

Pupil Transportation "Vehicle"

Provided by the Transportation Section within the Program Finance Division

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1. 2008 Legislative Session – Transportation Issues

The following is a summary of the laws affecting student transportation that were passed during the 2008 legislative session.

Type III Driver Requirements. The legislation clarifies that Type III school buses are to be considered school buses for the purposes of Minnesota Statue 169A. Effective September 1st, 2008, Type III drivers will be subject to a complete physical examination, drug and alcohol testing, driver's license verification and background checks and training. School employees whose primary duties do not include operation of a Type III vehicle are exempt from the physical examination, drug and alcohol testing, license verification and background checks. They are not exempt from the training requirements. The new legislation also prohibits Type III drivers to use a cell phone while operating the vehicle effective August 1st 2008

Office of Pupil Transportation Safety. The Office of Pupil Transportation Safety was created and is a section under the Division of State Patrol. The director of the pupil transportation safety office shall assist in the development, interpretation, and implementation of laws and policies relating to school bus safety, in consultation with a stakeholder group consisting of, but not limited to, representatives of the school board association, school superintendents, private bus contractors, directors of transportation, school bus employees or their exclusive bargaining representatives, and parent organizations.

The new division would consist of a director, three troopers and 15 school bus inspectors, and will be responsible for all school bus inspections, as well as data collection relating to the safety of the buses and the qualification of the drivers.

One-Time General Education Revenue Increase – FY 2009 Only. Provides additional general education aid for FY 2009 only equal to \$51 times the school district or charter school's Adjusted Marginal Cost Pupil Units (AMCPU). This is equivalent to a 1% increase in the general education formula, except that this one-time increase is **not** linked to other formulas that use the general education formula allowance (e.g. compensatory, sparsity, PSEO, shared time, nonpublic pupil transportation) or "general education revenue according to section 126C.10 subdivision 1" (e.g., special education excess cost aid). The increase **will** be used in calculation formulas linked to average general education revenue (e.g., contract alternative, special education tuition billing).

Uniform Municipal Contracting Law Contract Threshold Amounts. The minimum dollar amount a contract is estimated to exceed, that requires sealed bids has been changed from \$50,000 to \$100,000. These contracts are to be solicited by public notice in the manner and subject to the requirements of the law governing contract by the particular municipality or class.

Biodiesel Fuel Policy Modifications. Increases the biodiesel content mandate in stages, culminating in a B20 (i.e. 80% diesel, 20% biodiesel) blend requirement on May 1st 2015. Minnesota law currently requires a two percent blend, or B2.

Scheduled increases to B10 and B20 would take place only if state agencies report in advance that three criteria have been met and the state is ready to move to the next biodiesel content level. The Executive Branch could suspend or modify the mandate if there are supply disruptions or the price of biodiesel exceeds the price of diesel to an extent that could cause economic harm.

In addition, the bill requires agencies to develop a proposal for elimination of redundant fuel inspections and reports on bio-based diesel alternatives and cold weather blending and performance issues.

2. Special Education School Bus Drivers and Assistants Awards

The Minnesota Special Education Transportation Committee, in cooperation with the Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) sponsors an annual awards program to identify and recognize the best school bus drivers and transportation assistants serving Minnesota students with special needs. Winners are chosen by demonstrating exemplary service in several categories.

The Special Education Transportation Committee chose three school bus drivers and three bus assistants for the award. They are:

Special Education School Bus Driver Awards

First Place: Sharon Reimers, First Student/Oakdale Second Place: Barb Thomson, First Student/Oakdale

Third Place: Otis Easley, Jr., First Student/Golden Valley

Special Education Bus Assistant Awards

First Place: Alice Jones, First Student/Oakdale Second Place: Deb Hase, School District #196

Third Place: Luella Buersken, First Student/Oakdale

Congratulations on providing outstanding service to students with special needs. Your work is appreciated!

3. Best Practices and Model Transportation Contract

In January 2008, The Office of the Legislative Auditor completed a student transportation program audit. A program audit is conducted to determine the degree to which state agencies and programs are accomplishing their goals and objectives and utilizing resources.

The legislative auditors found a wide range in performance among districts and made recommendations to improve school district's management of student transportation. The Legislative Auditors recommended that MDE develop and distribute best management practices and a model transportation contract. Through the Transportation Issues Committee, two groups were formed. One group developed a Best Practices for Student Transportation. This document provides an outline of oversight issues school districts should consider while administrating their student transportation program. The second group developed a model contract for school districts to use when entering into a transportation contract. The sample model contract provides guidance to school districts on issues to consider when setting up a transportation contract. While these documents provide guidelines for districts to use they are not mandated in statute.

The documents are available on the Minnesota Department of Education's Website at:

http://education.state.mn.us School Support > School Finance > Transportation

The Minnesota Department of Education would like to thank the members of the committees that offered their expertise in developing these documents.

