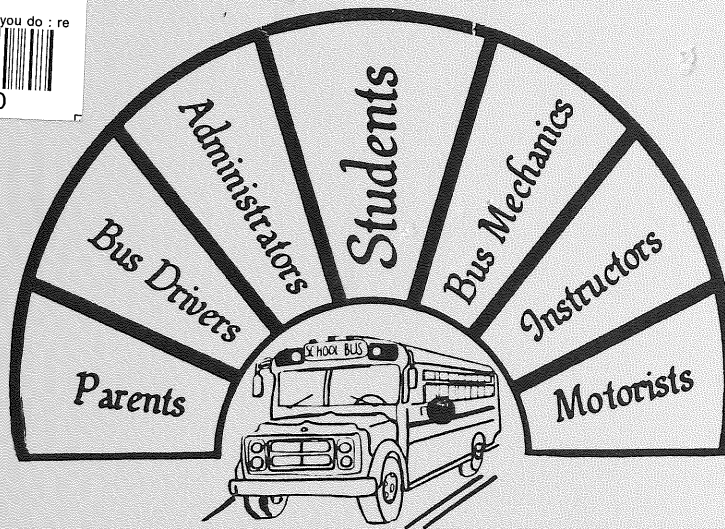
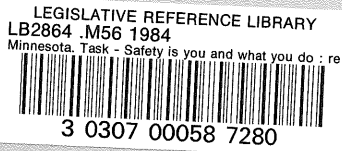


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SAFETY IS YOU AND WHAT YOU DO

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON
SCHOOL BUS SAFETY**

APPOINTING AUTHORITY:

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

L. 1984, Chapter 463, Article 7, Section 50

Pursuant to Open Appointments

Submitted to: Commissioner of Education and

Educational Committees of the Legislature

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December, 1984

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TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Chairperson--Dr. Rodney G. Dobey

Vice-chairperson--Jane Oxton

Subcommittees

Vehicles--Equipment--Inspection

Raymond Kroll
John Shaffer
Dr. Rodney G. Dobey
Tom Boerner
Cecil (Bud) Fritz

Driver Selection, Training, and Examination

Gloria Rea
Jim Johansen
Hugh Salisbury
Tom Boerner

Ridership Training--Public Awareness--Education

Vera Burgoyne
Jenny Hogle
Florence Harrington

Service and Administration

Jan Vanderwall
Raymond Kroll
Jane Oxton

Department of Education

Ronald J. Laliberte
Gerald Pavek

TASK FORCE CHARTER: TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Article I: The Need for This Task Force

This task force originated from the concern about the safety of school buses and pupil transportation practices in the state of Minnesota. The task force was to consist of up to thirteen members appointed by the Commissioner of Education. The Commissioner was to appoint at least one member from the Minnesota Safety Council, one member from the Department of Public Safety, one school administrator and a person to represent parents with children who regularly ride the school bus (see appendix). The task force was to report its findings and recommendations to the Commissioner of Education and the education committee of the legislature by December 1, 1984. The termination date of the task force was set for June 30, 1985.

Article II: The Charge to the Task Force

The task force was charged with studying school bus safety including the following issues:

1. Equipment and other safety features of school bus design, including seat belts, surface padding and compartmentalization;
2. proposals for mandatory installation and use of seat belts in school buses;
3. relative population of school buses which are and are not subject to federal requirements for safety features;
4. qualifications, training, examination, and licensing of school bus drivers;
5. adequacy of school bus maintenance;
6. current requirements and practices about school bus hauling distances;
7. safety aspects of school bus pick up points; and
8. instruction given to school children about safe boarding and departing procedures.

Article III: Plan of Action

The task force met for ten sessions beginning August 2, 1984, and ending November 28, 1984.

Four subcommittees were established with members volunteering to serve on them. They are:

1. Ridership Training--Public Awareness and Education
2. Vehicles--Equipment--Inspection
3. Service and Administration
4. Driver Selection, Training, and Examination

Article IV: Evaluation

Evaluation of the task force will be based on its recommendations relative to school bus safety and adherence to the time frame set forth by the legislature.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

I. Preface

The Task Force on School Bus Safety was comprised of thirteen members appointed by the Commissioner of Education. The Task Force has worked to fulfill the charge of the Commissioner of Education and the Education Committees of the Legislature as defined in the charter provided. We have examined data from many resources and have developed recommendations pertaining to the program components. We believe that it is in the best interests of the students of Minnesota that the Commissioner of Education and committees of the Legislature act expediently to implement our recommendations.

II. Introduction: The Need for a Task Force on School Bus Safety

For several years, pupil transportation safety in Minnesota was a priority matter, with growing initiatives on all fronts affecting the pupil transportation industry. There was action both on the Federal and the State level to increase the safety levels of our pupil transportation service.

At the Federal level this effort included revised vehicle standards, Standard 17, and seed funding of safety programs in the states. In Minnesota, efforts included such projects as The Minnesota School Bus Driver Training Curriculum; Funding of School Bus Driver Training Centers; loaning libraries of film and materials for both pupil and bus driver training, School Bus Safety Week Committees and activities; new legislation on the 8 light system enforcement; Safety Energy Committee; National Vehicle Standards Convention representation; and much more.

The state initiatives started to decline when the Federal funding for state programs was not renewed after 1980. Reduced safety funding was still available from the unspent funds of previous years, until October 1983. The Minnesota Department of Education did not include Pupil Transportation Safety Funding at the state level in its proposal for the 1982-83 legislative session. As a result the entire program has ceased to exist as a Department of Education activity.

Concerns for the improved safety of transporting the students of Minnesota prompted the introduction of a bill in the Minnesota legislature. This bill, SF 1404, created a school bus safety task force consisting of citizens and others responsible for pupil transportation. The Commissioners of Public Safety and Education were

requested to cooperate with the task force in its activities and were to provide assistance, including staff assistance as needed. General fund monies were appropriated to the Legislative Coordinating Commission to pay for expenses of the task force. Other provisions required that representatives of private companies operating school buses and a school bus driver be appointed to the task force.

The Task Force on School Bus Safety agreed to establish four sub-committees to serve, study, and make recommendations to the Commissioner of Education and the educational committees of the Legislature by December 1, 1984.

VEHICLES, EQUIPMENT, AND INSPECTION

I. Introduction

School buses have experienced many changes in design and construction over the past ten years. These changes have evolved as products of advanced research and technology, legislative enactments, and a greater sensitivity to the overall safety of pupil passengers. Some of the more prominent developments include; high back seats and compartmentalization, national school bus chrome yellow, and the eight-light warning system.

II. Rationale

The successful operation of school buses is dependent on vehicles which afford the greatest degree of safety, security and dependability. It was with these points in mind that the task force reviewed the current status of school buses, their maintenance, equipment, and inspection, as well as new products which could enhance the safety of school buses.

III. Issues Reviewed

- A. Since the early 1980's, more older model school buses have been retained in service. The state of Minnesota took a step backwards when semi-annual school bus inspections were changed to annual inspections. Budgetary shortfalls contributed to this situation. A review of the 1983 inspection report revealed that 9,387 buses were inspected. Of these, 4,521 (48%) were 1977 or newer, and 4,866 (52%) were 1976 or older.
- B. A school bus which has been involved in an accident and rendered inoperable or requires repair to the steering, braking or suspension may be placed back in service with only minimal scrutiny. This practice could result in an unsafe vehicle being returned to service.
- C. National statistics indicate that of the 28 school bus pupil fatalities which occurred in 1982, seventeen (17) students were killed by their own bus. Twelve (12) were in front and the remaining five (5) in back of the bus. These facts point out the need for increasing the visibility of the bus driver in the areas immediately around the bus.

- D. The visibility and/or contrast of directional turn signals as related to other lights on the school bus is somewhat obscure. The turn signals are often confused with the brake lights.
- E. The rear of the school bus is vaguely defined at night or during periods of reduced visibility. This is further complicated if one of the tail lights burns out.
- F. The ability for the school bus driver to communicate with students around the bus is imperative. This is equally true in terms of school bus/motorist communications. There is no single technique or device which assures clear communications to students and/or motorists; however improved methods are in order.
- G. At present a school bus accident is recorded and investigated in the same manner as other traffic accidents. The lack of detailed reporting has created a void of information relative to how injuries were received, seating arrangements prior to the accident, and other intricate aspects of the crash which would provide information and direction for accident/injury reduction strategies.
- H. School buses sold, licensed, or operated within Minnesota are not clearly marked that they have been manufactured to meet the minimum school bus construction standards set by the Minnesota Department of Education.
- I. Seatbelt installation and use in school buses continues to be an issue of widespread controversy. The gravity of this topic is such that special attention is warranted.

IV. Recommendations

- A. Semi-annual inspection of school buses should be conducted by the Minnesota State Patrol in accordance with the Minnesota School Bus Inspection Manual. This would necessitate legislative change and should become effective January 1, 1986. The estimated cost for this change is \$314,000 for the biennium.
- B. Before a bus is returned to service, following an accident which renders it inoperable, or if the steering, braking or suspension system is damaged, a post accident reinspection should be performed. A representative of the Minnesota State Patrol should perform this inspection. If a State Patrol representative is not available, the bus may be operated for two weeks with a temporary certification wherein the district/carrier certifies that the bus repairs have been completed. The temporary certification does not preclude reinspection by the State Patrol within the two week time frame. If habitual failures occur during the post accident

reinspection, the temporary certification procedure will be withdrawn. There are no anticipated costs associated with this recommendation.

- C. An additional crossover mirror should be required on the right front fender of the school bus. We recommend that the language of the Minnesota specifications (3520.4800X) be changed to parallel that of Federal specifications (FMVSS 571.111).

"There should be exterior mirrors, 7 1/2 inches in diameter, on both the right and left front fenders. Each mirror should be properly adjusted to give a clear view to the front and side."

The estimated cost of requiring the additional mirror on all school buses would be \$522,000. This includes mirrors, brackets and installation. This recommendation should become effective January 1, 1986.

- D. All new school buses placed into service in the State of Minnesota after July 1, 1986, shall be equipped with amber turn signal lenses. There would be no additional cost associated with the installation of these lenses on new buses.
- E. All new school buses placed into service after July 1, 1986, shall be equipped with two (2) additional Class A tail lights. Cost for factory installation of these two additional tail lights would be approximately \$25.00 per bus (\$17,500.00 per year based on an average of 700 new buses purchased each year).
- F. The following school bus safety equipment devices be considered as options to improve communications between the bus driver, the student, and the motorist.
1. External public address systems enable the bus driver to warn students of danger before they cross the roadway. The estimated cost for such a system including installation is \$179.00 per bus.
 2. A Crossing Guard Gate mounted on the front bumper forces children to move five feet ahead of the right corner of the bus before receiving a signal to cross. This device puts pupils "in-view" of the bus driver. The cost of this device is \$100.00 per bus.
 3. A lighted stop signal arm (flashing or strobe) attracts the motorist's attention. This increases the likelihood that the motorist will comply with the school bus stop law, M.S. 169.44. The cost for the flashing lights is \$100.00 per bus and \$275.00 per bus if the strobe lights are used.

4. Geographic and atmospheric conditions create situations which reduce the motorist's visual perception of the school bus. The discretionary use of a roof mounted double flash white light enhances the conspicuity of the bus during periods of danger and/or reduced visibility. A double flash roof mounted light system costs approximately \$140.00 per bus.
 5. A Safety Sensor is a microwave radar device which can be mounted under the front bumper and ahead of the right rear duals of the bus. The presence of any object (human or other) within a set distance, triggers an audio alarm to the driver. This device is activated when the door is opened and remains activated for several seconds after the door is closed. The cost for this unit, excluding labor for installation, is \$225.00 per unit per bus. Two units are required per bus.
- G. The State Patrol or designee assume the responsibility for investigating all school bus accidents which involve injury, death, or property damage of \$500.00 or more. The investigating officer shall be given authority to summon a Law Compliance Representative (LCR) to determine if the bus is safe to return to service. These thorough investigations will provide a data base for school bus accident/injury reduction strategies.
- H. Each school bus body (Type I and II) manufactured after July 1, 1985, shall bear the letters "MN" either preceding or after the body identification number. This would certify that the body was built to meet minimum body construction standards as established by the Minnesota Department of Education. After July 1, 1985, no Type I or II school bus shall be certified for use in the State of Minnesota that does not have a current valid inspection sticker. There should be no cost associated with this recommendation.
- I. The topic of seatbelts in school buses received more discussion than any other issue that faced the Task Force. These discussions attempted to examine all aspects of the seatbelt controversy and special guests addressed the task force on the pros and cons of seatbelts in school buses.

An industry representative spoke on the importance of recognizing the differences between the design, crashworthiness and integrity of automobiles and buses. He stressed that one should consider the seatbelt issue in light of these variables.

A video tape was viewed which advocated the importance and needs for seatbelts in school buses. Task force members were supplied with numerous documents (2 1/2 inches thick) which contained information on the seat belt issue. As a result of these efforts, the task force attempted to discuss the positive and negative aspects of seatbelts in school buses.

Several questions were raised about the feasibility of seatbelts in school buses. First was the question of the actual increase in student safety as a result of seatbelt installation. This was impossible to answer from a concrete data base because there was no conclusive evidence that addressed the issue. Of the recent in-bus fatalities in Minnesota, it appears that one fatality could have been prevented by wearing a seatbelt and some evidence to indicate that present minor injuries may be intensified with seatbelt usage.

The task force was unified in its desire to initiate a formalized method of investigating school bus accidents to ascertain answers to this question. Recent Canadian crash tests involving buses with restrained and unrestrained anthropometric dummies were of interest to the task force. Unfortunately the results of these tests will not be available until December, 1984. These tests may provide the first empirical evidence on the effects of seatbelts in simulated crashes.

Another important concern is the conflicting message regarding seat belt use in automobiles and school buses. It is undeniable that habits formed in childhood will last a lifetime. By not requiring seatbelts in buses, a basic safety precept for safe auto travel is undermined. The controversies concerning belts used as weapons, enforcement of use, and soiled clothing were recognized as clearly secondary issues.

