



POST COVID – Return to School Transportation Strategies: FAPT

Background:

During the 2017/18 school year, 2,818,858 students attended public schools in Florida and 1,040,043 arrived every day transported on yellow school buses. During that same time frame, the 67 school districts spent over \$1 billion dollars to transport students to and from school yet only received \$438 million dollars in state funding. The average cost per student was \$1,025, based on the financial reporting 2017/18 data in the Department of Education's Q-Links. While the base FAFP reimbursement from the categorical was \$402 per student. Additional costs for busing now comes from the student allocation for the classroom and financially, it negatively affects all 67 school districts in the state.

Current Issue:

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has released recommendations for guidelines in returning students to school. For school buses, they recommend one student per seat and skipping a row between the students. Logistically, that means the school buses in the State of Florida would be transporting only 13 students per bus or fewer. The 13 students per bus are based on a 77-capacity bus and many districts operate buses of smaller capacities.

The average bus occupancy (ABO) for the State of Florida for the 2017/18 school year was 62.5 students per bus. We track this measurement, as it is a key component on the amount of funding each district receives. By simply applying the 13 students per bus as recommended by the CDC, the 67 districts combined in the State of Florida would need over 80,000 school buses to maintain what school looked like at the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year. In dollars for buses alone, that would cost education over \$6.6 billion dollars.

FAPT Strategies:

Districts Transportation leaders have been meeting over the past several weeks and have produced a spreadsheet outlining four major areas covering student transportation. We recognize that we are a support function to our districts and many districts are approaching the distance issue in a variety of ways. The overlying important issue is for districts to ensure transportation has a seat at the table when reopening strategies are being developed. There is not a one size fits all, however we have identified important considerations and strategies in the following areas:

- Logistics for social distancing on school buses. Evaluating capacities and scheduling options to minimize the financial impact.
- Cleaning of buses – plans for daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning requirements
- McKinney-Vento – establishing plans for anticipated increase in homelessness
- Best Practices for Transportation employees in protection, training and recruiting
- Contract and Labor issues – developing plans to manage contracted service agreements and labor contracts. Districts will be using labor, both internal and contracted in ways they have not used them before.

FAPT has provided a copy of this work to all 67 school districts and will continue our weekly meetings to continue to explore additional solutions to this very fluid pandemic.

PRESIDENT: **Jim Beekman**
General Manager, Transportation
Hillsborough County Schools

PRESIDENT-ELECT: **Rob Davis**
Assistant Superintendent
Polk County Schools

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
Louise Piper



PO Box 1248
New Smyrna Beach, FL 32168



407.476.3278



ExecDir@FAPTFlorida.org
www.faptflorida.org