



Frequently Asked Questions – PLEASE KEEP FOR REFERENCE All Year

United Way of Steele County, ECI and SMART Transportation (SMART) are pleased to offer transportation to or from local preschools for 3 and 4 year olds in Owatonna. 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) 455-1180 or via email at uwadmin@unitedwaysteelecounty.org or SMART Transit at 1-855-762-7821 or SmartService@CedarValleyServices.org

1. How will the route be designed?

The bus route will be designed around the children's identified pick up or drop off locations. Placement on the bus is based on those locations, location of preschool and class times. **PLACEMENT ON THE PRESCHOOL ROUTE IS NOT GUARANTEED.** We do our best to accommodate every application. Please also note that if your child's pickup or drop off location changes during the program year, we cannot guarantee your child's spot on the preschool route.

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

Yes, for a short time at the beginning of the program, an aide will be on the bus at the beginning of the year and as needed thereafter. Please work with your child to buckle and unbuckle their own seatbelts. The aide(s) will be required to have background checks.

3. How long will my child ride the bus?

Children will be on the bus no longer than 1 hour and every attempt will be made to keep ride times at 30 minutes or less.

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 be able to ride the bus. Similar transportation programs have been operating for numerous years and a community member has rarely – if ever, ridden the preschool bus.

5. What about safety seats?

Safety seats are not required for children riding the SMART bus. Seat belts are provided and required.

6. How much will this service cost?

Each ride will cost \$1 and will be paid for using pre-paid punch cards. Pre-paid punch cards may be purchased for \$20 each. (Good for 20 individual rides.) Families that qualify for free or reduced lunches through the school district may qualify for scholarship rides through the United Way of Steele County.

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

You can purchase a punch card on the SMART bus from the driver – with a personal check or exact change ... or at Roosevelt Community Education's office at 122 E McKinley St. All payments should be made payable to Cedar Valley Services. Each child will receive a punch card holder that will be clipped to their backpack or school bag. The

child's name should be written clearly on the pass. When the child boards the bus, the driver will remove the punch card from the holder, punch one ride, and return it to the punch card holder. Families receiving transportation scholarships from the United Way will not need to purchase punch cards; punch cards will be provided directly to the driver to be placed in their punch card holders.

8. What if the card runs out of punches/we forget to pay?

When the punch card has 5 punches remaining, the driver will place a hot pink card in the punch card holder as a reminder to send \$20 to purchase a new punch card (which will then be placed in the punch card holder) or for the parent to purchase a new punch card at the Roosevelt Community Education office to send with the child in the punch card holder.

If the punch card is not replaced and there are no punches remaining, SMART Transit will continue to transport the child for up to 1 calendar week before denying service and removing the child from the preschool route. During that week, a red card will be sent home in the punch card holder and the family will be expected to pay for the missed rides before service can be resumed.

9. What happens in the case of inclement weather?

SMART Transit will follow the public school district decision in case of inclement weather for preschool service. If schools are closed, the preschool buses will not run. If schools are 2 hours late, the bus will not pick up for morning preschool classes. Mid-morning classes will run as usual if they begin at 10am or later. If schools close early, the buses will pick kids up early.

****NOTE - 2018/2019 Calendar Change – SMART Transit will follow the school district calendar for operation of preschool service for all preschools.**

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

The buses are equipped with radios to communicate between the SMART dispatchers and the bus driver. Cell phone use by public transit drivers with passengers on the bus is not allowed.

11. What happens if an adult is not there when the bus delivers a child from preschool?

The bus driver will immediately notify the SMART dispatch office who will call the phone numbers listed on the original application. If an appropriate adult cannot be located within 1 hour, local law enforcement will be called. The child will remain on the bus or with the SMART driver until this occurs and repeat instances of this issue will result in the child being removed from the preschool bus route.

12. What do I do if my child does not need bus service on a given day?

If your child will not be riding the bus for any reason on a scheduled day, you MUST contact the SMART dispatch office at 1-855-762-7821 in order to cancel the specific ride(s). Dispatch hours are 6am to 6pm Monday through Friday and 9am to 3pm on Saturday.

13. 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.

14. What if our home/daycare/school address changes?

Contact SMART dispatch at 1-855-762-7821 as soon as you are aware of the change. We cannot guarantee that your child will continue to be served on the preschool route, but we will make an effort to accommodate the change.

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

Children must be ready 10 minutes before their scheduled pick up time. Waiting for a child will delay the route for everyone. When dropping off a child, the driver must visually see a parent/caregiver accept the child. Otherwise, the child will not be released from the bus. (See #10 above.)

Concerns: Concerns regarding the route should be directed to SMART Dispatch at 1 (855) 762-7821.

Please remember that with road construction and inclement weather, pick up and drop off times can vary.