Another major concern was that of how to safely and effectively implement a mandated seatbelt law. Facts presented indicated that the rust and deterioration on older buses would prohibit a safe method of attaching seatbelt anchorages. In addition, the floors and seats of most older buses were not constructed with seatbelt anchorages as a consideration. This could require major structural modifications in order to safely anchor seatbelts. Discussions indicated that only new buses, with built-in seatbelts should be mandated. This would also allow the additional costs to be amortized over several years. The installation of seatbelts in Type I school buses is not required by Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. At present, no laws, rules or regulations (state or local) prohibit the installation of seatbelts on school buses should local district/carriers elect to have them placed on buses.

Since April 1, 1977, compartmentalized fully padded seats have been required on all Type I school buses. The National Highway Traffic Safety administration has gone on record in support of compartmentalized seating on school buses. The National Safety Council and the National PTA have taken the position to encourage additional research on the feasibility of seat belts on Type I school buses.

On the other hand, the installation of seat belts in Type I school buses has been supported by the Physicians for

Automotive Safety, the American Medical Association, and the National Coalition for Seat Belts in School Buses. While research continues on the subject, School Bus Fleet Magazine, a major industry trade journal, has called for a return to a logical dialogue that directs attention to the area outside the bus--the danger zone where 22 of 28 students died in 1983. With these points in mind, the Task Force specifically recommends that:

1. The Minnesota legislature delay a decision on mandatory seat belts on school buses until further information becomes available. This delay will provide additional time to fully study and evaluate existing and future research on the subject before making a final decision.
2. A pilot project be organized and funded which would encourage selected school district/contract carriers to purchase new vehicles with seat belts. The participants would work closely with the Minnesota Department of Education and Public Safety and the School Bus Safety Committee to monitor, evaluate and report the results of their findings to the legislature not later than December 1, 1987. A three-year pilot program would provide one year for organization, site selection and acquisition of Type I vehicles equipped with seat belts. The remaining two years would be used to collect data relative to the overall effect of seat belts in school buses.
3. The support be maintained for the position that Type I school buses already in service should not be retrofitted with seat belts. Harsh and adverse weather, road salt and daily use contribute to the aging process of every vehicle. Specifications are non-existent for retrofitting school buses with seat belts.
4. Parents and schools are urged to independently investigate the feasibility of seat belts on school buses in their respective districts. No federal or state regulations prohibit a school district or contract carrier from ordering seat belts in new Type I school buses. The additional cost of seat belts purchased with the bus may be paid from the school bus purchase account funded by local transportation levy. It is recommended that legislation be adopted that will permit school districts to use revenues from the bus purchase account to reimburse contract carriers for seat belts in new buses.
5. The cost estimate to install seat belts for three pupil passengers on one 39 inch wide seat is \$120.00. A 65 passenger school bus with eleven rows of seats would require approximately \$2,400.00 to cover the cost of seat belts.

In conclusion, the Task Force feels seat belts in school buses should not be mandated at this time. However, as new information becomes available this issue should be open to discussion. It is only on the basis of documented data that a decision for mandatory seat belts be made. Until that time, the emotional aspects of the issue must not be allowed to overwhelm us.

With the current evidence that 70 to 80 percent of the school bus related fatalities occur outside the bus, it seems logical that efforts be directed where there is an undisputed need.

V. Resources

- A. Letters: Commissioner Tschida
Major Glenn Gramse
- B. School Bus Loading and Unloading Survey, Bureau of Management Services--Safety, Kansas Department of Transportation.
- C. 1983 School Bus Inspection Report, Minnesota State Patrol, February 1984.
- D. Minnesota School Bus Crash Study Report 1972-1980, Pupil Transportation, Department of Education, St. Paul.
- E. Bus Design Considerations for the 1980's, Milt Honea, School Business Affairs, July 1983.
- F. New Product Update, Con-Serv, Inc. "Safety Sensor."
- G. Transport Canada, Road Safety Directorate, School Bus-Occupant Protection Study, February 1984.
- H. School Bus Safety, R. D. Hollenberg and G. Monaco for the Council on Road Trauma, Hamilton Academy of Medicine, Hamilton, Ontario.
- I. School Bus Accident Study, Paul Gutoskic, July 1978, Canadian Study.
- J. School Transportation Director, Vol. 4, No. 6; Vol. 4, No. 13.
- K. National School Bus Report-Special Edition, 1984, Spring, "School Bus Safety and Seat Belts."
- L. National School Bus Report-June 1984 and September 1984.
- M. School Bus Fleet, August/September 1971, p. 16; March 1984, p. 12; June/July 1978, p. 5; June/July 1984, pp. 12, 21, 24, 28; August/September 1984, p. 24; October/November 1984, pp. 11, 12, 35-42.

- N. NSTA Newsletter, August 1984; October 1984.
- O. Physicians for Automotive Safety, Spring/Fall 1980.
- P. 1974 Study of the Possible Effects of a Mandatory Seat Belt Use Law for Students on School Buses, Maryland State Department of Education, Safety and Transportation section.
- Q. Seat Belts in School Buses, Clarence Greger at the National Safety Congress on October 26, 1966.
- R. The Importance of Seat Belts in the Total School Bus Safety Picture, National Association of School Bus Contract Operators.
- S. Testimony before N.Y. State Public Hearing Legislative Commission on Critical Transportation Choices.
- T. Congressional Record Vol. 130, No. 5.
- U. Federal Register, Vol. 41, No. 19, January 28, 1976, p. 12.
- V. Transpo, 1984, Vol. 7/3.
- W. Transcript of tape from the Wisconsin Child Passenger Safety Association Conference, October 9, 1984, by James Nichols, Ph.D., NHTSA.
- X. Seat Belts in School Buses, materials assembled and condensed by Thomas Built Buses, Inc.

DRIVER SELECTION, TRAINING, AND EXAMINATION

I. Introduction

One of the most important elements in the safe transportation of students to and from school or approved school activities is the school bus driver. There are approximately 20,000 people in Minnesota who hold valid school bus driver endorsements on their drivers license.

II. Rationale

In view of the cargo transported and the tremendous responsibility placed on the bus driver it was in the interest of the Task Force to review district policies, driver license requirements and driver training practices to determine ways to improve the quality and competency of those who operate a school bus.

III. Issues Reviewed

- A. Concern has been expressed in the media and by parents relative to the criteria used by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety when issuing or denying a school bus driver endorsement.
- B. Currently there is no uniform school bus driver training curriculum or program used by districts and/or contract carriers for new or inservice drivers.
- C. Conviction of criminal acts committed by those who hold school bus endorsements are not readily known to their employer.
- D. The Department of Public Safety has not had the technology to immediately revoke the school bus endorsement of those bus drivers who are convicted of violating provisions of the school bus driver license rules and regulations.
- E. Past and current funding practices place emphasis on the operational aspects of transportation and ignore financial needs associated with school bus driver training.
- F. Training for school bus drivers is conducted on a district/contract carrier discretionary basis. The State has set no schedule of mandatory training for school bus drivers.

- G. Background record checks and driving record checks have been conducted as the district/contract carrier sees fit. A standard procedure has been established; however, not all districts/contract carriers make use of this service.
- H. School bus drivers, by their vocation, are expected to be in good physical condition and free from the influence and mood/mind modifying substances during the periods prior to and while on duty.

IV. Recommendations

The following recommendations are submitted:

- A. The Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Department of Public Safety adopt the following criteria for its rules in issuing and renewing school bus driver license endorsement.
 - 1. Conviction of the possession of a controlled substance or marijuana.
 - Within 5 years: Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contractor employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools.
 - Over 5 years ago: issue.
 - 2. Conviction of selling a controlled substance or marijuana.
 - Within the past 5 years: No endorsement.
 - Over 5 years ago: Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contractor employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools.
 - 3. Conviction of driving while under the influence of alcohol, controlled substance or marijuana.
 - Over 30 days, less than 5 years: Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contractor employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools.
 - Over 5 years ago: issue.
 - 4. Conviction of a felony or gross misdemeanor not committed against person.
 - Within 5 years: Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contract carrier employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools.
 - Over 5 years ago: issue.

5. Conviction of a felony or gross misdemeanor against person.
 - Within 5 years: No endorsement.
 - Over 5 years ago: Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contract carrier employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools.
 - Over 10 years ago: issue.
 6. Conviction of criminal sexual conduct.
 - Within 5 years: No endorsement.
 - Over 5 years: Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contract carrier employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools and probation officer.
 - Over 10 years ago: issue.
 7. If a driver has four traffic convictions for moving violations within three years (excluding 1-6 above).
 - No endorsement until the driver is conviction free for the past 12 months.
 8. If a driver has three traffic convictions for moving violations on record within two years (excluding convictions in 1-6 above).
 - Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contract carrier employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools.
 9. Any revocation or suspension of moving traffic violations on record in last three years.
 - Endorsement issued only with a letter from the superintendent of schools, his agent, or the contract carrier employing the driver, with a copy to the superintendent of schools.
- B. That a committee review, update, or develop a driver training curriculum to assist school districts and contract carriers to implement a uniform driver training program.
 - C. Criminal checks should be done every two years upon renewal of school bus endorsement. Bureau of Criminal Apprehension should be allocated a full time employee responsible for this assignment. This would cost approximately \$25,000 to implement.
 - D. The Department of Public Safety via the Traffic Record Integration Project is hereby requested to remove school bus endorsements immediately upon violation of any of the School Bus Driver Qualifications rules submitted by the School Bus Safety Task Force.
 - E. We recommend that funding be allocated and dedicated for school bus driver training. The estimated cost for this is \$500,000 per year.

- F. A graduated schedule of mandatory pre- and in-service hours of training should be adopted and implemented as follows:

<u>School Year</u>	<u>New Drivers</u>		<u>All Drivers In-Service</u>
	<u>Classroom</u>	<u>Behind-the-Wheel</u>	
1985-86	8	6	6
1986-87	12	8	8
1987-88	16	10	10

- G. School Bus Safety Rodeos at the State and Regional levels be conducted to provide a sense of initiative, professionalism, evaluation and training for school bus drivers. These activities are estimated to cost \$5,000.
- H. All school districts or contract carriers shall check references on every driver who is applying for a job or is already licensed as a school bus driver.
- I. Any school district or contract carrier may request a driver's license examination of any of their drivers. The examination will be conducted by the state.
- J. Driving record must be checked at least two times during a school year. The dates recommended for these checks are by October 15 and February 15. These driving record checks are available for the superintendent of schools, contract carrier, or their designee, by submitting a list of names, with dates, and driver license numbers for all drivers in their district or operation to the Pupil Transportation Supervisor, at the Minnesota Department of Education. These will be processed by the Department of Public Safety and returned to the Department of Education. The Department of Education will then send them to the requesting school district or contract carrier.

The cost for any school bus driver record check will be kept as low as possible. The cost at present is \$.50 per driver.

- K. The school district or contract carriers shall obtain the applicant's driving record prior to hiring.
- L. No person shall drive, operate, or be in physical control of a school bus if she/he possesses, is under the influence of, or is using, any of the following substances:
1. A narcotic drug or any derivative thereof;
 2. An amphetamine or any formulation thereof (including, but not limited to, "pep pills" and "bennies");
 3. Any other substance, to a degree which renders him/her less than fully capable of safely operating a school bus.

- M. No school district or contract carrier shall knowingly require or permit a driver to violate paragraph "L" of this section.
- N. Paragraph "L" of this section does not apply to the possession or use of a substance administered to a driver by or under the instructions of a physician who has advised the driver that the substance will not affect his ability to operate a school bus.
- O. No person shall consume any beverage with alcoholic content within 6 hours before going on duty, operating, or having physical control of a school bus.
- P. No person shall consume any beverage with alcoholic content, or be under the influence of an intoxicating liquor, while on duty, operating, or in physical control of a school bus.
- Q. No school district or contract carrier shall require or permit a driver to:
 - 1. Violate any provision of paragraphs O and P of this section;
 - 2. Be on duty or operate a school bus if by general appearance, by conduct or by other substantive evidence, there is reason to believe that the driver has consumed any beverage containing alcohol within the preceding 6 hours, or appears to be under the influence of alcohol.

V. Resources

Letters:

- A. J. G. Cunningham, Assistant Chief Driver License Examiner, Driving and Vehicle Services Division.
- B. G. Pavek, Supervisor, Pupil Transportation, Department of Education.
- C. William R. Jacobsen, Driver, Apple Valley, Minnesota.

Articles:

- A. School Transportation Director, October 17, 1984.
- B. MSBOA Operator, September 1984.

RIDERSHIP TRAINING, PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

I. Introduction

Every student is entitled to a safe enjoyable ride to and from school. In order to assure this, it is necessary to maintain an acceptable level of pupil management on the school bus. Students, parents, teachers, bus drivers and other motorists share a large responsibility in promoting the safety of all students on and off the bus.

II. Rationale

The Task Force reviewed the statistics and information on programs provided to students and the public which were designed to increase the safety of students who ride school buses. In 1983, three (3) students in Minnesota were killed while getting on or off the school bus. National statistics show that in school year 1982-83, twenty-eight (28) students died as they were getting on or off the bus. These statistics illustrate a need for a concentrated effort to protect the students in the area outside of the bus known as the "danger zone."

III. Issues Reviewed

- A. The current compliance by school boards and districts with Chapter 3520.3600 (Pupil/Bus Rider Safety Instruction) is unknown.
- B. There is no state-wide curriculum guide for teacher use when providing instruction on safe school bus riding techniques.
- C. The responsibility for student instruction, behavior management and safety is shared by the district and parents. It is essential that parents know the district policies on pupil transportation needs.
- D. The quality and timelines of the school bus safety media within the State has not been reviewed in terms of current needs, philosophies and teaching methodologies.
- E. Overall public awareness and the level of education related to school bus laws and safety are minimal. Increased efforts to inform the public are necessary.

IV. Recommendations

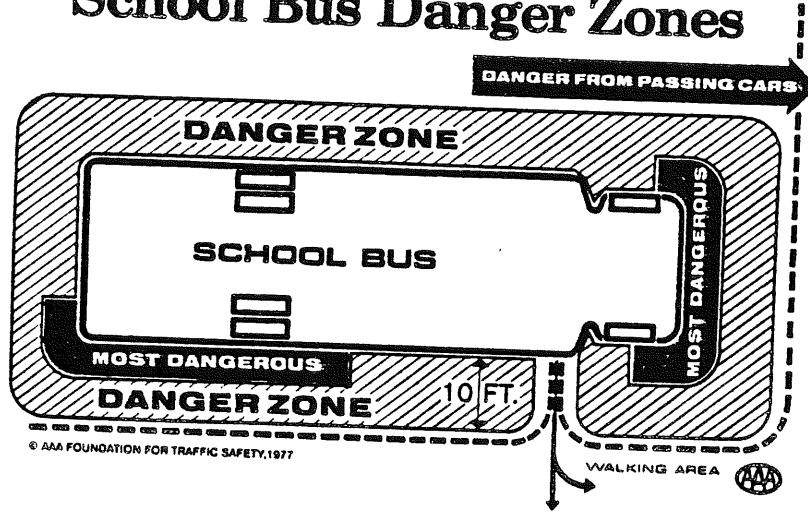
- A. An annual audit be conducted in each school district to determine the extent of compliance with Chapter 3520.3600. Upon completion of the audit, a notice of compliance/non-compliance will be made to the Board of Education.
- B. A school bus rider curriculum (Pre-12) be developed for use in the schools in Minnesota. This curriculum should be developed with the input of teachers, administrators, transportation personnel and reviewed by the School Bus Safety Committee. Contents should include film, slide or video tapes as part of the program. The cost for this project is estimated to be \$5,000 in 1986 and \$25,000 in 1987.
- C. School districts should furnish a copy of the school bus policies and procedures to the parents of students who ride buses. A signed form acknowledging receipt of said policies should be returned to the district by the parent.
- D. A committee should be developed to examine and edit the school bus safety films in the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Film Library. Films which are outdated, worn or philosophically inappropriate should be removed. This committee should also investigate methods to expand the availability and access of the films to districts, contract carriers and the public. Efforts should be made to up-date the Modules included in the School Bus Driver Development Series. The cost of these tasks is expected to be \$20,000 per year.
- E. In an attempt to increase public awareness and education regarding school bus safety, the following recommendations are offered:
 1. Increase the number of signs on highways that warn motorists of the school bus stop law (M.S. 169.44). These signs should be erected on highways that branch off 4-lane divided highways and also those highways entering Minnesota from other states.
 2. Develop and rent 100 billboard messages that stress the importance of school bus safety and the extra caution needed at bus loading and unloading areas. It is estimated that this would cost \$10,000 annually.
 3. Each year, organizations such as the American Automobile Association, Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation, Minnesota School Bus Operators Association, Minnesota Departments of Education and Public Safety, Minnesota Safety Council, and the bus body distributors conduct school bus safety poster contests for students. The winning poster should be the basis for the billboards in #2. It is estimated that this would cost \$1,000 each year to print and distribute copies of the winning poster.

4. The development and circulation of informational pamphlets (i.e., "It's the Law") to inform motorists about their responsibility should be increased. This would cost approximately \$4,000 per year.
- F. The state associations of Elementary and Secondary Principals, School Administrators, School Boards, School Business Officials, and the P.T.A. become active in promoting school bus safety activities. Each organization should demonstrate their concern for compliance with the requirement of Chapter 3520.3600 (Pupil/Bus Rider Instruction) and methods to meet these requirements.
- G. Include a section in the Minnesota Driver's Manual and written test that stresses the importance and proper procedures for complying with M.S. 169.44. (School Bus Stop Law)
- H. The Minnesota State Patrol, county and local law enforcement officials, and judges receive an update of information on the current operating rules for school buses and the requirements/penalties for those who violate the school bus stop arm law.
- I. Persons who report school bus stop arm violations should receive a follow-up report of law enforcement and judicial action.

V. Resources

- A. What Parents Should Know About Children and Traffic, Channing and Bete Company, Inc., 1980.
- B. School Bus Safety Week Committee Letter.
- C. Letter from Janet Weber concerning film library.
- D. Pupil Transportation Safety Education Program, Department of Education.
- E. 1983 Motor Vehicle Crash Facts.
- F. Safe Student Bus Riders, Minnesota Department of Public Safety.
- G. 1982-83 Kansas Department of Transportation School Bus Loading and Unloading Survey.

School Bus Danger Zones



SERVICE

I. Introduction

Simply stated, the service of school bus transportation includes the pick up of children near their homes for transportation to school and the return of children to their stops after school. Because it is these very pick up and drop off points that create the greatest hazard, it is only reasonable to evaluate our potential to eliminate or minimize these hazards. In addition, while we have sought to be financially responsible, we have implemented program and funding changes which have also made length of ride a concern to many. Finally, school bus service has long been a part of our school system in Minnesota. It is important that we evaluate whether the structure within which that service functions meets the needs of present day society which it serves.

II. Rationale

Providing transportation for Minnesota's children to and from school is recognized as an essential service. The dangers in human, economic, and ecological terms of abandoning this service are so overwhelming as to make it an unreasonable option. Since transportation services are such an integral part of the educational program, it behooves us to make certain that we provide school bus service in the most responsible manner possible with safety the highest concern.

III. Issues Reviewed

- A. The greatest number of school bus related deaths occur at pick up/drop off points. There are many causes of these deaths. One is the student being killed by the bus due to lack of supervision both on school property and/or in residential zones. The inconsistent use of clear crossing signals also is a significant factor. Blind spots around the bus prevent the driver from seeing the child especially in the cases of the student dropping loose papers or projects.

Of equal importance is the student being killed by a passing motorist. These accidents are generally a result of the motorist not being aware of the school bus stop law (MS 169.44), an inability of the motorist to see around the bus, conditions are such that the bus is obscure (weather, terrain, etc.) or the management of the students as they cross the road.

- B. Many parents are concerned about the length of time students spend on buses. It is difficult to set one standard and still meet the varying needs of communities. Size of the district (urban or rural), shape of the district (square or irregular), type of roads (freeway or gravel), and terrain (lake or prairie) all may be elements that determine how long a bus run must be. The tremendous push for efficiency has forced the school bus industry, due to the funding formula, to maximize bus ride length in favor of cost effectiveness. This has resulted in a lower priority for school bus safety standards which could create a greater potential for injuries or fatalities in the future.

Past actions such as consolidation and encouraging larger buses for efficiency may also serve to intensify the problem.

- C. The school bus industry and parents have expressed a concern that present funding formulas do not allow the flexibility in assigning pick up/drop off points that meet the needs of a contemporary society. The issues of day care, residential mobility, crime rates and sidewalks must be addressed.
- D. The provisions of the school bus stop law (M.S. 169.44) are not applicable on private streets and roadways.

IV. Recommendations

- A. The hazards at pick up/drop off points as well as the dangers of passing motorists could be minimized by implementing the following:
1. mandating standards for supervision at all pick up/drop off points on school property (cost - minimal),
 2. working cooperatively with parent organizations to enable the development of neighborhood bus stop monitoring programs,
 3. mandating consistent use of an approved method of indicating safety for crossing (i.e., P.A. system, hand signal or personal escort),
 4. continual district review of safe sties for pick up/drop off points,
 5. setting equipment standards which allow the driver the largest field of vision possible (see Equipment section),
 6. not allowing a student to carry loose papers when leaving the bus,
 - a. give authority for drivers to confiscate loose papers.
 - b. equip each bus with bags with a warning message:

DEAR PARENT--EACH YEAR CHILDREN'S LIVES ARE ENDANGERED BY THEIR OWN BUS WHEN THEY TRY TO RETRIEVE LOOSE PAPERS WHICH HAVE FALLEN UNDER OR NEAR THE BUS. PLEASE PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE SCHOOL BAG TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM.

c. cost--\$10,000.

7. reinstate funding to provide annual bus safety training for drivers and for students at no charge to districts or contract carriers. (see Driver Selection, Training and Examination section).
8. adequate lobbying from parents, school officials, and state government agencies for strict enforcement and penalties for stop arm violators by both the police force and the courts (cost - none),
9. identifying county and community jurisdiction and responsibility to cooperate with the schools in the maintenance of school bus stops, which will promote maximum safety at school bus stop areas (cost--none).
10. providing funding for prominent warning signs at rural school bus stops (cost--\$20,000),
11. allowing special funding or capital outlay monies for roadside bus stop shelters where appropriate (cost--\$200,000 or levy authority granted),
12. allowing capital outlay monies or levy for the construction of walk ways to protect students walking to buses or to school directly (cost--none),
13. developing an active public education program via PSA's, billboards, SBSW Committee, etc. (cost--see Ridership Training and Public Awareness and Education section),
14. the stop arm law (M.S. 169.44) should be modified to be effective at any bus stop on public or private roadway where a school district has assigned a bus stop, and designated use of the eight-light system,
15. the design and remodeling of schools should include criteria relative to maximizing safety and minimizing conflict of vehicular and pedestrian traffic (cost--none).

B. Concerns over length of ride could be minimized by:

1. allowing districts access to funds either through approval procedures or additional local levies to subsidize costs should they wish to run smaller buses to minimize bus ride length (cost--\$200,000 or none if levy authority granted);
2. encouraging the legislature and school board to consider the effects of education related legislation on transportation. When so many demands are placed on the system to run efficiently, it may become a powerful sub-structure that will infringe on the educational program (cost--none).

C. To allow the industry to become more responsive to contemporary society,

funding formulas must be adjusted to reflect present societal realities. While busing can in no way replace parental responsibility, we cannot ignore the safety concerns related to assault, sidewalks, complex family structures, etc. Some potential suggestions would be:

1. amend 124.223, clause 1 to read 1/2 mile instead of 1 mile for K-6 and 1 mile for 7-12.
2. including new variables in the formula such as an allowance for percent of sidewalks, percent of apartments, percent of students in daycare, and crime rate within a given district so that the transportation industry can legally address these very real hazards (DOE should estimate).
3. allowing consideration of unique safety oriented busing programs developed at the local level to meet local needs. Such diversions from established policy would be governed by the State Supervisor of Pupil Transportation and reviewed by the ongoing Safety Task Force (see Administration). It is quite possible that an incentive such as this could lead to very progressive program adjustments (cost--\$50,000).

V. Resources

- A. 1982-83 Kansas Department of Transportation School Bus Loading and Unloading Survey.
- B. Minnesota 1983 Motor Vehicle Crash Facts, Department of Public Safety.
- C. Letter, Robert N. Elo, Director of Transportation, Independent School District #710, St. Louis County, Virginia, Minnesota, October 22, 1984.
- D. Letter, Stan Hynek, Transportation Director, Independent School District #317, Deer River, Minnesota, October 26, 1984.

ADMINISTRATION

I. Introduction

A concern of this Task Force is that the problems identified will not be addressed unless the structure responsible for carrying out our recommendations is adequate in staff, funding, and legislative commitment.

II. Rationale

Considering that over 810,000 students are transported daily by school buses, it is obvious that the present Pupil Transportation staff consisting of a supervisor and one secretary is fully utilized just to maintain operational details. If this Task Force's recommendations are not feasible under the present structure, then it must be part of our responsibility to indicate adjustments we believe are necessary to ensure successful implementation.

III. Issues Reviewed

- A. At the state level there were two major concerns. First of all the Legislature has not yet made a statement of commitment to Pupil Transportation Safety since the entire Pupil Transportation staff in the Department of Education is made up of a supervisor and one secretary. It seems unreasonable to place additional responsibility on such a limited staff.
- B. Secondly, while many useful mandates and guidelines presently exist, districts and contract carriers are aware that compliance cannot be enforced with present staffing.
- C. Local concerns were primarily that the termination of Federal 406 funds and local budgetary confines have affected the ability of districts to spend money in non-operational areas such as safety. Transportation directors continually demonstrate their concern for safety related programs, but without programatically dedicated dollars or the state funded centers to carry them out, school bus safety activities have declined in the state.
- D. In addition, as new programs or mandates are considered (as well as present ones reviewed) it seems important to consider whether the entire state, with its widely varying urban vs. rural settings, can be served by one set of guidelines.

- E. Concerns have also been expressed about the rights and obligations of local transportation directors to control driving assignments so that the safest available drivers are assigned to routes.
- F. There appears to be a lack of consistency in whether or not districts maintain adequate written policy concerning their transportation services.

IV. Recommendations

- A. The task force strongly recommends the addition of a Pupil Transportation Safety Director to the Department of Education. The very nature of this position demands the director would be accessible to the public and private sectors responsible for pupil transportation as well as to the public who use and media who report on use to the general constituency. We would expect the major portion of this position to be spent in field work activities helping schools and private carriers to develop, conduct, monitor, evaluate, and revise their school bus safety efforts. We would foresee responsibilities including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Bus driver training, pupil safety education and public awareness.
 - 2. Serving as a liaison to other government and private agencies which have jurisdiction over any aspect of pupil transportation safety.
 - 3. Monitoring district and contract carrier compliance with existing and future school bus mandates.
 - 4. Preparing a comprehensive annual report to the Supervisor of Pupil Transportation, the School Bus Safety Committee, and the legislature on school bus safety activities.
 - 5. Serving as a repository of statistics and information relative to school bus safety as gathered by other state agencies for use by the legislature, school bus industry, and the media. Given the complexity and responsibilities of the industry, this position can be regarded as nothing short of essential and will be the key to whether any of this Task Force's recommendations are realized (cost, \$65,000).

In addition, we recommend the establishment of an ongoing school bus safety advisory committee made up of industry and public members to work with the Director of Pupil Transportation Safety, in the areas of updating regulations, recommending legislation, and other bus industry related issues (cost, \$5,000 annual).

- B. In order to assure compliance with regulations, the Director of Pupil Transportation Safety must have access to personnel for compliance inspections statewide, the authority to require each school district to place on file with the Department of Education a copy of their transportation policies and a copy of job descriptions for all positions in their transportation office, and the authority to require districts to maintain adequate records of mandated and other safety programs.
- C. Locally, we would refer to the recommendation for funding changes under "Service" which would provide adequate funding and allow creative solutions to once again address safety issues.
- D. Allowing local levies may help to solve the issue of diversity of districts where one state funding rule may not meet all districts' needs, especially relative to hauling distance and time on bus. Where one standard can be set, it should be done at the state level.
- E. There is a need to review and evaluate labor contracts, statutory provisions, and union restrictions relative to employee assignment to assure that student safety is never compromised.
- F. School districts should be directed to develop, implement, and review written policy, regulations and procedures as well as job descriptions for pupil transportation (refer to "Safe Student Bus Drivers," 1981, DPS Task Force, pp. 37-49). These policies should be mandated to be on file with the DOE Pupil Transportation Safety Office and reviewed annually by their local ongoing transportation committee.

