



"Your Future Is Riding On Us"

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POSITION PAPER: HB 243 / Legislative Session 84 (R) - 2015

The Texas Association for Pupil Transportation (TAPT) assumes the leading role in the State of Texas for the representation of the State's school transportation industry. The TAPT is a professional organization in Texas which represents and promotes safe and efficient pupil transportation operations for over 1,000 public school districts in Texas, and as such has always advocated use of proper protocols and procedures when designing and creating school bus routes.

One area of continued discussion in the industry is the creation of school bus routes and stops for students. A jointly published document from the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) and the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) entitled *Selecting School Bus Stop Locations: A Guide for School Transportation Officials* explained that "districts face several delicate policy issues and must decide which responsibilities the school bears and which responsibilities fall to the parents and other caregivers" (2010, p. 2). Additionally, these responsibilities for a district "must be further clarified to reflect policies when students are traveling between home and their school bus stops and while waiting for the bus" (p. 2).

The multifaceted process of designing school bus routes focuses on safety and efficiency. School districts place the safety of all students in the highest regard and are paramount when making determinations on planning bus routes and the placement of bus stops.

It is the position of TAPT that HB 243 could inadvertently place more students at risk than it is designed to protect. Passage of HB 243 will force a financial burden on districts, with an estimated operating cost increase of approximately 30% over current expenditures. It is also the position of TAPT that to be in compliance with HB 243, school bus routes will be significantly longer, lengthening the amount of time students will be riding the school bus. To implement HB 243, school districts may need to explore options to maintain levels of service similar to what is currently being provided or be forced to reduce current services. Limited by existing resources, districts may be forced to reduce or eliminate regular education transportation services as was witnessed during the 2009 legislative funding reductions.

It is advised that individuals involved in the school transportation routing process participate in more training opportunities, something which TAPT offers to its members. Further, we urge the Texas Legislature to explore possibilities to increase the penalty for those who disobey the traffic control safety devices on school buses designed to keep our students safe. It is recommended that additional education should be provided to the general public in regards to school bus transportation and the importance of obeying the traffic control devices.

It is tragic that an incident has occurred resulting in the untimely death of a student. The TAPT urges our legislature to promote and increase safety for our students through these recommendations instead of mandating how a district should design a school bus route. It is the goal and desire of TAPT to work jointly with the Texas Legislature to pursue opportunities to ensure the safety and welfare of all students who ride the school bus to and from school.