



SETTING THE STANDARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

STS EXPRESS

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New STS Website Is Unveiled

The new and improved STS website was unveiled at the organization’s General Meeting on December 5th by Charles Kelly, President of Earthspec, a school transportation consulting company. He led the audience of approximately one hundred STS members through a guided tour of the site and then answered questions. The website is attractive, loaded with great information, and very user friendly.

Some of the highlights:

- Easy navigation from any page on the website
- Best of the Web – direct links to Motor Vehicle, State, and Federal web pages.
- Interactive features
- On-line membership management
- Downloadable forms



School Transportation Supervisors of NJ



Shown here are the buttons and links that appear on every page of the website, making navigation around the site simple.

Home | Membership | About Us | Calendar | Calendar | Newsletter | Store | Bulletin Board | My Account

→ Best of Web

→ Legislation

→ Regional Pages

Events →

→ Enhance Your Skills

→ Special Projects

When you enter the site (njsts.org), start by checking out “News and Announcements,” on the home page. Here you will find current information that will be frequently updated as new noteworthy information becomes available. Further exploration of the site will uncover just how much useful information is now available to STS members.

Each region has its own page where news, announcements and pictures can be posted. There’s a page for Ed Treadaway to post legislative news. As information about events such as the Conference, School Bus Drivers’ Seminar and the Rodeo becomes available it will be posted on-line under “Events.” Look under “Enhance Your Skills – What You Should Know” for items that first appeared under News and Announcements. The current STS EXPRESS is available on-line, and back issues can be accessed. There’s a membership directory which is searchable by a member’s last name or job affiliation as well as information on how to become a member. You can also find the organization’s Mission Statement and Bylaws.

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STATE UPDATE

Jerry Ford, Director, Office of Pupil Transportation

DRTRS

The DRTRS collection went very well this year. We thought there would be problems with the new edits that were added to help districts correctly report data. However, very few districts had problems, and there were only a handful of districts that submitted their reports late. Please remember the major problem caused by filing your initial data after October 31st is the loss of points on the district QSAC report.

New State Regulations

There are several new administrative code regulations at N.J.A.C 6A:23 that pertain to district vehicles. These regulations are not intended for district vehicles registered and used as school buses. District school buses are regulated by NJAC 6A:27 and numerous DOE statutes and NJMVC statutes and administrative codes.

Unannounced Inspections

Even though you may not hear about them, contractors and districts experience unannounced inspections monthly. Please remain diligent about all aspects of your operation and make sure you and your staff comply with all current regulations. Do not let your guard down.

Advertising on School Buses

School buses are clearly not the best way for revenue strapped boards of education to raise money. However, the legislature seems poised to pass laws to permit such advertising. There are many co-sponsors of both the Senate and Assembly bills indicating broad support for this legislation.

I believe our efforts at this time should be to make sure the legislation makes it voluntary for boards of education to use advertising on school buses; allows the DOE to set standards for content; and allows the MVC to regulate size and placement of any advertising. If districts are given an option and you feel strongly against advertising on school buses, it will be up to you to educate your board about the problems and disadvantages related to school bus advertising.

Both our neighbors Pennsylvania and New York permit advertising in or on school buses to varying degrees.



Homeless Students

The economy grows more dismal every day. This may cause increases in the number of homeless student cases in each district. The student's district of last residence is responsible for the education and transportation of homeless students, if eligible. Therefore your transportation system may be called on to transport students from outside your area to your schools. Keep two things in mind as you try to keep your transportation costs down.

First, it may be less expensive for your district to pay tuition to the homeless student's new district. You may not get the parent to agree to this however, and it is the parent's right to choose the district the student attends. You may want to point out how much extra time the student will spend on the bus, and the fact there will be no after school transportation available for after school activities. Unlike special education only standard home to school transportation is required

Second, please consider extending a route rather than providing separate transportation. If the temporary residence is not too far out of the school's sending area, consider putting the student on an existing route. If necessary, make the homeless student's stop the first stop on the way to school and the last coming home to avoid changing all the other students' stop times.

