



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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Testimony on HB 5507

House Committee on Transportation Michigan House of Representatives

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Room 519, House Office Building
Lansing, Michigan

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Chair
MAPT Legislative Committee

Good afternoon. Thank you Chairman Opsommer and the entire House Committee on Transportation for allowing us the opportunity to testify today before this distinguished committee regarding **HB 5507 (2012)**. On behalf of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation, we would also like to thank the sponsor of the bill, Representative Hughes, for addressing the issue of school bus safety in Michigan.

My name is Paul Wegmeyer. I currently serve as the supervisor of transportation at Holt Public Schools. I have been a licensed CDL driver of commercial motor vehicles for 30 years. I am also a Third Party Test Examiner and have been the owner and designated representative of a Third Party Testing organization in partnership with the Michigan Department of State for the past 16 years. The testimony I am providing for you today is on behalf of the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) where I currently serve as chair of the association's legislative committee. MAPT represents over 800 pupil transportation officials from 826 public, private and contract school bus fleets throughout Michigan. These administrators oversee the effective, efficient and safe transportation of approximately 860,000¹ children to and from school, every school day, on approximately 17,500 school buses driven by some 15,000 Michigan school bus drivers.

My purpose today is to present **MAPT's support for HB 5507 as substituted**. School buses in the State of Michigan are uniquely designed and constructed to protect its passengers from a variety of crash forces created by impacts from multiple directions including rollovers. No other transportation vehicle is more effective in saving lives than a yellow and black school bus. Our association recognizes that there is a growing problem, not only in this state, but across the nation with motorists who pass school buses illegally while children are loading and unloading at approved bus stops with overhead red lights flashing and the stop arm extended. After a compassionate review of the December 14, 2011 accident involving a school bus in Ottawa County, our association embraces HB 5507 as an opportunity make the yellow and black school bus even more conspicuous to motorists so that future accidents may be avoided and lives can be saved.

MAPT has consulted with and brought together pupil transportation experts including representatives from the Michigan State Police Bus Inspection Unit, the Michigan Department of Education Pupil Transportation Unit, university engineering experts, all of the top three school bus manufacturers, multi-national, Michigan-based exterior lighting experts and pupil transportation industry leaders to explore newer technologies that are available to help motorists recognize when a school bus is preparing to stop and when the school bus is performing a loading/unloading school bus stop. We are very encouraged by what is available and what we have learned.

¹ 2007-08 SE-4094 Pupil Transportation Expense Report, Michigan Department of Education, Fall 2008.

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The standards for brake lights, overhead lights, clearance lights, etc., on commercial motor vehicles are based on state and federal incandescent standards which date back to 1964 technology. For safety-sensitive equipment, like yellow and black school buses, the time is right to review these dated standards and embrace newer technologies to help all motorists be more aware, faster, of the unique stopping activities that come from performing school bus stops on Michigan rural and urban roads and highways.

One of the newest technologies available to help motorists better understand what to do when a school bus performs a stop in a rural or urban area is a driver notification panel mounted to the exterior door at near-eye level, similar to the one I am going to demonstrate to you today. This device is being installed on new buses in the states of Alabama and Georgia as an effective tool to help motorists know what to do when a school bus has its overhead yellow lights activated, its overhead red lights on, or is performing a required stop at a railroad crossing.

(Demonstration of devise.)

Some of the other technologies that our association embraces as recommended for application on the yellow and black school bus include: Pre-emptive brake lights which can be very successful in alerting motorists when the brake pedal of the school bus is applied; installation of a second stop arm near the rear of the bus; as well as LED (Light Emitting Diode) lights which are currently available for all lighting of a school bus (overhead yellows and reds; brake lights; clearance lights; back up lights; etc.) which react much faster than incandescent lights, giving motorists even more valuable reaction time². (For example: At 60 mph, the reaction time improvement between LED lights compared with incandescent lights can offer some 60 additional feet of reaction time.)

Our association testified before you on March 28, 2012, and made a commitment to investigate and return to this Committee with a recommendation to enhance the lighting for the rear of the school bus to reduce accidents and injury to all persons inside and outside the bus. We have honored this commitment. Our association is highly motivated to adopt what can be done to make the bus more conspicuous and avoid the next crash altogether so that more lives may be saved. Mr. Chaitman, I would be happy to address any questions you or your fellow committee members may have.

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² Rear Lamp Reaction Time Study – Comparison of Incandescent Bulbs and LEDs, European Lighting Technology Group, Visteon, Advanced Lighting Technology for Vehicles (SP-1668), SAE 2002 World Congress, Detroit, Michigan, March 4-7, 2002.