V. Resources

- A. Handbook on Management Functions for Pupil Transportation, Rod Dobey.
- B. Safe Student Bus Rider, 1981, DPS Task Force.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Task Force would like to express sincere thanks to the legislature for providing this opportunity to evaluate school bus safety and offer recommendations for improvement. We are indebted to those who offered their time, expertise, and resources to us so that we might be as thorough as time would allow. To Mr. Ron Laliberte, Mr. Gerry Pavsek, Ms. Linda Schroeder, Major Glenn Gramse, and Mr. Harold Peterson, we offer grateful acknowledgment of the vital role they have played in completing the task at hand.

We are committed to the issue of school bus safety and are prepared to assist you further in any way possible.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Task Force on School Bus Safety

1. John H. Shaffer 612/291-9150 - O
Representative 612/647-1755 - H
Minnesota Safety Council
555 Wabasha Street, Suite 102
St. Paul, MN 55102
2. Tom Boerner 612/296-6953 - O
Traffic Safety Programs 612/776-4846 - H
Department of Public Safety
207 State Transportation Building
St. Paul, MN 55155
3. Jan P. Vanderwall 612/633-8150 - O
School Administrator 612/645-9896 - H
Roseville Public Schools
1251 W. County Road B-2
Roseville, MN 55113
4. Bud (Cecil) Fritz 507/926-5404 - H
Bus Driver/Contract Carrier
P.O. Box 42
Reading, MN 56165
5. Jane Oxtan 612/252-8457 - H
Parent/Parent Teacher Association
307 2nd Avenue N.E.
St. Cloud, MN 56301
6. Rodney G. Dobey 612/255-4251 - O
Parent/Associate Professor 612/253-5426 - H
Center for Driver Education & Safety
Whitney House
St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, MN 56301
7. Jenny Hoglund 612/333-2646 Metro
Contract Carrier 612/295-5119 - O
Hoglund Bus Company, Inc.
Route 3, Box 14
Monticello, MN 55362
8. Raymond Kroll 612/627-2580 - O
Transportation Director 612/533-8420 - H
Minneapolis Public Schools
1001 2nd Avenue North
Minneapolis, MN 55405

9. Vera Burgoyne 612/441-1003 - O
 Transportation Director x 110
 Elk River Public Schools
 400 School Street
 Elk River, MN 55330
10. Gloria Rea 612/423-9485 - O
 Transportation Director 612/423-1277 - H
 Rosemount Public Schools
 14445 Diamond Path
 Rosemount, MN 55068
11. Florence Harrington 218/534-3732 - H
 Parent/Driver
 P.O. Box 12
 Deerwood, MN 56444
12. Hugh Salisbury 612/770-7700 - O
 Contract Carrier 612/739-6071 - H
 2866 White Bear Avenue
 St. Paul, MN 55109
13. Jim Johansen 612/421-5785 - O
 Driver/Contract Carrier 612/421-6032 - H
 11911 Cavell Avenue N.
 Champlin, MN 55316

Department of Education

1. Ronald J. Laliberte, Director 612/296-2839 - O
 School District Organization,
 Transportation and Facilities
 939 Capitol Square Building
 550 Cedar Street
 St. Paul, MN 55101
2. Gerald Pavek, Supervisor 612/296-2839 - O
 Pupil Transportation
 939 Capitol Square Building
 550 Cedar Street
 St. Paul, MN 55101

Department of Public Safety

1. Glenn Gramse, Major
 Minnesota State Patrol
 Minnesota Department of Public Safety
 Transportation Building
 St. Paul, MN 55155

2. Harold Peterson
Driver License Section
Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Transportation Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL BUS INFORMATION

School Bus Information

School Bus Portion of Motor Vehicle Crash Facts, Minnesota Department of Public Safety

1983 was not a good year for school bus crashes in Minnesota. The total of seven school buses involved in fatal crashes is the highest number since 1976 and fatalities were up from two in 1982 to eight in 1983. The number of persons injured also increased, from 282 in 1982 to 321 in 1983.

Three of the eight killed were pedestrians and the five others were killed as a result of collisions with other motor vehicles; no school bus occupants were killed. Only three of the fatalities were of school age (5-9 years old), the remainder were 25 or older. Forty-one percent of those injured were of school age (5-19 years old).

It is sometimes confusing to see persons of up to 65 years of age and even older listed as school bus crash casualties. This confusion stems from not realizing that many of the injured persons, and all of the fatalities for 1983, were not school bus occupants, they were pedestrians or occupants of other vehicles involved in crashes with school buses.

In 1983, fatal school bus crashes all occurred during the school year, from January through April and September through December, with three in December alone. January and December were the most common months for injury crashes though others were spread throughout the year.

On an hourly basis, 71 percent of all fatal crashes took place between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., with the other 29 percent occurring from 6 a.m. to noon. Injury crashes occurred around the clock, with one-third between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. and another one-third between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Forty-three percent of school bus fatalities occurred in rural areas with populations of fewer than 1,000 persons per city or township, with only 14 percent in cities with populations over 100,000. Injury crashes show the opposite pattern, 35 percent occurred in the largest cities and 17 percent in the rural area. Again, this is most probably due to the high proportion of high speed roadways in rural areas.

TABLE 6.01

SCHOOL BUSES INVOLVED IN CRASHES, 1974-1983

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
School Buses Involved In All Crashes	539	708	599	724	698	866	678	692	737	694
School Buses Involved In Personal Injury Crashes	148	154	119	162	166	187	171	161	163	162
School Buses Involved In Fatal Crashes	6	2	9	1	2	6	1	2	2	7

TABLE 6.02

1983 SCHOOL BUS INVOLVED CRASHES BY ACCIDENT TYPE

Accident Type	All Crashes	Fatal Crashes	Personal Injury Crashes	Property Damage Crashes
Collision With Other Motor Vehicle	575	4	128	443
Collision With Motor Vehicle In Other Road-Way	6	0	1	5
Collision With Parked Motor Vehicle	60	0	7	53
Collision With Railroad Train	0	0	0	0
Collision With Bicyclist	2	0	2	0
Collision With Pedestrian	15	3	12	0
Collision With Animal	2	0	0	2
Collision With Fixed Object	22	0	7	15
Collision With Other Object	1	0	1	0
Overturn	2	0	1	1
Other	2	0	2	0
Total	687	7	161	519

TABLE 6.03

AGE AND SEX OF PERSONS KILLED & INJURED IN 1983 SCHOOL BUS CRASHES

Age	Fatalities			Injuries			Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Not Stated	
0- 4	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
5- 9	1	2	3	14	15	0	29
10-14	0	0	0	24	29	0	53
15-19	0	0	0	28	23	0	51
20-24	0	0	0	9	12	0	21
25-34	1	2	3	27	16	0	43
35-44	0	0	0	16	17	0	33
45-54	0	0	0	6	14	0	20
55-64	1	0	1	11	8	0	19
65 & Over	0	1	1	5	10	0	15
Unknown	0	0	0	6	24	1	31
Total	3	5	8	146	174	1	321

TABLE 6.04

1983 SCHOOL BUS CRASHES, INJURIES, FATAL CRASHES, FATALITIES BY MONTH

Month	All Crashes	Injuries	Fatal Crashes	Fatalities
January	100	40	1	1
February	95	57	0	0
March	51	11	0	0
April	63	14	1	1
May	43	41	0	0
June	12	8	0	0
July	11	1	0	0
August	13	9	0	0
September	56	28	1	2
October	42	19	1	1
November	62	41	0	0
December	139	47	3	3
Total	687	316	7	8

APPENDIX C

MEETING MINUTES

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

August 2, 1984

The first meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on August 2, 1984, at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills. Those present were: John Shaffer, Tom Boerner, Jan Vanderwall, Jane Oxton, Rod Dobey, Jenny Hogle, Ray Kroll, Vera Burgoyne, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen, Ron Laliberte and Jerry Pavek. Bud Fritz was absent.

The following meeting schedule was agreed upon:

Wednesday, August 15, 1984
Thursday, August 30, 1984
Wednesday, September 12, 1984
Wednesday, September 26, 1984
Wednesday, October 3, 1984
Tuesday, October 16, 1984
Wednesday, October 31, 1984
Wednesday, November 14, 1984
Wednesday, November 28, 1984

The Task Force will continue to meet at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills. The meeting time was set from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Subcommittee meetings will be held in the morning session with the full committee meeting in the afternoon session.

The Task Force elected Rod Dobey as Chairperson and Jane Oxton as Vice-Chairperson.

The Task Force agreed to establish four subcommittees with the following members volunteering to serve on them:

- A. Ridership Training - Public Awareness - Education
 - Vera Burgoyne
 - Jenny Hogle
 - Florence Harrington
- B. Vehicles - Equipment - Inspection
 - Ray Kroll
 - John Shaffer
 - Rod Dobey
 - Tom Boerner
 - Bud Fritz
- C. Service and Administration
 - Ray Kroll

- Jan Vanderwall
- Jane Oxton

D. Driver Selection, Training and Examination

- Gloria Rea
- Jim Johansen
- Hugh Salisbury
- Tom Boerner

Chairperson Dobeey designated the first person listed under each subcommittee as the chair. Subcommittees would further define the areas they are to cover when they meet following the full committee meeting.

Members felt that other people should be brought in that could provide specific knowledge on topics being discussed. They did not feel the Task Force had time for the general public to be invited to speak but would welcome their written comments.

The Task Force is required by law to report its findings and recommendations to the commissioner of education and the education committees of the legislature by December 1, 1984. It was felt that the Task Force must attempt to complete their report as close as possible to that date so that possible legislation can be drafted before the start of the 1985 Legislative Session.

Ron Laliberte informed the Task Force that if they wish to make recommendations that would require state funding, the Department would have to have that information by September 1, 1984, in order to be included in the Department budget request.

Task Force members were informed that they can claim mileage, meals and lodging expense. Mileage would be reimbursed at the rate of \$.27 per mile. Meals would be reimbursed at the rate of \$5.50 for breakfast, \$6.50 for lunch and \$10.50 for dinner. If a Task Force member needs to stay overnight, a receipt must be attached to the expense form in order to be reimbursed for the lodging.

Per diem is also available to Task Force members who are not full time employees of the state or full time employees of a political subdivision of the state. Per diem is set at \$35 per day.

If a Task Force member is unable to attend a meeting, a substitute could be sent. The substitute would not have voting privileges. M.S. 15.0575 states that if a Task Force member misses three consecutive meetings, he/she can be removed from the Task Force.

OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED :

Ray Kroll expressed a desire to see this committee or a committee consisting of members from school districts, contractors, parent groups, safety groups, Education Department, Public Safety Department, etc., continue to meet on school bus safety related issues.

Individuals who both train and test drivers was a concern expressed by Gloria Rea. She fears many trainers do not get beyond the drivers manual and expand into other areas. Jim Johansen stated that trainer/testers are

necessary because the state driver exam stations are so busy. Tom Boerner said that there might be some way to expedite the testing of school bus drivers.

Task Force members wondered if there were ways of monitoring compliance with current laws and rules especially in areas of equipment requirements and safety education for students. It was suggested that each subcommittee should consider ways to help and/or monitor districts compliance with current regulations.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

August 15, 1984

The second meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on August 15, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills. Those present were: John Shaffer, Tom Boerner, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxton, Jenny Hogle, Ray Kroll, Vera Burgoyne, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen and Jerry Pavek. Rod Dobey and Gloria Rea were absent.

Jane Oxton, Vice-Chairperson, called the meeting to order. Each subcommittee reported on the school bus safety topics they are covering. The following comments were made:

A. Ridership Training - Public Awareness - Education

Vera Burgoyne stated that the areas this subcommittee would like to see more emphasis on are:

- All students getting to school safely and comfortably such that the trip doesn't adversely impact the educational process.
- Students having a positive attitude about riding the bus.
- Making the loading and unloading of passengers as safe as possible.

The subcommittee feels that state funding should be requested for the following items:

- Purchase of more signs informing motorists to stop for school buses with flashing red lights.
- Development of a curriculum on bus ridership for all grade levels.
- Use of billboards, particularly at the beginning of the school year, to promote public awareness of school bus safety.
- Increased emphasis, through the Department of Education audit process, on district compliance with the State Board rule that requires instruction of pupils in safe riding practices and emergency evacuation drills.

Other areas of importance outside the scope of the subcommittee are as follows:

- District responsibility in developing written transportation policies that cover such things as loading and unloading.

- School bus driver training should include ways drivers should handle students and parents.

- Older school buses that were retrofitted with the 8-light system should be inspected more carefully. When buses are idling with everything running, such as lights, defrosters, etc., the 8-light system does not operate properly.

Jenny Hoglund believes that driver training students should be taught how to react to stopped school buses. She also feels that the stop arm law needs to be rewritten. In its present state, a lawyer was able to have a motorist acquitted who was charged with failing to stop for a school bus with the stop arm extended.

The subcommittee also feels that new ridership films should be purchased. The films that are currently available are very outdated. Tom Boerner said the State Patrol Film Library currently has additional federal funds with which to purchase films. The Department of Public Safety's Public Information Office should be contacted. Since this is the last year federal funds are available, Tom Boerner feels that some provision should be made to purchase school bus safety films through a state appropriation.

B. Vehicles - Equipment - Inspection

Ray Kroll discussed equipment that could possibly be added to current bus specifications to improve school bus safety. These items are:

- Seat Belts. There is currently a number of booklets, articles, etc., dealing with the seat belt issue. He will put together the material and distribute it at the September 12, 1984 meeting. The October 3, 1984 meeting will be devoted to the seat belt issue. It was suggested that Morris Adams of Thomas Built Buses be invited to speak at the October 3rd meeting about the pros and cons of seat belt usage.

John Shaffer also mentioned that the Physicians for Automotive Safety and the National School Bus Safety Task Force have published a great deal of material on the seat belt issue. He feels that a great deal of consideration must be given to the style of belt, e.g. waist, shoulder, etc., and the style of seat if seat belts are eventually installed in school buses.

