

# Tennessee Association of Pupil Transportation Conference

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*School Safety & Transportation* | Coordinated School Health



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## Objectives

- Understand the history, format and purpose of the National Congress on Student Transportation (NCST).
- Discuss and understand the main topics and proposals that were considered.
- Understand the road ahead and process for the State of Tennessee.
- Review and understand the Illegal Passing Survey Results.
- Collaborate and network with colleagues.



# National Congress on Student Transportation (NCST)

# What is NCST?

- The **National Congress on Student Transportation (NCST)** is a conglomeration of state delegates and stakeholders that come together every five (5) years to review, revise, and officially adopt national procedures and specifications that serve as a basis for states to establish specifications, rules, and regulations for school transportation.



# National Congress on Student Transportation

- Until the May 2025 National Congress on Student Transportation, Tennessee and other states used the [specifications and procedures](#) established during the May 2015 Congress as their guiding baseline.
- In addition to the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures, Tennessee provides state-specific [school bus specifications](#) to meet the needs of our state.
- **2025 Congress:**
  - May 4-7, 2025 – Des Moines, Iowa







# History and Milestones of NCST

- NCST was **established** in 1939.
  - **In 1938**, approximately 86,099 School buses were in operation.
  - **Today** our nation has over 480,000 buses that provide transportation to students.
- National Student Transportation Congress was held:
  - 1939, 1945, 1948, 1951, 1954, 1959, 1964, 1970, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2025.
  - Due to COVID-19, the **2020** National Congress did not convene.
- The decision to hold Congress every five (5) years was made beginning in 1980.

# History & Milestones of NCST (cont'd)

- Nation-wide **Representatives** of NCST:
  - State departments of education, public safety, motor vehicles, law enforcement, and other state agencies, local school district personnel, contract operators, and advisors from the industry.
- The recommendations of specifications and procedures for school buses and their operation has been a major purpose of each congress.
- Each congress has resulted in one (1) or more publications with recommendations.





# History & Milestones of NCST (cont'd)

## ▪ Major Milestones of NCST:

- **1939:** Formulated a set of recommended standards for buses of 20 or more passengers.
- **1945:** Revised the recommendations and added standards for small vehicles with capacities of 10 to 18 passengers.
- **1948:** Formulation of recommendations related to training of school bus drivers.
- **1959/1964:** Added standards for buses used to transport students with disabilities.
- **1954:** Discussion of the extended use of school buses.
- **1980:** Updated standards for chassis and bodies, rewrote standards for specially equipped bus, and included definitions for Type A, B, C, and D.
- **1985:** Updated chassis, bodies, special education, and operations procedures. Adopted a uniform school bus accident reporting form.

# History & Milestones of NCST (cont'd)

▪Major Milestones of NCST:

- 1990:** Reorganized format of publication into two parts, Standards for School Buses and Standards for Operations.
- 1995:** Transportation of pre-kindergarten age students, including infants and toddlers, was addressed for the first time. A comprehensive section on alternative fuels was discussed and included in the publication.
- 2000:** Changed official title of the publication to the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures and recommended states to require the use of school buses having equivalent crash protection for all student transportation.
- 2005:** Changed the name of NCST from “conference” to “congress” and several safety recommendations and procedures were added/revised.
- 2010:** Amendment process to address matters too important to wait until next congress was implemented.
- 2015:** Significant changes were made to School Bus Inspection and Operations Sections. NASDPTS accepted responsibility for website and budget/funding of the Congress. Most recent updates were established.

# Operational Format of NCST

- Each state and U.S. Territory was invited to appoint **delegates** to the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress.
  - Must be selected at least ten (10) months prior to Congress.
  - Seven (7) delegates and alternates must be selected.
- Each state (delegation) has one (1) vote on each Congress business presented.
- NCST operates much like active governmental setting of Congress.
- A [Manual](#) of Operating Procedures is provided to all delegates.



# Guiding Principles of NCST

- **Federal standards and state specifications** should:
  - be consistent with objectives of safety and efficiency;
  - ensure the construction and use of safe buses;
  - reduce conflicting specification and procedures among state, when possible; and
  - specify exact dimensions to increase the quality and efficiency of manufacture.
- **Any adaptation** of the national specifications should be made by states to meet local needs and should not:
  - conflict with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS);
  - conflict with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administrations Guideline #17 ; and
  - unduly increase operation or production costs.

