



June 19, 2019

**STATEMENT by the NATIONAL SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION (NSTA)
in response to the findings of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)
regarding the December 12, 2017 School Bus Run-Off-Road Crash and Fire, Oakland, Iowa**

On June 18, 2019, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) announced its findings regarding the December 12, 2017, School Bus Run-Off-Road Crash and Fire in Oakland, Iowa. In that incident a student and school bus driver from the Riverside Community School District in the state of Iowa perished in a one-vehicle bus accident and subsequent fire. The membership of NSTA joins with the community of Oakland, Iowa in mourning this tragic loss of life and shares in supporting the need to learn from tragic incidents to assure safe student transportation.

School bus safety is a paramount concern for NSTA, as well as the entire school transportation industry. For over 50 years, the National School Transportation Association (NSTA) has been the leading resource for school bus transportation solutions and the voice for private school bus contractors. Each day, more than 25 million students nationwide are transported to and from school on 480,000 yellow school buses¹ and the industry has achieved an unsurpassed safety record. In fact, according to U.S. Department of Transportation statistics, students are 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a school bus instead of traveling by car.²

The December 2017 incident in Iowa occurred when a school bus that had backed into a ditch caught fire while trying to return to the road. Unfortunately, the driver and a student were not able to escape before the school bus was consumed by smoke and fire. NSTA notes that some of the data appearing in the NTSB's report regarding the frequency of school bus passenger injuries caused by fire included motor vehicle passengers, and notes that the actual frequency of injuries caused by fire to school bus passengers appears to be lower than indicated in NTSB's report. NSTA supports careful and thorough research that can help the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the regulatory agency responsible for highway and vehicle safety, propose informed and effective regulations that can be proven to enhance the already stellar safety record of school bus transportation. The fact remains school buses are the safest vehicles on the road to transport children, even safer than a child riding in a car with their parents.³ Less than one percent of all traffic fatalities nationwide occur on a school bus.⁴

NSTA supports efforts to assure that school bus drivers are fully trained in school bus operations and emergency procedures. NSTA supports periodic certification of driver physical fitness and periodic evacuation training for drivers and students. NSTA cautions that initiatives that include retrofitting existing vehicles may not be consistent with original vehicle design, integrity, and warranty standards. NSTA also recommends that initiatives should be fully funded or should be made at the state and local level where school budgets are resolved. This will help assure that well meaning initiatives do not have the unintended effect of reducing the availability of yellow buses, thereby forcing more children into less safe modes of transportation for their trips to and from school. NSTA continues to advocate for school bus safety and to monitor regulations and recommendations from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), or any similar agency tasked with regulatory authority over vehicle safety and occupant protection in motor vehicles.

###

National School Transportation Association Contact Information

Phone: 703-684-3200 | E-mail: info@yellowbuses.org | Website: www.yellowbuses.org

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>; 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>

⁴ *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>