

Travel to School Facts and Findings

Facts about children's travel to school:

Children between the ages of 0-18 primarily travel by automobile—close to 75% of total trips – and since they are young, they “often travel with others.”

The primary destinations of children's travel are to: school, shopping and socializing.

The National Household Travel Survey (2001) collected travel information from 66,000 households. This sample included close to 34,600 minors, who made about 118,000 total trips.

NHTS data shows that children make 3.5 trips a day on average.

Also, children depend more on school buses and walking, with 1.3 trips made to and from school during school days.

Data from NHTS shows how children travel to school:

- 54% by private automobile;
- 30% by school bus;
- 13% walk;
- 1% bike; and
- 2% use transit.

The data also shows that children travel to school with:

- A mother 29% of the time;
- A father 8% of the time;
- Brothers and sisters 6% of the time;
- Family 3% of the time;
- Alone 44% of the time; and
- Other 11% of the time.

The data shows that mothers “spend significant amounts of time transporting children.”¹

What is the average commute to school?

According to the EPA, traffic increases 30% at the beginning of the school year. The average commute to school is 15 miles, and 4.2 miles is the average trip length to school.²

¹ McDonald, Noreen. “Exploratory Analysis of Children's Travel Patterns.” Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board, No. 1977, Transportation Research Board of the National Academies, Washington, D.C., 2006. 1-7.

How much has air pollution decreased annually by carpooling?

With 25% of people carpooling at least once a week, air pollution is reduced by 5%.³

How much gas is saved a year, per carpool?

With the sharing of fuel costs, there are savings of over \$2,300 a year (carpooling two times a week, with two others, in an automobile that gets about 20 miles a gallon, with an average commute to work of about 12 miles).⁴

Are school buses making any route changes in an effort to save gas/help the environment?

In Madison County, school bus routes have changed for middle-high school students from individually picking up students, to group pick ups. This is a way of saving gas and money. Parents and students will be notified of location and time of bus routes.⁵

Petersburg Schools in Virginia are removing 4 of their bus routes, and bussing middle school and high school students together. All this is in an effort to reduce money spent on fuel.⁶

To help save money on fuel, Howard County schools are eliminating buses, extending routes, and bringing more students on busses at one time.⁷

² Arnold, Tom. "Caution: Back to school carbon bump!" Available <<http://www.terrapass.com/blog/posts/caution-back-to-1>>. TerraPass: The TerraPass Footprint. 14 August 2007.

³ US Environmental Protection Agency. "Clean Air Cookbook." Available <<http://www.epa.gov/air/recipes/pool.html>>. 11 December 2006.

⁴ Alliance to Save Energy. "Money Saving Gas Tips." Available <<http://drivesmarterchallenge.org/money-saving-tips/Default.aspx>>. 2008.

⁵ Marshall, Bryan. "Fuel costs spur school bus route changes." Richmond Register. Available <http://www.richmondregister.com/localnews/local_story_201224109.html>. 19 July 2008.

⁶ CBS 6 WTVR, Richmond, VA. "Gas Prices Force School Bus Change." Available <<http://www.wtvr.com/Global/story.asp?S=8924273>>. 29 August 2008.

⁷ Groft, Kelly. "Gas Prices Cause Bus Route Changes." ABC 2. Available <http://www.abc2news.com/content/gasprices/story.aspx?content_id=0b1ce73f-03c5-4364-a56d-b1d1e7ffe5c3>. 29 July 2008.