



This publication is a member service of  
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The National School Transportation Association (NSTA) was founded in 1964 by school bus contractors to "promote and foster the highest degree of safety in the transportation of school children"

## Senate Committee Approves Clean Diesel Funding



This week, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved just over \$20 million for diesel emission reduction programs including the Clean School Bus USA program administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The funding is for the Diesel Emission Reduction Act (DERA) that was authorized as part of last year's comprehensive energy bill. The program covers a variety of grant programs to help reduce emissions from diesel vehicles and stationary equipment. School bus contractors have been able to participate in the program through the local school districts they contract with or through funding provided directly to NSTA and other nonprofit organizations. Funds can be used for refueling, idle reduction, replacement and retrofit of existing buses.

The recommended Senate funding level is well below the \$49.5 million requested by the President and over \$8 million below the funding approved by the House. However, it is the highest funding level ever approved by the Senate Committee, which only provided \$1 million for the program in last year. The measure now goes to the Senate floor and will later have to be reconciled with the higher House funding level.

NSTA has been supporting authorization and funding for the program while also working to

make sure school bus contractors are able to participate in the grant program. NSTA leadership wants to thank the many companies that sent letters of support to key Senators in the weeks prior to markup. Letters from constituents have a great impact on the outcome of these issues.

## New Effort to Tap CMAQ for Clean Diesel Funding

NSTA has begun work with a group of interested parties that are looking at ways to access the Congestion



Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program that is funded using Federal highway trust fund dollars. Each year, several billion dollars in funding is made available to states and localities for projects that help to improve air quality. In the past, much of this money has gone to major capitol improvement projects like high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, traffic congestion mitigation, bicycle or pedestrian lanes or improved traffic flow. However, changes in the law enacted as part of the comprehensive highway bill last summer could allow greatly expanded use of these funds for diesel emission reduction projects like those carried out under the Clean School Bus program. Last week, NSTA representatives met with a group that included diesel equipment manufacturers, state highway program administrators and public health activists to map out a strategy to tap into this substantial source of funding for school bus retrofit and replacement projects.



## SAFETEA-LU Technical Corrections Bill Passes House

Unexpectedly, on June 27, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Don Young (R-AK) introduced HR 5389 entitled "To Amend the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users to Make Technical Corrections, and for Other Purposes." The bill went directly to the House Floor and was approved via voice vote with almost no debate.

The only Members who spoke were Transportation and Infrastructure leadership including Chairman Young, Ranking Member James Oberstar (D-MN) and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Ranking Member of the Highways, Transit and Pipelines Subcommittee.

Along with several technical corrections, the bill makes the following changes:

- Title V's primary research account was "over-earmarked" in SAFETEA-LU, thus, the corrections bill deducts 2/10ths of one percent from apportionments under the primary highway formula programs in 2006-2009 and transfers that money to the research program to pay for the overextended earmarks.
- Adds contract authority for two projects in Montana and Nevada. As a result, this bill rescinds approximately \$140 million in unobligated balances of highway contract

authority as of September 30, 2009 to offset these two projects.

- The term "repeat intoxicated driver law" is redefined and State requirements are changed.
- The bill raises each State's minimum annual apportionment of National Highway Traffic Safety grants from 1/2 of one percent to 3/4 of one percent.

The Senate authorizing committees have yet to introduce companion legislation.

In addition, the Senate Appropriations Committee sent e-mail to Congressional staff this week indicating that they do not plan to include yesterday stating that they have no plans to make technical corrections in the Transportation, Treasury, Housing, Judiciary and DC FY07 Appropriations bill.



## NHTSA Releases 2006 CSRS Ratings

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has released its 2006 Ease of Use Ratings for child safety restraint systems, awarding 85 models an overall "A" rating.

The agency tested 99 models for 2006, three more than it tested last year.

The purpose of the ratings program, which began in 2003, is to educate consumers about child safety seat features and to assist them in finding the appropriate CSRS for their needs.

According to the agency, manufacturers have improved their labeling and instructions

each year, demonstrating that they are mindful of the Ease of Use criteria in developing new designs and improving current ones.

CSRS are rated in five categories: assembly, labels, instructions, attachment, and child securement.

In order to get an A rating, the seat must earn an A in all categories. None of the tested seats earned an overall "C" rating, but there were Cs in individual categories.

You can find a chart of the ratings on the FMCSA website at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/CPS/CSRating/Index.cfm>.

The chart is useful not only for the ratings, but also for locating the proper restraint for the height and weight of child you are transporting.



## Have You Registered?

The International Safety Competition will be held in Lake Tahoe, Nevada in the parking lot of Heavenly Ski Basin July 22nd & 23rd.

Following the Competition, NSTA's Annual Meeting and Convention will be held at **Harrah's Lake Tahoe**, during the dates of July 23rd through July 26th.

The [42nd Annual Meeting & Convention](#) agenda, as well as registration forms, are available in the Upcoming Events section and on the home page of NSTA's website, [www.yellowbuses.org](http://www.yellowbuses.org).



## New York City Prepares for School Bus Drivers Strike

The Amalgamated Transit Union is threatening to strike the city's school bus companies when summer school opens in New York City on July 3 if contract issues are not settled. The union's current contract with the 25 school bus companies represented by the New York City Bus Contractors Coalition expires today, and both sides say that little progress has been made. The main issue is health care costs. The contractors' coalition is asking that drivers contribute 1.5% to their premiums; they currently pay nothing toward health care. Teamsters locals have said they would honor the school bus drivers' strike, and the coalition has threatened a lockout if the drivers do strike.

