Tackling the Challenges in School & Head Start Transportation in 2021

April 27, 2021
Charlie Hood
Former Executive Director, NASDPTS

Safety of School Buses
- Yellow school bus transportation remains far safer than other modes
- For example, less than one percent of youth fatalities during school travel hours are in school buses, versus 37 percent when riding with teen drivers and 23 percent with adult drivers (www.schoolbusfacts.com)

Student Transportation Overview
- NASDPTS: Who are we and what do we do?
- COVID-19 Pandemic: Effects and trends
- The Great Seat Belts Debate: Spoiler alert: it’s almost history
- Loading and Unloading Safety: Vulnerabilities, challenges, and solutions
What is NASDPTS?

National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services

- Established in 1968
- 51 state directors (highest ranking student transportation official in each state and DC)
- Other membership categories include suppliers to industry, state student transportation association leaders, and interested parties

www.nasdpts.org

What does NASDPTS do?

- Policy direction and guidance
- Training workshops and conferences
- Develop and broker best practices for operations and fleet management
- Promote SAFETY, equitable access to school programs, and environmental stewardship

https://nasdpts.org/Position-Papers
COVID and Student Transportation-2021

- Burbio.com School Opening Tracker tracks:
  - % US K-12 students attending "virtual-only" schools
  - % US K-12 students attending "traditional" in-person/every day schools
  - % US K-12 students attending "hybrid" schools

Rewind to March 2020

- In-school learning ended virtually overnight
- Public and contracted school buses were parked
- School buses and drivers pivoted to:
  - Providing meals throughout communities
  - Distributing technology, lesson plans, and education resources
  - Serving as wifi "hotspots"
- NASDPTS and others disseminated guidance on prevention protocols and mitigation strategies (PPE, temp checks, symptom monitoring, quarantining, contact tracing, sanitation of buses, in-bus barriers and air purification/ventilation, etc.)
- Tracked federal stimulus bills and funding sources for displaced school bus drivers and idled employees and companies
Student Transportation Aligned for Return To School

Sponsoring Organizations

The Student Transportation Aligned for Return To School (STARTS) Task Force (the "Task Force") was formed as a partnership of the three leading school transportation industry organizations: the National School Transportation Association (NSTA), the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) and the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS).

The purpose of the Task Force was to develop materials that would be useful to the school bus community as it works to respond to the unprecedented challenges of developing transportation plans to support school reopening plans in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Core Activities of the Task Force

1. "Mined" action items and guidelines from:
   - each state's school reopening plan
   - other transportation reopening plans (paratransit, transit, rail and airlines)
   - corporate reopening plans from Starbucks, McDonald's, Walmart, Disney, Apple...

2. Surveyed to understand the needs and requirements of:
   - State Directors of Student Transportation
   - Bus Contractors
   - Local School District Transportation Directors
   - School Superintendents

3. Developed a Master List of Guidelines

4. Developed a "Menu of Tasks" for each Guideline

5. Developed a Guideline and Task Assessment Matrix Tool and Gantt Chart

COVID and Transportation-2021

- CISA (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency) classifies school bus drivers as “essential workers” (Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers Guidance, v. 4.0)
- NASDPTS and others encouraged states to prioritize essential workers, including school bus drivers, in early phases of the vaccine rollout, once front-line health care and emergency response personnel received vaccines
- Supported President’s Executive Order 13998 requiring mask use by all passengers and drivers on public transportation
- Supported safe resumption of school bus service; discouraged temporary, less safe transportation options

COVID and Transportation-related Resources

- CDC and FEMA: www.coronavirus.gov
- CISA: www.cisa.gov/coronavirus
- USDOT “waivers” sites:
  - FMCSA: https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/COVID-19
  - NHTSA: www.nhtsa.gov/coronavirus

School Bus “Seat Belts”

- Prior to 2007, seat belts were...just seat belts
- Only two-point lap belts were available
- Common misperceptions were that belts:
  - Were expensive
  - Reduced capacity
  - Would be used as weapons
  - Could cause abdominal injuries and/or whiplash
Then in 2007…………everything changed!

A thing called “flexible seating” was introduced……..

~ Lap/shoulder belts had been introduced in 2002

~ Flex seating was introduced at the NAPT trade show in 2007

~ Flex seating went into production in February 2008

February, 2014 - NASDPTS fully supports the installation and use of lap-shoulder belts in school buses. NASDPTS is not advocating that the installation and/or use of lap-shoulder belts be required.

November 8, 2015 - NHTSA

NHTSA: “SCHOOL BUSES SHOULD HAVE SEAT BELTS. PERIOD.”

Administrator Mark Rosekind, November 8, 2015
The National Transportation Safety Board recommended for the first time that all new school buses in the U.S. be equipped with lap and shoulder belts.

