



# STS EXPRESS

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## National School Bus Safety Week is the Third Week of October!

### Life of School Buses Extended from 12 to 15 Years

The Official Site of New Jersey Senate Republicans reported on September 28<sup>th</sup> that Senate Bill A2660 had been signed into law. The law extends the service life of certain school buses from 12 to 15 years. “The 12 year use limit on most school buses is outdated, as advances in the design and construction of school buses now allow for their safe and effective use over a longer period of time,” said Senator Diane Allen, a co-sponsor of the bill. School districts still have the option of replacing school buses earlier than 15 years. Senator Allen commented that extending the life of school buses is a safe, cost-effective way to save taxpayer money, leaving additional resources for use in the classroom.

A report prepared in January 2006 by the Commission on Business Efficiency of the Public Schools stated there was a national consensus for a uniform 15 year school bus service life. But in January 2010, shortly before leaving office, Governor Corzine unexpectedly failed to sign a bill similar to this law.

It is not clear how many districts will take advantage of the new law. Interviewed in 2010 by School Bus Fleet Magazine, Paul Henry, transportation supervisor for Washington Schools and then chair of the STS Legislative Committee, said that while the bill allowed some flexibility, in practice it might be better for some districts than for others. “A bus working in the southern or central areas of the state might have a better shot at a 15 year life span than its cousin in the north,” he pointed out. Despite economic pressures to pare down transportation costs, districts should be expected to

evaluate their individual situations and replace buses on a schedule that promotes safety for their students.

Al Mayro, Vice President of American Bus and Coach Sales, said older buses or retired buses being “resurrected from the bone yard” will continue to be used provided “closed crankcase technology” is added to diesel engines. He said he fully expects the NJMVC will continue to inspect older buses thoroughly to ensure that all the safety and operational requirements for safe pupil transportation in New Jersey are met. He also pointed out that contract operators or purchasers of older buses will have a tremendous competitive advantage at the bidding tables when schools outsource their transportation routes. “This activity will continue to degrade contractor pricing at the bidding table,” Mr. Mayro said. “We have already been experiencing a downward spiral in contractor pricing and this will make matters worse for them.” The good news, he said, is that used buses afforded a “new lease on life” will see increased sales prices.

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## MVC Chairman Highlights Safety Inspections

New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission Chairman and Chief Administrator Raymond Martinez took advantage of this year's school opening to reassure parents that school buses are the safe way for their children to travel to school. As part of the event, a group of second graders was given clipboards and asked to grade their school buses.

Mr. Martinez was visiting Egg Harbor Township to discuss the ways in which MVC inspectors ensure that New Jersey's School buses are safe. He was accompanied by MVC's mobile inspection team, which was scheduled to perform an on-site inspection of the Township's buses.

On-site inspections allow for better monitoring of carrier operations and maintenance procedures, interaction with mechanics and operational staff, access to inspection and repair records, and a more timely inspection of school vehicles.

In addition to checking more than 180 items for compliance to government standards, the MVC inspectors are responsible for reviewing gas and diesel emissions for each school bus, and for ensuring all drivers are properly licensed and have their paperwork up-to-date.

The MVC inspects 24,000 school vehicles in the state twice a year. Including re-inspections, the MVC's total yearly inspection count is over 86,000.

- 47% of the buses inspected are placed out of service after being inspected.
- Fewer than 20% are issued 30 day rejection stickers.
- Most violations are addressed and buses are re-inspected during the same on-site visit.
- After re-inspection, 91% are deemed safe for the road.

Martinez says failure rates might seem troubling, but are actually a testament to the MVC's stringent inspections.

He encouraged parents to check the MVC online school inspection report card at [www.njmvc.gov](http://www.njmvc.gov).

*Have you spoken to your drivers lately about:*  
Proper professional attitude and behavior?  
Customer service skills?  
Dealing with cultural diversity?

## NHTSA Denies Petition for Three Point Seatbelts in Large School Buses

The August 25<sup>th</sup> issue of the Federal Register reported that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has denied a petition to require three point or lap/shoulder seat belts in large school buses. NHTSA said it is denying the petition because it "has not found a safety problem supporting a federal requirement for lap/shoulder belts on large school buses, which are already safe." The agency says fewer than 1% of school transportation related fatalities occur in school buses, compared to 12% while walking and 79% when being transported in cars.

The petition was filed by the Center for Auto Safety and a number of other entities, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, Advocates for Highway and Automobile Safety, and Safe Ride News.