The city Board of Education has prepared a contingency plan in partnership with the Metropolitan Transit Authority. MTA will provide all students with two passes a day to get to and from school, and will also give parents of elementary students four passes a day so that they can accompany their children to school. The Board will use taxis and other transportation for students with special needs, and will reimburse parents to drive special needs students to school.

The NYC Contractors Coalition has contracts with the city that total \$790 million, according to the city's education department. ATU represents 8400 city school bus drivers, matrons and

mechanics. Last year, 37,000 children attended summer classes.



## House Passes Compromise and Senate Delays Consideration of Estate Tax Bill

At the request of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN), House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas (R-CA) crafted a compromise on the estate tax repeal issue. The bill, which passed the House by a vote of 269-156, would permanently reduce, but not repeal, the tax. When Republicans tried, but failed to garner the 60 votes necessary to end debate on their version of the bill, Senator Frist took the unusual step of appealing to the House tax-writing committee and its chairman, Congressman Bill Thomas (R-CA) for assistance. The Thomas bill would exempt all estates worth less than \$5 million per person and would make it easier for taxpayers to pass on the full exemption to a spouse when they die. The bill would take estates between \$5 million and \$25 million at the capital gains rate, which is currently 15%, and above \$25 million at double the capital gains rate. The \$5 million per person threshold would be indexed for inflation. A "sweetener" was included in the bill to attract timber-dependent states such as Washington and Arkansas. The provision would include a 60% deduction for qualified capital gains on timber.

Despite his assurance of quick passage in the Senate, Majority Leader Bill Frist opted to delay consideration of the estate tax

bill conceding that he lacks the 60 votes necessary to end debate on the bill. It is unclear when the Senate might move on such legislation in the future.



## Recalls

**Blue Bird Vision**, manufactured from April 7 to May 26, 2006 and **Thomas Built C2 and HDX**, manufactured from April 1 to May 26, 2006, equipped with Bendix modulated spring brake valves. The check valve inside the valve cavity may not properly seat, causing internal air leakage. This can result in a delay in the application of the park brake. As a consequence, the bus may roll unexpectedly. Manufacturers will replace the check valve free of charge. The Thomas recall is expected to begin on June 30; the Blue Bird recall is expected to begin on July 14.

## Upcoming Events

**July 22-23, 2006**  
[International Safety Competition](#)

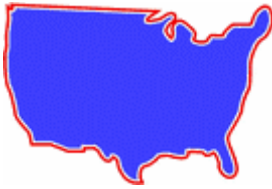
*Heavenly Ski Basin  
Lake Tahoe, Nevada*

**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*



## Outside the Beltway

**GA:** Under a law passed in April, no person can receive or renew a CDL as of July 1 without presenting evidence that he/she has taken Highway Watch training and is registered accordingly. For school bus drivers, School Bus Watch training will apply.

**NC:** In what may be the most curious bill title this year, the Judiciary Committee has approved a bill called "No Prayer for Judgment/School Bus Stop Arm Violation," which true to the title prohibits anyone convicted of passing a stopped school bus from receiving a prayer for judgment.

**NC:** The Senate is considering a House-passed bill called "Schoolchildren's Health Act," that among other things requires boards of education to implement policies to reduce students' exposure to diesel exhaust through idling reduction, prohibition of nose-to-tail parking, and more efficient routing.

**DE:** The Public Safety Committee has approved a bill that would require all school buses to have "How am I driving?" reporting numbers displayed on them.

**NJ:** The Education Committee is considering a bill to set the maximum age of all school buses built after January 1, 2007, at fifteen years. Current law sets

the maximum age of conventional buses at twelve years and transit-style buses at twenty years.

**AK:** The legislature passed a bill requiring a 60-day mandatory sentence for a conviction of assault in the fourth degree on a school bus.



## Special Thanks to our Safety Competition and Convention Sponsors...

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**Blue Bird Corporation**

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**RBC Dain Rauscher**

**Thomas Built Buses**

**Transpec Worldwide**

**US Bus**

**Zonar Systems**

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## Transportation Secretary Mineta Resigns

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta recently announced his resignation

effective Friday, July 7. Mineta is one of the longest serving Secretaries in the Bush Administration and the only Democrat to serve under this



Republican Administration. Prior to his service at the Department, Mineta served as Secretary of Commerce under President Bill Clinton and was a Member of the then House Public Works and Transportation Committee House of Representatives for twenty years, including serving as Chairman of the then House Public Works and Transportation Committee.

One of Secretary Mineta's main achievements was the enactment of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which was signed into law in August 2005 after more than two years of debate. This bill authorizes more than \$286 billion for Federal surface transportation programs over a six-year period.

After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Secretary Mineta oversaw the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to improve transportation security. TSA put thousands of air marshals on commercial air flights, installed high-tech equipment to check baggage at airports across the country, and hired tens of thousands of workers to screen air travelers and their baggage. In 2003, TSA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

It is expected that Deputy Secretary Mario Cino will be named Acting Secretary. Names being mentioned for Secretary include Ms. Cino, former Federal Highway Administration Administrator Mary Peters, Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Marion Blakey and Michael Jackson, Deputy Administrator of the Department of Homeland Security and formerly the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Secretary at the Department of Transportation.