It was decided that the Task Force should have a chance to see seats that are currently being used in school buses. Jenny Hoglund will bring a bus to the October 3rd meeting that will have a pre 1973 seat, pre 1977 seat and current style of seat installed in it.

Jane Oxton said the financial issue should not be the only consideration whether or not seat belts are installed in older school buses. Groups concerned with safety issues would not find finances

alone to be a credible excuse for not installing seat belts.

- Mirrors. Ray Kroll plans on bringing different mirrors to future Task Force meetings. In the recent contracts he negotiated, more mirrors were required than are currently specified in school bus equipment standards.

- Student Control Arm. The arm, which is attached to the front bumper, forces students to walk a number of feet in front of the bus so they remain in the bus driver's sight.

- Crossing Box. The device, or box, has a red light on the top, a green light on the bottom and a sounding device in the middle. The box is mounted on the outside of the bus near the driver. The driver uses it to signal students when it is safe to cross the roadway.

The subcommittee feels that current federal school bus specifications on construction of school buses is quite good. Ray Kroll stated that his new contracts specify that after four years Minneapolis will not allow the use of school buses manufactured before April 1, 1977. . . the date when federal school bus standards became more restrictive.

Ray Kroll also distributed an article on how the cutback in federal monies has affected school bus safety.

C. Service and Administration

Jan Vanderwall feels the areas of greatest importance to this subcommittee are as follows:

- Parents must share in the responsibility of designating pick up points.

- School districts' transportation policies should cover transporting pupils to and from Day Care facilities and houses where parents are not at home.

- The state should think of setting a standard for the maximum length of time students should spend on school buses.

- Public education of school bus laws should be improved. Perhaps a greater promotion of School Bus Safety Week activities would help accomplish this.

- School bus driver training should be improved.

- Equipment standards should be upgraded, e.g., requiring two crossover mirrors.

Jan Vanderwall distributed a list of goals set by the Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation at its January 1984 meeting.

D. Driver Selection, Training and Examination

Tom Boerner will invite Harold Peterson of Driver and Vehicle Services to the September 26, 1984 meeting. He will be able to answer questions on what is currently available on driving records. He also stated that Major Gramse of the State Patrol could be invited to a future meeting to discuss school bus inspections.

Jim Johansen feels that the Task Force should have legal counsel particularly in the area of requesting information on the background of drivers. It was suggested that the Attorney General assigned to Public Safety, Joel Watne, should appear before the Task Force to answer any legal questions.

Tom Boerner feels that the proposed rule change in licensing of school bus drivers that Jerry Pavek distributed at the beginning of the meeting should be carefully studied before it is adopted. There might be areas that need strengthening.

It was also discussed whether or not to put the driver license checks in rule as opposed to just a recommendation as it is now. It was pointed out that getting rules adopted takes about six months.

Currently there are no procedures for obtaining information from the Criminal Apprehension Division of the Department of Public Safety. Ray Kroll feels that the Task Force should develop some procedures.

Jan Vanderwall would like to see the Department of Public Safety notify districts/contractors when a school bus driver has been convicted of a felony. The Task Force feels that the Department of Public Safety possibly could check for felonies every six months as opposed to only when the license is renewed (every four years) or when drivers submit physical exam forms (every two years).

The Task Force members feel that too much attention is given to bad drivers when the vast majority of drivers are excellent. Although there are a number of driver award programs in place now, good drivers may not be getting the recognition and publicity they should.

Next Meeting

Task Force members should bring their requests for the Department of Education biennial budget to the next meeting. The requests should include a narrative of explanation and justification along with the dollar amount necessary to implement each request.

There are approximately 20,000 licensed school bus drivers and 9,000 school buses in the state of Minnesota. Task Force members should use these base figures in preparing their budget requests.

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Thursday, August 30, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

August 30, 1984

The third meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on Thursday, August 30, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center. Members present were: John Shaffer, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxton, Rod Dobey, Ray Kroll, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury and Jerry Pavek. Alternates and guests present were: Jim DeVeau, Kathy Swanson, Glenn Gramse, Joe Beaton and Nancy Kallenbach. Tom Boerner, Jenny Hoglund, Vera Burgoyne and Jim Johansen were absent.

A film, Children in Traffic, was shown at the beginning of the Task Force meeting. It dealt with how children view traffic. The Task Force feels this would be a good film to show to children as well as to bus drivers, teachers and parents.

Rod Dobey, Chairperson, called the meeting to order. Each subcommittee was asked to report on its findings. The reports are as follows:

Vehicles - Equipment - Inspection

Ray Kroll reported that the subcommittee would like to see the following equipment added or improved upon in state school bus specifications:

- Mirrors. The subcommittee feels the language in the state specifications should be changed to agree with the language in the federal specifications. There should be exterior mirrors, 7 1/2" in diameter, on both the right and left. Current Minnesota minimum standards require only one crossover mirror on the left side. In the state of Minnesota, two mirrors shall be installed, to meet FMVSS 571.111 issued August 30, 1983, with stable supports, and mounted on the left and right front end of bus. Each mirror shall be properly adjusted to give a clear view to front and side.

The subcommittee presented Jerry Pavek with a written request to have the cost of the convex mirrors included in the Department of Education's biennial budget request. Estimated cost of requiring the additional mirrors on all buses in the state would be \$522,000 which includes the cost of the mirrors, brackets and installation.

The subcommittee feels that school bus drivers must also be trained on how to use mirrors properly.

- Seatbelts. There is a great deal of material to be studied before any recommendation is made on the seat belt issue by the

subcommittee. Jane Oxton gave the subcommittee some films which deal with the seat belt issue.

- **Compartmentalization.** The subcommittee feels districts and contractors should be encouraged to replace their older buses so that by the 1987-88 school year, only buses that meet the federal standard for compartmentalization . . . those buses manufactured after April 1, 1977 . . . will be in use.

Optional equipment to be considered includes:

- **Lighted Stop Arm.** The background should be reflectorized in case the lights fail. Jan Vanderwall feels that a pre-trip inspection should determine whether or not the lights are working. Since failure of the lights during operation is rare, requiring a reflectorized background is unnecessary.

- **Crossing Control Arm.** The arm, which is attached to the front bumper, forces students to walk ten feet in front of the bus so they remain in the bus driver's sight.

- **Strobe Light.** Its visibility and effectiveness should be studied.

- **Black Box.** The box has a red light on the top, a green light on the bottom and a sounding device in the middle. The box is mounted on the outside of the bus near the driver. The driver uses it to signal students when it is safe to cross the roadway.

- **P.A. System.** A public address system that could be used both inside and outside the bus should be considered. Bus drivers could use the P.A. system to tell students when it is safe to cross the roadway.

Inspections. The subcommittee feels that the state should return to semi-annual school bus inspections. By requiring a semi-annual inspection, districts and contractors would have more incentive to keep their fleets in better condition. The subcommittee feels that the Task Force should recommend legislation that would return the state to semi-annual school bus inspections. Estimated cost of this proposal would be \$500,000 for hiring additional LCRs by the Department of Public Safety to conduct the inspections.

Ray Kroll informed the Task Force that Minneapolis has implemented a policy concerning school bus accidents which he will distribute at a future Task Force meeting. The policy covers such things as who to contact in case of an accident, equipment that emergency personnel should dispatch to the accident scene and follow-up care by the school nurse when the child returns to school. The policy was developed with the help of the staff of the Hennepin County Medical Center and the Minneapolis school nurse's office.

Driver Selection, Training and Examination

Gloria Rea reported that the subcommittee feels that the

recommendations on pages 10-12 of the School Bus Safety Review Committee report are being followed by the Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Department of Public Safety. However, the subcommittee would like to see the following changes made in the recommendations:

- If a school bus driver has a conviction or suspension on record in the last three years, the school bus endorsement should be pulled (VI.9).

- Driving records should be checked during the first 60 days of the school year and once again during the next 120 days, rather than the present recommendation of September 15 and January 15 (XI).

The subcommittee also feels that school bus driver training must include how drivers should deal with improper behavior of students.

They would also like to see an employee in the Driver and Vehicles Services Section that would periodically check the criminal and driving records of all persons having a school bus endorsement.

If the Task Force desires, Ray Kroll could invite Lt. Ed Donaldson of the Juvenile Division of the Minneapolis Police Department to a future meeting. Lt. Donaldson helped him obtain information from Dakota County Court to suspend a Minneapolis school bus driver who was recently convicted of sexual misconduct.

The subcommittee feels that there should be a state-wide school bus driver training program. The hours of training that were recommended on page 11 of the School Bus Safety Review Committee report should become mandatory. The cost of this training program is estimated to be \$5 million . . . \$500 per driver times 20,000 drivers. They would like to see the state pay for 50% of the training costs.

It was suggested that each driver attend at least two in-service training sessions each year. The sessions could be held at centralized locations or ECSUs and cover such topics as student behavior modification, first aid, driver training, etc.

In order to receive reimbursement, districts and contractors would be required to submit some type of documentation to the state that their school bus drivers received the mandated training.

Gloria Rea also stated that the subcommittee feels drivers should be required to take a road test in a school bus every four years and a written test every two years. There are presently many older drivers who have never had a road test in a school bus.

Service and Administration

Jane Oxtan reported that the subcommittee feels that the eligibility standards for state pupil transportation aid should be reviewed. We are presently operating under laws and rules that were adopted years ago. There is now a new set of social standards,

e.g., greater mobility, greater assault potential, changing family structure where children are home alone, school closings which force children to attend schools outside their neighborhood and housing developments without sidewalks forcing children to walk in the streets. They feel that perhaps the one mile eligibility for state aid should be changed, or parents should be able to pay districts for transportation if their children would be ineligible for transportation.

The subcommittee distributed a budget proposal that Jan Vanderwall had prepared. The proposal goes along with the handout of the goals set by the Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation that Jan Vanderwall distributed at the August 15, 1984 meeting. It was suggested each subcommittee review the budget proposal to be sure it addresses the interests of their subcommittee.

Ridership Training - Public Awareness - Education

Florence Harrington distributed a proposal that state funding be appropriated to provide for printing and posting billboards at the beginning of each school year to remind motorists that school buses are once again on the road and that extra caution is necessary. They feel that the winning poster from the safety poster contest for students should be used as the next years billboard. Since billboard companies donate the billboard space, estimated cost of this proposal is \$12,000.

Other ways of increasing public awareness of school bus safety include:

- Printing school bus laws on the sides of paper milk cartons.
- Printing placemats to be used at fast food restaurants.
- Greater distribution of pamphlets such as, "It's the Law."

Florence Harrington feels other areas of importance to this subcommittee are as follows:

- More emphasis on the meaning of flashing yellow lights.
- Development of a curriculum on bus ridership for all grade levels that would include films and video tapes.
- Increased emphasis, through the Department of Education audit process, on district compliance with the State Board rule that requires instruction of pupils in safe riding practices and emergency evacuation drills. Also, that all districts have developed written policies on pupil transportation.

Department of Education's Biennial Budget

The Task Force has asked Jerry Pavek to submit a request for the biennial budget to Dr. Ruth E. Randall, Commissioner of Education, for \$3.5 million for school bus safety activities. It

should be stressed that this is just a preliminary request and that there are many other issues still being discussed, such as seat belts, that could change the request.

Minutes of Task Force Meetings

The Task Force has agreed not to release the meeting minutes until they have been officially approved by the Task Force.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, September 12, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

September 12, 1984

The fourth meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on Wednesday, September 12, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center. Members present were: Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Rod Dobe, Jenny Hoglund, Ray Kroll, Vera Burgoyne, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen and Jerry Pavak. Alternates and guests present were: Ron Laliberte, Harold Peterson, Stanton Shanedling and Glenn Gramse. John Shaffer, Tom Boerner and Jane Oxtan were absent.

Chairperson Dobe called the meeting to order. The minutes of the August 30, 1984 meeting were discussed and two changes were made. They are:

- Mirrors. The last sentence of the first paragraph on mirrors should read, "In the state of Minnesota, two mirrors shall be installed, to meet FMVSS 571.111 issued August 30, 1983, with stable supports, and mounted on the left and right front end of the bus. Each mirror shall be properly adjusted to give a clear view to front and side."

- Department of Education's Biennial Budget. The \$3.5 million should cover all "school bus safety activities," not just school bus driver training and education.

Budget Request - Education

Ron Laliberte informed the Task Force that they may request funding for their proposals from either the Department's aids budget or as a recommendation to the Legislature or both. If they decide to request funding through the Department's aids budget, they may either request that the transportation aids budget be increased or that a new categorical aid be established. A categorical aid directs very specifically what can be done with the money.

As there is very little time left before the Department's budget must be finalized, Task Force members should forward their requests to Jan Vanderwall early next week using the form and instructions distributed by the Department of Education. Jan will prepare the final request(s) which he will bring to the September 26, 1984 meeting for the Task Force's approval. Rod Dobe will also write the Commissioner of Education advising her that the Task Force will soon be making an appropriation request of approximately \$3 million for school bus safety activities to be included in the F.Y. 1986-87 Department of Education school aids biennial budget request.

If money is appropriated, procedures or rules would have to be developed on how the money would be distributed, e.g., so much per driver, etc. The state can only reimburse public agencies, so if a private operator is providing his own training, they would have to contract with a school district. The school district would then be able to claim the training expense and receive reimbursement.

Budget Request - Public Safety

Glenn Gramse reported that it would cost the Department of Public Safety an additional \$175,000 annually to return to semi-annual school bus inspections. Three additional LCRs and three additional laborers would be required. Travel time for the present LCRs would be reduced and the spot "re-check" program would be abolished.

The Task Force has officially requested that the Department of Public Safety include \$175,000 annually in its budget to provide for semi-annual school bus inspections. Rod Dobey will write to the Commissioner of Public Safety advising him of this request.

The subcommittee reports were as follows:

Service and Administration

Jan Vanderwall would like to see a full-time employee in the Department of Education or Public Safety who would be responsible for school bus safety activities. Most Task Force members feel that the employee should probably be in the Department of Education because of its close association with school districts. However, they would strongly encourage that this employee work closely with the various divisions in the Department of Public Safety.

The Task Force also would like to see the employee working with students, drivers, transportation directors, parents and the general public, on all school bus safety related issues. The employee would also be responsible for monitoring school district compliance with certain laws and rules, e.g., student ridership training, school bus inspections, etc. It was suggested that the Task Force draft a set of guidelines or tasks for the safety position.

