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March 13, 2006

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of school transportation providers around the country (both public and private), we are writing to seek congressional aid with respect to the staggeringly high fuel costs that are threatening our ability to provide low-cost, safe transportation for 25 million school children each day.

The nation's school bus fleet is the largest mass transportation fleet in the country, 2.5 times the size of all other forms of mass transportation including transit, intercity buses, commercial airlines and rail, combined. This system is also the safest way to transport children to and from school every day. The National Academy of Sciences has reported that there are an average of 800 fatalities a year among children who do not ride school buses, while the school bus related annual fatality rate is less than 20. Keeping our school buses running is vital to the safety of our children.

In the wake of instability in crude oil supplies, Hurricane Katrina and other factors, rising fuel costs have devastated the industry and now threaten to force the involuntary reduction of school bus transportation nationwide due to diesel fuel prices that are today 25% higher than a year ago and more than twice what they were four years ago. In fact, contrary to past experience, diesel fuel prices are now more than 20 cents higher in most states than the price of regular gasoline. This is proving to be a burden to public and private operators alike. While the high fuel costs affect all modes of transportation, other transportation modes are better able to either absorb the costs or pass them on in the marketplace.

Public school systems and their school transportation providers are not able to pass on the costs to the students they drive to and from school every day. Instead, many school districts have responded to this crisis by eliminating field trips and worse, reducing transportation to and from school, forcing students to find less safe and reliable ways to access their education. For example, in Ohio school districts have eliminated school bus service to 80,000 school children a day

This reduction in service has a number of significant effects on students and families, and also on our national economy. Some of the most notable are:

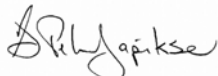
- 1) Reduction in service eliminates the protection students receive from a school bus, and results in their having to travel in one of the other transportation modes that are documented as being more dangerous.

- 2) Loss of available school transportation service places a burden on working parents and single parents who have come to depend upon the school bus as their child's only mode of transportation to school. This disrupts households and impacts the public workforce when parents must interrupt their workday to manage the transportation of their children.
- 3) Reduction in school transportation service results in an increase in personal vehicle use during morning and afternoon rush hours. In an era when we are globally concerned about air pollution and traffic congestion, we are actually increasing the problems by increasing the number of vehicles on the road.
- 4) This increase in personal vehicle use also increases the consumption of fuel as we place more vehicles on the road to replace the service that was provided by school buses.
- 5) In schools where educators are struggling to continue school transportation services, additional funds and tax dollars have to be spent on fuel for vehicles, resulting in a negative impact on the funds available for education services.

We understand that there are no easy solutions to this problem, but are writing to ask for your help nonetheless. We ask that Congress consider providing a negative surcharge for diesel fuel used in public school transportation that could be in the form of a grant, a tax credit for fuel vendors that supply fuel to school bus systems or other benefit to allow public schools to continue to provide low-cost, safe transportation services to our nation's school children. Even though we are the lowest cost, highest volume form of public mass transit in the country we have never received a subsidy of any kind. While funds are always tight, we understand that Congress is considering raising additional oil related revenue through either an accounting change for oil industry profits, limiting royalty relief for exploration, or repeal of tax incentives that the oil industry executives have indicated may no longer be needed. While the oil industry may no longer need Federal help, our industry desperately does. We would appreciate your consideration of any measure, even if temporary, that could help reduce fuel costs for transportation of school children by public and private fleets.

We would be happy to meet with you to provide additional information about these issues or to discuss potential actions that may be viable to address these issues. Please contact Gabe Rozsa at BKSH & Associates (202-530-4825) if you have any questions or if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Pete Japikse
President, NASDPTS



John Corr
President, NSTA



Leonard Bernstein
President, NAPT