



**NEW YORK ASSOCIATION
FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**

1764 Route 9 / P.O. Box 356 / Clifton Park, NY 12065 / 518.463.4937 / www.NYAPT.org

NYAPT

Our future is riding with us!

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

2023 State Budget and Legislative Priorities

NYAPT supports the following legislative and budget priorities that enhance the safety of our student passengers while balancing efficiency of operations and will collaborate with the Governor, the State Legislature, and to the Board of Regents to ensure they are given every consideration.

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2023 School Transportation Legislative Priorities

School Transportation Safety

Criminal Trespass & Security on a School Bus

- NYAPT supports legislation that establishes a crime of criminal trespass in the third degree to address unauthorized boarders of school buses to protect bus drivers, students and district property.

Passing Stopped School Bus Legislation

- NYAPT supports an increase in fines specified in NYS V&T Law section 1174 for the repeated offense of passing a stopped school bus.
- NYAPT will support legislation to establish a crime of vehicular homicide for instances where a motorist causes the death of a child while in the act of passing a stopped school bus.

Lap/Shoulder Belts on School Buses

- NYAPT supports the installation of three-point lap shoulder belts on school buses under reasonable implementation conditions and timelines.

Article 19-A Disqualification

- NYAPT supports ongoing review of new crime legislation in order to provide for the continuous updating of crimes that would disqualify a school bus driver under Article 19-A.

School Transportation Mandate Relief

School buses to follow posted speed limits

- NYAPT supports regulation change that permits school buses to follow posted speed limits under New York State Vehicle and Traffic law. State Education Department regulation 156.3 (f) (6) limits the speed of a school bus to fifty-five miles per hour. This low-speed requirement causes a safety hazard on highways with higher posted speed limits.

Strobe Lights on School Buses

- NYAPT supports the removal of operational restrictions from the Regulations of the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles regulation, 15CRR-NY 56.12 regarding strobe lights on school buses. Strobe lights are effective in improving the

visibility of school buses on the highway. Use of strobe lights should be allowable whenever environmental conditions limit visibility of the bus or when the bus is travelling slow in traffic as to cause a hazard.

Shared Services

- NYAPT supports legislation that removes financial penalties for “shared services” among school districts to promote transportation efficiencies. Revenue from shared services is a deduct from state transportation aid owed to a school district. NYAPT recommends that when a school district participates in a shared service, the district should retain a percentage of the revenue received without a state aid penalty to encourage shared service agreements.

Civil Service Portability

- NYAPT supports a seamless portability process for the transfer of Civil Service titles across state civil service jurisdictions for Transportation Supervisor or Director of Transportation titles.

Ignition Interlocks

- NYAPT will oppose legislation related to the mandatory use of ignition interlock systems on school buses.

2023 School Transportation State Budget Priorities

Transportation Aid

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 actual 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 the ‘expense-based’ aid formula for school district transportation services which recognizes the volatility of transportation costs to school 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. Currently, the cost of pre-kindergarten transportation is placed entirely on the local school district.

Transportation Aid During School Shutdowns.

- NYAPT supports transportation aid to be paid for school bus operational expenses that are incurred during Executive ordered school shutdowns or school closures caused by natural disasters. Certain school transportation operations must continue during extended school closures to guarantee continuity of service when schools reopen for in person learning. Those include maintenance of buses, insurance and rent payments, bus driver recruitment and training, and the retainment of transportation staff to name a few.

Transportation Equipment Aid – Promote Healthy School Bus Environment

- There are new and emerging technologies that are available for installation on school buses to protect children from transmission of the COVID-19 virus and other pathogens. All school districts should have access to these technologies to protect students regardless of district wealth. NYAPT recommends state transportation aid be paid on expenses for proven technologies that will promote a healthy environment within the school bus.

Funding assistance for Electric Bus Purchases

- Current law allows for state transportation aid to be paid for purchase of an electric school bus over 12 years. This lengthy reimbursement term creates a deterrent to transitioning to electric school buses. NYAPT recommends the state pays state aid the following year of purchase to encourage school districts to transition to zero emission school buses.
- NYAPT recommends that the state fully fund the incremental cost increase for the purchase of electric school buses versus diesel/gas buses to accelerate the transition to zero emission school buses in our State.

School Bus Driver Recruitment and Retainment Incentives

Increase funding to the level of \$600,000 to support the School Bus Driver Training program at the State Education Department.

- The State Education Department School Bus Driver Instructor program is currently funded at \$400,000 to provide annual mandated training for the 50,000+ school bus drivers in our State. This funding has not increased since the early 1990’s. There are existing training materials that need updating as well as new training materials that

need development to meet the needs of the ever-changing environment our school bus drivers operate in. NYAPT strongly recommends an increase in this funding to equip our bus drivers with the skill set necessary to succeed and to maintain the exceptional safety record of the school transportation industry in our State.

New York State Tax Credit to address school bus driver shortage.

- The school bus driver shortage continues to be a grave concern for school districts across the state. The cost of becoming a licensed school bus driver in New York State is significant. To address the school bus driver shortage problem, NYAPT proposes the adoption of a NYS Tax Credit for school bus drivers hired by a school district or private contractor in the amount of \$2500 for the first year of employment and a \$500 credit annually thereafter for all school bus drivers employed by a school district or contractor. This incentive will off-set the initial qualification and training expenses incurred by a newly hired school bus driver and help to retain those currently in the profession.

Extend beyond June of 2023, the earnings cap waiver for retired state, city, police and fire retirees who return to public service as a school bus driver.

- There are many retired state employees in our State who drive school buses as a second career and are receiving state retirement benefits from previous public employment. The retiree earnings cap waiver passed last legislative session and due to expire in June of 2023 has helped school districts keep bus drivers working as school bus drivers. Prior to passage of that legislation, retirees in many cases were forced to pause their driving career when they reach the earnings cap of \$35,000. NYAPT proposes to waive the cap for an additional 60 months to address the school bus driver shortage in our state.

Allow expenditures for school bus monitors to be eligible for transportation aid reimbursement.

- NYAPT proposes that the State provide transportation aid reimbursement for costs related to employing school bus monitors (aides, matrons) on school buses as deemed necessary by the local school district. School bus operators recognize the need for additional adult assistance on school buses due to increased student management requirements such as ridership attendance, managing student behavior and providing overall support for the school bus driver. The State has advanced early childhood education and expanded pre-kindergarten programs causing an increased need for additional adult supervision aboard the school bus. Surveys of bus drivers tell us that the difficulties in student management on a school bus is one of the reasons that people do not choose the school bus driving profession. State assistance in the cost of providing bus monitors for school bus operators who opt in to use bus monitors will

help ease the bus driver shortage issue. This proposal is not intended as a requirement for mandatory use of monitors on all school buses statewide.

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