

What you need to know

- Nearly [50%](#) of all DC students and families attend school outside of their ward of residence.
 - [39%](#) of all the children who attend DC public schools travel up to an hour or more to and from school. Students living in Wards 5, 7, and 8, on average, [travel farther](#) to school than students in other wards.
- In the 2016-2017 school year, there were [177 shootings within 1,000 feet of a school](#) in DC. 84% of those incidents occurred in Wards 7 and 8.
- The goal of the Safe Passage Program is to understand and improve safety-related policies that impact DCPS and public charter school students as they travel to and from school.
- The Safe Passage to School Expansion Act of 2021 seeks to establish an Office of Safe Passage to coordinate initiatives across DC agencies and Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

What is the Safe Passage Program?

Many DC students travel across wards and use various methods of transportation to get to school every day. As of 2021, the only District-wide school buses are available only for students whose [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#) requires transportation. However, all students enrolled in a public, charter, private, or parochial school are able to ride free on the bus, metro, and DC Circulator through the [Kids Ride Free program](#). In light of increased incidents of physical and emotional harm, many families are concerned about their students' commutes to school. **In response, the Safe Passage program was started in 2017 to address District student and school safety concerns, especially as students arrive and depart from school.** The program was established by the School Safety and Safe Passage Working Group that included a variety of DC agencies like MPD, District Department of Transportation, WMATA, Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, Office of the Student Advocate, and Deputy Mayor for Education, as well as Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

This collective group is tasked with understanding and improving safety-related policies that impact DCPS and public charter schools, especially in locations that are deemed “priority areas.” The School Year 21-22 Safe Passage priority areas include:

- Anacostia Metro Station
- Columbia Heights
- Congress Heights
- Good Hope Road SE

- L'Enfant and Waterfront Metro Stations
- Minnesota Ave Metro Station
- NoMA - Gallaudet U Metro Station

What does Safe Passage look like for students and families currently?

To support safe travel to and from school, Safe Passage initiatives include the consistent presence and visibility of adults, including crossing guards, community partners, and local businesses, in the Safe Passage priority areas. “Boots on the Ground” programs are dedicated to ensure that all students, as they travel to and from school on public transportation and out in the communities, are aware of helpful adults and locations that are designated as safe. Starting in October 2021, community organizations will have over 200 part time adults to walk targeted safe passage routes, build relationships with students and community members, and be trusted adults who can help keep everyone safe.

In Mayor Bowser’s Fiscal Year 2022 budget, \$6.1 million was allocated to launch new microtransit routes that will serve over 20 elementary, middle, and high schools in the Safe Passage priority areas in Wards 7 and 8. These microtransit routes will include the use of shuttles for student transportation, but plans are not yet finalized for what this will mean for specific schools and neighborhoods.

What is the Safe Passage to School Expansion Act of 2021?

In February 2021, Councilmember Henderson introduced the Safe Passage to School Expansion Act of 2021 along with Councilmembers Lewis George, Nadeau, Cheh, Pinto, and R. White and was co-sponsored by Councilmember Allen. (*Note:* This legislation was originally introduced by Councilmember Grosso as the Safe Passage to School Expansion Act of 2019.) As written, this legislation would:

- **Create an Office of Safe Passage that would report to the Mayor** that would:
 - Coordinate safe passage efforts across agencies developing citywide and ward specific strategies for student safety, while working with community-based organizations to monitor routes in high-priority areas.
 - Create a District-wide and Ward-specific five year strategic plan with measurable outcomes that would be submitted to the DC Council.

- **Require the Mayor to increase the use of shuttles for student transportation** to Metro stations in areas facing the greatest safety challenges.

How can parents get involved?

- **Testify at the public hearing for the Safe Passage to School Expansion Act of 2021 is on October 12, 2021.** Email organizers@dcpave.org for more information!
- Read more on DC's Safe Passage website: safepassage.dc.gov
- Check out DME's Safe Passage Interactive Map to view the schools, point of contact at each school, school crossing guards, and public transportation within each priority area to plan the safest route for you and your family. Check it out here: bit.ly/SafePassageMap
- [TO ADD: A bullet to say other cities are also working on improving safe passage to school. Check out what is happening XYZ here and here.]