



May 8, 2020

Dear NSTA Member,

Thank you for your continued support and dedication throughout the coronavirus pandemic. We certainly appreciate efforts you've made to support student transportation and keep it viable. As we are all facing many of the same questions about what students returning to schools will look like, it is important that the nation's student transportation community formulates best practices with respect to the pupil transportation system in a post COVID-19 environment.

We are pleased to announce a partnership among the three national associations to create a task force dedicated to providing industry best practices to policy makers and educators as we collectively plan for students to return to the classroom. Today, we are pleased to announce the formation of the Student Transportation Aligned for Return to School (STARTS) Task Force. The STARTS Task Force will operate similarly to the National Congresses on School Transportation (NCST), but will, of necessity, be more nimble and timely in helping to answer questions that we all have right now. Our efforts will be coordinated by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS), the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT), and the National School Transportation Association (NSTA).

Our three organizations, and especially our members, have the knowledge and expertise to raise, review, and report on the myriad of issues that will face student transportation in the weeks and months ahead. It is our shared goal to put together thoughtful and thorough best practices that can be shared with stakeholders at any level. The COVID-19 health crisis has saddled us with unexpected and unique challenges, and the task force represents our effort to meet those challenges and offer constructive solutions. With your help, we will expeditiously develop best practices guidelines and resources.

With that, your expertise is welcome and needed. The areas of research and emphasis may include the following areas of concern and others that may be identified as we glean input from experts such as yourselves:

- Social distancing and workplace safety at the transportation facility;
- Social distancing and use of PPE and other preventive health measures to ensure driver and student safety;
- New or expanded bus cleaning and disinfecting protocols;
- Regular and special education student management to ensure student and driver safety;
- The impact school schedule changes will have on transportation operations and finance, including the potential for radical changes to student class scheduling;

- School-centric, parent and community-based education and other communications;
- And other changes that have the potential to affect school transportation operations.

Initially, we aim to do the work of the task force through three separate subcommittees: Health and Safety (Students and Employees); Communications, