



School Transportation Director

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NTSB Releases Documents on Fatal N.J. School Bus Accident

The National Transportation Safety Board released more than 1,000 pages of documents this week on last year's fatal school bus crash in Chesterfield, N.J.

The documents included vehicle inspection reports, photos and diagrams of the wreck, and transcripts of interviews with the drivers of the bus and dump truck that collided on the morning of Feb. 16.

The findings do not identify the cause of the accident, which NTSB spokesman Keith Holloway said would likely be determined before the end of the year.

"This information is being analyzed to determine what caused the accident," Holloway

said. "Our goal is to determine what caused it and possibly make recommendations based on actual information that we issued today."

The crash occurred when a school bus on its way to Chesterfield Elementary School collided with a dump truck at an intersection. The impact killed 11-year-old Isabelle Tezsla and seriously injured her triplet sisters, Natalie and Sophie, as well as another student, Jonathan Zdybel, 11.

According to NTSB investigators, as school bus driver John Tieman, who had been on the job three weeks, pulled

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Source: <http://dms.nts.gov>

In the Dark About Early Morning School Buses *By J.H. Snider*

Lots of apps, such as Transit Stop, iNext-Bus, and Embark DC, now let you track public-transit schedules. But they are restricted to public transit used by adults. Why can't a similar app exist for public school buses, likely the most widely used public-transit system in the United States? And, more specifically, why can't prospective homeowners or renters easily learn the school bus times associated with different properties?

For many well-documented reasons concerning the health, education, and safety of their children (a compendium of such resources may be found at StartSchoolLater.net), many parents don't want to live in a neighborhood where their children would have to board predawn buses for most of the school year. For example, Fairfax County, Va., and Montgomery County, Md.,—both Washington suburbs—have large parent-dominated movements seeking later bus and high school start times. Most Fairfax public high school students start their day at 7:20 a.m.; Montgomery's, at 7:25 a.m. Many buses start their routes an hour before schools start, and Fairfax has one bus that starts as early as 5:45 a.m. Seeking later start times, thousands of Fairfax County and Montgomery County residents have recently signed petitions pressing for change.

School districts assert that

they cannot publicly release school bus-route data because it would be used by child predators. But I haven't been able to find a single piece of evidence to back up this claim. The defense also appears remarkably arbitrary: It would be easy for a motivated stranger to learn when buses arrive for kids, and countless after-school activities, including outdoor sports, already widely publicize their schedules.

A better explanation for the lack of public bus-route data is that school districts recognize that predawn bus routes reflect child-unfriendly budget priorities.

Consider this: I took a list of the nation's "top 20 prep schools," as selected by *Forbes* magazine in 2010, and looked up when their days began—not one started regular classroom instruction before 8 a.m. At the same time, many poor public school districts also can somehow afford later start times.

Reflecting the political embarrassment associated with early bus routes, not only are the final bus routes publicized as little as possible, but the whole process of establishing such routes is often shrouded in secrecy.

The primary driver of ever-earlier bus routes (and corresponding early school start times) is transportation-cost reduction. Using a single bus for as many routes and pickups as

possible saves money. Consider a district that finds itself with a budget shortfall.

Since the transportation budget is discretionary and lacks a well-organized constituency to protect it, it's a prime target for raiding, which leads to earlier bus times. Meanwhile, to minimize opposition, districts give parents minimal public notice of the proposed changes.

Those harmed the most are typically the poorest, most educationally at risk students. Others, usually the most privileged, can compensate thanks to parents who either buy cars for their kids or drive their children to school.

As part of the Obama administration's push for data-driven public school accountability, public school systems should be required to disclose their bus-route data in a well-structured, standardized format on the Internet, just as public-transit systems already do.

Similarly, the process for establishing guidelines for earliest school bus times should be subject to the same type of public notice and comment already required for public school calendars.

In choosing a home, parents shouldn't be blind-sided about an issue such as public school bus routes that could prove vital to

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In the Dark About Early Morning School Buses (continued)

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the safety, health, education, and happiness of their children. Tax-payers deserve accessible information about public bus routes for children as well as adults.

J. H. Snider, a former school board member in Burlington, Vt., and former chairman of the Anne Arundel County, Md., school system's citizen advisory committee, is a lab fellow at the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University. He is also the president of iSolon.org, a nonprofit organization based in Severna Park, Md., that is focused on public-policy reform. This article first appeared in Education Week, Jan. 4, 2013. It is reprinted here with permission from the author.

Gas and Diesel Prices Rise

Diesel and gasoline prices in the U.S. continued to rise this week, jumping 9.5 cents and 18.1 cents per gallon, respectively, compared to the week of January 28, according to the Energy Information Administration (EIA).

