



**Transportation Issues Study Committee
The 162nd Meeting
January 28, 2009**

Next Meeting: February 25, 2009 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

CC- 1 & 2, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Roseville, MN 55113

Present:

Keith Paulson, Anoka-Hennepin
Denny Coughlin, Minneapolis
Gary Botzek, Minnesota School Bus Operators Association (MSBOA)
Shelly Jonas, (MSBOA)
Lieutenant Ed Carroll, Department of Public Safety (DPS)
John Thomas, Chaska
Kelly Wosika, MDE Program Finance/Transportation
Randy Dukek, Rosemount
Jim Schmidt, Minnesota Association of Pupil Transportation (MAPT) Website Editor
Jan Vanderwall, Roseville
Brad Lundell, Minnesota Association of Pupil Transportation (MAPT) Lobbyist
Cindy McKay, Spring Lake Park
Derrick Agate, Eden Prairie

Summary: The summary of the December Transportation Issues meeting was approved with corrections.

Special Announcement: Jim Schmidt provided the address to the MAPT Website: <http://www.mnapt.org/home.htm>. He is open for comments and suggestions on the website.

Special Education Transportation Committee: Lori Jonason was not present.

The MDE pupil transportation training tapes are located at the Central Minnesota Education Research and Development Council (cmERDS Services) in St. Cloud. cmERDS Services said they will be closing down library services soon and will not be able to hold the tapes after they close the library. Kelly will work with cmERDS to bring the tapes back to MDE. It was suggested to contact Greg Liedl, Bemidji to have the VHS tapes converted to DVD format. MAPT would cover the cost of the conversion.

Minnesota Department of Education: The charter school choice survey form is available for the 2009-10 school year. It is the form that charter schools use to indicate their choice of either district provided or charter school provided transportation. The form is due March 2 (the first falls on a Sunday this year) to both MDE and the district in which the charter school is located.

School year 07-08 transportation data is now available, Kelly will work on compiling the data for statistical and comparison purposes.

Cindy McKay suggested the draft document of the Reference Guide to Transportation Student with Disabilities and Special Transportation for Selected Students in Minnesota be revisited. There are situations that should be included as examples with a final version made available on the Web.

Office of Student Transportation Safety: Lieutenant Eddy Carroll stated the report to the 2009 Legislature on the Office of Pupil Transportation Safety Student Transportation Safety is available. DPS made all deadlines on recommendations from the Office of the Legislative Auditor on the student transportation program audit.

DPS is working on the DPS Website for posting of vehicle inspections. The site is currently functioning as an intranet within DPS. Once it is ready, it will be available on the Internet for public purposes. The Website will provide results of inspections that have occurred since the first of the year along with important contact information. The program they are working with is easily updated and in the future information may be directly uploaded from inspection sheets.

There was a discussion that their needs to be an explanation of how the point system works and a standardization of the inspection procedures and criteria.

Denny Coughlin asked if the fleet number of the bus could be use to identify the vehicle. Ed replied that the school district employee will be able to enter the district's fleet information which will include fleet numbers, VIN and plates. The district will be able to sort on these fields.

Private cars will be included in the Type III vehicle listings. The vehicle will be tied to the district for whom the driver is driving or through the contractor with whom the district has contracted with.

Fox News, Channel 9 gave a good review on the presentation DPS provided on the topic of the Cottonwood crash at the MSBOA and MAPT Winter Conference.

Legislative: Gary Botzek and Brad Lundell provided information on current legislative initiatives. Senate File 33 and House File 116, Type III Driver Modifications is currently being reviewed by the Minnesota Senate Judiciary Committee. The controversy remains with the use of the term normal duties and how that is defined. The goal is to have a common understanding of interpretations on introduced bills.

Senate File 10, Shared Services Purchasing Programs for school districts and charter schools has been introduced. The main idea of this bill is to minimize duplicated services. Some of the identified services surrounding this legislation may already exist through regional services and cooperatives.

House File 2 presented by Representative Mindy Greiling focuses on school finance system modifications and creating a new funding framework.

House File 331 was introduced to mandate the use of seat belts in motor coach vehicles.

There was a discussion on a draft a bill that would require crossing arms on all busses by 2011. Some comments were that they would be useful on regular education buses; however, they are not used often enough on special education buses and tend to freeze up.

Miscellaneous: Derrick Agate provided information on the Eden Corporation and a Hybrid Hydraulics System that they are developing. The new technology is part of the overall drive system. Starts and stops would be done hydraulically and would save wear and tear on breaking systems. This type of system would need to be approved at the national level before DPS approval and inclusion in the bus purchasing specifications. Eden Corporation could possibly work with MAPT to establish benchmarks and positive developments in the school bus industry.

Denny Coughlin led a discussion on the topic of mandatory seat belts in school buses and the issues surrounding the proposed mandate. Denny referenced Cal LeMon's article "The People Have Spoken, Are We Listening?" The article is pro lap/shoulder belts for several reasons including that technology now allows the installation of lap/shoulder belts without losing seating capacity, lap belts (two points of restraints) are banned, lap/shoulder belts system, together with compartmentalization would provide optimum protection and lap/shoulder belts are supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

While Denny understands LeMon's perspective, he has reservations surrounding the proposed mandate. Denny has concerns regarding the pressures of the school districts and the school bus drivers on dealing with seat belts. He is concerned how an unfunded mandate will affect school districts especially with current economic conditions. There was a discussion concerning evacuation procedures and issues that surround it.

Denny pointed out that if there is no funding available, the district would have to absorb the more than 10% increase in purchase price of the bus. The trade for buying more expensive buses will be that fewer students will be transported. In turn, the students not provided transportation will be put in harms way by walking or driving themselves. The money could be better spent improving safety around the bus where most injuries and fatalities occur. Denny would be in favor of lap/shoulder belts if fully funded.

Jan Vanderwall disagreed and stated that, historically, increase in school bus purchase prices have been absorbed by the district and have not changed the ridership.

Derrick Agate felt that he would have a hard time arguing with a parent against the advancements in safety standards especially with the new developments in safety belt releases and non-limiting factor on seating capacity.

There was a discussion on the use of biofuels and the recent cold weather. Denny Coughlin stated that the Arctic Blend works better in lower temperatures. The sulfur content has changed in the new formula and they seem to work well during cold spells. Denny stated the real cause for freeze up may be the filtering system. Also, if moisture is present it can crystallize and build up and block fuel lines.

Randy Dukek stated he had cold weather bussing problems at his district but they were unrelated to the biodiesel fuel.

Future Meetings: Future meeting dates are:

February 25, 2009	Education Conference Ctr A., Rooms 1 & 2, 9:30 am.-11:30 a.m.
March 25, 2009	Education Conference Ctr A., Rooms 1 & 2, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
April 22, 2009	Education Conference Ctr A., Rooms 1 & 2, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
May 27, 2009	Education Conference Ctr A., Rooms 1 & 2, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Adjourn: 11:30 a.m.