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**You are encouraged to contact your STS Board members with questions, suggestions, and concerns.**

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## 2011 DRTRS HIGHLIGHTS

Following is a summary of information provided by the Office of Pupil Transportation to help you file your DRTRS successfully.

1. The district of residence :
  - a.) is responsible for arranging and paying for transportation to and from a choice school; and
  - b.) should list students in its district who attend choice schools on its own DRTRS.
2. There is a hazardous busing count on the DRTRS Summary Report.
3. Report one route/bus for each student regardless of whether he/she rides a different bus from school.
4. Respond YES when asked if you provide courtesy busing for hazardous reasons **only** if your district has a policy to provide transportation for hazardous reasons.
5. If you answer YES to #4 above, and if the student resides less than remote from school, answer YES if this student is being transported for hazardous reasons according to your district's hazardous busing policy.
6. On the Route file screen, enter the number of joiner districts who have students riding on this route.
7. The Perform Edit utility will automatically check imported data and generate error messages, if applicable.

8. State ID Number (SID) is a required entry for all students except nonpublic school students.
9. Please remember to run the "Recreate Index Files" utility often but at a minimum, daily upon exiting the program, before printing any report, and before transmitting data via the DOENET
10. CTSA's are required to complete a DRTRS Route File only and transmit it via the DOEnet.
11. SCTA's must select their county and district when initializing the DRTRS program or use their assigned codes if importing a vendor file.
12. Forms for reporting "Other School" and "Other Contractor" are available from your county office or on the data collection information webpage.

### Important Dates:

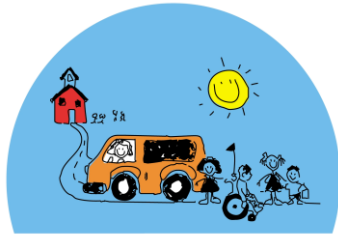
10/14	DRTRS Snapshot Date
10/14-10/31	Electronic Transmittal to DOE Via the DOEnet
11/4	Paper Summary, Transmittal Forms and Other Letters due to County Office

There is more detailed information available on the STS website

### Before You Put a New Driver on the Road...

Driver training and instruction should include the following, as recommended by the American School Bus Council.

- Your district's rules and policies for conducting safe and efficient student transportation
- Instruction on how to operate school bus equipment
- Proper adjustment and use of school bus mirrors
- Daily pre-trip and post-trip vehicle safety inspections
- Safe driving techniques, including defensive driving skills
- Procedures for loading and unloading passengers
- Procedures for entering and exiting school zones
- Student management
- Accident and emergency procedures, including evacuation and use of emergency equipment
- Safety procedures for railroad crossings



### **National Special Needs Team Safety Roadeo<sup>SM</sup>**

The 15<sup>th</sup> National Special Needs Team Safety Roadeo, hosted by the National Conference on Transporting Students with Disabilities & Preschoolers, will be held in Orlando, Florida from March 9<sup>th</sup> to March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2012.

This year's goal is "Teams from *Every State!*"

Eduprogroup and the NAPT, co-managers of the competition, invite contestants and judges to participate.

Contestants will complete an open-book test prior to attending the event. The competition will consist of skills events that include pre-check, loading/unloading an occupied wheelchair; securing students in wheelchairs and safety seats; and managing challenging student behavior.

Participation in a Roadeo in the contestant's home state is not a prerequisite.

The event includes FREE training sessions on Friday and Sunday and an awards banquet on Saturday.

In their literature promoting the event, Eduprogroup says, "If you are passionate about Special Needs Transportation, want to grow as a professional, and would like to network with others who do what you do from across the nation, then form a team and plan to participate in this event."

For more information and registration forms, go to [www.eduprogroup.com](http://www.eduprogroup.com)

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### **New Jersey Appellate Court Overturns DOE Decision on Bid Bond Forfeiture**

K&M Transportation, Inc. submitted proposals to the Passaic County Educational Services Commission for twenty nine school bus routes for the 2011-2012 school year and was the successful bidder on eight routes.

There was a problem however: K&M Transport has only two drivers and two school buses.

After an administrative law judge and the state commissioner of education did not rule to order forfeiture of the company bid bond, the New Jersey Appellate Court overturned their decisions and ordered the forfeiture.

Charles Fisher, the attorney who filed a petition to correct the situation on behalf of the Garden State School Bus Contractors Association, said the purpose of bid bonds is to guard against bidders targeting contracts they know they cannot fulfill. If the winning bidder cannot fulfill the contract, the bond must be pulled, Fischer said.