Ron Laliberte informed the Task Force that the Department has included in its operating budget request, a position that will be responsible for school bus safety activities.

Jenny Hogle expressed a desire to see an ongoing Task Force. As this Task Force is required by statute to end on June 30, 1985 and the Department of Education is limited in the number of Task Forces it can have, legislation would have to be introduced to create a new Task Force that would be able to continue after June 30, 1985. She also feels that one responsibility of the safety employee would be to give guidance to the Task Force.

Vehicles - Equipment - Inspections

Seat Belts. Morris Adams of Thomas Built Buses will be appearing at the October 3, 1984 Task Force meeting to discuss the pros and cons of seat belt usage. The subcommittee would like Mr. Adams to make his presentation during the morning session with the afternoon session devoted to a discussion of the direction the Task Force will be taking on the seat belt issue.

The subcommittee will be distributing a packet of materials on seat belts on or before the September 26, 1984 meeting so that Task Force members will have time to study them before October 3, 1984.

Compartmentalization. Jim Johansen expressed some concern about the Task Force recommending that all districts and contractors replace their pre-1977 school buses. He stated that many contractors are operating a number of pre-1977 school buses and that the cost of replacing them would be too great. The pre-1977 school buses were required to have seats with padding although it is not as good as the padding in post-1977 school buses.

Ray Kroll feels most contractors would pass along replacement costs when new contracts are negotiated with districts. A recommendation could be made for a special levy authorization for districts to raise funds to reimburse contractors for phasing-up their bus fleets to include only post-1977 buses.

Inspections. (See Budget Request - Public Safety.) Glenn Gramse informed the Task Force that the 1983 School Bus Inspection Report is available and will be distributed by the Department of Education. The report details the number of buses inspected, defects by year, etc.

Glenn Gramse will bring the recently revised school bus inspection manual to a future Task Force meeting.

Optional Equipment. The subcommittee recommends that the State Board Rule on minimum standards be amended to include installation of either one or both of the following items: lighted stop arm or strobe light. This equipment would help alert motorists of a stopped school bus.

They also recommend consideration of the installation of one or more of the following items: crossing control arm, black box or public address system. This equipment would be used by the bus driver to signal students when it is safe to cross the roadway.

Taillights. The subcommittee recommends that the State Board Rule on minimum standards be amended to require at least 7" diameter taillights and that they be located right below the beltline.

Ridership Training - Public Awareness - Education

Vera Burgoyne will be distributing a list of the recommendations of this subcommittee. It is requested that Task Force Members review them and recommend any changes deemed necessary. The recommendations are:

- Ridership Training

1. Development of a curriculum on bus ridership for all grade levels.
2. Auditing and enforcement of instruction of pupils in safe riding practices and emergency evacuation drills.
3. Updating the film library.
4. Classroom teachers becoming more involved in ridership training.

- Public Awareness and Education

1. Signs along roadways informing motorists to stop for school buses with flashing red lights.
2. Use of billboards to promote public awareness of school bus safety.
3. More emphasis in drivers training on the meaning of the yellow caution lights.
4. Increasing the understanding and awareness of the state patrol, county sheriffs, local police and judges, as to school bus stop laws.

Driver Selection, Training and Examination

Gloria Rea reported that the subcommittee would like to know if the Task Force thinks the Criteria for Issuing and Renewing School Bus Driver License Endorsement (VI) recommendations made by the previous School Bus Safety Review Committee (yellow book) should be enacted into law. The Task Force members indicated they would like to have more time to study the proposal before they make a final decision.

Ray Kroll feels that a future meeting should be devoted to the issue of obtaining background information on school bus drivers from the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. He would like a representative from the Bureau to appear before the Task Force to provide information on what is available and how it can be obtained.

Harold Peterson indicated that the only time the Drivers License Division checks with the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to see if a school bus driver has had any convictions is when the driver initially applies for the license. Federal regulations limit what information can be obtained on the criminal background of an individual.

Other Topics Discussed

Jenny Hoglund informed the Task Force that Wrigleys Big Red gum commercial has children hanging from the windows of a school bus and running around the bus stop area. She thinks a letter should be written to Wrigleys asking them to either withdraw or revise their commercial.

A number of Task Force members have seen public service announcements dealing with school bus stop laws. If tapes of these public service announcements could be obtained, they could be distributed to the various educational channels on cable television.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, September 26, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills.

Jan Vanderwall will bring the request(s) for the Department of Education's biennial budget.

The Task Force would like Harold Peterson from Driver and Vehicle Services to come to the September 26, 1984 meeting.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

September 26, 1984

The fifth meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on Wednesday, September 26, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center. Members present were: John Shaffer, Tom Boerner, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxton, Rod Dobey, Ray Kroll, Vera Burgoyne, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen and Jerry Pavek. Alternates and guests present were: Harold Peterson, Jim DeVeau and Glenn Gramse. Jenny Hoglund was absent.

Chairperson Dobey called the meeting to order. The minutes of the September 12, 1984 meeting were discussed and one change was made. The second paragraph on optional equipment should read: They also recommend "consideration of the" installation of one or more of the following items: crossing control arm, black box or public address system. This equipment would be used by the bus driver to signal students when it is safe to cross the roadway.

Final Report

As the Task Force is required by law to report its findings and recommendations by December 1, 1984, subcommittees should have a rough draft of their findings ready for the October 31, 1984 meeting. Task Force members should also be thinking of what format should be used in the final document. Rod Dobey suggested that each subcommittee could begin its report with a statement of rationale as to how the issues addressed by the subcommittee will improve school bus safety in Minnesota.

Budget Request - Education

Jan Vanderwall presented Jerry Pavek with the Task Force's request for the Department of Education's biennial budget. The request is for \$3 million for school bus safety activities for the upcoming biennium.

Budget Request - Public Safety

Tom Boerner informed the Task Force that the Commissioner of

Public Safety received their budget request for \$175,000 to provide for semi-annual school bus inspections. The Department will not be able to include this request in its budget because the budget has been finalized. He suggested that the Task Force include the request in its recommendations to the Legislature. Glenn Gramse assured the Task Force that the Department of Public Safety would testify favorably at any legislative hearings on semi-annual school bus inspections.

Jan Vanderwall would like the Department of Public Safety to reconsider the budget request. They could add a notation that the Task Force has asked the Department to include this item in their budget. The impact on the Legislature would be greater if both the Task Force and the Department recommended it.

The Task Force decided to include the semi-annual school bus inspection request in its report to the Legislature. The Task Force also requested that the Department of Public Safety support the Task Force's position before legislative committees.

Driver Selection, Training and Examination

Examination. Gloria Rea reported that the subcommittee reviewed the criteria for issuing and renewing school bus driver license requirements that were distributed with the September 12, 1984 Task Force minutes. It is recommended that Item 2 become Item 3, Item 3 become Item 4, and Item 4 become Item 2. Also Item 7 should be changed from "conviction free for the past 6 months" to "conviction free for the past 12 months".

The subcommittee would like to see legislation enacted which establishes a standard for the amount of drugs present in an individual which would cause driving ability to be adversely affected. Ray Kroll stated that he requires school bus drivers to take a physical if it is suspected they are under the influence of drugs.

Gloria Rea asked Harold Peterson to write a statement on the criteria for issuing and renewing the school bus driver license endorsement used in Minnesota. This statement could be reproduced in the MAPT and MSBOA newsletters. Many districts and contractors may not be aware of what options are available after they have checked on the driving records of their school bus drivers.

The subcommittee would also like to see a full-time employee in the Department of Public Safety who would check on the criminal background of all licensed school bus drivers. Each driver's record should be checked once every two years. It would have to be determined how related the offense is to the job (e.g., should a felony conviction for writing a bad check prevent an individual from obtaining a school bus driver license endorsement?).

It was also discussed whether districts and contractors can require a prospective employee to sign a form allowing examination of the individual's criminal record. Hugh Salisbury stated that their lawyer advised that they could not request this type of information.

Ray Kroll informed the Task Force that when he was gathering information from the Dakota County Clerk of Court's office to dismiss a driver for criminal misconduct, he was able to obtain the file number. The Minneapolis school district attorney then wrote a letter requesting the information on that file. In this particular incident, the file contained information on previous convictions, however, this is not always the case. It was pointed out that there is usually a long time between the time an individual is charged and the time of conviction.

Harold Peterson informed the Task Force that Driver and Vehicle Services checked the criminal background of approximately 3000 school bus drivers last year. Only 30 drivers were found to have felony convictions. Driver and Vehicle Services refused to issue a school bus driver license endorsement to four of the 30 because each had two felony convictions.

The Task Force discussed whether the criteria for issuing and renewing school bus driver license endorsements should be enacted into law or adopted as rule. Although a rule would allow for more flexibility, it was the general consensus of the Task Force that a law would have greater impact. Gloria Rea stated that these criteria should be made into law because future employees of the Driver and Vehicle Services Section might not be as conscientious as the present staff in applying them.

Training. The number of hours of training recommended by the School Bus Safety Review Committee (page 11, yellow book) should become mandatory.

Ridership Training - Public Awareness - Education

Vera Burgoyne distributed a summary of the recommendations of the subcommittee. Each member of the Task Force should read it and provide comments as appropriate.

Films. Tom Boerner reported that this is the last year federal funds would be available to purchase films for the State Patrol Film Library. The Department of Public Safety is considering charging a \$5 to \$15 film rental fee which would be used for future film purchases. He would like recommendations from the Task Force on how the film library should be funded.

Jan Vanderwall stated that he will prepare a list of new school bus safety films. Since there is no longer any federal 406 monies, many film companies stopped making school bus safety films. Tom Boerner stated that the Department of Public Safety is not allowed to purchase school bus safety films with federal 402 monies.

Wording on Back of Bus. Rod Dobey asked why the lettering was removed from the rear door of school buses. Jerry Pavek stated that when the state went to the 8-light system, the lettering requirement was dropped. Manufacturers also started putting glass in the bottom

half of the rear door. It was further noted that the lettering was so small that motorists were not able to read it until they were almost immediately behind the bus.

Consideration should be given to requiring the lettering again because of the large number of stop arm violations. Also, many individuals are color blind and cannot distinguish between the amber and red lights.

Service and Administration

Jan Vanderwall stated that because this subcommittee has fewer issues to discuss than the other subcommittees, they would be willing to begin writing reports, that would include both recommendations and justifications for all subcommittees. They could also start assembling statistics and facts that would be part of the final document.

The final report might include such ideas as a) subsidizing cities to build sidewalks, b) subsidizing districts and contractors to buy bigger buses that give the driver a clear view to the front and side of the bus, c) changes in the pupil transportation aid formula and d) an ongoing Task Force.

Vehicles - Equipment - Inspection

Seat Belts. Ray Kroll distributed a packet of material on seat belts that his subcommittee had assembled. The National School Bus Report, Spring 1984, is not in the packet but will be distributed as soon as it is received.

John Shaffer also distributed some material on seat belts. He noted that although most deaths and injuries occur outside of the bus, parents are very concerned with the seat belt issue.

Retrofitting older school buses with seat belts would almost be impossible. It would be best if school buses were factory equipped with seat belts. Some Task Force members were concerned that if just a few buses that were equipped with seat belts were added to a fleet, certain parents would think districts were discriminating against their children by not providing the same equipped buses as were provided other children.

John Shaffer stated that many people have expressed a fear that children would use seat belts as weapons. He feels that seat belts do not present any greater danger than lunch boxes or books.

Compartmentalization. Using figures from the 1983 School Bus Inspection Report, the subcommittee estimated the cost of phasing-up bus fleets to include only post-1977 school buses would be approximately \$150 million. The following breakdown was provided

1976 buses: 1083 units @ \$35,000 = \$37,905,000

1975 buses: 989 units @ \$37,100 = \$36,691,900
1974 buses: 770 units @ \$39,326 = \$30,281,020
1973 and
older buses: 1294 units @ \$41,685 = \$53,940,390

Taillights. The subcommittee recommends the installation of four Class A taillights on each school bus. The four taillights would show the horizontal width of the bus and provide a back-up system should one of the lights fail.

Inspections. Glenn Gramse told Task Force members to disregard page 19 of the recently distributed 1983 School Bus Inspection Report as it contains some inaccurate information.

Radar. Gloria Rea recently learned that the bumpers and sides of school buses can be equipped with radar. If a bus starts to move and something is in front or to the side of it, the radar will activate a sounding device.

Other Topics Discussed

Rod Dobeay informed the Task Force that he contacted Barbara Sadek, Public Relations Manager at Wrigleys, about their Big Red gum commercial. She was unaware the commercial was portraying unsafe school bus ridership practices. As the commercial was prepared by an advertising agency and has been released nationwide, there is nothing they can do to stop it from being shown.

School Bus Accidents. Task Force members expressed an interest in obtaining more details about the Bloomington (September 25, 1984) bus accident, e.g., type of seats, type of injuries, etc. They thought it would be helpful if they could interview some of the passengers.

At an accident in Minneapolis a few years ago, a number of the children walked home before the paramedics arrived. They were treated for shock much later that evening. Gloria Rea reported that they have had trouble with parents taking their children home before help arrives.

The Task Force members believe there should be improved school bus accident investigation. The State Patrol or National Transportation Safety Board is sometimes contacted too late or not at all.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, October 3, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills.

The subcommittee on Equipment submitted the following agenda for the October 3, 1984 Task Force Meeting:

10:00 Introductions
10:10 Presentation by Morris Adams
11:20 Move outside to view bus
12:00 Lunch
12:30 Open discussion
2:00 Adjourn

Rod DobeY would like all Task Force members to read the material they received on seat belts so they are prepared for the meeting. Each member should also bring in their reactions in writing to the recommendations made by the subcommittees on Driver Selection, Training and Examination, and Ridership Training and Public Awareness.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

October 3, 1984

The sixth meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on Wednesday, October 3, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center. Members present were: John Shaffer, Tom Boerner, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxton, Rod Dobey, Jenny Hoglund, Ray Kroll, Vera Burgoyne, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury and Jerry Pavek. Alternates and guests present were: Jim DeVeau, Thomas Lee, Stanton Shanedling, Morris Adams, James Pederson and William Hobert. Jim Johansen was absent.