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Highlights from the December 2008 STS General Meeting

- Charles Kelly, President of Earthspec, a school transportation consulting firm, gave an impressive tour of the new STS Website. (See article on page one.)
- Jerry Ford, Director of the State Office of Pupil Transportation, spoke on several issues. Please refer to Mr. Ford's State Update on page two for further details.
 - The results of the DRTRS collection will be posted in the 2008 Comparative Spending Guide. The State will compare last year's efficiency ratings with this year's numbers for possible discrepancies. Districts with large variances will be contacted for clarification. County Superintendents are charged with working with districts with efficiency ratings lower than 1.2.
 - Senate Bill 1730 extends the life of new school buses from 12 years to 15 years. The life of school vehicles weighing more than 25,000 gross lbs. will be decreased to 15 years.
 - Assembly Bill 3086 would allow advertising on the exterior of school buses. (See article on page 7.) . The legislation applies to district owned vehicles, which account for about 38% of all New Jersey school buses.
 - When purchasing new buses, consider ordering lap/shoulder seat belts for their improved safety features. This was an "unfunded" recommendation.
 - There may be an increase in homeless students due to tough economic times.
 - Pre-school may be mandated for 3 and 4 year olds living in districts whose District Factor Group (DFG) is A,B, or CD. Public school transportation requirements will apply.
 - The anticipated CPI for 2008-2009 is 3.34. The anticipated nonpublic rate is \$914. Neither figure will be official until the State Budget is passed.
- Billy Reed, Motor Vehicle Commission, stressed the importance of keeping up with motor vehicle maintenance even during difficult times. He also expressed safety concerns about two issues currently before the State: the increase in the number of years a school bus can be on the road and advertising on school buses.
- Mr. Charles J Hoffmann III, Project Manager of Charles J. Hoffman Jr. and Son, Petroleum Equipment Contractors, emphasized the following four points about fueling facilities. Fines for noncompliance can be as high as \$10,000 - \$50,000.
 - Be aware that unannounced Fueling Facility Inspections in NJ are in full swing right now and NO ONE is exempt from inspections.
 - Keep Required Inspection Logs & Testing Records. Every site is unique as far as monthly and annual requirements.
 - Get into an annual contract with an outside vendor, and initially have them evaluate the entire site to find out what is periodically required; start monthly inspections and annual testing.
 - Have a spill plan.

Mr. Hoffman reported that the State is planning to announce more stringent requirements during 2009. Mr. Hoffman has offered to answer any of your questions. You may contact him at: info@HoffmannTankRemoval.com or www.HoffmannTankRemoval.com .

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The following Committee Reports were given:

- Dolly Cristaudo, Conference Facilities, reported that she was able to renegotiate our contract with Trump Marina for the 2009 Conference for two days instead of the previously planned three days. The change was necessary because of the State's stringent travel restrictions. The Banquet has been rescheduled to Monday night. We are submitting a Waiver Request asking the State to approve one night's lodging during the Conference. If the Waiver Request is denied, The Board of Directors has committed to picking up one night's lodging under certain conditions.



- Wendy LaFontaine, Entertainment, announced the theme of this year's Conference is "DOO WOP." She is seeking sponsors for the Banquet's festivities.
- Ed Treadaway, Legislation, distributed a handout listing pending school transportation legislation. He does not think Assembly Bill 347, Abigail's Law, which would require sensors on school buses, will pass, due to financial constraints. STS is taking a stand on the content of advertising on school buses and the placement of the ads.
- Kathleen Warrick, Safety Poster Contest, announced there are four vendors sponsoring the School Bus Safety Poster Contest. This year's theme is "Cross In View, It's The Right Thing To Do."

Kathleen is also chair of the Northern School Bus Driver Seminar. She reported that the speaker for both the Northern and Southern School Bus Driver Seminars will be Betty Hughes. The topics will be "Out of Sight/Out of Mind" and "Insuring Student Safety on the Bus." Flyers for the seminar were available at the meeting.