Moreover, the agency reported, retail pump prices for both fuels are up over 12 cents and 22 cents per gallon, respectively, over the last two weeks.

The U.S. average for diesel is now \$4.022 per gallon, roughly 16.6 cents per gallon higher compared to the same week in 2012. Prices are up in every region of the U.S., the EIA reported, with California (\$4.242 per gallon), New England (\$4.232), the Central Atlantic (\$4.165) and lower Atlantic (\$4.008) home to the highest prices for diesel in the nation.

Gasoline reached a U.S. average of \$3.538 per gallon this week, the EIA said—5.6 cents per gallon higher compared to the same week in 2012. The agency again stated that gasoline prices are up in every region of the U.S., with the West Coast (\$3.936 per gallon), New England (\$3.682), and the Central Atlantic (\$3.665) home to the highest retail pump prices in the country.

The EIA also noted the fiscal effect the rise in fuel prices is having on U.S. households: the 26.1% yearly increase in 2011 for average city retail gas prices was six times greater than the 3.4% rise in nominal household income, while the 3.3% estimated gasoline price rise in 2012 outpaced the 2.9% estimated increase in household income.

Source: fleetowner.com, 2/5/13

NTSB Releases Documents on Fatal N.J. School Bus Accident (cont.)

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forward to get a better view of the road, a dump truck driven by Michael Caporale hit the back of the bus, spinning it around before it struck a traffic light pole. A preliminary probe found that Tieman's inexperience, the heavy load of the dump truck and a lack of visibility at the intersection all could have

contributed to the crash.

According to one report, fifteen accidents were recorded at the intersection in a five-year period from 2007 to 2011.

Police issued motor vehicle citations to both drivers and the trucking company that owned the dump truck, but have yet to file criminal charges in the case.

Burlington County Prosecutor's Office spokesman Joel Bewley said the office is waiting on

the NTSB's final report to decide if further charges are warranted.

Last April, Anthony and Susan Tezsla, the parents of the student who died and her injured sisters, filed a lawsuit against the bus company and trucking company, citing their "negligence and recklessness." Both drivers were also named as defendants.

Source: The Times of Trenton, 2/13/13 and 2/14/13

School Bus Companies Sue NYC over Job Protections

A group of school bus companies has sued the City of New York to remove job protections for senior workers from existing private bus contracts.

The job protections are at the center of the dispute between the city and school bus drivers, who are in the fourth week of a school bus strike. Workers began the strike on Jan. 16 after the city said it would put hundreds of school bus routes out to bid without guarantees of job protection.

The companies suing the city claim in a lawsuit that because bids for new contracts do not include Employee Protection Provisions, it is illegal for the city to continue working with ongoing contracts that keep the protections.

The companies who win the bids—67 of which were submitted on Monday—would not be required to retain veteran workers or continue the current salaries as in the past. The companies are now asking to have that same freedom for all their routes—not just those being put out to bid—and have filed suit in Manhattan Supreme Court.

In the suit, the companies argue that the mayor is putting them at a competitive disadvantage by not allowing them to eliminate the job protections.

Union officials say eliminating veteran job protections places children at risk by leaving them in the hands of inexperienced drivers.

The mayor has said that the seniority protections are illegal and cannot be included in future contracts.

DOE officials said earlier this week that since last Friday they had spent \$19.2 million getting children to school by issuing MetroCards for public transit, or reimbursing for taxicabs or private car. They estimated that that amount was more than three times as much what it would have cost students to take the bus during that same period.

On Tuesday, the city began publicly reading the bus companies' bids out loud, a measure that is required "so that everyone hears at the same time what the different companies have bid," said David Ross of the Department of Education.

"We'll be doing our due diligence in taking a look at the various types of qualifications for these companies," Schools Chancellor Dennis Walcott said.

He added that he hopes the union will end the strike soon, because even with most drivers on the picket line, the city is determined to move forward with the new bus contracts.

Source: nydailynews.com, 2/11/13; nyl.com, 2/11/13 and 2/12/13

Ind. School District Upgrades Buses with Wi-Fi, GPS

An Indiana school district will be installing wireless Internet on all of its 65 buses as part of nearly \$200,000 in transportation upgrades that will take place this year.

Kokomo-Center Schools will have the service on all the buses by the end of the year, after school officials had debated the measure for more than a year.

Officials said the service would be a big help to students involved in after-school activities like marching band, debate, robotics, academic teams and athletics. Those students will now have Internet access in the evenings and on weekends as they travel to and from different competitive events.

"This is huge," said Mike Wade, director of operations for the district. "I remember as a coach, driving two and a half hours to Richmond. If I could have done my work, that would have been great."