NTSB Board Chairman Robert L. Sumwalt – May 22, 2018

NASDPTS 2020 Position Statement

NASDPTS fully supports requiring the installation and use of lap/shoulder belts in all new school buses. States and local jurisdictions must have policies requiring that all students use the belts and must train them on how to use the belts properly.

Training must include:
- proper use and adjustment
- regular evacuation drills, unbuckling exercises
- field or activity trip pre-trip safety briefings

LEAs and contractors must implement policies, notices, training, and appropriate enforcement.
### States With School Bus “Seat Belt” Laws

- **Arkansas**: Lap/shoulder (L/S) belts, if authorized by local petition (started Jan. 1, 2018)
- **New York**: Lap belts, use not required
- **New Jersey**: Lap belts, use required, L/S belts started Feb. 25, 2019
- **California**: Lap/shoulder belts, use required
- **Iowa**: Lap/shoulder belts, usage policies required (started October 2, 2019)
- **Louisiana**: Few in use, never funded
- **Florida**: Lap belts, use required
- **Texas**: Lap/shoulder belts unless districts vote to opt out (started Sept. 1, 2017)
- **Nevada**: Lap/shoulder belts (started July 3, 2019)

---

### Purpose and Findings of NHTSA Study

**Purpose**: To determine how school districts maximize effectiveness and benefits of belts by improving proper usage

**Major Findings**: Through surveys and interviews, NHTSA found that:

- Usage policies, backed by training, education, and enforcement are important.
- Belts contributed to a calmer bus environment with less distractions for school bus drivers.
- Drivers and supervisors who devoted more time and energy into training and enforcement of required use derived the most benefits.

---

### Breaking News

**Education on Proper Use Of Seat Belts on School Buses**
Loading/Unloading Safety

Getting to Zero: While school buses are incredibly safe, students remain most vulnerable as pedestrians outside the bus.

Kansas Survey:
- Kansas State Dept. of Education (formerly KDOE) surveys fatalities to students during loading and unloading.
- Reports students killed while bus was approaching, within, or leaving a school bus stop.
- Survey conducted for over 40 years.

### Latest 10-Year Data (ksde.org)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Children Killed by Vehicle Passing School Bus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of States</th>
<th>Number of Drivers</th>
<th>Total Vehicles Passing Illegally</th>
<th>Vehicles Passing per Bus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>111,914</td>
<td>76,685</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99,930</td>
<td>88,025</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>108,436</td>
<td>85,279</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>97,265</td>
<td>75,965</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>102,371</td>
<td>78,239</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### 2019 NASDPTS Illegal Passing Survey

- One-day snapshot captured by school bus drivers
- Completed annually since 2011 to document incidence of other vehicles illegally passing their buses
- 2019 survey results:
  - 133K school bus drivers in 39 states
  - 95K motorists illegally passed their buses
  - Equates to over 17M violations per year nationally
- Complete results available at [www.nasdpts.org](http://www.nasdpts.org)

---

### Multi-year Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of States</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Drivers</td>
<td>111,914</td>
<td>99,930</td>
<td>108,436</td>
<td>97,265</td>
<td>102,371</td>
<td>96,540</td>
<td>106,930</td>
<td>108,623</td>
<td>130,879</td>
<td>106,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Vehicles Passing Illegally</td>
<td>76,685</td>
<td>88,025</td>
<td>85,279</td>
<td>75,965</td>
<td>78,239</td>
<td>74,421</td>
<td>78,239</td>
<td>83,944</td>
<td>81,808</td>
<td>79,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles Passing per Bus</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Survey Takeaways

- Results unfortunately consistent over nine years
- About 27 percent of the nation's school bus drivers participated
- AM and PM passes close to equal
- About 60% of passes from front, 40% from rear
- Equates to over 17M per year
- 72-76 are on right side of bus where students enter and exit!

Model Policies and Best Practices

- Is there a need for?:
  - Uniform national law on stopping for buses?
  - National priority on illegal passing enforcement (e.g., targeted grants)
  - Model training curricula for school bus drivers and student riders (e.g., standardized signaling procedure)
  - Model state law on photo/video enforcement
  - Better promotion of safety-related vehicle technology and operational procedures of National Congress on School Transportation (ncstonline.org)

Illegal Passing of School Buses: Study Objectives

- Assess knowledge of drivers about laws regarding passing of school buses
- Assess current stop arm violation initiatives, and
- Demonstration project: implementation of HVE and camera systems
- Use the results to create a report and guide
Illegal Passing of School Buses: Study Approach

1. A national survey of motorists to determine their knowledge of and attitudes towards laws regarding passing of school buses

2. A field study to examine the effectiveness of an automated school bus camera enforcement system combined with HVE and education in two communities
Love the Bus Activities

Awarded three prizes (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) for most Facebook likes for Love the Bus Activities.