- Nancy Rosikiewicz, Membership Committee Chair reported there are 264 members of STS.

Helping Our Heroes

Early this year, the Army of Hope Committee of the NJ Elks Association donated a transportation van to the Wilson Medical Support Element at Fort Dix, better known as Charlie Company. The van is used to transport wounded soldiers from Fort Dix/McGuire Air Force Base to Walter Reed hospital in Washington, D.C. where they receive physical therapy.

Chris Zeiner, President of Jersey Shore Bus Sales, was instrumental in making the donation possible by arranging for a 12 passenger van. Chris paid special attention to details like comfortable seats for this special group of passengers. The white van is equipped with two wheelchairs and video screens. To see pictures of the dedication on the following link: <http://picasaweb.google.com/geoyusko/>



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It's Coming: The New Transportation Supervisors' Certification Program

Members of STS and the Department of Education have spent the last year working with the Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy to develop a Transportation Supervisor's Certification Program. The first classes of the new program could start as soon as the fall of 2009.

The new program will replace both the Supervisors' training currently offered at Mercer County Community College, which has been referred to as the "Tier One" program, and the planned "Tier Two" program that has never been developed. The Committee is developing a plan for students to receive credit for course work already completed in "Tier One."

The Committee's goal is to elevate the level of professionalism of school transportation supervisors in New Jersey. To achieve this goal and to help qualify students to become Certified Transportation Supervisors, the Committee has developed a challenging eight course curriculum. All the subjects currently being taught at Mercer College are included in the new curriculum, but the content of the courses has been expanded to provide a broader understanding of the subject matter. In addition, changes in school environment have increased the importance of two topics in particular: Special Education and Emergency Management.

Students who complete the requirements of the Certification Program will receive a Certificate of Completion. Committee member Cathy Kelly explained the difference between Certification and a Certificate of Completion: "Just completing the course work and getting a certificate does not mean that you are officially "Certified." Students who

receive a Certificate of Completion will submit the Certificate to the Department of Education to request Certification. The Department of Education has the option of requiring additional qualifications such as management experience or two years' employment in school transportation before qualifying a candidate as a Certified Transportation Supervisor."

Hopefully the availability of instructors and the number of interested students will make it possible to offer classes in several locations around the State, both at night and on Saturdays, to make it easier for students to attend.

Committee members designing the new program are Glenn Barry, Rich Cushinotto, Cathy Kelly, Gerry Oram, and Don Todd from STS, and Jerry Ford and Dot Shelmut from the Office of Pupil Transportation

IMPORTANT DATES

- January 14th Central Region Meeting
- January 23rd North Region Meeting
- February 28th School Bus Drivers' Seminar
- March 14th School Bus Drivers' Seminar
- March 30th, 31st Annual Conference

For details, go to the STS Website

News You Can Use

For an excellent article on Wheelchair dos and don'ts, click on the following link. It will take you to an article in School Bus Fleet Magazine. Or go to schoolbusfleet.com, click on Special Needs, then News, 12/1/08, Do's and Don'ts.

[Hhttp://www.schoolbusfleet.com/t_specialneeds_inside.cfm?action=news&storyID=1936](http://www.schoolbusfleet.com/t_specialneeds_inside.cfm?action=news&storyID=1936)

Video Review, submitted by Cathy Kelly

Night Driving for School Bus Drivers by the Training Network

When daylight savings time changes it is important to advise your drivers about what to look for while driving in the dark. This video was an excellent presentation to make drivers aware of critical night driving issues. The Video has a copyright of 2007 and is 22 minutes long. It fits nicely into a one hour driver training session.

CENTRAL REGION FALL MEETING

Submitted by Ray Keuhner

On Wednesday October 1st the Central Region held its fall meeting. We would like to thank our host the East Windsor School District for the use of their conference room and helping with the set up of the room.

