



United Way of Mower County and SMART Transportation (SMART) are pleased to offer transportation to and from local preschools for 3 and 4 year olds in Austin. Below is a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) about how the program will work. If you have any additional questions please feel free to contact United Way at (507) 437-2313 or via email at admin@uwmower.org.

1. How will the route be designed?

The bus route will be designed around the children's identified pick up and drop off locations. Placement on the bus is based on those locations, location of preschool and class times. **PLACEMENT ON THE RAINBOW ROUTE IS NOT GUARANTEED.** We do our best to accommodate every application.

2. Will someone be riding the bus with my child?

Yes, an adult aide will be on the bus at all times to help children on and off the bus and to be available in case of any emergencies. This aide goes through background checks and all necessary certifications (first aid, CPR, etc.).

3. How long will my child ride the bus?

Most children are on the bus no longer than 30 minutes.

4. Can other community members ride this bus?

MNDOT prohibits SMART from denying community members from riding the bus, but the route is designed specifically around the children's pick up and drop off locations and, therefore, it would be extremely rare that an individual would want to ride the bus. Also, the aide will always be present when children are on the bus. The transportation program has been operating for numerous years and a community member has NEVER ridden the bus.

5. What about safety seats?

Safety seats are not required for children riding the SMART bus. Seat belts are provided and if parents would like their children to ride in a safety seat they must provide the seat. The aide will make sure that the child rides in the safety seat provided by its parent(s). Safety seats must be removed from the bus daily. Please make arrangements with your day care provider regarding the use of safety seats prior to bus service.

6. How much will this service cost?

Each ride is discounted at \$1 per ride (Round trip is \$2). All bus passes will stay on the bus with the aides.

If you are paying for your child's rides we encourage you to buy a bus pass rather than pay daily with cash and/or change.

7. How do I pay for my child's rides?

You can purchase a punch card from SMART or a punch card/ride can be purchased from the bus driver.

Children receiving transportation scholarships do not need to purchase punch cards.

8. What happens in the case of inclement weather?

SMART will follow the public school district decision in case of inclement weather. If schools are closed, the busses will not run. If schools are two hours late the bus will not pick up for morning preschool classes (Rainbow Routes 1 & 2) Mid-morning classes will be held as usual (Rainbow Routes 3 & 4). If school closes early the bus will pick kids up early.

The bus follows the Austin Public Schools calendar which can be downloaded from the district's website at <https://www.austin.k12.mn.us/default.aspx>.

9. Does the driver have any kind of telephone access on the bus?

Yes, the busses are equipped with radios and communicate between the SMART dispatcher and the bus driver.

10. What happens if an adult is not there when the bus delivers a child home?

The bus driver will immediately notify SMART dispatcher; the SMART dispatcher will immediately attempt to reach the parent or the emergency contact person identified on the registration information. If no one is reached immediately the child will be taken to the SMART office. The aide will stay with the child at the SMART office until the child is picked up by an appropriate adult. If an appropriate adult cannot be located, Law Enforcement will be called and the child will be placed in emergency foster care by the Mower County Department of Human Services.

11. What do I do if my child does not need bus service that day?

If your child is sick, or will not be riding on his/her scheduled day parent(s) **MUST** call SMART to let them know a pick-up/drop-off is not required. Please call the dispatch line by 7:30 am at 1 (855) 762-7821 to notify them that your child will not be riding. Additionally, if the pick-up/drop off location changes throughout the school year parent(s) must notify SMART of this change.

Bus schedules are set. SMART will not make pick up/ drop off changes on daily/weekly basis.

SMART has the right to cancel service if the number of children riding drops below 5. Therefore it is important that children ride unless they are sick as the route is designed around the number of children riding. All parents/caregivers will be notified before a decision is made. If the decision is made to cancel, parents/caregivers will be given at least two weeks' notice.

12. Can I send food/snacks with my child on the bus?

Due to safety and cleanliness issues food/snacks are not allowed on the bus.

13. What is the pick-up/drop off procedure?

In order for SMART to accept a child on the bus the aide must physically see the parent/caregiver send the child out to the bus. The parent/caregiver must be present, not just waving a hand in the window. When dropping off the aide will not release a child unless they visually witness a parent/caregiver accept that child.

14. What if we move during the school year?

If you move during the school year there is no guarantee that transportation will continue. Please contact your preschool provider immediately with new address.

If you have any other questions please contact United Way, at 437-2313 or via email at admin@uwmower.org