

Blind Brook Schools

Pupil Transportation Referendum

Community Discussion



Blind Brook Pupil Transportation Program

There are two components to a school district transportation program:

1. In-district transportation
2. Out-of-district transportation



2008-2009 Transportation Program

□ In-district Students	1083	(69% Eligible)
Grades K-5	631	(65% Ridership)
Grades 6-12	452	(50% Ridership)
□ Out-of-district Students	90	
K-12 Private/Parochial Schools	76	
Students with Disabilities	14	



Transportation Program Costs – 2008-2009

In-district transportation <i>\$515 per pupil</i>	\$557,327
Out-of-district transportation <i>\$6,719 per pupil on average</i>	\$604,743
Total <i>3% of total 2008-2009 budget</i>	\$1,162,070

State Minimum Bus Eligibility Standards

Per Section 3635 of NYS Education Law the minimum standards for school bus transportation eligibility are:

Grades K-8 - students must live further than 2.0 miles from school

Grades 9-12 - students must live further than 3.0 miles from school

All Grades - Students must live within **15-mile** limit to be eligible for bus service to out-of-district schools

For students with disabilities (SWD) attending out-of-district schools the maximum distance increases to a **50-mile** limit



How are Eligibility Distances Measured?

BMPRSS:

Eligibility distance is measured from the driveway of a student's home to the school's north driveway entrance by way of the shortest route using non-highway roads.

BBMS/HS:

Eligibility distance is measured from the driveway of a student's home to the stop sign at either of the two MS/HS entry roadways by way of the shortest route using non-highway roads.

Where is the Eligibility Criteria Found?

A school district's school bus eligibility criteria is located in the school board policy manual. At Blind Brook that policy is No. 5720, *Scheduling and Routing*. This transportation policy can be found at:

<http://www.myschoolpages.com/schools/blindbrook/policies.cfm?pid=12613&searchwords=scheduling>



Who Authorizes Changes to Eligibility Criteria?

In all school districts (except city school districts) the distances used for determining eligibility can only be changed (made more or less liberal than state minimums) by a separate proposition passed by a simple majority of the voters (on the ballot with the annual budget vote and board member election in May).



How does a Proposition get on the Ballot?

In one of two ways:

The school board passes a resolution authorizing that a proposition be placed on the May ballot.



How does a Proposition get on the Ballot?

or:

A properly executed petition can be submitted to the District Clerk within 30 days of the annual budget vote date. It must be signed by 25 qualified voters, or 5% of the registered voters of the District who voted in the previous annual election of Board members, whichever is greater. The school board must approve the petition and authorize that it be placed on the May ballot.



Retrospective on Blind Brook Bus Eligibility

- Eligibility from 1988 to 2004
- Eligibility from 2004 to present
- Efforts to advance a K-12 universal busing proposition in April 2006
- Petition to rollback eligibility to state minimum criteria submitted April 2009

Bus Eligibility Policy

*9/26/88 to 6/30/04

To be eligible for school bus service Blind Brook resident children must have met this criteria during this period 1988 to 2004:

Grades K-8 - Students must live further than 1.5 miles from school

Grades 9-12 - Students must live further than 2.5 miles from school

All Grades - Students must live within 15-mile limit to be eligible for bus service to out-of-district schools (50-mile limit for SWD)

Bus Eligibility Policy

*9/26/88 to 6/30/04

With this policy the eligible in-district rider statistics were as follows in the 2003-2004 school year:

Eligible Students	410
Number of District Buses	5



Community Concerns about Busing

During the 2003-2004 school year community and school board concerns arose about the growing enrollment at all Blind Brook schools and traffic problems at school arrival and dismissal times.



What factors led to the 2004 Referendum?

A traffic safety committee commissioned by the school board in the fall of 2003 studied the issue of vehicle and pedestrian safety and recommended in early 2004 that expanding transportation eligibility would reduce the arrival and dismissal traffic problems that were evident at both campuses and on King Street and North Ridge Street.



How did the Referendum get on the Ballot?

The school board passed a resolution authorizing a proposition to appear on the ballot in May 2004.