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### **School Bus Advertising Is Coming to New Jersey – But When?**

Advertising on school buses has been legal in New Jersey since Governor Christie signed Bill A-1637 on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Less than three weeks after the bill was signed, the New Jersey Department of Education notified school districts to wait until new administrative code was adopted before taking advantage of the legislation. Regulations have been developed, but they are still being reviewed.

Several forms of advertising are already present in schools. Consider the practice of students asking local businesses to place ads in programs distributed at school plays and sporting events. Some companies provide scoreboards in exchange for advertising their products or placement of their logos. Soft drink companies cut deals in exchange for being sole providers. Some companies have recently been successful using corridors and hallways for billboards. There is even a district in Minnesota, the St. Francis School District, that last year approved wraparound ads on their students' lockers. There are no federally mandated requirements or guidelines for advertising in public schools.

So if the concept of advertising in schools is not new, what's the holdup?

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Ms. Dot Shelmet, acting State Director of Pupil Transportation, told the State Board of Education that the process has been slowed because the four pages of regulations are being reviewed by a number of State agencies. Those agencies include the Motor Vehicle Commission and State Police.

Among the issues being raised is the use of framed signs. The MVC is concerned about loose clothing or backpacks getting caught on the signs. This leaves large decals as the preferred option; the downside to using decals is the higher cost.

Both the August and September agendas of the State Board of Education included school bus advertising. At the August meeting, one Board member expressed the opinion that the Board should do its best to minimize regulations on districts, not add to them. The Board will probably discuss school bus advertising at least twice more. In addition, a public hearing could follow. It may still be a while before districts can take advantage of the potential source of additional revenue allowed by the law.

An interesting note: Ms. Shelmet says school districts have not contacted her about school bus advertising. Ad agencies have.

The proposed regulations fall into several major areas:

- The physical specifications of the advertisements and how they will be attached to buses
- The methods by which a district BOE may contract with an advertiser
- Allowable subject matter and restrictions on language used in ads (think appropriate t-shirts)
- Reporting requirements

Half the revenues from school bus advertising are to be used to offset fuel costs. The other half can be used to support programs deemed appropriate by the BOE.

You can view the proposed regulations at:  
<http://www.njspotlight.com/assets/11/0803/2154>.

## New Law on Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Became Effective on September 1

In the United States, more than 160,000 school days are lost every year because students are afraid of being bullied and choose instead to miss school, according to the 2009 Report of the NJ Commission on Bullying in Schools. The law known as the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights was signed on January 5, 2011 by Governor Chris Christie. The law seeks to strengthen the law that has been in place since 2002 and hopefully reduce the risk of suicide among bullied students.

The new law became effective on September 1, when school districts had to submit revised policies on Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying to the County Superintendent of Schools. Some of the highlights of the new law provide for the following:

- The new definition of HIB includes behavior that takes place off school grounds that disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students.
- There are three new district functions whose responsibilities are delineated in the law:  
 District Anti-Bullying Coordinator  
 School Anti-Bullying Specialist  
 School Safety Team
- The policy must include a description of the behavior expected of students, consequences and remedial actions for a person committing an act of HIB, and the reporting requirements and procedures for investigating incidents of HIB.

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*NAPT and the U.S. DOE Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools joined forces to produce two training modules on bullying on school buses.*

*They are available for free download at:*  
<https://netforum.avectra.com/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=NAPT&WebCode=bullying>

- Retaliation against anyone who reports an act of HIB is prohibited; appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in retaliation must be described.
- Links to the district's HIB policy and the District Anti-Bullying Coordinator must appear on the homepage of the district's website. A link to the School Anti-Bullying Specialist must appear on the school's webpage.
- Schools will be graded on their anti-bullying efforts and the grades will be made public.
- The first week of October is designated "Week of Respect." Schools must observe the week by providing age-appropriate instruction focusing on HIB prevention.

Refer to your district's policy on HIB for more specific details of how HIB is being handled in your district.

**Manage Your Route To School Safely**

**School Bus Drivers:**  
As the driver, you have the premiere safety seat on the bus. It is your job to ensure the safety of your young riders. When planning the route - avoid railroad crossings whenever possible.

**When you do cross the tracks, follow this Safety Route Reminder:**

- 1 Advance Warning**  
This sign tells you to slow down - tracks ahead.
- 2 Check Traffic Behind**  
Engage bus' parking lights, pull out of lane, if necessary.
- 3 Prepare Bus**  
Quiet students before stopping, turn off radio and fan.
- 4 Stop Bus**  
Stop at least 15 ft from crossing, further back if necessary.
- 5 Look & Listen**  
For train in both directions. Open door, window to listen. **Doubletake** before crossing.
- 6 GO!**  
If no trains are in sight - move out!