The meeting was the best attended meeting we have had in recent years with over 100 members and non-members in attendance. Included in the audience was the Middlesex County School Business Administrator Mr. John Nemeth.

The topic for the meeting was the annual State DRTRS process and updates. Guest speakers were Jerry Ford, Director, New Jersey Office of Student Transportation and Mr. Ray Zirilli, Senior Specialist for the Office of Student Transportation. Mr. Ford and Mr. Zirilli gave a one hour slide presentation that included areas such as loading the DRTRS program, updates that have been made to the program and clarifications on several key components that are in put into the program.

New this year on the report: *The "Host District Question:" If you are the Host District for a route, you must enter the number of other districts included on the route.

* CTSA's are required to complete and transmit a DRTRS containing route file information.

After the presentation both Mr. Ford and Mr. Zirilli made themselves available to answer any individual questions that members may have had.

The Central Directors would also like to thank Mr. Fred McNiece, from Wolfington Body Company, for providing refreshments for the meeting.

State Update (continued from page 2) Pre School Program Expands

Be prepared for more preschool transportation starting next year. Despite the current state budget problems, the preschool expansion still seems to be on track. The expansion requires districts with a district factor group (DFG) of A, B or CD and with 40% or more of their preschool families eligible for free or reduced lunch to provide preschool for all three and four year olds in the district. These districts are being called

Universal preschool districts. All other districts must provide preschool only for their three and four year olds who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program.

Some of the districts that do not have to provide preschool for all their three and four year olds will create preschool programs to accommodate all those who want to attend. Other districts may only provide for what is required. Many districts have only a few preschool age students so they are being encouraged to join with other districts to provide the program and transportation.

The good news is that the preschool initiative has been designated a special program. That means districts that are not triggered and yet have to provide transportation for preschoolers, especially if they are joining with another district, are not triggered for nonpublic school transportation.

Please remember you must treat preschoolers as regular public school students. If an eligible preschooler is more than 2.0 miles from home to where the program is being provided you must provide transportation. If a non-eligible preschooler is more than 2.0 miles and the district is providing a preschool class for them, transportation is not required. Only eligible preschoolers, more than 2.0 miles from school, will be counted for state aid.

There are no special requirements to transport preschoolers in school buses. Aides are not required. Car seats are not required in school buses. Type III School Vehicles, those not school bus yellow with school warning lights, are not considered school buses and require the use of car seats or booster seats for all occupants following the eight or eighty rule.

TIPS

Remind drivers to wear footwear appropriate for the job of driving a school bus.

Update emergency management phone lists on a regular basis.

Advertising on School Buses

The New Jersey Legislature is poised to pass a new law allowing advertising to appear on the exterior sides of school buses owned or leased by school districts. The money that districts raise using advertising can be added to the district's undesignated general fund balance. Each district will be able to decide for itself whether or not to exercise this new option. Districts should weigh the value of the revenue to be gained from school bus advertising against the potential of taking unfair advantage of a captive audience of young students.

Clearly, the reason for using school bus advertising is economic: as school budgets shrink, school districts need to find additional sources of income. Ads on buses can bring in significant sums, depending on the type of ad and whether the ads are placed inside or outside the bus. The extra income, though usually relatively small in comparison to a district's overall budget, can supply the capital to save school programs or purchase equipment. In Cherry Creek School District in Colorado for instance, the district contracted with an ad company for 3' x 5' print ads on the exterior of 220 buses. In 2006 -2007, the district received \$75,000 in advertising revenue. The following year they were hoping to collect \$100,000, but made only \$54,000. The extra income was used to purchase a bus tracking system and digital videos for more of their buses. SAC, an advertising contractor, places an 11" wide strip of advertising above windows inside school buses. Districts using their services receive about \$2100 per month, per bus. A district may make between 40% - 60% or more of the revenue generated by advertising.

Advertising on school buses is not a brand new concept. In 1993, Colorado Springs School District was the first district in the nation to implement school bus advertising. It has always been a touchy issue, however, met with controversy in almost every school district that has tried it. Some districts have tried it, and then banned it, sometimes because it wasn't very lucrative and sometimes after reconsidering the welfare of its students. Bob Riley, NSDDPT Executive Director, says there have been some successes but not on a large scale.

