



This publication is a member service of

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## 2005-06 Board of Directors

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## Industry Seeks Relief from High Fuel Costs

Citing staggeringly high fuel costs which "are threatening our ability to provide low-cost, safe transportation for 25 million school children each day," the Presidents of NSTA, the National Association of State Directors or Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) and the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT), wrote to Congress on March 13<sup>th</sup> asking for help in addressing the problem. A copy of the letter can be found on the website ([www.yellowbuses.org](http://www.yellowbuses.org)) by clicking on the Press section from the home page.

asked Congress to consider relief measures that could include tax credits, grants or other forms of Federal assistance.

Although Congress passed comprehensive energy legislation last August, there is continuing talk that further action may be needed.



## Congress Considering New Energy Legislation

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## Diesel Emission Reduction Funding

A broad coalition of interests that includes NSTA, bus and equipment manufacturers, state and local governmental entities and public interest organizations is continuing to advocate for \$50 million in funding requested by the President for the Diesel Emission Reduction Program authorized in last year's energy bill.

The Presidents of NSTA, NAPT and NASDPTS transmitted a letter of support for the program earlier this week. Also, at least 24 Senators have agreed to cosponsor a letter seeking full funding for the Administration's request. That letter was scheduled to be transmitted on Friday, April 7<sup>th</sup>. A similar letter is being circulated on the House side and there is still time to encourage your congressman to sign on.

The program would provide funding for grants and loans to help pay for the cost of newer engines, after-treatment devise or alternative fuels like biodiesel to help reduce emissions from diesel vehicles on the road today. The program would include the Clean School Bus USA program administered by EPA, which has provided over \$24 million for school bus retrofits and replacements over the past 4 years.

Under that program, grants have been awarded through state and local agencies or nonprofit entities like NSTA to help both public and private fleets with school bus diesel reduction costs.

## Summer Fuel Shortage Possible



The Administrator of the Energy Information Administration (EIA), Guy Caruso, recently testified at an oversight hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on the impact of the elimination of Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether (MTBE).

Mr. Caruso told the Committee that the switch from MTBE is likely to result in a temporary shortage of corn-based ethanol, driving up gasoline prices during the peak driving season. He noted that the shortage would most likely impact areas where MTBE is still widely used, such as Texas, parts of New England and the mid-Atlantic. Due to a provision in the energy bill passed by Congress last summer, almost all US refiners are planning to stop adding MTBE to gasoline by May.

Bob Dineen, President & CEO, Renewable Fuels Association disputed EIA's projections as "outdated." Mr. Dineen testified that there would be plenty of corn-based ethanol available to avoid such shortages. Committee Democrats have agreed, saying the situation is not as dire as the Administration suggests and that the oil companies could have avoided a sudden supply disruption by phasing out MTBE gradually, rather than eliminating its use just before the peak summer driving season

NSTA encourages its members to contact their House Representative to urge that they support funding for this important program.



## National School Bus Safety Week Needs Your Help!

Congressman John J. "Jimmy" Duncan (R-TN) introduced House Resolution 498 honoring School Bus Safety Week on October 18, 2005.

The Resolution honors the goals and ideals of School Bus Safety Week and the safety of school bus transportation.

The most current list of co-sponsors to the Resolution, totaling 40, is posted on the NSTA website in the Action Alert link of the home page ([www.yellowbuses.org](http://www.yellowbuses.org)).

We have made much progress in securing co-sponsors and we thank you for your efforts to date, but we still have a long way to go. Please contact your Member of Congress and ask that they join onto the bill as a co-sponsor.

In order for the Committee to act upon the Resolution we must have at least 50 co-sponsors, so your assistance in this effort is very important.

As this is only a House effort, there is no need to contact your Senators about this Resolution.

[www.  
yellowbuses.  
org](http://www.yellowbuses.org)





**MO:** A bill was introduced to repeal the state motor vehicle inspection program, except for school buses; and turn school bus inspections over to the state highway patrol.

**IN:** The Governor signed a bill that allows the state Bond Bank to purchase school buses for sale or lease to school districts, and encourages districts to buy buses from the state by waiving certain procedures that districts must go through when buying direct.

**CT:** The Transportation Committee approved a bill that would rescind the requirement for drivers of camp vans to have an endorsement equal to that required for drivers of school vehicles other than buses.

**LA:** A bill was introduced that would increase compensation for school bus operators. About 35% of Louisiana's school buses are privately-owned, but the state determines compensation for public school transportation based on a per-mile rate by length of bus. The rate schedule was last changed in 1986 and currently provides a top rate (for buses of 39 feet and longer) of 117.8 cents for the first 6 miles, dropping 10 cents for the next 6 miles, and going to 80.29 cents for each additional mile. The proposed top rate, beginning January 1, 2007, is 129.98 cents for the first 6 miles, 118.15 for the next 6 miles, and 88.59 cents for each mile over 12. The bill also says that "when funds become available, and for thereafter" operators will be paid a flat rate of 129.98 cents for all miles (for the longest buses).

