



# Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency HIRTA Public Transit

Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story, and Warren Counties

7/22/2020

Dear Parents:

We are writing to you about the bus service HIRTA typically provides during the school year to get students to and from school.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, HIRTA had to make a number of changes to keep our drivers and passengers safe while we continued to provide essential services in the community. One of the changes also included a number of staff layoffs, especially with a 90% decrease in demand for service. This means we have fewer buses operating. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines for school bus transportation includes social distancing on the buses, that may include transporting 50% fewer students.

In previous years, HIRTA was able to pick up those who fell in to the gaps and unable to use school bus transportation, instead riding under our general public student program. With COVID-19 we also have social distancing guidelines on our all of our vehicles so we have fewer seats available to transport people. This fact, along with federal regulations regarding public transit agencies and school transportation, has put us in a challenging situation.

At this time, we cannot give any guarantees about the service we will offer for this academic year to those who have used HIRTA in the past, or may be unable to secure School transportation.

We are working with the Iowa Department of Transportation, who is working with the Iowa Department of Education and Federal Transit Administration. We are unsure if there are any plans to lessen regulations and assist with funding so that HIRTA may be able help fill in the gap in getting students to school.

This notice is being sent now, because we wanted to make sure you have time to plan and make other arrangements when your school district opens back up to having in-school learning.

If and when something changes or we have additional information, we will let you know.

Thank you –

Julia Castillo, Executive Director  
HIRTA Public Transit