



THE LOOP BUS POLICY

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1. Purpose

The Loop Bus provides at-risk youth with free transportation to free activities that connect them to mentoring and gang prevention programs throughout Tulare County. The program is funded by Measure R and is part of the Step-Up program. The following Loop Bus Policy and Procedures were approved by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors on June 5, 2018, per Resolution # 2018-0441. The purpose of this policy is to establish the eligibility requirements, application process, and operating procedures for requesting LOOP Bus transportation.

2. Scope

Requestors, Transit Coordinator and RIDE Tulare County Staff.

3. Policy

Requests to use the Loop Bus must be made via the online request application found at <https://ridetc.org/>.

Completed applications for service must be made at least four (4) weeks in advance of the requested service date to ensure adequate time for processing and required planning. Special circumstances will allow request approval under four (4) weeks.

Applications are able to be submitted up to three (3) months before the event date.

Incomplete applications will be denied. Applicant organizations may submit a new application after correcting any deficiencies, provided the request still meets all applicable submission deadlines.

Applicant organizations may only request use of the Loop Bus for one (1) date per application, this includes a return trip.

The Applicant Organization must demonstrate its mission and the trip requested further the Loop Bus purpose of providing transportation to free activities that connect at-risk youth to mentoring and gang prevention programs and activities within Tulare County. The following are indicators which the County will use to determine whether a youth is “at-risk”:

a. At-Risk Youth Eligibility Indicators

- The individual has “dropped out” of school.
- The individual is within the age of compulsory school attendance but has not attended school for at least the most recent school quarter.
- The individual is subject to the juvenile or adult justice system.

- The individual is homeless or is considered a runaway youth (defined as being away from home for one night for youth under 14 and for two more nights for youth fifteen or older), or a youth who is in foster care.
- The individual is eligible for assistance under section 477 of the Social Security Act.
- The individual is a youth who is pregnant or parenting;
- They have been diagnosed with a disability;
- The individual is an emancipated minor;
- The individual has been suspended five or more times, or who has been expelled from their academic institution;
- The individual has been documented by a school official as being at serious risk of dropping out of school;
- The individual has been referred to, or is being treated for, a substance abuse-related medical or behavioral condition.

b. Travel Parameters

- The Loop Bus is for travel within Tulare County. Travel outside of Tulare County is subject to Director Approval.
- Cannot go beyond 2000 ft. elevation in the mountains.
- Trips to Sequoia National Park are currently unavailable.

c. Calendar and Availability

- Applicants must check the Loop Bus Calendar before requesting a trip.
- There are two (2) Loop Buses available, per day. If there are two (2) appointments at the same time, the Loop Bus is booked and will not be available.
- Overbooked requests will be reviewed and the two (2) applicants who submitted the requests first will be approved and all subsequent requests will be denied.
- The exception to this rule is outlined under letter V of this policy.

d. Approval

- Applicants will be notified of the status of their request within one (1) week of submission.
- A confirmed Loop Bus trip means the bus has been reserved by Via Transit staff and the applicant has been notified via e-mail and phone call by Via Transit Staff.

e. Cancellation and Changes

- A confirmed Loop Bus trip must be canceled at least forty-eight (48) hours from the requested date of service. Individual must email loop@gotcrrta.org to cancel or make modifications to a trip.

- Any changes to a confirmed Loop Bus trip must be submitted at least one week prior to the requested date of service. Changes include adjustments to pick-up or drop-off locations, service dates, pick-up or return times, and adding or removing stops along the route.

f. No-Show

- A trip will be considered a no-show if the riders are not at the pick-up location within ten minutes of the requested pick-up time.
- An applicant organization will be notified of their No-Show status via e-mail sent from the TCRTA staff.
- The first No Show will cause the Loop Bus Transit staff to issue a written warning to the applicant.
- If an Applicant Organization has two (2) no-shows within three (3) months, the Applicant Organization will be temporarily suspended from using Loop Bus Services for six (6) months.
- For purposes of the no show policy, each Applicant Organization shall be determined by chapters or sites and not by Tax ID.

g. Special Circumstances and Prohibited Uses

- In the event that a confirmed trip must be cancelled due to inclement weather, or other natural disaster that will not allow the scheduled activity to occur, last-minute cancellations may be accommodated on a case-by-case basis by staff.
- School districts will be prohibited from requesting to use the Loop Bus for school-sanctioned events, such as ASB trips, FFA trips, band or choir performances, sports games, etc.
- In order to comply with the U.S. and California Constitutions, the Loop Bus shall not be used to transport persons to those religious activities whose sole intent consists of prayer, religious instruction, and/or proselytism.

h. Passenger Requirements

- Trips shall have at least four (4) passengers.
- If an organization has a need to transport less than the minimum number or more than one bus, special consideration will be given but will be approved on a case-by-case basis by staff.
- Trips shall have a maximum of twenty-five (25) passengers.
- This includes chaperones, per California Highway Patrol requirements.

i. Chaperone Requirements

- Chaperones are required to be present on the Loop Bus, at all times. Applicant Organizations must submit chaperone contact information which will be gathered at the time of the request. Applicant organizations are responsible for the supervision and conduct of all passengers during the trip.
- One chaperone is required for every twenty (20) students. If there are more than twenty (20) students, two (2) chaperones will be required.

j. Accessibility and Overnight Trips

- All Loop Buses are wheelchair accessible.
- Please note that the capacity of the bus changes if one of the passengers requires use of a wheelchair or any other large device.
- Overnight trips will not be permitted.
- Pick-up and drop-off dates must be on the same day.

k. Step Up Preference

- In order to support Step Up programming, the Loop Bus will give preference to Step Up related events and organizations; including, but not limited to: Youth Challenge, Summer Night Lights, and for organizations who are currently receiving Step Up Youth Activities grant funding.

l. Hours, School-Year Restrictions, and Holidays

- The Loop Bus may be requested for use within the following hours of operation: Weekdays: 6:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. and Weekends: 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
- During the academic school year, the Loop Bus MAY NOT be used during school instructional hours.
- For programs requesting during the instructional hours, the TCRTA staff will call and confirm if the request is during a scheduled minimum day. If a minimum day has been confirmed, the Transit
- Coordinator will inform Via Transportation: “Approved Loop Bus – Minimum Day”.
- The Loop Bus will be closed for service in observance of the following holidays: New Year’s Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.
- The following holidays will operate on a Sunday schedule: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President’s Day, Veteran’s Day, the day after Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Eve.

m. Emergencies and Service Suspension

- In the event of an emergency or natural disaster which has necessitated the use of County buses or transit contractor staff for transportation communications, or evacuation purposes, Tulare County may suspend Loop Bus service for the duration of the emergency or natural disaster.

n. Required Forms and County Cancellation Authority

- The Applicant Organization is responsible for the consent and emergency information forms that are required to ride the Loop Bus. Transportation consent forms can be downloaded on the RIDE Tulare County website: <https://ridetc.org/>
- The County of Tulare reserves the right to cancel or terminate Loop Bus services up to five (5) business days prior to the scheduled service date with or without cause.
- O. Responsibility for Approval
- The Transit Coordinator or RIDE Tulare County Staff will be responsible for approving and/or denying the Loop Bus request within one week.

o. Application Information

- Individuals will go to <https://ridetc.org/> to apply for the use of the LOOP Bus.

Approved for Implementation and Distribution by:

Approval Signatures	
_____ TCRTA Executive Director	_____ Date
_____ TCRTA Board Chair / Board Vice Chair	_____ Date