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**NEW YORK ASSOCIATION  
FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**

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1764 Route 9 / P.O. Box 356 / Clifton Park, NY 12065 / 518.463.4937 / [www.NYAPT.org](http://www.NYAPT.org)

**NYAPT**

*Our future is riding with us!*

# NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

## 2024 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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1764 Route 9, PO Box 356  
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## ***2024 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 incidences of unauthorized boarders on school buses as well as authorization to place signage on the outside of the school bus to discourage unauthorized boarders to protect bus drivers, students, and district property.

#### **Passing Stopped School Bus Legislation**

- NYAPT supports an increase in fines and/or points specified in NYS V&T Law section 1174 for the repeated offense of passing a stopped school bus.
- NYAPT will support legislation charging a motorist with vehicular manslaughter when that person 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 to provide for the continuous updating of disqualifying crimes designated under Article 19-A of V&T Law.

#### **Extension of V&T 1174A**

- NYAPT supports permanent renewal of V&T Law 1174 A. V&T law 1174A provides for owner liability for failure of a motor vehicle operator to stop for school bus displaying a red visual signal or stop arm. Known as the stop arm camera law, 1174A is set to expire on December 1, 2024. The deployment of stop arm cameras has proven successful in reducing illegal passings of stopped school buses in our state.

### **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. The use of strobe lights should be allowable whenever environmental conditions limit the visibility of the bus or when the bus is travelling slow in traffic so as to cause a hazard.

### **Shared Services**

- NYAPT supports legislation that removes financial penalties for “shared services” among school districts that promote transportation efficiencies. NYAPT recommends that when a school district participates in a shared service with another district, the lead district should retain a percentage of the revenue received to incentivize shared programs.
- NYAPT supports the formation of regional transportation collaboratives where practical to share in the cost of the electric bus transition.

### **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 opposes legislation related to the mandatory use of ignition interlock systems on school buses.

## ***2024 School Transportation State Budget Priorities***

### **Transportation Aid**

**Support expense-based aid model to provide safe and reliable school transportation services to communities.**

- NYAPT supports the continuation of 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 authorizes school districts to provide "Pre-K" transportation. The yellow bus provides access to these programs and should be supported at the same levels as transportation services for children in grades K-12.

**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 operational functions 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 and staff regardless of district wealth. NYAPT recommends state transportation aid be paid on expenses for proven technologies that will promote a healthy environment on the school bus.

**Funding assistance for Electric Bus Purchases**

- NYAPT recommends sufficient State funding be provided to local school districts to fund the incremental cost increases associated with the purchase of zero emission buses compared to fossil fueled buses to lessen the financial impact to local school districts.

## **School Bus Driver Recruitment and Retainment Incentives**

### **Provide sufficient funding 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 in need of updating as well as new training materials that need development to address 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 an ongoing challenge 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 2024, 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 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 2024 has helped school districts retain school bus drivers. NYAPT requests that the State Legislature waive the retiree cap for an additional 60 months or to raise the cap earnings limit to \$50,000 annually.

### **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 for grades UPK-6. 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 covering 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.

David Christopher  
Executive Director  
New York Association for Pupil Transportation  
518-463-4937  
[dave@nyapt.org](mailto:dave@nyapt.org)

**Contacts**

Andre Claridge  
Government Affairs  
PC Public Affairs  
518-424-2575  
[andre@pcpublicaffairs.com](mailto:andre@pcpublicaffairs.com)