



# NYAPT

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **SCHOOL BUS SAFETY ASSOCIATION ISSUES BUDGET NEEDS**

The New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) today issued its priorities for the 2016-2017 state budget, calling for restoration of funds taken from school districts under the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) and for some \$2.2 billion in school aid increases to support local efforts to provide a ‘sound basic education for our students.’

In the arena of school bus safety and school transportation support, the Association called for the following priorities which it will pursue in the coming weeks as the Governor and the Legislature negotiate the state’s budget:

- Continue and fully fund Transportation Aid as an Expense Based Aid
- Authorize Transportation Aid for the costs of transporting Universal Pre-Kindergarten students
- Increase funding for, and target the uses of, the School Bus Driver Training Fund to specific training areas

“We believe that it is vital to the safety and efficiency of school transportation services to our children that the Governor and the Legislature invest in these areas and we look forward to engaging with our state’s leadership in these areas. From Pre-K transportation to vital training needs, we need the state’s leadership to attend to school bus safety needs,” noted NYAPT Executive Director, Peter Mannella.

NYAPT President, David Adam, stated that “it’s important to school districts including my own here in Marcus Whitman CSD, that the state continue and strengthen its support for education and that included in that support are ample funds to ensure the safety of our 2.3 million children who ride the yellow school bus to school every day.”

Attached is a brief discussion of each priority area.



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## STATE BUDGET NEEDS: DISCUSSION

The New York Association for Pupil Transportation believes that sufficient funding is needed for critical functions and services in the school transportation arena. We offer the following specific areas of need and will advocate in support of these needs and responses in our communications about the State Budget in the coming months:

- ❖ *Continue Transportation Aid as an Expense-Based Aid*  
NYAPT urges that the State continue the current 'expense based' approach to school transportation aid and to ensure full funding of those expenses to school districts. School districts have taken significant steps to adjust their operations to become even more efficient than ever and the expense-based approach is working as it was intended.
- ❖ *Authorize Transportation Aid for the Costs of Transporting Universal Pre-Kindergarten Students*  
NYAPT is recommending inclusion of funds in the State budget related to the delivery of transportation services for students enrolled in Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs. Several years ago, the State enacted a law that allows school districts to provide such transportation, but placed the burden for paying for that transportation entirely on the school districts. This needs to be corrected.

In addition to the provision of funding, we would urge the State engage in a candid and thorough discussion about the issues related to safely and efficiently transporting children to the Pre-K programs. Beyond questions of funding, it is important that guidelines be formulated to ensure the safety of these younger students and to ensure the capacity of our school districts and transportation providers to transport them safely and within budget realities.

- ❖ *Increase Funding to a Level of \$500,000 for and Target Uses of the School Bus Driver Training Fund*  
NYAPT has since 1997 supported the appropriation of funds in the SED budget for support of the Comprehensive School Bus Driver Training program. This fund has been supported at a level of \$400,000 over these past 17 years. We are recommending an increase of \$100,000 to that training fund which represents the first increase since its inception in 1997. We also believe it is important that the Education Department take specific steps to advance sound training programs through those funds.

Accordingly, we are recommending that the additional funds focus on the following training needs areas:

- 1) training related to transporting students enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten programs
- 2) bullying-related training consistent with DASA requirements and practices
- 3) training in security measures to help drivers protect their bus, riders and themselves from violent incidents, and
- 4) training related to special education classifications enumerated in the federal IDEA, as required under "PJ's Law"