## Guiding Principles of NCST (cont'd)

- **State specifications** should be written in terms of performance desired, thus assuring that resulting regulations are enforceable.
- Provisions should be made within each state for periodic review and revision.
- State specifications should allow for state approval of the use of new inventions and improvements that are consistent with safety, security and efficiency.
- The current National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures are considered as recommendations to states.

# 2025 Tennessee Delegation

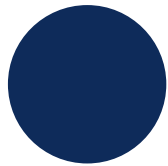
## Seven Members + Two Alternates:

- **TN Department of Education**
  - Transportation Manager: Alex Spann
  - Senior Director of School Safety & Transportation: Brian Yarbrow
- **TN Department of Safety/TN Highway Patrol**
  - Capt. Allen England
  - Lt. Raymond Gaskill
  - Sgt. William Alvarez
- **TAPT President (Year of Conference)**
  - Elizabeth Kong (Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools)
- **TSBTA Director (Year of Conference)**
  - Dewayne Ferrell (Metro Nashville Public Schools)
- **Alternate Members (2025 – Alternative Fuels)**
  - Ricky Phillips (Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools – Alt. Fuel)
  - Josh Hinerman (Robertson County Schools – TAPT President-Elect)





# NCST – School Bus Specifications



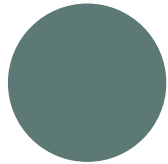
## **Proposal #1: Passed 34-13**

School buses shall be equipped with a crossing control arm mounted on the right side of the front bumper. (Already in place for Tennessee)



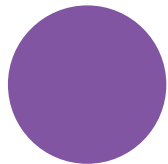
## **Proposal #10: Passed 47-0**

Emergency Exit Interlock Device Requirements: IF equipped, the vehicle shall be incapable of starting when the exit is locked and an audible alarm sound.



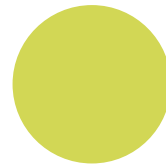
## **Proposal #15: Passed 38-7**

A handrail shall be installed on the left and right sides of the step well.



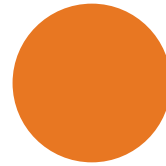
## **Proposal #17: Passed 46-0**

Fire suppression system shall include audio and visual alerts to notify the driver that the system has been activated.



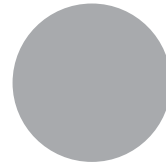
## **Proposal #18: Passed 46-0**

The location of the batteries identified by the word "BATTERY," "BATTERIES," or "12V BATTERIES" on the battery compartment door in two-inch lettering.



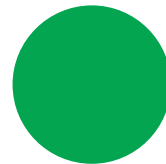
## **Proposal #19: Passed 47-0**

Identification of charging port on a Battery Electric Bus in 1-inch lettering adjacent to the port location.



## **Proposal #23: Passed 47-0**

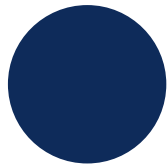
An amber pilot lamp and a red pilot lamp shall be installed adjacent to the driver controls or in the instrument cluster for indication to the driver.



## **Proposal #24: Failed 21-22**

School buses with a body length of 30 feet or greater ~~shall~~ **may** require combination front and rear stop arms/stop signs and shall comply with FMVSS 131.

# NCST – School Bus Specifications (cont'd)



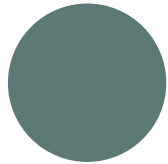
## **Proposal #25: Failed 2-45**

All exterior body/chassis lighting, with the exception of head/park/turn combination assemblies, shall be LED lighting.



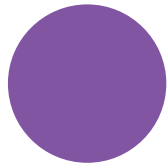
## **Proposal #28: Failed 19-25**

Remote controlled external rear view mirrors shall be used. Language to remain as "may" be used.



## **Proposal #29 (Part A): Passed**

If equipped, the Mobile Data Device (MDD) shall be mounted in an area that shall not block the driver's field of view through the windshield.



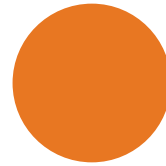
## **Proposal #29 (Part A): Passed**

The MDD shall not block the view of/or access to any gauges, mirrors, indicator lights, or safety controls.



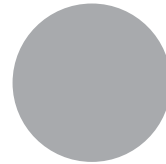
## **Proposal #29 (Part D): Passed**

While in motion, the Audio/Visual Functions of the MDD may remain functional but the operable/tactile functions must be disabled.



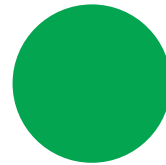
## **Proposal #45: Passed 45-2**

Electrical High Voltage System mandates – to update for EV technologies.



## **Proposal #50: Passed 45-1**

Creates optional Passenger Advisory System. This system is already required for TN School Buses.



## **Proposal #51: Passed 45-0**

Beltline: The horizontal section defined by the lower edges of the passenger windows and the top of the seat cushion-level rub rail.

# NCST – Specially Equipped Buses

- This section is intended to describe the minimum standards that supplement the Bus Specifications section.
- In general, specially equipped buses shall meet all the requirements of the preceding sections, plus those listed in this section. It is essential to consider both current and future needs, a flexible approach may be necessary given the diverse needs of students with disabilities or health care needs.
- Long term consideration makes it necessary to research all options available. It is prudent to consider the potential range of students you will be transporting throughout the vehicle's lifespan. This forward-thinking approach ensures the bus remains suitable for changing student populations over time.



# NCST – Specially Equipped School Buses

- **Proposal #1:** Passed 42-4
  - Introduction (Previous Slide)
  - IDENTIFICATION: Three (3) labels shall be located as follows: One on the front, one on the rear of the bus body or bumper, and one on the special service door.
- **Proposal #3:** Passed 31-10
  - Wheelchair securement positions shall be located that wheelchairs and their occupants do not block access to the lift door or exits.
  - SPECIAL LIGHT: Doorways in which lifts are installed shall be equipped with a special interior light that is located above the bus lift ...
- **Proposal #3:** Amendment Passed 37-7
  - E. Climate Control options MAY be installed that include heating and air conditioning.
- **Proposal #3:** Amendment Fails 13-18
  - C. Each specially equipped school bus that is set up to accommodate wheelchairs or other assistive devices should be equipped with a "drag blanket" (stays shall).





# NCST – School Bus Inspections

- **Proposal #3 – Seats and Barriers: Passed 32-6**

- D. Any part of the occupant safety restraint assembly is missing, not properly installed, not accessible or defective as to prevent proper securement ...
- E. Driver's seat fails to maintain adjusted position (393.93)

- **Proposal #10: Passed 47-0**

- C. Missing, unusable or incomplete set of emergency triangles or not properly stored in accordance with FMVSS 571.125

- **Proposal #11: Passed 48-0**

- H. If equipped with an emergency exit interlock device, the vehicle is incapable of starting while the emergency lock is engaged ...





# NCST – General Operations

- **Proposal #23:** Pre-Service & In-Service Training of Bus Drivers
  - Adding the language of: "Records that show attendance and topics discussed should be maintained"







# NCST – Infants, Toddlers, & Pre-School

## ▪ Type of Child Safety Restraint Systems

- 4 (f). Booster seats SHALL not be used in a school bus since, unlike passenger vehicles, school bus seats and their seat belt systems are designed to fit a child's body.





# NCST – Alternative Transportation

- **Proposal #1**

- **Driver Credentials**

- (B) Be at least of the age commensurate with the state's required age and required years of driving experience to become a school bus driver.
    - (F) Be subject to non-dot drug and alcohol testing equivalent to FMCSA CFR 49 Part 40 and Part 382 ... This includes pre-employment, random, post-accident, and reasonable suspicion as required by state requirements for school bus drivers.

- **Driver Training**

- To provide safe transportation, all alternative transportation drivers shall complete a pre-service training and subsequent annual in-service training. All training shall be in accordance with federal, state, and local requirements.

- **Vehicle Design/Equipment Requirements**

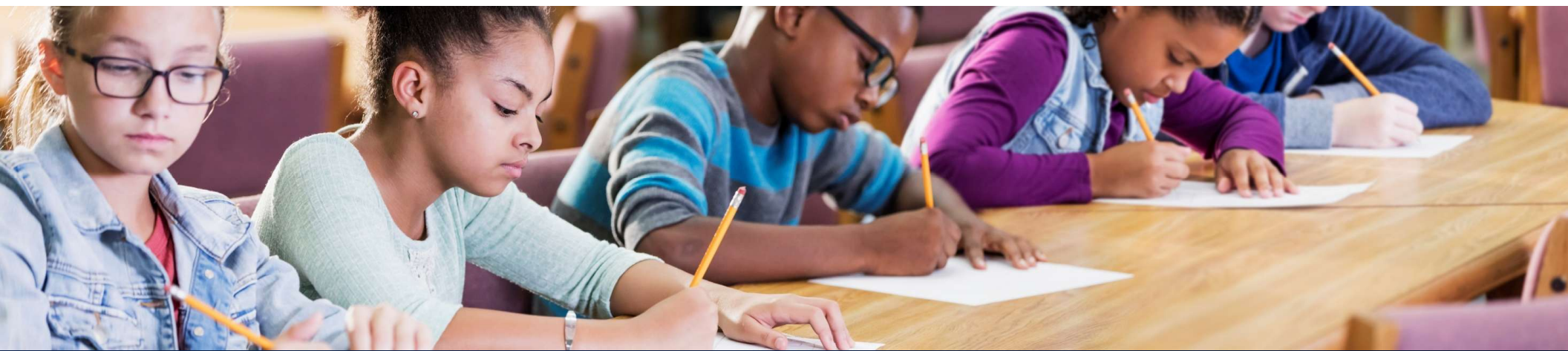
- A (1): Any vehicle manufactured with a designed seating capacity of more than 10 passengers, including the driver, shall meet all school bus specification requirements...



