School Choice Programs:** This is a separate funding program for school choice programs that exists within available appropriations. • Districts are eligible for transportation reimbursement for students that attend school in a contiguous district, and may be eligible for reimbursement for transportation to noncontiguous districts, if the method of transportation is deemed cost-effective by the state board of education.	• Statutory formula for state reimbursement to school districts for transportation to local public schools, but there have been no appropriations by the state legislature for this purpose since FY2003. • Currently, the state only appropriates state funds to support the transportation of students attending regional school districts and regional charter schools, homeless students, and non-resident vocational students. • Local public schools are eligible to be reimbursed by the State, within available appropriations, for transportation for two trips a day per pupil. • Reimbursement for an individual student is not to exceed five dollars more than the average per-pupil expenditure for transportation in the district. • Towns may receive reimbursement for the transportation of students to private schools, not to exceed the per-pupil expenditure for student transportation to public schools in the district. • To qualify for state reimbursement, districts must negotiate contracts with transportation providers using a competitive bidding process, and must certify to the Massachusetts Department of Education that the average number of students transported does not exceed 75 percent of the carrying capacity of the district's bus system.

New Jersey

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement
• Local school districts are required to provide transportation to: students (grades pre-K – 8) who live more than 2 miles from schools, to students (grades 9-12) who live more than 2.5 miles from school, and students (all grades) who live on a hazardous route for foot travel. • Districts must also provide transportation for students enrolled in universal pre-K who meet the age and income eligibility requirements and are enrolled in targeted pre-K programs. • Cooperative Transportation Service Agencies may provide transportation for resident and non-resident students who are not otherwise eligible for transportation, and may charge parents for either all or part of the cost (although they cannot charge to the point of making a profit). • Districts are required to use CTSAs to provide transportation to outplaced students, including special education students, unless they already participate in a shared transportation agreement or can provide transportation to those students at a more economical rate. • Districts may charge parents for transporting students they are not required to, and parents may waive their rights to transportation.	• Districts are required to provide special education students with transportation in accordance with their IEP. • Eligible expenses include special equipment, aides, and other assistance. • District must provide transportation to special education students placed out-of-district. • Districts are required to evaluate their methods of transporting special education students, and students placed out-of-district, who receive aid in lieu of transportation, to determine if a CTSA could provide more economical transportation. • Special transportation arrangements are made for the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf. • If a student is experiencing homelessness, the district where the student is enrolled becomes responsible for transportation, even when the school is not located in the student's current town of residence.	• **Charter Schools:** Local school districts must provide transportation to all resident students attending charter schools that are remote from their residence. • If the charter school is not remote from the student's residence, the district must provide the same transportation services provided to students attending local public schools. • Districts are reimbursed the maximum allowable expenditure for private schools to transport resident students to out-of-district charter schools. • If the cost of transporting a student to an out-of-district charter school exceeds the maximum allowable expenditure, the parent may pay the excess cost for the district to provide transportation, or they may receive the maximum allowable aid in lieu of transportation from their resident school district. • All charter school transportation policies apply to New Jersey's "renaissance" schools. • **Nonpublic Schools:** Transportation for remote students to nonpublic, nonprofit schools is the responsibility of the student's resident district, or that district must provide aid in lieu of transportation. • Districts must attempt to utilize a CTSA to provide transportation to private schools before choosing to pay families aid in lieu of transportation. • Resident districts do not need to pay aid in lieu of transportation to a private school if the student is utilizing a voucher to attend said school. • Resident districts are not required to transport students more than 20 miles to a private school. • **Interdistrict Choice Programs:** Transportation arrangements	• Every local school district and county vocational school district is eligible for state transportation aid. • Current aid rates are a base per-pupil amount of $442.18, an average per-mile amount for regular education students of $12.10, a base per-pupil amount for special education students of $3,082.15, and an average per-mile amount for special education students of $5.88. • The entire appropriation is capped at 81.4875 percent of the district's total eligible expenditures. • For private school and interdistrict choice transportation, the maximum allowable reimbursement was set at $735 in 2002-03 and has been increased annually in direct proportion to the increase in the state per-pupil transportation aid amount in the prior year, or the consumer price index for the average of New York City and Philadelphia for the prior year, whichever is greater. • Any additional costs incurred by a school district due to the increase in the maximum amount of nonpublic school transportation costs per pupil are borne by the state.

• Districts may participate in interlocal agreements for transportation of non-remote students, and may charge parents for the cost. • Districts may also pay parents in lieu of offering required transportation, in which case parents may purchase transportation from CTSAs. • Families experiencing financial hardship (i.e. eligible for free or reduced price lunch) are not required to pay for transportation. • Local boards of education are allowed to sell advertising on exterior of school buses.		follow the same funding formula as that of nonpublic schools. • When cost of transporting a student to an interdistrict choice program exceeds the maximum allowable expenditure, the family can pay the excess amount to the district to secure transportation or they may take aid in lieu of transportation.	