Gary Ruskin is Executive Director of Commercial Alert, a non-profit anti-commercialism group based in Portland Oregon. He thinks it is the school district's job to protect kids from a "voracious commercial culture." But some argue that districts get to hand pick the advertisements that children are exposed to on the buses and that advertisements are almost everywhere else anyway. Consider Little League. The name of the team sponsor is often splashed across the young ball players' uniforms. Isn't that advertising?

For school transportation officials, the most important factor is whether school bus advertising will compromise school bus safety. School buses are easily identified by the driving public; their color, the flashing warning lamps and stop arms contribute to the safety record of school buses. If the driver of a car is staring at the advertisements on a school bus, he might not notice that the lights have come on and there are kids crossing the road.

(Three separate studies, one done in North Carolina, one in Indiana, and one done by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, found that between 3.2 % and 4% of the crashes studied were caused by driver distraction from a source outside the vehicle. It would seem plausible, then, that driver distraction caused by school bus advertising could potentially result in accidents.)

Districts using school bus advertising generally have a review board in place to evaluate advertisements before they are posted. It is difficult to write criteria that will cover everything but is very important that ads are age appropriate and subject appropriate. Some of the advertisements that have been accepted were for colleges, the U.S. Army, local television shows and the local newspaper. Avoid fast food because most schools now have a wellness policy. Avoid tobacco and alcohol. If you try to sell students a particular brand, you may be accused by advertising opponents of trying to influence students' purchasing decisions. On the other hand, if you have a "G-rated" advertising policy, you may be accused of violating the U.S. Constitution and free speech (this has not happened yet.)

STS of NJ has not taken a stand on the issue of school bus advertising, but intends to express its views on setting standards for advertising content and the placement and size of advertisements.

New STS Website (continued from page 1)

There are two very exciting new features. First, the site is equipped with an interactive calendar on which to post and manage events. Open the calendar, click on an event, and you will see details about the event. Members can even request automated email reminders about upcoming events. The second thing is an online membership management tool developed with valuable help from Don Todd. Each STS member has an account. All updates to a member's account, such as a change in address or password, can be done right on-line by the member. Updates will generate emails confirming the changes that were made to the account.

The website is designed to grow as the needs of the organization grow and change. That's a very valuable feature. Consider the fact that right after Mr. Kelly's presentation, there was already talk about additional ways the website could fill the organization's needs, such as on-line registration for meetings.

If you have any questions or ideas for the website, please send them to info@njsts.org.

On the Lighter Side... New Driver of Sesame Street

The new bus driver for the Sesame Street Elementary School for Exceptional Children was a bit nervous his first day on the job.

Clutching the map and the list of names he'd been provided with, the driver made his way to the first stop, where a very fat little girl boarded the bus. "Hi," she said, "My name is Patty." The driver tried to return her smile as she took a seat.

At the next stop, an extremely fat little girl got on. The driver managed a weak smile when she said, "Hi, my name's Patty," and waddled to a seat.

Next was a little boy sporting thick glasses, crutches, and a safety helmet. His list informed the driver that this was "Special" Ross, and he helped the little boy up the stairs and into a seat.

The last child to be picked up was a boy named Lester T., and to the driver's relief he appeared perfectly normal. Accelerating, he was near the school when a strange smell came over the bus. Looking in his rearview mirror, the driver saw that Lester had his socks and shoes off and was picking at bunions on his feet. Totally grossed out, the driver lost control and crashed into a guard rail.

The police were quickly on the scene. Ascertaining that no one had been hurt, they turned to the bus driver & asked what the hell had come over him.

"Well, wouldn't you go crazy?" asked the bus driver indignantly. "It's not even 9:00 and I've had two obese Pattys, Special Ross, Lester T. picking bunions on a Sesame Street bus!"

