



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION UPDATE



a service of the Ohio School Boards Association

Issue 2014-4

September 5, 2014

This message contains information on the following:

- 1) Master of Transportation Administrator (MTA) program for 2014-15
- 2) Emergency evacuation drills
- 3) FMCSA considering changes in entry level driver training regulations
- 4) Preparing for National School Bus Safety Week
- 5) Transportation Consultant Vacancy at OSBA

1) Master of Transportation Administrator (MTA) program for 2014-15

Last year was the inaugural year for the Master of Transportation Administrator training program. This professional development program is designed for any school administrator that has responsibility for school transportation, and wants to participate in specific training and be recognized for doing so.

The total curriculum spans three years – focusing on a different area of transportation responsibility each year. Last year we focused on compliance and safety, this year we will focus on operations, and next year we will focus on finance and policy issues. A full MTA program requires participation in all three years of the program, but you may start at any time – the focus years will repeat annually.

If you are interested in participating, please follow this link to more detailed information about the program, the class agendas and the registration form. <http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/transportation-training-programs> Registration for this program is one year at a time. Classes will fill up quickly, so if you are interested you may wish to act quickly!

2) Emergency evacuation drills

Another of the requirements for all school transportation departments are annual emergency evacuation drills (Ohio Administrative Code 3301-83-15). While the administrative code does not specify when these drills need to be done, there is a strong argument to be made that the beginning of the school year is the most logical time. That prepares the drivers and the students in the event an emergency does occur some time during the school year.

In accordance with the code, the drills shall be organized and conducted for all students who ride school buses to and from school. Each of three emergency procedures must be conducted at least once: a) everyone exit through the front door, b) everyone exit through the back door, and c) split exit with some students exiting the front and some exiting the back.

There are some critical elements in these drills as follows: 1) all drills must be arranged and scheduled by an administrator, 2) the drills must be supervised by at least one staff person other than the driver, and 3) the drills shall be held on school property when possible as opposed to along the bus route.

The Ohio Preservice Bus Driver training manual is an excellent resource if you want to review more procedures and recommendations.

3) FMCSA considering changes in entry level driver training regulations

There is a delicate balance between federal governance and state control when we discuss Commercial Driver License (CDL) requirements. In the last e-alert we discussed the conflict with sleep disorders. In this issue we discuss a consideration by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to consider more formal training requirements for new CDL drivers. This includes our school bus drivers.

First-- a little history: In 2004 the FMCSA implemented a driver training rule for CDL operators that the US Court of Appeals remanded back to the agency for reconsideration. FMCSA then published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) in 2007 seeking public comment on enhanced training requirements. These new requirements would have required all applicants for new or upgraded CDLs to successfully complete specified minimum classroom and behind the wheel training from an accredited institution or program.

While this sounds like a high-level summary of our successful Ohio Preservice Driver Training Program, the wrinkle is that FMCSA proposed to restrict the training agencies that they would accredit. ODE and the Ohio Preservice Driver Training Program would not have qualified under their rules. The net result is that Ohio's schools would have to send their drivers through a commercial driver training school in addition to the preservice program – at a significant cost in both time and money. Many other states faced the same challenges. As a result the National State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) as well as other national groups filed objections with FMCSA regarding their proposed rule. The gist of the objection was that many states, just like Ohio, already provided excellent school bus driver training. FMCSA's program would have duplicated efforts, resulted in significant costs, and would not have improved safety.

Following the public comment period, FMCSA withdrew their proposed rulemaking.

So now--back to the present. FMCSA is now exploring the feasibility of conducting a negotiated rulemaking on this same subject. Negotiated rulemaking (called "Reg Neg" by the feds) is a formal process available to FMCSA where the agency invites representatives of interested parties likely to be affected by a regulation to work with each other and the agency on a negotiating committee to develop a consensus draft of a proposed rule. FMCSA can then act to publish that proposed rule, disregard the report and publish their own proposed rule, or decide to take no action.

Our office will continue to monitor this process closely, and also will submit an application to serve as an interested party on behalf of Ohio's public schools.

4) National School Bus Safety Week is next month. Are you ready?

National School Bus Safety Week is always celebrated the third week of October. This is a great opportunity to reach out to your community and let them know about the benefits of effective school transportation service. Many parents have not been on a bus for years and do not know about the advances in design and construction. They also may not know the safety rules and procedures that we teach the children that ride our buses. This is a great opportunity to bridge the gap between them and us. It is not too soon to begin thinking about what you might like to do special this week.

5) Transportation Consultant vacancy at OSBA

If you have an interest in working as a transportation consultant with us at OSBA, please check out the current vacancy announcement posted on our website: <http://www.ohioschoolboards.org/OSBA-openings> This is a very rewarding way of applying your transportation expertise to help multiple school districts and the students they serve. The position is a full-time career path and will be based in our Columbus office.

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