The school buses will also be equipped with GPS technology to help the transportation department run more efficiently.

The system can track where each bus is on its route, how fast drivers are traveling, and

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In the News



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what the drivers are doing at any moment. It can also keep logs of when drivers are at each stop.

“This GPS tracking system will enable our transportation department to handle parent concerns in a timely, more efficient manner,” said transportation supervisor Larry Johnson. “It will prove invaluable when answering parent questions concerning bus estimated time of arrival and present location.”

The GPS technology will cost \$60,000 initially and \$25,000 a year after that.

The Internet service will cost the district \$125,000 a year to install, but yearly service rates are \$5,000, and 70 percent of that cost can be recovered through an Indiana Department of Education reimbursement program, said Dave Barnes said, the district’s director of communications.

Source: kokomotribune.com, 2/12/13

Teenagers Charged for School Bus Behavior

Two teenagers in South Carolina were charged this week after authorities said they became unruly against a school bus driver and police officers who were investigating a report that the two students had been smoking marijuana on the bus.

After deputies arrived and met with the bus driver, they were directed to the rear of the bus to speak with 17-year-old Errol Chisolm Jr. The teen reportedly began to act aggressively toward the deputy and “resisted being detained.”

The second student, 17-year-old Rashawn Bradley, tried to leave the bus and began to curse at the driver when he was told to take his seat. Bradley then displayed resistance to the deputies as they attempted to escort him from the bus due to fellow riders creating “a hostile environment,” reported WCSC Channel 5.

As a result, both Chisolm and Bradley were arrested and charged with interference with the operation of a school bus.

A subsequent search of the bus did not locate any marijuana or contraband, Major Jim Brady said.

Source: live5news.com, 2/12/13

News Follow Up

Stretch of Ala. Highway to be Named after School Bus Driver Charles Poland

The Alabama Senate unanimously passed a resolution last week that would rename a portion of U.S. Highway 231 the Charles “Chuck” Albert Poland, Jr., Memorial Highway.

Poland, a school bus driver,

was killed two weeks ago when an armed anti-government loner, Jimmy Lee Dykes, 65, entered the Midland City school bus and demanded Poland hand over two children. When Poland refused, Dykes shot him.

The one-half mile stretch of the highway in Pinckard runs by Midland City, where Dykes held a 5-year-old boy captive in an underground bunker.

Several state senators signed on to sponsor the bill including senators from the Wiregrass region, which encompasses several towns in the area where the kidnapping took place.

A day earlier, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution mourning the death of Poland.

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Recent Recalls

Thomas Built/Saf-T-Liner EFX 2013-2014

Component: Electrical System, Exterior Lighting

NHTSA Campaign ID#: 13V022000

Daimler Trucks North America (DTNA) is recalling certain model year 2013-2014 Thomas Built Buses brand Saf-T-Liner EFX school buses manufactured from March 29, 2012, through November 14, 2012 and equipped with 100% Daytime Running Lights (DRL) option code C3676-24-000. The DRL circuit breaker may trip during continuous operation of the headlights in high beam mode. This would result in a loss of power to the headlights, marker lights, tail lights, and dash lighting.

A loss of power to the bus' lights may reduce the driver's ability to see other vehicles, pedestrians, or objects, as well as reduce the bus' visibility to other drivers or pedestrians, increasing the risk of crash.

DTNA has notified the affected owners.

Dealers will replace the circuit breaker, free of charge. The recall began on December 14, 2012. Owners may contact DTNA at 1-800-547-0712. DTNA's recall campaign number is FL-638.

IC Bus/CE 2013; IC Bus/RE 2012-2013

Component: Electrical System, Engine and Engine Cooling

NHTSA Campaign ID#: 13V019000

Navistar is recalling certain model year 2013 IC brand CE buses, and 2012-2013 RE buses; manufactured from December 7, 2010, through June 26, 2012 and equipped with model year 2011 through 2013 I-6 engines and feature codes 12NUK, 12NUL, 12NUM, 12NUN, 12NUP and 12NUS. The injection pressure regulator (IPR) harness wire may break due to vibrational damage. This could cause an unexpected shut down of the engine. An unexpected engine shut down while driving may increase the risk of a vehicle crash.

Navistar will notify owners, and dealers will replace the IPR wire connector, free of charge. The safety recall is expected to begin by March 18, 2013. Owners may contact Navistar at 1-800-448-7825.

Navistar's recall campaign number is 13502.

For all recalls, owners may also contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Vehicle Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236 (TTY 1-800-424-9153), or go to www.safercar.gov.

