



Date: May 23, 2018
To: School Bus Industry and General Media
From: National School Transportation Association
Re: School Bus Safety and May 22, 2018 National Transportation Safety Board Recommendations

For over 50 years, the National School Transportation Association (NSTA) is the leading resource for school bus transportation solutions and the voice for private contractors. School bus safety is the top priority for NSTA and the school transportation industry. Every day, more than 25 million students are transported to and from school on 480,000 yellow school buses.¹ The NSTA and all school bus professionals are committed to keeping our nation's children safe and have achieved an unsurpassed safety record. As noted by the U.S. Department of Transportation, "[s]tudents are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a school bus instead of traveling by car."² Moreover, school buses are uniquely designed "to be safer than passenger vehicles in preventing crashes and injuries."³ The fact is:

School buses are the safest vehicles on the road to transport children, even safer than a child riding in a car with their parents.⁴

While the loss of any life on a school bus or in any other vehicle is one too many, less than one percent of all traffic fatalities nationwide occur on a school bus.⁵ NSTA also recognizes that school bus safety education is an integral component of keeping children safe on school buses.

Currently, there is no federal requirement for seat belts in large school buses. But, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the leading agency responsible for keeping people safe on America's roadways, has provided guidance on the issue. For over 20 years, the NHTSA has declined several times through regulatory actions to federally mandate lap shoulder belts on large school buses⁶ and the NSTA agrees that such decisions are best evaluated at the state and local level where initiatives can be matched with resources. In 2011, NHTSA determined that requiring safety belts in school buses would not result in improved safety. NHTSA also stated that a federal seat belt mandate might increase fatalities by forcing more children into less safe modes of getting to and from school. Further, a Louisiana Department of Education Study found that, "passenger compartment seating design provides a safety alternative to seat belts" and "school buses without seat belts protect occupants in a way that no other passenger vehicle is capable of protecting their passengers."⁷

On May 22, 2018, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) announced recommendations arising from its investigation of two school bus accidents that occurred in 2016, one in Tennessee and one in Maryland. NTSB's recommendations were numerous and varied and were directed to a wide range of federal, state, and local government agencies as well as some business entities and trade associations. The NSTA will carefully review all of the recommendations announced by the NTSB, along with existing guidance from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and other qualified safety information resources, in order to provide its members with information and guidance. The National School Transportation Association is committed to pupil safety on school buses and appreciates all recommendations that can be shown to help provide safe student transportation.

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¹ Report to the House and Senate Committees on Education of the Louisiana Legislature, "Response to Senate Resolution 122 of the 2016 Regular Session," from the Louisiana Department of Education, Data Analysis section, p. 2, <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/nsta/43161/SR-122-Final-Draft-R-1-5-2017-Transportation-Report.pdf>; NHTSA, 49 CFR Part 571, Final Rule, Docket No. NHTSA-2008-0163, p. 17, https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/fmvss/SchoolBusBeltsFinal_0.pdf

² U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "School Bus Safety," <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety>; *see also*, American School Bus Council, "fact: The School bus is the Safest Way to Travel to and from School," <http://schoolbusfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Safety-Benefits.pdf>

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "School Bus Safety," <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety>; *see also*, American School Bus Council, "fact: The School Bus is Designed to be Safer than other Vehicles," <http://schoolbusfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Safety-Attributes.pdf>

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "School Bus Safety," <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety>; U.S. Department of Transportation, "Keep Children safe on the Way Back to School," <https://www.transportation.gov/connections/keep-children-safe-way-back-school>; American School Bus Council, "Keeping Children Safe in and around the School Bus," <http://schoolbusfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/KeepingChildrenSafe.pdf>

⁵ *See* U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "School Bus Safety," <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety>; *see also*, American School Bus Council, "fact: The School bus is the Safest Way to Travel to and from School," <http://schoolbusfacts.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Safety-Benefits.pdf>

⁶ *See*, e.g., NHTSA, 49 CFR Part 571, Final Rule, Docket No. NHTSA-2008-0163, p. 17, https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/fmvss/SchoolBusBeltsFinal_0.pdf

⁷ Report to the House and Senate Committees on Education of the Louisiana Legislature, "Response to Senate Resolution 122 of the 2016 Regular Session," from the Louisiana Department of Education, Occupant Restraints section, p. 5., <https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/nsta/43161/SR-122-Final-Draft-R-1-5-2017-Transportation-Report.pdf>