

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

With the passage of Chapter 683 of the Acts of 1986, the opinion that school pupil transport vehicles (7D) carry a cargo so precious that stringent measures must be applied to test drivers and regulate the vehicles that transport school pupils was formalized into law.

**Purpose of this manual:** The purpose of this manual is to provide information to companies and those individuals operating 7D vehicles to assist them in complying with all rules and regulations governing the operation of a 7D vehicle. This manual also serves as a valuable tool in assisting perspective 7D license applicants in preparing for the written exam needed to obtain a 7D operator's license. Applicants should familiarize themselves with the entire contents of this manual, focusing on chapter 2, "Obtaining a School Pupil Transport (7D) License."

There are over 5,000 school pupil transport vehicles registered in Massachusetts as well as approximately 7,000 licensed 7D operators. The Registry of Motor Vehicles is committed to working with all of you to ensure that you are in compliance with all Rules and Regulations pertaining to pupil transportation.

If you have additional questions or concerns regarding the information provided in this manual, please contact Vehicle Safety & Compliance Services at 617-351-9345.

**What are School Pupil Transport Vehicles?** M.G.L. c. 90, Sec 7D allows "school pupils" to be transported in vehicles other than school buses. These vehicles are called "school pupil transport vehicles" (or "7D vehicles" after the Section number creating the law) and are generally vans and station wagons. The law restricts them to carrying a maximum of eight (8) passengers.

7D vehicles are frequently used to transport special needs and handicapped pupils so it is vitally important that the vehicle owner and operator are qualified to provide this transportation. The vehicle operator must have a "7D driver's license." A school system or a private contract carrier cannot transport school pupils (subject to exceptions listed in the statute) in a vehicle that does not conform to the requirements of 7D.

**What is a "school pupil?"** Massachusetts law defines a "school pupil" as any person enrolled in any school, kindergarten through grade twelve, or enrolled for day care services, or in any program for children with special needs as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, Sec. 1, or in any organized day or summer camp program or any activity supported by said schools.

**7D Vehicle Required for Fixed-Route Transportation:** 7D vehicles are required to be used whenever "fixed-route transportation" is being provided for **not more than** eight "school pupils." (Transporting more than eight (8) "school pupils" on a fixed-route requires the use of a "School Bus" as described in M.G.L. c.90, Sec. 7B). It doesn't matter if the vehicles are publicly or privately owned and operated.

**“Fixed-route transportation”** is the transporting of school pupils on a predetermined daily basis to and from a set location for the length of the pupil’s school year. This includes:

- transporting from home-to-school and school-to-home
- picking up and dropping off at established bus stops
- transporting from home-to-school-to an after-school activity
- transporting to an after-school day care,
- transporting from school to school
- or a similar type of daily route.

The transportation must be provided on a regular basis for the “pupil’s school year” to require a 7D vehicle.

The “pupil’s school year” is the period of time the program is expected to last. The length of the pupil’s semester or summer-school program may constitute the “pupil’s school year.” The “pupil’s school year” will be six weeks long if that is the period of time a school program or camp is expected to last. If it is a week-to-week program the period of the “pupil’s school year” will be a week at a time. The infrequent use of a taxicab to transport a school pupil does not require a 7D vehicle. If a taxicab is used on a regularly scheduled basis to transport a school pupil, the taxicab will be required to meet the standards of a 7D vehicle and the driver will be required to obtain a 7D license.



Figure 1: Examples of 7D Vehicles