4. Fee Law

Districts are reminded that, according to public school fee law, districts cannot charge fees for transporting students that live two miles or more from school and for all other transportation that is required by law. Further, if a district charges fees for transportation of pupils, it must establish guidelines for that transportation to ensure that no pupil is denied transportation solely because of inability to pay.

5. Transportation Reporting Deadlines

School districts year-end pupil transportation data are collected from different sources. The number of nonpublic students transported to and from school, school bus ownership and annual mileage are collected on the Pupil Transportation Annual Report. The number of public school students transported to and from school is collected on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS). Expenditure and revenue data are collected on the Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) data submissions. All three sources (Annual Report, MARSS, and UFARS) have different reporting due dates.

Pupil Transportation Annual Report. The Report ED-01652 is sent to districts around early-June. The report is due to MDE August 15th.

MARSS. Final End-of-Year (EOY) student data is due the end of October. Only selected manual changes will be allowed until the end of December. Districts MARSS personnel who want to avoid making a lot of corrections to individual student's transportation records should have all of the transportation coded correctly by the EOY deadline.

UFARS. Minn. Stat. 123B.77 provides that districts must submit unaudited financial data by September 15th for the preceding fiscal year. By November 30th, districts must submit audited financial data for the preceding fiscal year.

It is very important that districts comply with these reporting deadlines. MDE Program Finance Division needs final fiscal year data in order to make timely final payments and for preparing reports for legislators and state administrators. Further, Minn. Stat. 127A.49 sudb. 1 provides, in part, that no adjustment to any aid payments resulting from omissions in district reports shall be made for any school year after December 20th of the next school year unless otherwise specifically provided by law. Failure to meet the December 30th date may cause aid payment to be withheld or delayed.

If you have any questions on completing the pupil transportation annual report, reporting the transportation code for students on MARSS, or reporting transportation expenditures, contact Kelly Wosika at 651-582-8855 or at kelly.wosika@state.mn.us.

6. Transportation Director List Serv

The Minnesota Department of Education Pupil Transportation Unit has implemented a Transportation Director E-mail list serv. The list serv will provide information to Minnesota school districts regarding pupil transportation. The e-mail messages will include topics such as state pupil transportation reporting, legislative and MDE policies regarding pupil transportation and the "Vehicle Newsletter".

A contact person's email from each district was selected because at one time that person was indicated as the pupil transportation contact. If you would like to be included in the Transportation Director List Serv, please send an e-mail to kelly.wosika@state.mn.us indicating you would like to receive e-mail news regarding pupil transportation. If you think someone at your district should be included on the Transportation Directors list serv, have that person send an email to kelly.wosika@state.mn.us.

6. Cost Allocation Worksheets

School districts are reminded that legislation requires school districts to allocate student transportation expenditures among categories on a cost per mile, cost per hour or cost per route/run. A district may only choose **one** of the methods during a year. If further allocation is needed because students from more than one category ride on the same buses, districts must further allocate the expenditures on a cost per student or cost per mile. For further information on how to allocate transportation costs and what limitations apply, contact kelly.wosika@state.mn.us.

Districts must submit their worksheets showing how they arrived at the costs reported in each category. Fiscal year 07-08 worksheets are due on 9/15/08. If there are substantial changes to the costs after 9/15/08, districts should resubmit the worksheets. Please send your district's worksheets to MDE Program Finance – Transportation, 1500 HWY 36 W, Roseville, MN 55113.

7. Elimination of Finance Dimension 715

Effective fiscal year 2009, Finance Dimension 715, Integration/Desegregation Transportation will be eliminated. Finance Dimension 715 was use to record expenditures for the transporting of pupils under their own **intra-district** integration plan. The pupils attended a school or program located outside the pupil's normal attendance area, but with in the boundaries of the school district. The transportation expenditures must now be reported in Program Code 760, Student Transportation, Finance Dimension 315, Integration Aid and Levy. This will streamline all revenue and expenditures that relate to a district's integration plan into one finance dimension for better reporting.

A district will still need to report the miles, hours or routes that occurred for intra-district desegregation on the paper Annual Transportation Report (ED-01652). However the code will now be Fin Code 315.

Finance Dimension 714, Transportation to Multi-District Integration/Desegregation Programs will still exist for recording expenditures for the transportation of pupils to and from approved **multi-district** integration/desegregation schools or programs. The pupils could be transported to and from school or between schools to attend a program or event.

Students that are transported to approved intra-district or multi-district desegregation integration school or program on a daily basis must be coded as 04-Desegregation Transportation Category in their MARSS enrollment record.

If you have any questions concerning this change, please contact Kelly Wosika at 651-582-8855 or kelly.wosika@state.mn.us.

8. Bob Fischer's Retirement from State Service

As you may know, Bob Fischer, Transportation Specialist at MDE, retired after 35 years of state service on May 27th, 2008. Bob provided excellent service and guidance to the pupil transportation industry over the years. We wish him luck in his new adventures.