

## Education on Proper Use of Safety Belts on School Buses

### SUPPORTING STATEMENT

#### Part B.

#### COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

The objective of this project is to gather information to understand the states' and local agencies' decisions to implement safety belts on school buses and the funding mechanisms that are used to pay for seat belt installation. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will use the information gathered from this project to guide the development of a non-binding Model Policy and a Best Practices Guide to assist jurisdictions that are considering the use of safety belts on school buses. NHTSA has no intentions of using the information gleaned to develop any regulatory action regarding seat belts on large school buses. NHTSA proposes two methods of information collection for this project: (1) discussions and informal interviews with school districts, and (2) a bus driver survey.

##### *Informal Interviews*

NHTSA proposes to conduct discussions and informal interviews with school districts who have implemented safety belts on school buses and to gather information on both implementation and funding mechanisms; such insight will be helpful in identifying the types of challenges that may be faced, as well as methods for overcoming challenges. NHTSA also recognizes the importance of reaching out to school districts who do not currently have safety belts in order to gain a broader picture of the priorities and challenges that jurisdictions face. Therefore, NHTSA will also be gathering feedback from school districts who are not considering implementation, or who considered but decided not to implement, as their perspective will be helpful in developing model policies and understanding what would be useful to them.

In general, the interviews will be used to gather information on:

- Practices at the State and district levels related to funding structures and established policies in place;
- the pros and cons of financial and regulatory environments;
- experiences of the districts and Local Education Agencies;
- reactions and interactions with stakeholders, specifically bus drivers; and
- recommendations on best practices to promote the acquisition and use of safety belts on school buses.

Due to the small anticipated sample size, information collection from the interviews will not employ statistical methods to analyze the data collected from respondents. This is qualitative data, which will be analyzed by breaking out the responses to interview questions into themes

based on the content. Some anticipated themes include financial considerations, cost-benefits considerations, statutory and policy considerations, fleet type and size considerations, student compliance, and driver distraction reductions. The information collected from the interviews will be used in summary form to identify trends and will inform the development of the Best Practices Guide.

#### *Bus Driver Survey*

NHTSA also proposes to obtain information on bus driver distraction as related to student behavior and safety belt use. Bus drivers are in a position to provide subjective information on whether safety belts deter student misbehavior and whether bus drivers are less distracted as a result. Therefore, NHTSA plans to administer a survey to help identify potential indicators of whether 1) seatbelts deter student misbehavior when used properly, and 2) whether school bus drivers are less distracted by student misbehavior when safety belts are used. The survey will include questions that will be useful in providing preliminary indicators of how safety belts have influenced behavior on buses. This will include questions regarding the driver (e.g. the degree to which their perceived levels of stress and distraction have changed, if at all), the students (e.g. if/how their behavior has changed, details on type of behavior, etc.), as well as any important details such as the type of behavior change or any unexpected effects. This information will be useful in developing the Best Practices Guide and identifying effective strategies use to encourage compliance by students.

NHTSA expects to distribute the survey to no more than 2 bus drivers in each of the school districts that participate in the interviews. NHTSA will share the link, via email, to the survey with their existing contact(s) within that school district and will request that they distribute the survey to the appropriate bus drivers within their school district. NHTSA may also survey some districts that said we can contact them, but that were not included in the interviews.

The information collection from the bus driver surveys will be summarized using descriptive statistics. The collected information is neither generalizable or predictive, but will provide exploratory value in terms of future NHTSA research, and illustrative value for local school districts considering factors associated with seat belt installation.

### **B.1. DESCRIBE THE POTENTIAL RESPONDENT UNIVERSE AND ANY SAMPLING OR OTHER RESPONDENT SELECTION TO BE USED.**

#### *Informal Interviews*

Participants in the discussions and informal interviews will be representatives both from school districts who have implemented safety belts on school buses, and from school districts who are not considering implementation or who considered but decided not to implement.

In order to identify school districts that have implemented, or have considered implementing, safety belts on school buses, NHTSA will reach out to current partners, connections, and any existing contacts in transportation departments to identify school districts who would be interested in participating in the project. NHTSA will hold brief, general discussions with these partners and contacts via telephone, email, and/or in person. As the goal of these conversations is to identify school districts who are interested in participating in the project, it is expected that

these conversations will take no longer than 5 minutes. To the extent possible, NHTSA will also identify, in coordination with their partners, an appropriate contact(s) in each school district. It is expected that these contacts will include State directors of pupil transportation and local school district professionals.

In addition to gathering information both from school districts who have already implemented safety belts, as well as districts who have considered but not yet implemented safety belts, NHTSA also plans to ensure that different categories of jurisdictions are identified. For example, NHTSA recognizes that not all districts that have implemented safety belts have done so in the same manner. There may be different categories of those using safety belts, such as:

- Districts that are required by State law to install safety belts,
- Districts that have requirements for safety belts on certain types of buses (i.e. special needs buses),
- Districts that develop their own safety belt policies based on county or city codes or ordinances, and
- Districts that are undergoing pilot programs to consider safety belt use.

Additionally, implementation policies may be different depending on whether state funds are or can be used to upgrade bus purchases to include belts. Therefore, NHTSA plans to find examples of the different type of scenarios that exist in order to conduct interviews with representatives from school districts that have different perspectives, challenges, etc.