# The Road Ahead

- Tennessee Delegation will meet to debrief.
- Department of Education and Department of Safety (THP) will hold meetings to review National Specifications and review/revise Tennessee Bus Specifications.
  - Stakeholder feedback will be received during the process.
- Timeline of the process is yet to be determined and is based upon the review/revision and approval process.





**Questions?**

# Tennessee Illegal Passing Survey - Results

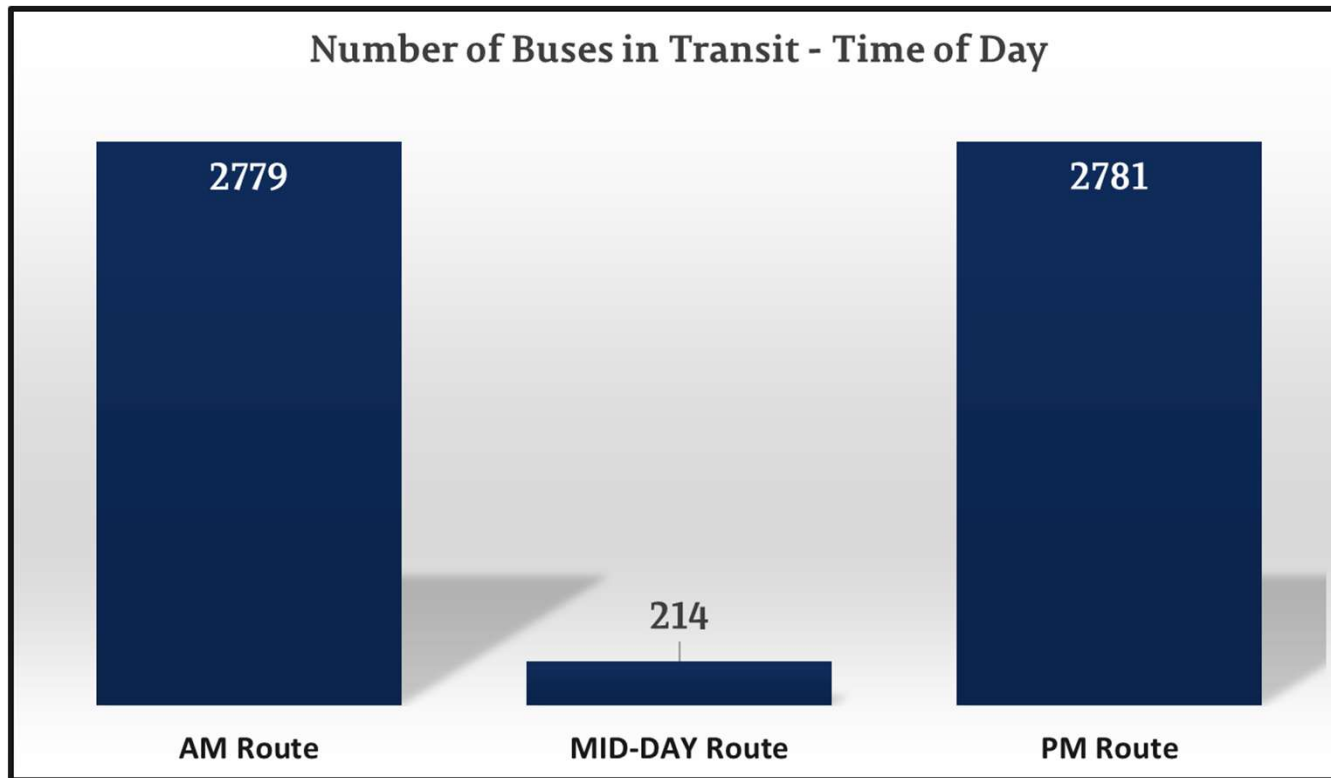
# Illegal Passing Survey - Tennessee

- **National Survey: NASDPTS**
  - Snapshot in Time for Illegal Passing Infractions
- **Survey Window:** April 7 – 25
- **Survey Information:**
  - 43 District Responses - Statewide
    - *Approximately 2781 Total Buses*
  - Survey Questions:
    - Number of Buses in Transit – AM/MIDAY/PM
    - Number of Buses Illegally Passed:
      - Front/Oncoming
      - Rear/Following
      - From Left/Driver Side
      - From Right/Door Side

