

North Carolina Pupil Transportation Association

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The North Carolina Pupil Transportation Association 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.

While aware of the many budget concerns throughout all state government, we feel that school transportation is being put in a perilous position if the current funding trends are continued.

The items of greatest concern are:

1} **Replacement of School Buses** - During the last legislative session no funds were appropriated for replacement school buses for the 2012-13 school year. Currently North Carolina has one of the longest life cycles of school buses nationally. School buses are currently replaced after 20 years or 200,000 miles, whichever comes first. While there is no doubt that the current replacement cycle allows for safe operation of our school buses, failure to replace buses will not only compromise safety but increase operational costs. In addition, advances in safety and environmental areas will be ignored. If the replacement program is no longer funded by the state, it will put a serious burden on local boards of education that many will not be able to address. ***Our recommendation is for the state to continue the practice of fully funding school bus replacements in North Carolina.***

2} **Funding for Fuel Costs** - For the last few years, the cost of fuel has been especially volatile. Frequent changes in pricing, with prices mostly on an upward trend, have made fuel funding a moving target. This year, the costs have risen again, and while original funding was at \$2.51/gallon, the actual cost has been significantly higher (over \$3 per gallon so far). By failing to adequately fund the cost of fuel, the state has passed the burden on to the local boards of education at a time when they can least afford to supplement this expenditure. ***Our recommendation is for the state to fully fund the cost of fuel for school buses.***

3} **Tort Claim Responsibility** - The last two legislative sessions have included discussions about the funding of tort claims for school bus accidents and medical claims. Tort Claims have historically been a Department of Justice responsibility for both investigation and settlement. Putting this responsibility in the laps of local boards of education would place a serious burden on an already strained local budget. ***Our recommendation is for the Department of Justice to continue fully funding tort claim investigations and settlements in school bus-related incidents.***