NHTSA anticipates speaking briefly (5 minutes) with approximately 100 individuals across the country to identify school districts that have implemented, or have considered implementing, safety belts on their school buses. In lieu of contacting that many people directly, some existing contacts (ie, National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation) may choose to disseminate project information themselves to solicit online feedback from their school district contacts on which of the aforementioned categories they fall into, and whether they would be interested in providing additional information.

After NHTSA has identified people who are willing to participate in the project, the detailed discussions/informal interviews will then be held. It is anticipated that the informal interviews and discussions will be held with approximately 25 individuals.

### *Bus Driver Survey*

The respondents for the bus driver survey would include bus drivers from school districts who have implemented safety belts. NHTSA may also survey some districts that said we can contact them, but that were not include in the interviews. NHTSA expects to distribute the web-based survey to at least one bus driver in each of the school districts that participate in the aforementioned interviews, but hopes to collect surveys from more than one driver in each of those school districts. Therefore, NHTSA estimates to gathers surveys from approximately 100 respondents. NHTSA will share the link, via email, to the survey with their existing contact(s) within that school district and will request that they distribute the survey to the appropriate bus drivers within their school district.

## **B.2. DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES FOR THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION.**

### **B.2.1. PROCEDURE**

#### *Informal Interviews*

After school districts have been identified as having considered seat belts, NHTSA will reach out to the school districts who have agreed to provide NHTSA with more information on their decisions to implement safety belts on school buses and the funding mechanisms that are used to pay for seat belt installation. Informational interviews will be conducted with State directors of pupil transportation and local school district professionals to identify policy components that influence seat belt acquisition and use. Prior to reaching out to any of the school districts, NHTSA will contact the Regional Administrators, via email, to inform them of the school districts that NHTSA intends to contact within their region. The process will then commence with introduction emails that NHTSA will send to the identified contact in each school district. The email will provide a brief overview of the project and discussion/interview goals, and will contain two attachments: (1) an introduction letter from NHTSA describing the goals of the project and interview process, and explaining how the information that they provide will be incorporated into the project and report, and (2) a list of discussion topics and questions. Although specific interview questions will be developed to keep the discussion on track as needed, it is expected that the actual interviews will occur as more of a fluid, conversational dialogue rather than a structured interview. NHTSA will follow up with each contact via telephone within 1-2 weeks of sending the email. During this call, NHTSA will either work with the contact to schedule a time to conduct the interview, or will conduct the interview on the spot if preferred by the contact. In some cases, the necessary information may be retrieved through a one-time telephone or in-person discussion, while in other cases discussions may continue via telephone and email as an on-going discussion throughout the course of the project as school districts think of more information to provide or if they provide additional contacts to follow up with in their district. NHTSA is seeking to gather as much information as the school districts are willing to provide, and frequency of response and discussion will be driven by how involved the school district would like to be in the conversation. It is anticipated that the more detailed discussions will be held with approximately 25 individuals for a collective total of 100 hours, or an average of 4 hours per individual over an extended period.

#### *Bus Driver Survey*

NHTSA will conduct a survey to gather information about bus driver distraction as related to student behavior and seat belt use to see if the use of safety belts has influenced disruptive behavior. The potential respondents would include bus drivers from school districts who have implemented safety belts. The survey administered to bus drivers will be web-based and should take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete. NHTSA expects to distribute the survey to no more than 2 bus drivers in each of the school districts that participate in the aforementioned interviews, but hopes to collect surveys from more than one driver in each of those school districts. NHTSA will share the link, via email, to the survey with their existing contact(s) within that school district and will request that they distribute the survey to the appropriate bus drivers within their school district. Follow-up discussions may also be conducted via telephone or email

depending on the interest of respondents in providing additional information that may not have been captured by the survey.

B.2.2. SAMPLE SIZE

*Informal Interviews*

It is anticipated that the informal interviews and discussions will be held with approximately 25 individuals.

*Bus Driver Survey*

This will be an opportunistic sample. The goal will be to survey at least one bus driver in each of the school districts that participate in the interviews, but NHTSA hopes to collect more than one survey from each. Therefore, NHTSA estimates a sample of 100 participants for the bus driver surveys.

**B.3. DESCRIBE METHODS TO MAXIMIZE RESPONSE RATES AND TO DEAL WITH ISSUES OF NON-RESPONSE.**

*Informal Interviews*

The initial screening (via email, online, telephone or in person) of up to 100 individuals is intended to help identify school districts who are willing to participate in interviews for the project. In order to maximize response rates of the interviewees, NHTSA plans for the interviews to occur as more fluid, conversational dialogue. In some cases, the necessary information may be retrieved through a one-time telephone or in-person discussion, while in other cases discussions may continue via telephone and email as an on-going discussion throughout the course of the project. It is expected that allowing the respondents to have more control over the frequency of response and discussion will increase their willingness to participate.

*Bus Driver Survey*

The survey participants will be from the school districts who are already participating in the interviews. Additionally, NHTSA will request that the existing contact in each school district distribute the surveys to their bus drivers directly; the intent is that if the survey is coming from someone that the bus drivers are familiar with in their own school district, then the bus drivers will be more likely to participate. If NHTSA does not receive at least 1 survey from each of the school districts, then the school district contact will be asked to remind the bus drivers of the survey.

**B.4. DESCRIBE ANY TESTS OF PROCEDURE OR METHODS TO BE UNDERTAKEN.**

No test of procedures or methods will be conducted for the interviews. A pilot test of the bus driver survey will be conducted.

**B.5 PROVIDE THE NAMES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED ON STATISTICAL ASPECTS OF THE DESIGN.**

**REFERENCES**