**OPERATION LIFESAVER**  
www.oli.org  
This message is brought to you by Operation Lifesaver, Inc. For more information on keeping your children safe while riding aboard the bus, visit our website.

Go to the Operation Lifesaver website at: <http://oli.org/training/school-bus-drivers/> to download this poster. There is also a training quiz for school bus drivers available at this site.

## Safety at Railroad Crossings

Operation Lifesaver is a non-profit group dedicated to reducing injuries and fatalities at highway-rail crossings. Following are some of their safety tips for school transportation.

- Plan routes that provide maximum sight allowance at highway-rail grade crossings.
- When approaching a railroad crossing, bus drivers should slow down, test the brakes and activate the four-way hazard lights about 200 feet before the crossing.
- Make sure your intentions to stop are clear. Use a pull-out lane if one is available or use flashers, if necessary.
- Stop where you have the best view of the tracks. Check for traffic congestion, a signal, or a stop sign beyond the tracks. Before crossing the tracks, **be certain there is sufficient area beyond the tracks** to hold the entire bus, plus 15 feet.
- Even when active railroad signals indicate the tracks are clear, look and listen to confirm it is safe to proceed. Quiet students, turn off the radio and fan. Come to a complete stop, look and listen for trains in both directions. Open the door and the driver's window to provide a good view down the tracks.
- If the bus stalls or is trapped on tracks, evacuate immediately. Get everyone off the bus, **move far away from the tracks**, but move in the direction from which the train is coming. This procedure will keep the evacuating students away from the point of impact between the train and the school bus.

## Trading on Nasdaq

Student Transportation, Inc., the third largest contractor in North America, entered the U.S. stock market on September 6<sup>th</sup>. The school bus contractor has been listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange since December 2004, where it paid dividends for 79 consecutive months.

The company is projecting 12% growth in fiscal year 2012.

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NHTSA estimates the cost of installing the lap/shoulder seat belts could range from \$5,485 to \$7,345. Since funds for school transportation are limited, the agency's concern is a reduction in school bus fleets and consequently bus ridership. Their analysis shows that a Federal mandate for seat belts on large school buses could result in 10-19 more students being killed a year while traveling to and from school by means other than school buses.

NHTSA also estimates installation of the seat belts could save about two lives per year, and would prevent 1,900 crash injuries, of which 97 % would likely result in only cuts and bruises. This estimate assumes that students always wear their seatbelts and wear them properly.

The agency believes the decision to install seat belts on buses should be left to state and local jurisdictions which can analyze the needs, benefits, and financial impact on their own operations.

In 2008, NHTSA decided to require lap/shoulder belts in all newly purchased small buses, choosing to only publish engineering standards for the voluntary installation of the seat belts in large school buses.

### **Change in Service Requirements**

School districts will no longer be required to provide transportation services to students who live remote if the student's parent or guardian signs a written statement that the student waives transportation services for the school year.

### **Training Idea for Young Riders**

Available online: the MVC's new [School Bus Safety Activity and Coloring Book](http://www.nj.gov/mvc/busactivitybook.pdf). The book is designed to teach young students what they need to know about how to act safely on the school bus. Even the occasional rider on field trips can benefit from this book. Teachers in your district may like to use the book in conjunction with School Bus Safety Week, the third week of October.

<http://www.nj.gov/mvc/busactivitybook.pdf>

## **School Bus Driver Training**

Warren Hills school bus drivers took charge of their own driver training workshops, under the supervision of Cathy Kelly, Transportation Coordinator for Washington Township BOE. Each group of drivers chose a topic and put together a presentation which they shared with their colleagues.

The group that chose railroad crossings designed a display board with various types of railroad crossing signals. They explained the different types of signals and signage. One of the interesting points of this presentation was the many railroad signages that were displayed that are not seen in New Jersey.

The drivers that chose accident procedures as their topic used role playing to simulate an accident scene. They set chairs up as an imaginary school bus and played the parts of the driver and passengers. A presentation of the correct way to handle an accident followed a presentation of the wrong way to handle the situation.

Ms. Kelly said the drivers did an excellent job with their presentations, and had fun while learning from their co-workers.

**The STS EXPRESS would love to share training ideas that worked for other districts with its readers. Contact the editor at [info@njsts.org](mailto:info@njsts.org) if you can contribute details on a successful training session you planned for your drivers.**

**STS EXPRESS is the Newsletter of School Transportation Supervisors of New Jersey**

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