

September, 2014

Greetings to all fellow TAPT school transportation folks! First I want to thank everyone for allowing me to lead our organization this year—I am truly humbled by that honor. You have my pledge that the Executive Committee (EC) and I will support our organization and its membership in every way possible by making appropriate decisions and taking necessary actions. Please let me (joe@tapt.com), your Area Director, or any member of the EC know if you have a concern or an issue that needs to be reviewed. We will do so!

Here we are—starting school again. I anticipate everyone is having an exciting (as always) school year. Our role is one of the most critical in a school district, yet I'm always hearing "I'm glad I don't have your job." We do not have an easy task but are certainly driven to do the best we can every single day to get kids to and from school or trips safely and efficiently. I believe we do that job in an exemplary manner. Included in this mix of caring people are also our vendors who we have seen go out of their way to help districts do things in a better or more economical way—and not for profit but for betterment of the safety of kids. From the first and last person to see our students to the ones up in the middle of the night to see if roads will be suitable for school bus travel, pupil transportation employees play an important role in educating the children of our state.

There are always several matters we face as an industry and this year is no different. This is a legislative year and that in itself is always an uncertainty as to what new mandates may come out of Austin. The National Congress on School Transportation will meet during this school year to review our industry's best practices so we may see some recommendations coming from that group. The EC will meet in late September to conduct business. Some of the items to be considered will be adoption of a budget and subsequently the development of the program schedule outline for the conference next June.

After reviewing the comments from the Corpus Christi conference I have asked our Area Directors to gather some information to help the EC make informed decisions on the program for next June. Currently we are planning to have a conference schedule very similar to the one last year in order to keep costs down as well as offer the maximum number of classes for our members. The Area Directors will be asking for input on a couple of items:

Last year we only had one formal evening function and a few folks asked about another function and about music and dancing. Dinner functions are expensive and given funds available for the Dallas conference, we have tentatively discussed only one function again. Please provide input to your Area Director or an EC member on this proposal.

The other issue is about class timing. An attempt was made last June to offer more classes to support the Master Official program even though there would be conflicting training opportunities. I'd like to know what folks think about that too. My thoughts are that we continue to maximize training opportunities and allow folks choose what venue is best for them. We will try to get the conference program out sooner though so folks can work around conflicts in advance.

Following our September EC meeting I'll be sending out an update to let you know what was accomplished and provide a tentative conference schedule. Also look for this year's certification class schedule to be on the web site soon since the Certification Committee met earlier this month. They have developed an excellent schedule of classes with emphasis on supporting our Master Official program. And, speaking of committees, the list of committee chairs will be posted on the web site after the EC approves it in September.

In the meantime, "What can you do?" Attend your local chapter meetings and invite your neighboring districts to join you at the meeting and to join our organization. Work with students in your district to participate in our annual safety poster or speech contests. Take advantage of our web site at www.tapt.com and join egroups for discussions on the latest issues or to add your expert input to help answer a question from another member. Identify your outstanding employees now and begin to work on a submission packet for recognition as TAPT Employees of the Year. Check out the Committee Chair list when posted on the web site and look for an area where you would like to contribute--then contact that Committee Chair and offer your services. As the Area Directors seek out individuals to run for offices on the EC for next year sign up to run! Also, if there are topics you would like to see highlighted at the conference please get that information to an EC member so it can be considered.

Chapter presidents--make sure to get a list of your current officers to Pam and pay your dues for this year. Once that is done she will send your chapter two gift certificates for TAPT certification classes to use as your chapter elects.

I am proud to be a part of such a caring and sharing organization. The mentoring and training that I received over the years because of this philosophy has certainly made the job at my district much easier and I know the trend will continue as our organization continues to forge ahead. I believe the things we do and the improvements we plan for every day contribute to our theme this year-- TAPT: Making Tomorrow a Better Day. I'm looking forward to a great year in transportation for us all and hope to see you in Dallas at the conference. Don't forget that we also have the CENTEX Conference coming up on 3-5 October in San Marcos. Check the CENTEX link on the TAPT web site to register.

God bless you and the work that you do for children!

Joe Hart

President, 2014-15

Texas Association for Pupil Transportation