



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION UPDATE



a service of the Ohio School Boards Association

On [Monday, November 21](#), 2016, five children were killed in a tragic school bus crash in Chattanooga, Tennessee. All of us share in the sorrow and grieving of the community that lost these children. This event reminds us how precious our children are, and how fragile human life can be.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, we can take solace in the knowledge that all aspects of the crash will be examined, including the mechanical condition and design standards of the school bus, the bus route, management practices in place, and the actions of the driver both leading up to and at the moment of the crash. The National Transportation Safety Board has already initiated its investigation and will certainly provide the thorough analysis and recommendations for improvements for safety that have become the trademark of that board.

We have also seen reports in the press, quotes from various public officials and editorials opining on missing safety features in school buses and the impact that a different vehicle design would have on student safety. Certainly every individual will have strong feelings about how we should collectively move forward after an event such as this. More deliberate thinkers will carefully evaluate the facts of this crash, wait for the NTSB report, and weigh that against all the other factors in play in school transportation.

Our staff and specialists at the Ohio School Boards Association are monitoring these developments very closely. There is much to be considered, and much to learn from this crash as well as others that have occurred. What we do know, without any question, is that school bus transportation continues to be the safest way for a child to go to school.

Each study that has been completed by government and leading safety agencies has drawn the same conclusion, supporting the claims made in the landmark report by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) of the National Academy of Science in 2002 entitled: The relative risks of school travel: A national perspective and guidance for local community risk assessment. In this study the TRB evaluated the safety of all students with respect to their mode of travel to school. The findings tell us that each year approximately 800 school-aged children are killed in motor vehicle crashes between home and school. Of these, only 2 percent are school bus related.

The big question is: how can we decrease school bus related fatalities – both those inside the bus and those around the bus? As an industry, we continue to work with engineers, vehicle design specialists, government agencies and school district managers to look for solutions. Before committing to any change, we have to ensure that it will benefit the most number of students without causing harm to others.

The bottom line is that we will continue to look for better ways to keep our children safe. When the direction is clear, and positive results of a specific change are proven, we will move that direction. Please be reassured that the staff and specialists at OSBA are very much “in-the-game” and will keep you informed of the next chapter.

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