New York

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement

• All non-city school districts must provide transportation for all students (grades K-8) who live more than two miles from the school they attend and for all students (grades 9-12) who live more than three miles from the school they attend, up to a distance of 15 miles.
• City districts are not required to provide transportation, but if they do, they must provide equitable transportation within similar mileage standards to nonpublic schools as they do public schools.
• City and non-city districts are required to provide transportation to students with disabilities.
• Districts may choose to transport students who live outside the mandated limits, with express approval from voters in the district.
• Districts operating on contingency budgets must continue to provide transportation in accordance with the most recent, voter-established mileage limitations.
• School districts are allowed to utilize and are eligible for reimbursement for the use of mass transit systems to provide transportation.
	• All districts must provide transportation for all resident students with disabilities in accordance with the student's IEP.
	• There are no minimum or maximum allowable mileage caps for the transportation of special education students if transportation is specified in the student's IEP.
	• Resident districts are responsible for transporting special education students to charter schools, at the charter school's request and in accordance with the student's IEP.
	• If a charter school elects to directly provide special education services to the student, the charter school then becomes responsible for the transportation.
	• Charter schools may pay resident districts to provide transportation of special education students for which the charter school provides special education services at cost.
		• **Charter Schools:** Charter schools are considered nonpublic schools for the purposes of school transportation.
		• Local school districts must provide resident students who attend charter schools with transportation on the same basis as they provide transportation of private school students.
		• **Common School Districts:** Cost of transporting students within common school districts in grades K-8 is not eligible for state reimbursement.
			• The State provides transportation aid for the following general expense categories:
			  • Transportation expenditures made in transporting pupils to and from school once daily, including students who stay late for extracurricular activities
			  • Transportation of students to and from Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)
			  • Transportation to and from approved shared programs in other districts
			  • Transportation to and from occupational programs operated within the district
			  • Expenditures for operating district-owned buses, buses under contract, and public mass transit carriers
			  • Allowable operating and capital expenses include salaries, equipment, supplies, insurance, repairs, benefits, and retirement
			  • Limited reimbursement for transportation to academic summer schools.

Pennsylvania

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement

• With the exception of charter school students, Pennsylvania law does not require school districts to provide school transportation to students.
• All transportation decisions are made locally, however, when a district does provide transportation, it must be free to all students and paid by district funds.
• Districts are only allowed to provide transportation to resident students in grades K–12 to public or nonprofit schools within 10 miles of the district.
• Districts must provide identical transportation to private schools.
• Districts may appropriate funds for the purposes of transporting students via common carrier mass transit systems, but these services are not subject to state reimbursement.
	• Districts may offer transportation to special education students, or they may provide room and board in lieu of transportation.
	• If free transportation is not provided by the school district to special education students or those students requiring early intervention, a body entitled an "Intermediate Unit" becomes responsible for providing transportation required under IDEA.
		• **Charter Schools:** Districts of residence must provide transportation to charter schools located within 10 miles of the district for elementary school students who live more than 1.5 miles from the charter school, and for secondary school students who live more than two miles from the charter school.
		• If the student is determined to live on a hazardous route, the mileage limits do not apply.
		• In addition, if the district provides transportation to students attending local public schools, who live under the required mileage limits, the district must also provide these services to charter school students.
		Districts are eligible for reimbursement for the transportation of charter school students.
			• Districts are reimbursed for student transportation using a formula determined by multiplying the approved reimbursable transportation by the district's aid ratio.
			• Maximum allowable costs are subject to annual percentage increase or decrease determined in accordance with the CPI for the preceding calendar year.
			• Reimbursement is only available for the following allowable expenses:
			  • Transportation of elementary school students who live more than 1.5 miles from school,
			  • Transportation of secondary school students who live more than two miles from school,
			  • Children in residential care,
			  • Special education student transportation,
			  • Transportation to technical schools,
			  • Transportation of students who live along a hazardous route.
			• Excess cost reimbursement is available for the transportation of exceptional students. Districts are reimbursed $385 per pupil for charter school and private school transportation.
			• Reimbursement is also available for capital expenditures associated with student transportation.
			• The basic annual allowance for each vehicle used during the full school term is $540, except for vehicles with a capacity of 10 or less students, in which case the allowance is $360.
			• An additional allotment is provided by a multiplier based on the approved rated capacity of the vehicle and the age of the vehicle.

Rhode Island

Statutory Requirements	Students w/ Exceptional Needs	Choice Schools	State Reimbursement
• State is divided into regional school bus transportation districts • Student's resident school district is required to transport student to any public or private, nonprofit school in the transportation district. • State administers statewide transportation system for students attending choice schools and programs. • Local school districts are required to purchase transportation from the statewide system for their eligible resident students unless the district can prove it can provide transportation at a lower cost.	• Variances are available for towns, which must provide transportation for students entitled to a special education program, only if the special transportation is necessary and no similar program exists in the transportation region.	• Students attending private, parochial, charter, career and technical education centers, or other approved choice programs, are eligible to receive transportation via Rhode Island's statewide transportation system. • **Charter and Technical Schools:** If they do not take part in the statewide transportation system, local school districts are responsible for the transportation of students to charter schools and technical schools within their established transportation district. The cost of transporting students to a charter or technical school is charged to the receiving school at the same grade-level per-pupil cost of student transportation in the resident district. Local districts may offer transportation to charter and technical schools outside the established region if there is no additional cost to the resident district. • **Other Choice Schools:** Towns are required to provide transportation for students attending a non-special education school outside the designated transportation region, if it is found there is no similar school in the region and transportation is necessary to provide an educational opportunity that the student has a right to pursue—if the school is within 15 miles of the resident town.	• State covers nonpublic, out-of-district transportation costs, and 50 percent of the costs for regional school district transportation. • If the amount of reimbursement sought by districts exceeds the amount of funding available in a given year, the funds are prorated among the eligible districts.

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[62] N.J. Admin. Code § 6A:27-3.1
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