



**NEW YORK ASSOCIATION
FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**

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NYAPT

Our future is riding with us!

2021 School Transportation State Budget Priorities

NYAPT will advocate for the following school transportation budget priorities and work with the Governor, the State Legislature, and to the Board of Regents to ensure they are given every consideration for the 2021 State Budget:

- **Continue to provide sufficient funding for school transportation services.**
 - NYAPT urges that the State continue the current 'expense-based' aid model and aid levels for school transportation. Under this funding approach, the State reimburses districts for the costs of transportation at levels between 6.5% and 90% of approved costs. In recent years, school districts have taken significant steps to become more efficient and the expense-based approach is working as it was intended. We urge the continuation of 'expense-based' aid for school district transportation as it recognizes the volatility of transportation costs to districts and local taxpayers.
- **Provide funding in support of transportation services for Universal Pre-Kindergarten students.**
 - NYAPT recommends that funds be appropriated in the State budget to support the delivery of transportation services for students enrolled in Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs. It has been several years since the State enacted Chapter 244 of the Laws of 2012 that allows school districts to provide "Pre-K" transportation, but the burden is on local school districts to pay the full cost for transportation services. It is time to correct this and provide transportation aid to school districts to support transportation services that provide access to this valuable program for students.
- **Allow expenditures for school bus monitors to be eligible for transportation aid reimbursement**
 - NYAPT recommends the State allow transportation aid reimbursement for costs related to employing school bus monitors (aides, matrons) on school buses. This need has increased due to COVID-19 related student management requirements such as social distancing and ridership attendance along with managing student behavioral and bullying issues on school buses. In addition, the State has advanced early childhood education and pre-kindergarten programs across the

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State resulting in an increased need for additional adult supervision aboard the school bus. Surveys show that student management is one of the reasons that people do not choose the school bus driving profession. State assistance in the cost of providing bus monitors will help ease the bus driver shortage issue.

- **Maintain funding to the State Education Department for the School Bus Driver Training program at the current level of \$400,000**
 - This funding provides for annual mandated safety training for the State's more than 50,000 school bus drivers, attendants and monitors. The need for safety training in the transportation industry has never been greater given the challenges of the job to include student management, traffic challenges and appropriate service for students with special needs. NYAPT strongly recommends continuation of this funding to support safety training for our school bus drivers, attendants and monitors.

- **New York State Tax Credit to address school bus driver shortage**
 - The school bus driver shortage is reaching critical levels in our state. The initial cost of becoming a licensed school bus driver in New York State is significant. NYAPT is proposing the adoption of a NYS Tax Credit for prospective school bus drivers who are hired by a school district or private contractor operation after adoption of this incentive. A school bus driver would become eligible for this tax credit upon completion of a full year of service as evidenced by date of hire on the New York State Department of Motor Vehicle 19-A roster. NYAPT proposes a first-year credit of \$500, and \$250 for each subsequent year the school bus driver is gainfully employed with a school district or contractor as a certified school bus driver. This incentive is meant to help off-set the significant expenses incurred by a prospective bus driver candidate to become certified as a school bus driver.

- **Electrification of state school bus fleet**
 - New York State has embarked on an aggressive goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our state. The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act enacted in 2019 establishes goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050 from 1990 levels. School bus fleets are targeted for conversion to electric power to assist in achieving those goals. Electric powered school buses are three times the cost of school buses powered by diesel or gas. Funding is requested to offset the differential cost of an electric powered bus versus the cost of a diesel or gas-powered bus to make it possible for school districts to enter into the electric powered school bus market.

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