Source: NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation

A loss of power to the bus' lights may reduce the driver's ability to see other vehicles, pedestrians, or objects, as well as reduce the bus' visibility to other drivers or pedestrians, increasing the risk of crash.

We'd love to hear from you!

Contact our editor, Christina Gillham, at christina@paper-clip.com with comments, questions and suggestions.

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LaHood Speaks at Va School's Love the Bus Event

In honor of this month's Love the Bus celebration, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood made a special appearance at Tuckahoe Elementary School's Love the Bus Main Event in Arlington, Va., on Feb. 12.

At the event, La Hood asked the students to thank their bus drivers not just that day, but every day.

"The person who drives your bus is as important as your teacher," he said. "Because it's his or her responsibility to get you the places you're going safely."

Local officials and school administrators also attended the event, and spoke to students about being respectful to their bus drivers and appreciating the safety, environmental, and congestion mitigation benefits of the yellow school bus.

Before the assembly, a group of preschoolers sang "The Wheels on the Bus" and some kindergartens sang a rap song about following the rules on the bus.

In preparation for Tuesday's event, students and staff also researched the evolution of



school buses, Tuckahoe Principal Cynthia Brown said.

"Two things are obvious today," she said. "Tuckahoe rocks, and we love the bus."

Source: arlington-va.patch.com, 2/12/13; americanschoolbuscouncil.org

News Follow Up

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"... While grieving the death of Mr. Charles Albert Poland, Jr., we are grateful for his precious life, and we offer this resolution in highest tribute to his inspiring legacy of love and faith, as well as in heartfelt sympathy to his family and friends," the resolution states.

At the meeting to discuss the resolution on Wednesday, the Senate chamber also paused to sing Happy Birthday to Ethan Gilman, the child held captive by Dykes for six days.

Source: dothaneagle.com, 2/7/13

Ala. School District Enforces Safety Procedures after Kidnapping Incident

Safety procedures for

school buses and school facilities are being strictly enforced after Ozark City School students return to school last week, city schools Superintendent Mike Lenhart said.

Classes were cancelled for three days last week after Jimmy Lee Dykes shot a school bus driver dead and kidnapped a 5-year-old boy in nearby Midland City.

Lenhart said the district used the school closings to review and exercise existing policies aimed at better protecting students in school and on buses. He said among the changes is the enforcement of a 15-foot zone law that says no unauthorized person can be within 15 feet of a school bus at any time, reported the Dothan Eagle.

Lenhart also said parents

will no longer be allowed to change transportation arrangements from school over the phone or with a written note sent by their child.

He said schools will be locked during operating hours and entry only allowed after a person signs in at the office, after which he or she will be escorted to the specified destination.

"Up until last year most safety plans dealt with an intruder in school but in today's environment, bad things can happen outside the school," he said. "Before we put our kids back on the buses, we want to make sure we've reviewed and done all we could to protect our students while they are in our care."

Source: dothaneagle.com, 2/2/13

EPA Announces Recipients of School Bus Replacement Rebate

The EPA has announced that thirty applicants have received rebates through the 2012 School Bus Replacement Rebate Program, an incentive program that allows eligible participants to replace older school buses with newer buses powered by certified 2012 or new engines.

The selected applicants are:

	Selectee Name	State
1	Davie County Board of Education	NC
2	USD 504	KS
3	Sandy Valley Local School District	OH
4	Mechanicsburg Exempted Village School District	OH
5	Mount Ayr Community School	IA
6	Genesee Intermediate School District	MI
7	South Sanpete School District	UT
8	Champaign County Head Start	IL
9	Hoopeston Area Schools CUSD #11	IL
10	East Muskingum Local Schools	OH
11	Stark County Board of Developmental Disabilities	OH
12	Weld Re-9 Highland Schools	CO
13	Old Bridge Township Board of Education	NJ
14	Dousman Transport Co., Inc.	WI
15	Pangburn School District	AR
16	East Allen Schools	IN
17	Averill Park Central School District	NY
18	USD 252 Southern Lyon County	KS
19	Nestucca Valley School District 101J	OR
20	North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District	NJ
21	N&M Bus Lines Inc.	NH
22	Northeast Nodaway R-V School District	MO
23	Flippin School District	AR
24	Bendle Public Schools	MI
25	Mechanicville City School District	NY
26	Champion Local Schools	OH
27	United Talmudical Academy	NY
28	Paris Community Unit School District No. 4	IL
29	Dietrich and Sons, Inc	ND
30	Kottkes' Bus Service, Inc	MN

More than 1,000 school bus fleets applied to the program this year, requesting over \$70 million in funding. Only \$2 million was allocated to the program—the selected applicants were chosen at random until the funds were spent.