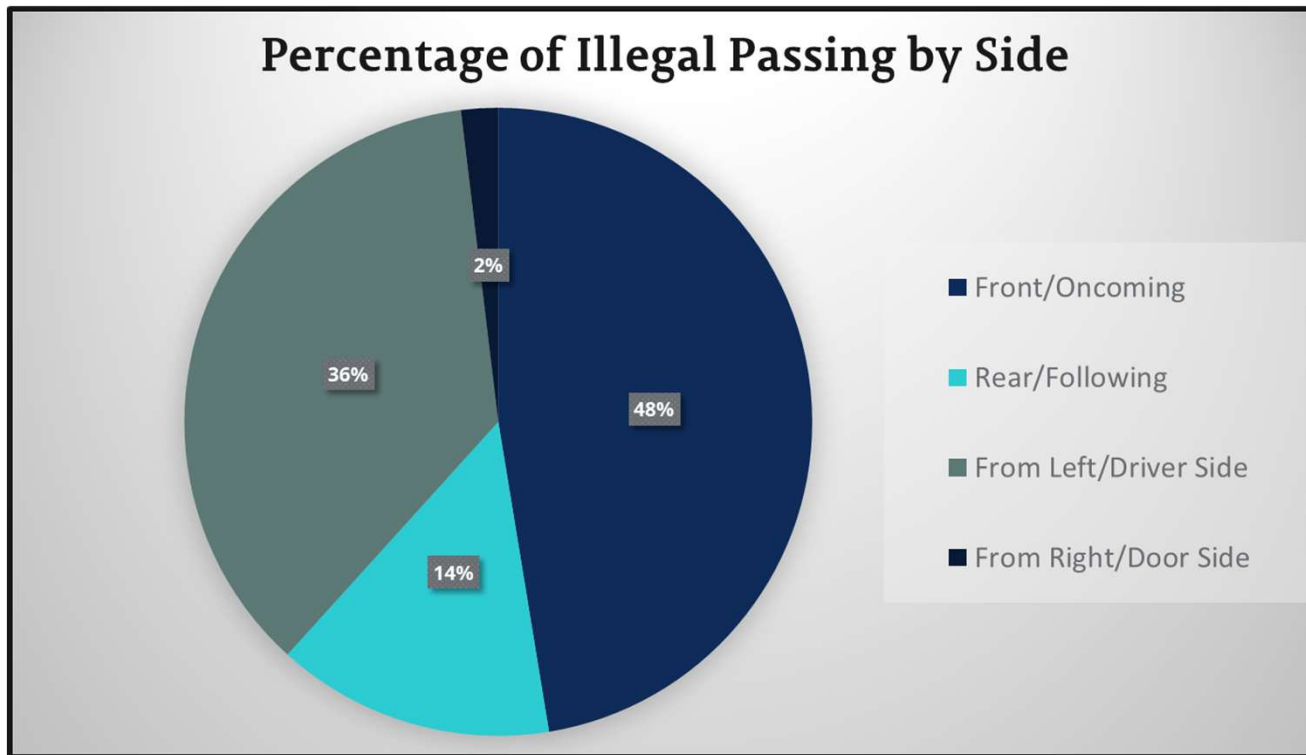




# 2025 Illegal Passing Survey



# 2025 Illegal Passing Survey



# District Collaboration

# Best Practice Collaboration

- What is one thing that you are doing in your district/school that you wish you would have implemented sooner?
- How are you combating the School Bus Driver Shortage?
- What is something that you have learned that you would do differently?
- What do you see as a strength in your district in regard to Transportation?
- Is there an addition that you have installed on your buses that have improved your practices?

# Networking Activity

# Resources

- [National Congress on Student Transportation](#)
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)
- [THP – Pupil Transportation](#)
- [Entry Level Driver Training \(ELDT\)](#)
- [Tennessee Association of Pupil Transportation](#)
- [National Association of Pupil Transportation](#)
- [Transportation Security Administration – Bus](#)
- [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#)
- [School Bus Fleet](#)
- [School Transportation News](#)
- [School Bus Ride](#)







# Thank You!

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