

MIDWEST SUPER LEAGUE

Cross-Pod Weekend Hosting Guide

2026-27 Season

A guide for clubs hosting cross-pod matchday weekends

Section 1: What is a Cross-Pod Weekend?

1.1 Overview

Cross-pod weekends are scheduled matchday events where teams from different geographic pods compete against each other. These weekends happen 2-3 times per season and bring the broader MSL community together. They are hosted by a single club or pod on a rotating basis.

1.2 Why Cross-Pod Play Matters

- Gives teams exposure to different styles of play
- Creates a sense of league-wide community
- Provides a 'big weekend' feel for players and families
- Ensures competitive balance across pods
- Builds relationships between clubs from different regions

1.3 Hosting Rotation

Cross-pod weekends rotate among pods so that no single region bears all the travel burden. The league office coordinates hosting assignments at the start of each season. Hosting is voluntary, but pods are expected to share the responsibility.

Section 2: Planning & Logistics

2.1 Timeline

- 8 weeks before: Hosting club confirmed and venue secured
- 6 weeks before: Match schedule published by league office
- 4 weeks before: Visiting clubs receive venue info and travel details
- 2 weeks before: Final schedule confirmed, referees assigned
- 1 week before: Weather contingency plan communicated

2.2 Venue Requirements

A cross-pod weekend venue must provide:

- Minimum 2 fields (3-4 preferred for efficient scheduling)
- All fields properly lined and equipped (goals, nets, flags)
- Adequate parking for visiting teams and families
- Restroom facilities
- Space for teams to warm up
- Spectator areas with clear separation from team areas

2.3 Scheduling

The league office builds the match schedule in coordination with the host club. Typical format:

- Saturday: 3-4 match windows (morning through afternoon)
- Sunday: 2-3 match windows (morning through early afternoon)
- Minimum 15 minutes between matches on the same field
- No team plays more than one match per day

Section 3: Host Club Responsibilities

3.1 On the Day

- Provide a host coordinator as the point of contact for visiting clubs
- Clearly mark fields, parking, and facilities with signage
- Have game balls available as backup
- Ensure goals are anchored and fields are in match condition
- Coordinate referee check-in and payment
- Provide schedule board or printed schedules on-site
- Have a first aid kit accessible

3.2 Communication

- Send a welcome email to visiting clubs 1 week before the event
- Include: venue address, parking map, field layout, schedule, contact info
- Recommend nearby hotels/restaurants for families traveling overnight
- Provide emergency venue contact for day-of questions

3.3 Hospitality (Encouraged, Not Required)

These extras are not required but make a great impression:

- Water station or cooler for players/families
- Concession stand or food truck coordination
- Welcome banner or signage
- A brief welcome announcement at the start of the day

Remember: visiting families have traveled to your community. A welcoming environment reflects well on your club and the league.

Section 4: For Visiting Clubs & Families

4.1 Travel Planning

- Book hotels early if an overnight stay is needed
- Carpool when possible to reduce costs and parking pressure
- Arrive 30+ minutes before your first match
- Bring your own canopies, chairs, water, and snacks
- Know the schedule and field assignments before you arrive

4.2 Being a Good Guest

- Respect the host venue (pack out your trash)
- Follow all parking and facility rules
- Be positive ambassadors for your club and pod
- Thank the host club for organizing the weekend
- Follow the MSL Sideline Behavior Guide at all times

4.3 Cost Expectations

Travel costs for cross-pod weekends are the responsibility of each club/family. Typical costs include:

- Gas/transportation (2-4 hours each way, depending on pods)
- Hotel (1 night, if distance requires overnight)
- Meals on the road

The MSL keeps cross-pod weekends to 2-3 per season specifically to limit travel costs. Most families report spending \$100-\$300 per cross-pod weekend, which compares favorably to out-of-state tournament costs.

Section 5: Weather & Contingency

5.1 Weather Monitoring

The host club is responsible for monitoring weather in the days leading up to the event. If severe weather is expected:

- Notify visiting clubs as early as possible (ideally 24+ hours)
- Coordinate with the league office on contingency options
- Do not wait until teams have already traveled to cancel

5.2 Contingency Options

- Delay start times if weather is expected to clear
- Shorten the event (reduce to single-day if one day is affected)
- Relocate to a backup venue if available
- Cancel and reschedule (league office coordinates)

5.3 Day-Of Weather

If weather disrupts the event after it has begun, follow the MSL Weather & Lightning Policy. The host coordinator and referees will make joint decisions about suspension or abandonment.