Bus Eligibility Policy Proposition

“Is the Board of Education authorized to modify its public school transportation eligibility policy effective September 1, 2004 for Grades K-5 pupils from the existing one and one-half (1-1/2) mile limit to a new three-quarters (.75) mile limit and for Grade 6-12 pupils from the existing two and one-half (2-1/2) mile limit to a new one and one-half (1-1/2) mile limit thereby increasing the proposed 2004-2005 School District Budget in the approximate amount of \$90,000 and levy the necessary tax therefore?”



Bus Eligibility Policy Referendum Results

The results of the May 2004 referendum were:

YES	696
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NO	225
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New Bus Eligibility Policy

since 9/1/04

To be eligible for school bus service Blind Brook resident children must now meet this criteria:

Grades K-5 - Students must live further than .75 mile from school

Grades 6-12 - Students must live further than 1.5 miles from school

All Grades - Students must live within 15-mile limit to be eligible for bus service to out-of-district schools (50-mile limit for SWD)

Bus Eligibility Policy

With the revision to eligibility criteria the increase in service is as follows for the stated school years:

	<u>2004-05</u>	<u>2008-09</u>	<u>2009-10</u>
Eligible Students	838	1,083	1,107
Number of District Buses	8.5	10	10

Approximately 69% of the total student population is eligible for school bus transportation to in-district schools.



K-12 Universal Busing Petition

2006

In the spring of 2006 a group of resident voters prepared and delivered a petition that sought to change the school board's transportation policy to accommodate a K-12 universal busing program at Blind Brook.



Outcome of 2006 Universal Busing Petition

The petition submitted by resident voters was found to be unacceptable by the School Board and a proposition did not appear on the May 2006 ballot.

No further petitions have been submitted until recently.



2009 Bus Eligibility Petition Initiative

During the past several weeks resident voters seeking to roll back the eligibility criteria to state-minimum distances initiated action in this regard.

A petition with 119 valid signatures was delivered to the District Clerk on the morning of April 20, 2009.

Qualifying Petition to the School Board

4/20/09

“Shall the eligibility limits for the minimum distances that a student must live from his or her school to qualify for District-funded transportation as set forth in Section 5720 of the Blind Brook Board of Education’s Policies be changed from the current limits of: 0.75 miles or further from school for Kindergarten through Grade 5 and 1.5 miles or further from school for Grade 6 through Grade 12 to newly-established limits of: 2.0 miles or further from school for Kindergarten through Grade 8 and 3.0 miles or further from school for Grade 9 through Grade 12, representing the state law minimum transportation requirements, and resulting in an estimated net savings of \$178,082.00 in the overall annual school budget?”

Potential Implications of this Petition

In-District	2008-2009	Anticipated 2009-2010	Reduced 2009-2010
K-5	631	613	152
6-8	222	262	132
9-12	230	232	2
Total	1,083	1,107	286

There would be a 75% reduction in the number of students eligible for bus service



Potential Implications of this Petition

Eligibility to BMPRSS (Grades K-5)

Only students living in these areas would be eligible for bus service:

- Belle Fair
- Hidden Falls
- SWD with an IEP requirement



Potential Implications of this Petition

Eligibility to BBMS (Grades 6-8)

Only students living in these areas would be eligible for bus service:

- Belle Fair
- Hidden Falls
- Lincoln Avenue Corridor
- Talcott Road
- Certain other addresses north of the Crawford Park area
- SWD with an IEP requirement



Potential Implications of this Petition

Eligibility to BBHS (Grades 9-12)

No high school students would be eligible for transportation except SWD with an IEP requirement.



Potential Implications of this Petition

There would be cost savings if transportation services are reduced to the extent proposed. Approximately \$178,082 is estimated to be saved by reducing personnel and fleet operating costs.

The amount of savings could be lower if it is determined that additional personnel are needed to monitor traffic on both campuses in the morning and afternoon and to assist with custodial work in the summer.



Potential Implications of this Petition?

- Traffic congestion
- Vehicle and pedestrian safety
- Environmental impacts
- Changing school bell times to accommodate a staggered schedule at the MS/HS
- Reduced opportunities for academic/sports trips
- Sale of 6 buses at very low resale prices
- Increased liability exposure