



# SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION UPDATE



*a service of the Ohio School Boards Association*

Issue 15-7

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This issue contains information on the following:

- 1) Virtual Transportation Supervisor – a new OSBA support service
- 2) Supplemental transportation payments
- 3) Details on transportation funding as it is calculated by ODE
- 4) New technology is on the horizon
- 5) Seat belts in school buses -- in the news again

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## **1) Virtual Transportation Supervisor**

OSBA is pleased to announce that we are introducing a new transportation support service for our districts, beginning in 2016. This subscription service is intended to expand access to transportation expertise, guidance and training events. By subscribing to this for a year, at the cost of \$250, a district is entitled to participate in training sessions at and receive transportation services included in the program at no additional cost.

Unique services offered include:

- Regional in-service meetings around the state that include hot topics, roundtable discussion and review of issues that you bring to the table. Attendance is open to any staff from the district.
- cursory review of the T-1 and T-2 reports prior to your submittal to the state. In-depth reviews are also available through consulting contracts.
- First-of-the-month quarterback conference call/webinars. These conferences will be held at the beginning of each month, and will review tasks to be completed that month, issues affecting all districts, and then followed by question-and-answer sessions and discussion among participants on transportation issues. (These sessions alone will qualify as administrative in-service, meeting the administrative code requirements for annual training)
- Cost analysis calculators, efficiency studies, funding forecasting tools and other Web-based tools to assist you with the fiscal elements in pupil transportation. These calculators will help you to estimate your funding flow for transportation, determine your cost analysis for the current year, and also assess the impact on funding by using different levels of transportation services in your district.
- Access to OSBA's advanced transportation services library. (This library is currently only available to enrollees in the MTA program, and serves as a single go-to location for all the documents needed to manage pupil transportation in Ohio)
- This subscription service also ensures that all members of your district management team have access to the transportation e-alert service.

To sign up for this subscription, please ask your treasurer to select the Virtual Transportation Supervisor option on the 2016 OSBA membership invoice.

## **2) Supplemental transportation payments**

In the current state budget for school transportation, the legislature adopted a supplemental payment flow for low density districts. The total subsidy in this payment flow totals 32.8 million for FY2016. The

payments to districts for this amount were initiated by ODE with the October #2 payment, and will be spread out over the remaining payments in this fiscal year.

Districts with a density below 35 students per mile qualify for this supplement, which is not subject to funding caps or guarantees.

To determine the line-by-line breakdown of transportation funding that you are currently receiving from ODE, go to the following link on ODE's web site:

[http://webapp2.ode.state.oh.us/school\\_finance/data/2016/foundation/FY2016-SFPR-REPORT.asp](http://webapp2.ode.state.oh.us/school_finance/data/2016/foundation/FY2016-SFPR-REPORT.asp)

### **3) Details on transportation funding as it is calculated by ODE**

School funding from ODE is distributed in bi-monthly payments through their school finance payment system. For the transportation payments, there are three separate elements to the payments, including special education transportation, regular education transportation, and supplemental payments. Each of these amounts is calculated based upon formulas in law.

Regular education transportation is calculated based upon current year ridership and miles, as reported on the T-1 report. Since this data is not available to ODE when payments start in July, the department pays each district based upon a continuation of last year's calculated amount. Once the T-2 reports are tabulated from the previous year to determine average cost, and the current year ridership from the T-1 reports is tabulated, the department recalculates each district's transportation subsidy. The amount of payment districts receive is then adjusted from last year's amount to the current year. Typically this happens in January of the current school year. Payments for regular education transportation are subject to payment guarantees and the gain cap, so the actual amount received can be influenced by these factors.

Special education transportation funding is calculated from the T-2 reports that each district files, and then paid to the district in the following school year. In essence, this is a reimbursement style of funding, and is one year in arrears. When payments begin in July, as with regular education transportation, the department does not yet have the data from the T-2's tabulated. Until that is done, districts will continue to receive the same amount as they received in the last school year (based upon two-year old data). Once the T-2's are reviewed and new data calculated, districts receive an adjusted amount for special education transportation – albeit based upon the last completed school year. In previous years, the department has made this adjustment in the payment flow sometime after January of the current school year. Special education transportation funding is not subject to payment guarantees or the gain cap.

Supplemental transportation payments were reviewed in an earlier section of this message (see item 2 above).

### **4) New technology is on the horizon**

For many years our familiar yellow school buses have been just that – a very familiar sight that leaves little to the imagination. More than one parent has observed that school buses continue to look the same, and then they assume that everything under the hood is like it was 50 years ago.

While those in the profession know otherwise, it is also true that technology does not always come quickly to the school bus market. Fortunately, that is changing. Not only do we have access to new engine technologies that use different fuels, but other features of our yellow school buses are benefitting from technological advances. Now is a great time to stay current with journal articles, news from our manufacturers and vendors, and product unveilings that happen at conferences.

One long-awaited tool that is coming into the market place is the tablet based/gps linked routing system. Tablets are now approved for mounting in Ohio school buses, and vendors are working to roll-out routing applications that can be of great assistance to our bus drivers. Perhaps the day of holding a paper route sheet in one hand and driving with the other will soon be left behind.

The manufacturers are now unveiling 'connected-school buses' that can communicate with the bus garage, mobile wi-fi technology that our students can use, new exterior camera technology to increase a driver's view around the bus, and other safety enhancements to help move us forward.

Stay tuned as we at OSBA continue to work with the school bus manufacturers and other suppliers to bring you news as it becomes available. Look for information about an upcoming school bus technology conference later in this school year where we will help you to learn more and experience these innovations first-hand.

## **5) Seat belts in school buses -- in the news again**

One of the regular discussions in school bus transportation is the topic of seat belts – or more correctly, passenger restraint systems. This subject can be polarizing, with nearly all participants taking a strong position either for or against. What is difficult with this subject is to separate facts from assumptions, and to separate emotion from what will truly enhance passenger safety. At the same time, we have to be cognizant of what our customers (parents) believe is best for their children.

In the last major study of the need for passenger restraints on school buses, the National Highway and Traffic Administration (NHTSA) issued rules for the optional installation of restraints on full size buses, but stopped short of requiring them. Now, NHTSA's newly appointed administrator has expressed his belief that the lack of passenger restraints in school buses is an oversight. He has also acknowledged that there are no rules in place to change this, and the rule-making process would take time to complete.

So what does this mean for us? While various national organizations are lining up on different sides of the fence again, the cautious observer may choose to watch and see what develops. There is no new rule or mandate in place that requires every new school bus to have passenger restraints installed.

The current safety record of school buses is nothing short of amazing--arguably our students are not at more risk [today](#) than they were prior to the position taken by the new NHTSA administrator in October of this year. At the same time, there is no harm in considering what we can do to increase an already outstanding safety record, and to determine the costs associated with any options that we may consider.

In considering all of our options, it would also be appropriate to consider all aspects of school transportation – and to evaluate just where our students are at most risk. It may be that we realize they are more at risk outside the bus than inside of it, or perhaps when they do not have access to a school bus to ride--in which case we might be able to do more good by looking at other options.

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