The Task Force meeting was devoted to a discussion of the seat belt issue. Morris Adams of Thomas Built Buses made a presentation during the morning session. After lunch, the Task Force members viewed the three types of seats presently used in school buses in Minnesota on the school bus that was provided by Jenny Hoglund. The remainder of the afternoon session was devoted to a discussion of the direction the Task Force will be taking on the seat belt issue.

John Shaffer noted that although it is not known whether seat belts in school buses would help reduce deaths and injuries, some parents have expressed a favorable attitude concerning seat belts. He personally leans toward requiring seat belts in school buses because of his involvement with the seat belt issue in automobiles. Although some people believe seat belts would trap passengers in a burning bus, this type of accident happens so rarely that this concern should not be considered a valid concern. During the discussion it was noted that the National Safety Council has not taken a formal stand on whether seat belts should be required in school buses, and will not until more studies are completed.

William Hobert, Duluth Schools Safety Director, stated that children are being taught at an early age the importance of wearing seat belts. By not requiring seat belts in school buses, schools are not reinforcing this teaching. A few years ago, an experiment was conducted that required elementary students to wear seat belts on a school bus. One result of the experiment was that the students urged their parents to wear seat belts in the family automobile.

James Pederson of the Duluth Police Department informed the Task Force that while conducting safety classes in Duluth Elementary Schools, he surveys students on whether they wear seat belts in automobiles. He found that in the younger grades, nearly 100% of the students wear seat belts. In the sixth grade the results are exactly

the opposite. It is at the third grade level that the transition takes place. When asked why they stopped wearing seat belts, a common reply is, "My parents don't wear seat belts. Why should I?" He further noted that students frequently ask why school buses are not equipped with seat belts.

Morris Adams pointed out that the issue essentially becomes a matter of where can we do the most good to improve school bus safety. Are seat belts the answer or would more lives be saved by requiring safety instruction for elementary pupils?

Because the majority of accidents occur during loading and unloading, the Task Force strongly recommends that there be increased emphasis and education of the danger zone outside the school bus.

Jan Vanderwall feels that a number of questions need to be answered before the Task Force can make any decision on the seat belt issue. These questions include:

1. How many lives could be saved if school buses were equipped with seat belts?

2. Would money appropriated for seat belts detract from other safety issues?

3. What type of injuries occur in school bus roll-overs?

4. What type of school bus accidents are we trying to prevent: front-back, side or roll-over? How will seat belts prevent injuries in these types of accidents?

It was noted that state school bus specifications do not prohibit seat belt installation. Morris Adams informed the Task Force that the federal performance standards for seat belts in large school buses are the same as the performance standards for small school buses.

The Task Force members agreed that before a decision is made to require seat belts in all school buses in Minnesota, more research and testing must be done. It was suggested that a few districts be selected as test districts. Each district could operate one or two buses that were equipped with seat belts for a set period of time. At the end of that period, it would need to be determined if any deaths or injuries were prevented.

The funding for installation of seat belts in the school buses owned by the test districts could either be by a special grant from a legislative appropriation or through depreciation cost in the Department of Education pupil transportation aid formula.

It was agreed that the test districts should be from both urban and rural areas. The test districts would have total control of the program. It would be up to them to make sure the pupils wore the seat belts. They would also have to rearrange their route schedules to allow more time at each stop so that the pupils could fasten their seat belts.

Jane Oxton stated that the pupils who are assigned to the seat belt-equipped school buses must be given instruction as to proper seat belt usage. Also, a concern is that a district might hesitate to add only one or two seat belt-equipped buses to the fleet because of pressure from parents to have all district buses equipped with seat belts. The Task Force would have to assist the test districts in reassuring parents that if seat belts prove to be effective, all buses in the district will be equipped with them.

Final Report to the Legislature

Tom Boerner stated that the final report to the Legislature should not be limited to recommendations for improving school bus safety. The report should include positive comments about the present level of safety of school buses. The Task Force also should not hesitate to say that they have not reached a final decision in all areas because a great deal more research needs to be done.

Other Topics Discussed

Rod Dobey told the Task Force that Commissioner Tschida will be writing a letter informing them that the Department of Public Safety will support the Task Force's position that the state return to semi-annual school bus inspections. Also, Rod Dobey will write the Canadian government seeking the results of tests they conducted on seat belts in school buses.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Tuesday, October 16, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

October 16, 1984

The seventh meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on October 16, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center. Members present: John Shaffer, Tom Boerner, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxton, Rod Dobey, Jenny Hoglund, Ray Kroll, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen and Jerry Pavek. Guests present: Jim DeVeau. Vera Burgoyne was absent.

Chairman Dobey called the meeting to order. The minutes of the October 3, 1984 meeting were discussed and one change was made. A sentence was added on page 2 which reads: Because the majority of accidents occur during loading and unloading, the Task Force strongly recommends that there be increased emphasis and education of the danger zone outside the school bus.

Jenny Hoglund informed the Task Force that at the October 3, 1984 meeting, James Pederson of the Duluth Police Department commented to her during lunch that he favors the installation of seat belts in school buses but does not think that wearing them should be enforced. She feels that there would be no point in requiring seat belts if their use were not enforced. John Shaffer feels that when James Pederson said he did not believe that seat belt usage should be enforced, he was referring to the first few weeks of school when buses are occasionally overloaded.

Rod Dobey stated that William Hobert and James Pederson came to the Task Force meeting because of their personal concern on the seat belt issue. They were not representing the Duluth School District or the City of Duluth.

Rod Dobey informed the Task Force that he had contacted Archie Calabay of Thomas Built Buses in Canada to see if he could obtain the results of the recent tests that were conducted on seat belts in school buses. Mr. Calabay informed him that the results were still being analyzed and that he could not pass judgment on what those results would be.

Rod Dobey also contacted Stan Watkins of Transport Canada to see if the Canadian government had any results on the tests. Mr. Watkins informed him that the results will not be released until early December. Rod Dobey did learn, however, that the tests were conducted on all sizes of buses. In each test, the bus, traveling at 30 MPH, crashed into a concrete barrier. Mr. Watkins did not express the same fears as Morris Adams did with regard to retrofitting school buses with seat belts. Mr. Watkins will send some of the information he has on the use of seat belts in school buses.

John Shaffer stated that it would be useful if the Task Force heard the views of other individuals as to the seat belt issue. The Task Force members agreed that they would be remiss if they didn't seek out all views on the seat belt issue.

After some discussion the Task Force agreed to invite a representative of the

National Coalition for Seatbelts on School Buses to the October 31, 1984 Task Force meeting to present facts and findings on the seat belt issue. It was further agreed that the Task Force would offer to provide \$250.00 only if no other funds were available for travel.

Rod Dobey informed the Task Force that Commissioner Paul Tschida had responded to the request to return the state to semi-annual school bus inspections. Commissioner Tschida assured the Task Force that they have the Department of Public Safety's full support and that the agency will work hard to carry out any and all reasonable recommendations to improve the safety of young people as they are transported to and from school.

Rod Dobey also informed the Task Force that Jerry Pavek had advised him that the Department of Education had included in its preliminary biennial budget the Task Force's request for pupil transportation safety activities. The request and the specific level of funding will be reviewed, along with other new initiatives, by the Department and State Board of Education. A decision is pending as to which initiatives and the funding levels that will be included in the final budget request.

The subcommittee reports are as follows:

Ridership Training - Public Awareness - Education

Jenny Hoglund distributed the revised recommendations of the subcommittee.

The subcommittee feels there must be some type of enforcement of the student ridership training rule. They would also like to see a booklet on school bus policy distributed to parents that they must sign and return. Parents are often not aware of their school district's transportation policies.

It was also suggested that another way to promote public awareness would be the use of newspaper advertisements on school bus safety issues which could be run periodically during the school year.

Jenny Hoglund stated that a follow-up should be made as to why judges refuse to convict individuals who are charged with failing to stop for a school bus with its stop arm extended.

Ray Kroll suggested that the subcommittee include in Item 2, Public Awareness and Education, that the winning poster of the State School Bus Safety Week Poster Contest be submitted to the National School Bus Safety Week Poster Contest.

Rod Dobey feels the subcommittee should include the state associations for Elementary and Secondary School Principals, School Administrators, School Boards and School Business Officials in the promotion of school bus safety activities.

Service and Administration

Jan Vanderwall informed the Task Force that some areas the subcommittee is addressing include:

- Improving safety at pick-up points including construction of shelters where necessary, and supervising all pick-up points located on school property.

- Construction of sidewalks.

- Consolidating rural pick-up points which might require the construction of shelters. Parents could be required to transport their children to pick-up points.

- Shortening the length of bus routes.

- Changing the transportation aid formula to be more reflective of societal conditions (i.e., higher crime rates, larger percentage of students in day care, etc.)

- Varying the walking distance by age of pupil for state aid eligibility.

- Funding a position at the state level to administer school bus safety activities and an ongoing Task Force.

- Setting a state policy for closing schools early because of inclement weather. Bud Fritz informed the Task Force that school districts in southwestern Minnesota transport pupils to foster homes located in the cities if the roads become blocked because of snow.

Funding for some of these proposals could be by a special levy or through the state transportation aid formula. Although there would be higher costs initially, many of these proposals could reduce costs in the long run.

Vehicles - Equipment - Inspection

Ray Kroll distributed a revised statement of the additional equipment items previously recommended. He hopes to have the cost of these items available for the next Task Force meeting.

There will be 30 black boxes available for use by the end of this month. The black boxes have been named "Sul-A-Lert" after the seven-year old Sullivan boy who lost his life in a school bus accident near Farmington in November 1982.

Hugh Salisbury gave the subcommittee a copy of a Wisconsin law that requires bus body manufacturers to stamp the state name abbreviation either preceding or following the body identification number. This indicates that the bus body was built to meet the state's school bus construction standards. The subcommittee supports legislation that would require this in Minnesota. This would prohibit companies from bringing into Minnesota, large numbers of used buses that do not meet our state construction standards.

Hugh Salisbury also gave the subcommittee a copy of an article on seat belts that appeared in the July 4, 1984 School Transportation Director.

Ray Kroll feels that the Task Force needs to review the 1983 National Fire Protection Association Standard No. 58 for propane powered school buses. There seems to be a conflict in what the state Fire Marshal's office requires for venting and what is in this standard. Also, standards should be developed for use of compressed natural gas in school buses.

The subcommittee is still discussing the pilot project for installing seat belts in school buses. Jane Oxton feels that it is imperative that the selected school districts be monitored closely. The subcommittee on Service and Administration feels that monitoring of these districts should be a responsibility of the pupil transportation safety administrator position.

Driver Selection, Training and Examination

Gloria Rea reported that the subcommittee recommends that the Criteria for Issuing and Renewing School Bus Driver License Endorsements be adopted as rule rather than being enacted into state law. The subcommittee was concerned that the criteria would be completely rewritten if subjected to the legislative process.

Other recommendations of the subcommittee are as follows:

- The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension should check the criminal background of school bus drivers when they submit their physical forms (every two years).
- Improving driver examination stations (i.e., painting railroad crossing signs on the roadway instead of having drivers imagine they are coming to a railroad crossing, etc.)
- Updating driver license examining procedures.
- Updating the State Board Rules Chapter on Transportation of Students in Public and Nonpublic Elementary and Secondary Schools.
- Dedicating a portion of the monies requested for school bus safety activities for school bus driver training.
- Reissuing the small school bus drivers handbook.

Bud Fritz informed the Task Force that it sometimes takes up to 30 days to get a school bus driver endorsement from the Driver Examination Station in Nobles county. The Task Force discussed possible ways of correcting this situation.

Gloria Rea stated that the subcommittee will not have time to review the training requirements for new and current school bus drivers. This should be a function of an ongoing Task Force.

Final Report to the Legislature

Gloria Rea presented an outline of a format that could be used for the final document. Task Force members were asked to review and comment on the outline.

Proposed Outline for Task Force Report

- Article I : Need for the Task Force
- Article II : Charge to the Task Force
- Article III: Plan of Action

Article IV : Evaluation
Article V : Task Force Members
Article VI : Future

The Task Force on School Bus Safety

- Preface
- Introduction
- Recent History: The Need for a Task Force on School Bus Safety
- Societal Trends in School Bus Safety
- Ridership Training, Public Awareness and Education
 - Introduction
 - Rationale
 - Areas/Issues Reviewed
 - Recommendations
 - Resources
- Vehicles, Equipment and Inspection
 - Introduction
 - Rationale
 - Areas/Issues Reviewed
 - Recommendations
 - Resources
- Service and Administration
 - Introduction
 - Rationale
 - Areas/Issues Reviewed
 - Recommendations
 - Resources
- Driver Selection, Training and Examination
 - Introduction
 - Rationale
 - Areas/Issues Reviewed
 - Recommendations
 - Resources

Rod Dobeý will be organizing the final document so that overlap of topics will be minimized.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, October 31, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

October 31, 1984

The eighth meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on October 31, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center. Members present: John Shaffer, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxtan, Rod Dobey, Ray Kroll, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen and Jerry Pavek. Guests present: Glenn Gramse, Jim DeVeau, Harold Peterson and Joe Beaton. Tom Boerner, Jenny Hoglund and Vera Burgoyne were absent.

Chairman Dobey called the meeting to order. He recently sent Task Force members a copy of the material he received from Transport Canada. He also received a large chart that shows Canadian school bus construction standards which he had not distributed because of its size.

Rod Dobey stated that the latest issue of School Bus Fleet contains an article on seat belts which he will distribute. Ray Kroll pointed out that the editorial that appears on the last page of that magazine also addresses the seat belt issue.

School Bus Accident Investigations

Glenn Gramse distributed a memo indicating that the State Patrol believes there is a need to obtain better, more uniform, data on school bus accidents. The State Patrol believes the Task Force should recommend a statutory change that would require them to investigate all school bus accidents regardless of where they occur.

The Task Force members agreed that the present collection of school bus accident data is inadequate. The present accident form does not indicate where injured passengers were sitting or whether they were a passenger in the school bus or in another vehicle. If additional data were available, it would assist a future Task Force in identifying problems and making recommendations to correct them.

