



## National School Transportation Association

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# Position Statement

## Student Occupant Protection

The National School Transportation Association (NSTA) is proud to be part of the largest and safest transportation system in the country. Yellow school buses transport 25 million students every school day, providing more than 9 billion student rides every year, with an occupant fatality rate of less than ten a year and an injury rate of less than 0.2% .

Passenger safety is our first priority. NSTA is aware that lap/shoulder belts are a proven effective form of occupant protection, and crash tests conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicated that lap/shoulder belts, when properly worn, could provide additional protection for school bus passengers.

While we appreciate that there is a benefit to developing a uniform Federal standard for how lap/shoulder belts are installed, NSTA recommends that the decision to equip school buses with lap/shoulder belts and require their use be left to the states. Primary authority for school transportation and responsibility for school transportation funding currently resides in the States; and States are in a better position to gauge their needs and to determine the most beneficial use of limited resources to improve student health and safety.

Currently, four states require some type of seat belt on school buses, though only California requires lap/shoulder belts. In the wake of November's tragic crash in Alabama, many more states are considering legislation to add restraints to their buses. NSTA encourages this debate, and supports efforts to increase safety for all students.

Congress does have an appropriate role here, which is to ensure that Federal agencies charged with the responsibility for transportation safety analysis provide the States with the facts and guidance they need to make informed decisions. NSTA asks that Congress direct NHTSA to analyze and report on the effects of equipping school buses with lap/shoulder belts on school transportation systems, including possible consequences of capacity loss and real-world usage patterns in districts that have lap/shoulder belt-equipped buses. There is a great deal of speculation and little verified information on these and other questions surrounding the lap/shoulder belt issue. NHTSA is in the best position to provide the answers, and doing so would be a service to States, local districts, parents, and the school transportation industry.

NSTA is ready to work with Congress, the Department of Transportation, and the States to ensure that we continue to provide our children with the safest, most reliable transportation system in the world.

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*The National School Transportation Association, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, represents private companies that contract with local school districts to provide school transportation. Approximately one-third of the nation's school bus fleet are operated by private contractors, ranging from small family businesses to large, multi-state corporations.*