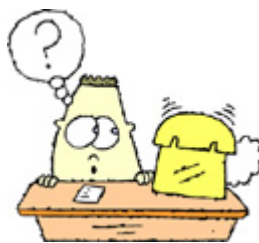
School bus owners must also obtain approval from the school board to replace buses, and cannot purchase a bus more than 5 years old.

**MN:** Legislation was introduced to conform school bus equipment standards to the 2005 edition of the National School Bus Specifications and Procedures.

**MO:** A bill requires that beginning in September 2008, every school bus will be equipped with a child safety alarm that talks to children as they are boarding or exiting the bus and alerts them to cross safely.

**AL:** The Governor signed a bill to increase penalties for passing a stopped school bus. According to press reports, the state has had eleven fatalities in eight years due to school bus stop law violations.

**VA:** The Governor signed a bill to increase speed limits for school buses to 45 mph on roads with speeds of 55 mph or less, and 55 mph for roads with posted speeds of more than 55.



### We Get Questions . . .

**Q.** *Can my district apply for a grant from the Safe Routes to Schools program to improve school bus stops?*

**A.** Unfortunately, no. There was some speculation initially that this federal program, which will provide \$600 million to states over the next five years for grants to local school districts and communities for

improvements to walking and biking paths around schools, could also be used to make bus stops and the walkways leading to them safer. In fact, at least one state had proposed that some of their funds would be used for that purpose. But the official guidance sent by FHWA to the state Safe Routes programs in January squashed that idea. Under the heading *Inappropriate Uses of SR2S Funds*, it says "improvements to bus stops are not eligible for this funding."

### Maintenance Workshops Continue

NSTA is pleased to announce that Maintenance Workshops at Manufacturers' plants are scheduled for 2006!



This is an excellent opportunity for your maintenance technicians and other staff to become experts on how a school bus operates and learn how to troubleshoot mechanical issues with ease. Workshops will be held at the following locations and during the dates listed:

#### **Blue Bird Corporation -- Fort Valley, GA**

- July 18 - 19
- September 19 - 20

#### **International Truck & Engine Corporation -- Tulsa, OK**

- ~~June 26 - 29~~ **SOLD OUT!**
- September 25 - 28

#### **Thomas Built Buses-- High Point, NC**

- October 24 - 25

Registration forms are available online on the home page (and events section) of the NSTA website, [www.yellowbuses.org](http://www.yellowbuses.org).

**NSTA  
Announces  
a New  
Award**



One of NSTA's goals is to promote greater safety and more professional transportation services throughout the industry. Therefore, NSTA announces its newest award category, the "**Outstanding School Transportation Administrator Award**".

To find out how to nominate someone in your company for this award, or any of the other NSTA awards, go to our website ([www.yellowbuses.org](http://www.yellowbuses.org)) and download the Awards Booklet or simply call us at (800) 222-NSTA (6782) and we will mail one out to you.

**Important Events  
to Mark in your  
Calendar...**

**July 23-26, 2006**

42nd Annual Meeting  
and Convention  
*Harrah's  
Lake Tahoe, Nevada*

**January 28-31, 2007**

Midwinter Meeting  
*Loews Ventana Canyon  
Resort  
Tucson, Arizona*

**July 14-18, 2007**

43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting  
and Convention  
*Westin Waterfront Hotel  
Boston, Massachusetts*



**It's Time to Book your  
Rooms for NSTA's  
Summer Convention!**

NSTA's Summer Convention will be held at **Harrah's Resort in Lake Tahoe, Nevada**, July 22-26, 2006.

A special group block has been set up for NSTA attendees and is available at the discounted group rate of \$165 single or double occupancy. Rooms are limited and are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

To make reservations for your room(s), call **(800) 455-4770** and ask for the Group Code: **S07-NSTA**. Additional information on the convention will be sent out next week, as well as be available in the Upcoming Events section of the NSTA website ([www.yellowbuses.org](http://www.yellowbuses.org)).

**NSTA's Online  
Marketplace**

 ***The School Transportation Outsourcing Toolkit***

 ***The Yellow Bus Industry: Safety, Caring and Innovations***



**And, Coming Soon...**

Novelty items such as pins, coffee mugs, watches, and more! Click on the NSTA Marketplace link on our website at [www.yellowbuses.org](http://www.yellowbuses.org) to find out more.

**Welcome  
New  
Members!**

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**Harris County  
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**Marshall Bus  
Company  
James L. Marshall  
Rising Sun, Maryland**

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**Keystone Insurers  
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Northumberland,  
Pennsylvania**