Some Task Force members were concerned that the law compliance representatives (LCRs) would devote less time to school bus inspections in order to conduct accident investigations. Glenn Gramse stated it would be the intent of the State Patrol to have troopers in the area conduct the investigations.

Joe Beaton stated that consideration should be given to assigning one individual to investigate all accidents. He feels nothing would be gained if different individuals investigated accidents because of the judgmental factor involved. Glenn Gramse stated that each trooper would have an expert in traffic accident reconstruction available to assist in school bus accident investigations.

Ray Kroll informed the Task Force that the St. Paul and Suburban Bus Company allowed him to interview the bus driver and to see the maintenance records of a school bus that was involved in an accident. It should be recommended that school districts include language in their transportation contracts to insure cooperation exists between the district and contractor in school bus accident investigations.

Jan Vanderwall stated that in a school bus accident in the Roseville school district, the dual wheels came off when the bus had to brake suddenly. After investigating this accident, it was found that the shackles had come loose. In order to prevent this from happening, it was found that it is necessary to tighten the shackles every month. Rod Dobey stated that when an accident investigation reveals defects, this information should be shared with the entire pupil transportation industry.

Jim Johansen noted that in the material from Transport Canada, it was stated that 40% of the accidents were caused because of defective brakes. Rod Dobey feels that if Minnesota school bus accidents were investigated thoroughly, similar findings would exist here. Although the brakes on school buses are passing inspections and stopping the buses under normal conditions, it does not mean that the bus would be able to stop in emergency situations.

Jim Johansen stated that he had to replace new brake parts recently because they did not work. Although he is making every effort to keep his buses in good working condition, defective parts could be the cause of accidents.

The Task Force also discussed whether school buses involved in serious accidents should be recertified before they can be put back into service. Criteria would have to be developed if this recommendation was adopted.

Jim Johansen questioned whether the information obtained in the investigations could be used in a court of law. Glenn Gramse stated that the findings of the investigation could be used as evidence in any litigation.

Seat Belts

John Shaffer showed a video tape on the seat belt issue which he had received from the National Coalition for Seatbelts on School Buses. He also distributed a transcript of a speech given by James Nichols of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to the Wisconsin Child Passenger Safety Association Conference on October 9, 1984. Cassette tapes are available of the other speakers who appeared on that panel.

John Shaffer pointed out that James Nichols feels that seat belts would work well with compartmentalization. School buses can and should be equipped with more than just one safety feature. James Nichols also stated that seat belts would help reduce injuries in roll-overs. John Shaffer stated that he agrees with James Nichols' position that if you can make a school bus safer by installing seat belts, why not do it.

Jim Johansen wanted to know who would be responsible for making sure each child buckled the seat belt and kept it buckled. It was pointed out that Minnesota Statute 169.685 states that proof of the use or failure to use seat belts is not admissible in evidence in any litigation involving personal injuries or property damage

resulting from the use or operation of any motor vehicle.

Gloria Rea stated that special education students in the Rosemount school district will not keep their seat belts buckled. Also, they have to replace one or two buckles every week because of vandalism.

Hugh Salisbury feels that if seat belts were required in school buses, minor injuries would be replaced by more serious injuries. He has found that any child over 4'6" tall would hit the seat in front during a sudden stop. This could cause possible spinal cord injuries when the child's head is forced backwards.

Bud Fritz suggested that because of all the problems associated with seat belts the Task Force perhaps should recommend the installation of harnesses for each child. Gloria Rea pointed out that harnesses must be individually fit. John Shaffer stated he is serving on another committee where an individual is working on designing seats for all types of handicapping conditions.

The Task Force discussed the cost of installing seat belts in both new and used buses, maintenance costs, etc., and ways that school districts and contractors could be reimbursed. John Shaffer stated that a bill has been introduced in Congress that would provide federal funds to states for installing seat belts. He did not know whether the funds are targeted in any way.

Generally, Task Force members feel that because of the lack of research available on the seat belt issue, it would be premature to take a stand at the present time. It would be best if they could delay making a decision for two or three years at which time more research data will be available. They would be comfortable reporting to the Legislature that the Task Force devoted more time to this issue than any other. Task Force members also are concerned that money allocated for seat belts would leave less money for the important tasks of driver training, student ridership training, and phasing-up bus fleets to include only post-1977 school buses.

However, Ray Kroll believes that the Task Force should make a recommendation to the Legislature on the seat belt issue. The possible recommendations include the following:

1. Delay making a decision until more research has been completed.
2. Require installation of seat belts in new buses only.
3. Encourage school districts and contractors to install seat belts in new buses.
4. Request state funding for a pilot project to install seat belts in new buses in selected school districts.

Rod Dobeey suggested that the Task Force recommendation could include a combination of these positions. For example, funding of a pilot project and encouraging school districts and contractors to install seat belts in new buses.

John Shaffer informed the Task Force that the Minnesota Legislature will probably enact legislation during the 1985 Session mandating seat belt usage in passenger cars. The Task Force could ask that fines paid for failing to wear seat belts be targeted for the pilot project of installing seat belts in school buses.

Other Topics

Jan Vanderwall distributed a draft of the recommendations of the subcommittee on Service and Administration. Each member of the Task Force is requested to review this draft and provide comments as appropriate.

Joe Beaton indicated that in order to have maximum impact on the Legislature, the Task Force should identify and assign priorities to the safety issues and provide cost estimates.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, November 14, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center in Arden Hills.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

November 14, 1984

The ninth meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on November 14, 1984 at the MN/DOT Training Center. Members present: Tom Boerner, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxton, Rod Dobey, Jenny Hoglund, Ray Kroll, Vera Burgoyne, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen, Ron Laliberte and Jerry Pavek. Guests present: Jim DeVeau and Esther Kolodziej. John Shaffer was absent.

Rod Dobey introduced Esther Kolodziej. She is from Chisago County and is a parent and citizen concerned with school bus safety issues. She does not represent any group or organization.

Esther Kolodziej informed the Task Force that school bus stop arm violations that happen on private property, such as trailer parks, are not enforceable under present state law. A municipality may adopt a law that allows ticketing an individual who violates the school bus stop arm law on private property. However, the municipality in which she lives does not have such a law. She would like the Task Force to include in its final report a recommendation that school bus stop arm violators be prosecuted no matter where the violation occurs. Esther Kolodziej plans to write legislators requesting their support. She also has contacted the Attorney General's Office and the County Attorney's Office but has not received a reply.

It was noted that most trailer parks do not allow school buses to enter, while some allow school buses on main roads only. Task Force members agreed that all school bus stop arm violators should be prosecuted.

Jim Johansen stated that it was difficult to get the present stop arm law passed. If a recommendation is made to change the law, he is concerned the Legislature might rewrite the entire law making it less effective.

Inspections

Jan Vanderwall stated that there must be more consistency in school bus inspections. Some inspectors check every detail no matter how minor, while others fail to inspect the major items. Also, if the recommendation is adopted to have school buses recertified after they have been involved in serious accidents, inspectors would have to be trained in the recognition of structural damage.

Subcommittee Reports

The various subcommittees submitted drafts of their recommendations. Rod Dobey and the subcommittee chairs will meet November 19, 1984 to review the drafts and write the final report. Task Force members will be sent a copy of the report for review before the next Task Force meeting. Once the final report has been approved, it will be given to the State Department of Education for printing. Public distribution of the report will not occur until it has been submitted to the Legislature.

Jane Oxtan informed the Task Force that the recently released report, Minnesota Plan, which was funded by the Minnesota Business Partnership, states that schools are asked to do too much. Since this report will be reviewed by the next Legislature, the Task Force should consider this finding when making its recommendations on school bus safety.

Department of Education Budget Request

Ron Laliberte informed the Task Force that the Department of Education is including the Task Force's request for pupil transportation safety activities in the biennial budget. The level of funding requested is \$750,000 for the first year of the biennium and \$787,500 for the second year of the biennium.

Other Topics

Ray Kroll informed the Task Force that Morris Adams released some of the results of the Canadian school bus seat belt tests at the recent meeting of the National Association for Pupil Transportation. The unbelted passenger thrust 700 to 800 pounds of force against the next seat, while the belted passenger thrust 1500 to 1800 pounds of force. The preliminary results tend to indicate that the force with the belted passenger would be greater, with the head and neck receiving most of the impact. The unbelted passenger would have lesser force and the impact would be spread over the entire body.

Ray Kroll also informed the Task Force that the National Association for Pupil Transportation has given approval for a study to test air bags in school buses.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M. on Wednesday, November 28, 1984 at the Holiday Inn (near State Capitol), 161 St. Anthony Avenue, St. Paul, MN.

TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

November 28, 1984

The tenth meeting of the Task Force on School Bus Safety was held on November 28, 1984 at the Holiday Inn-St. Paul. Members present: John Shaffer, Tom Boerner, Jan Vanderwall, Bud Fritz, Jane Oxtan, Rod Dobey, Jenny Hoglund, Ray Kroll, Vera Burgoyne, Gloria Rea, Florence Harrington, Hugh Salisbury, Jim Johansen and Jerry Pavak. Guests present: Ron Laliberte, Glenn Gramse, Jim DeVeau and Paul Tschida.

The Task Force discussed a letter written by Rhonda Hanna on the seat belt issue. Individual members may respond to her comments if they desire.

The Task Force meeting was devoted to a review of the preliminary report. Rod Dobey has rewritten some of the subcommittee reports to conform to the format agreed to earlier. It was agreed that cost estimates, if appropriate, should accompany the recommendations that are included in the report.

Following is a discussion of some of the topics covered in each subcommittee's preliminary report:

Vehicles - Equipment - Inspection

Seat Belts. Ray Kroll distributed a draft of the recommendations of this subcommittee on the seat belt issue. Jan Vanderwall also distributed a proposal he had prepared on the seat belt issue.

Tom Boerner informed the Task Force that results of a recent survey indicate that a majority of respondents believe seat belts should be installed in school buses. The majority of respondents also feel that school bus design does not provide adequate protection for passengers. Tom Boerner feels that the public needs to be made more aware of the present level of safety of school buses. He feels that the recommendation on seat belts should include a statement that there is nothing in present state or federal laws that prohibit school districts and contractors from installing seat belts.

Jane Oxtan stated that the pilot project should include funding so districts would not be forced to use General Fund monies. Also, districts or contractors that express an interest in participating in the pilot project should be given a packet of information that lists the pros and cons of seat belt usage. After reviewing this information, the school districts or contractors could decide whether they wish to participate in the pilot project.

Jim Johansen pointed out that the results of a pilot project would be

inconclusive unless a seat belt equipped school bus is involved in a serious accident.

Accident Investigation. Jim Johansen expressed concern that information obtained in school bus accident investigations could be used against a contractor in a court of law. Task Force members pointed out that the results of the investigation could also be used to a contractor's advantage. Only those accidents involving either personal injury or damage to the vehicles of \$500 or more would be investigated. Under current state law, school districts and contractors are already required to submit accident reports to the state. The Task Force members agreed that this information would be useful in identifying problems and making recommendations for corrective actions.

Serial Numbers. Jim Johansen indicated that the serial number recommendation should be changed to include used buses. He is concerned that districts and contractors could bring in a number of used sub-standard school buses because the present recommendation only deals with new school buses. School buses now in service in Minnesota would be exempt (i.e., buses that have a valid inspection sticker or buses that have been registered with the Motor Vehicle Division before a certain date). Jan Vanderwall noted, however, that a number of used buses are available that meet or exceed Minnesota school bus specifications.

Driver Selection, Training and Examination

Gloria Rea distributed a letter that William Jacobson, a bus driver in the Rosemount school district, had written to the Attorney General's Office regarding the current practice of issuing, terminating, suspending and reinstating school bus driver license endorsements. His concern is that the current criteria were never given a public hearing. Gloria Rea feels that it is important that the revised criteria be adopted as rule in order to avoid a challenge in the future.

Hugh Salisbury believes that the recommendation concerning consumption of an intoxicating liquor before driving a school bus should be changed by increasing the time period from four to eight hours. After much discussion, the Task Force agreed to change the number of hours to six.

Ridership Training - Public Awareness - Education

Jan Vanderwall suggested that a recommendation be added that school bus safety films be made available for distribution at Educational Cooperative Service Units (ECSUs) or Vocational Centers. More districts and contractors would take advantage of the films if they were more accessible. It was discussed whether additional films should be purchased for the State Patrol Film Library rather than for the ECSUs, and whether a recommendation should be made to appoint a committee to investigate school bus safety film availability and access.

Jan Vanderwall proposed that a recommendation be made that a number of regional school bus safety road-e-os and a state school bus safety road-e-o be conducted each year.

Service and Administration

The Task Force members discussed whether the recommendation to make elementary students eligible for state transportation aid at one-half mile instead of one mile, and secondary students eligible for state transportation aid at one mile instead of two miles, should be retained. The members agreed to include the recommendation but leave the method of funding to the Legislature.

Hugh Salisbury proposed that the recommendation to have a standard contract based on a cost per hour per bus be deleted. It is not always feasible to have contracts based on this method. After much discussion, the Task Force agreed to delete this recommendation from the final report.

The Task Force also discussed expanding the recommendation on the responsibilities of the Pupil Transportation Safety position to include more field work.

Early Dismissal/Late Openings

The following information was taken from the Department of Education's Pupil Accounting Manual dated March, 1984:

A day during which students are dismissed early or a day when school starts late because of inclement weather or other unforeseen emergencies may be counted as an instructional day in session for the school involved. It may also be counted as a day in membership for the students involved. Under this provision, the students must have been gathered at the school building and then released.

If an afternoon kindergarten class is not held because of inclement weather or an unforeseen emergency, but the morning kindergarten class met for part or all of its session, the afternoon class may be reported as having been in session also. And if under similar circumstances only the afternoon kindergarten class met, the morning class may be counted in session.

Final Report to the Legislature

Rod Dobey will write the final report and send copies to each Task Force member early next week for comment. Task Force members are to respond as quickly as possible. Once the final report has been approved, it will be sent to Jan Vanderwall for printing. A minimum of 75 copies will be needed for the Senate and House Education Committees and Legislative Reference Library.

Ron Laliberte reminded the Task Force that the report should be kept as short as possible as legislators are inundated with reading material. Also, it is essential that efforts be undertaken to draft legislation and obtain sponsors for the upcoming session.