Set Up Smarter Summer Routes:
7 Key Areas to Consider

Summer school is just around the corner — and with it comes another round of setting up summer routes. This can be a relatively straightforward task for some districts, especially where summer programming or student participation is limited. But even in those cases, routing requires multiple ins and outs and points of coordination.

To help you manage the many factors associated with summer routes, we spoke with veteran experts and compiled this checklist to help you build smarter, leaner, and more efficient summer school routes.

1. Gather and Confirm the Necessary Data
Lay the groundwork for accurate route planning and avoid last-minute changes.

- Communicate early with Special Ed, Student Services, Curriculum, and individual school teams.
  - ⟶ *Avoids delays and ensures better resource forecasting*
- Set **clear deadlines for schools** to submit ridership data (aim to finalize before the last day of school).
  - ⟶ *Maximizes planning time and avoids rush adjustments*
- Confirm which students require transportation — then **verify attendance** via direct outreach (e.g., calls or emails).
  - ⟶ *Prevents over-routing for students who sign up but don't attend*
- Identify students with **special schedules** or daycare
  - ⟶ *Supports route efficiency and student experience*
- Assess the potential impact of **summer road construction projects** and adjust accordingly.
  - ⟶ *Avoids delays that extend student ride times, risk late arrivals, and extend driver hours.*

2. Account for Students with IEPs
Support compliance while preventing unexpected last-minute additions to routes.

- **Use IEP documentation**, which typically includes transportation needs, as your primary source.
  - ⟶ *Improves accuracy and reduces reliance on last-minute confirmations*
- Plan routes **using existing SPED ridership data** and adjust as needed with new info.
  - ⟶ *Minimizes route disruptions*
- Communicate route assignments early to SPED families to **avoid late-stage changes**.
  - ⟶ *Improves family trust and planning predictability*

3. Understand Summer Programming

Enable efficient routing by mapping student overlap across programs.

- Identify all **summer** and **grant-funded programs** requiring transportation.
- **Determine any overlap** between programs and student enrollment.
- **Evaluate impacts** on routing, vehicle use, and timing.
  - ⟶ *Optimizes shared routes and reduces duplicate trips*

4. Review Bus Limitations and Requirements

Ensure planning is within real-world constraints while preserving service quality.

- Confirm the **maximum number of buses** available.
- Consider the **potential for longer ride times** and adjust accordingly for special needs students.
- Ensure your fleet has the **appropriate vehicle mix** (especially AC-equipped buses in hot climates).
- Coordinate with vendors to **reserve backup buses**.
- Use your routing software's optimization tools to **reduce mileage and idle time**.
  - ⟶ *All of the above reduces fuel costs, driver overtime, and vehicle wear-and-tear*

5. Clarify and Strategically Use Bell Time Structures

Minimize the number of buses needed with route tiering.

- Use transportation team input to **set summer bell times**, rather than adapting to fixed ones.
  - ⟶ *Directly reduces the number of buses and drivers needed*
- Confirm if programs are multi-tiered or if there's **potential to stagger start/end times**.
- Suggest **bell time adjustments** that allow bus reuse between programs.
  - ⟶ *Maximizes vehicle efficiency and cuts labor hours*

6. Assess and Monitor Driver Coverage

Avoid uncovered routes and maintain safety standards.

- Review vacation schedules and create a realistic driver roster.
- Provide route familiarity training or route previews if drivers rotate frequently.
- Use GPS-enabled tablets for real-time navigation and ridership tracking.
  - ⟶ *Improves driver efficiency and reduces missed stops or delays*
- Retain monitors to cover absences and maintain safety protocols.
  - ⟶ *Avoids costly emergency staffing or incident fallout*

7. Leverage Your Routing Software's Sandbox Capabilities

Enable testing of various route and bell time models prior to implementation.

- Copy default routes into a sandbox for safe summer route testing.
- Layer in confirmed ridership and program details.
- Run different scenarios, such as maximum time-on-board, walking distances, and vehicle constraints
  - ⟶ *Identifies the most cost-effective, student-friendly routing plans*
- Use your sandbox output to inform bell time windows for better tiering.

Make your routing smoother and smarter with our <u>easy-to-use K-12 transportation solution</u>! Or, request **<u>info and pricing</u>**.