



## North Carolina Pupil Transportation Association

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### Legislative Position Paper May, 2012

The North Carolina Pupil Transportation Association (NCPTA) represents 1200 professional members throughout the state who are dedicated to the safe and efficient transportation of our public school students. This group is comprised of technicians, office professionals, and administrative staff.

On May 17, 2012 a bill entitled “Clean Energy and Economic Security Act” was filed and will have a direct impact on all school districts in NC. NCPTA supports the research and development of alternative fuel and energy, however there are significant concerns with the proposed time line and fiscal impact of this bill. Concerns are focused in two primary areas: 1) the requirement to purchase and operate CNG school buses; and 2) changes to retread tire specifications.

### **Compressed Natural Gas Replacement School Buses**

The bill specifies timelines that requires replacement school buses purchased by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) must run on compressed natural gas (CNG) and that by December 2012 DPI along with local school districts will develop a plan for implementation of CNG school buses. It should be noted that there is currently no funding for replacement school buses of any type in future budgets.

#### 1) Requirement to Purchase CNG Replacement School buses by 2015

Research and LEA experience indicate that the proposed use of CNG school buses will cost excessively more, both in acquisition and operating cost. A simple comparison of the cost of CNG fuel to diesel fuel on the surface would indicate a savings on fuel procurement. However, there are many other factors to consider including cost of CNG fueling stations, the higher cost of CNG school buses, CNG pipeline infrastructure and increased maintenance cost associated with CNG buses. CNG Pipeline infrastructure and fueling station issues create huge challenges statewide, particularly in areas where natural gas is not currently available. In addition, some of these added costs may place additional unfunded mandates on transportation budgets that have been reduced several times over the past few years.  
***NCPTA's recommendation is to strike this requirement from the proposed legislation.***

2) Requirement for DPI and LEA's to Develop a Plan for Deployment of CNG Buses

The NCPTA supports the idea of exploring the use of alternate fuels to power school bus transportation in North Carolina. Having a natural resource available in North Carolina that could be used as an alternate fuel creates a great opportunity for studying this issue in depth before mandating changes in equipment and infrastructure. *NCPTA recommends that DPI and LEA's collaborate to study this issue in depth and provide a report to the Legislature in December of 2012 on the feasibility of deploying CNG school buses across the state of North Carolina.*

## **Procurement of Retread Tires for School Buses**

Legislation has been drafted that will affect the procurement of retread tires for school buses. The legislation effectively eliminates the current retread rubber formulation requirement and specifies that pre-cure retread tires be certified as fuel efficient by the retread manufacturer. Proposed changes would go into effect on July 1, 2012.

1) **Elimination of the current retread rubber formulation** – The current requirement to meet a specific retread rubber formulation does not appear to add value or ensure safety of retread tires used on school buses. All school bus tires are inspected every 30 days as part of a rigorous school bus inspections program. During the inspection, tires are checked for tread depth, signs of damage/unusual wear and a stop test is performed on the school bus to ensure the brakes and tires are operating in a safe manner. It is imperative that the rubber formulation or lack thereof not adversely affect tire performance or safety. Removal of the rubber formulation requirement effectively will increase competition among vendors to provide safe, fuel efficient and economical retread tires. *NCPTA supports the removal of the current retread rubber formulation requirement.*

2) **Requirement for Pre-Cure Retread Tires to be Certified as Fuel Efficient** – With the need to operate efficiently high on every agencies list of priorities, it seems intuitive to support the requirement to have pre-cure retread tires certified as fuel efficient. The concern with this requirement is defining how retread tire manufacturers will meet the fuel efficient standard; currently there is no published rating system by which to classify retread tires as fuel efficient. Our desire is to be able to purchase safe and economical retread tires for use on school buses. Competition among vendors is the best way to ensure that both of these goals are met. We would not support legislation that would limit competition to only a few vendors. Thus, it appears that this portion of the proposed legislation needs further study so as to ensure all retread manufacturers are able to compete to supply safe and economical retread tires. *Our recommendation is to strike this requirement from the legislation until further study can prove the benefits of including such a requirement to the state of North Carolina.*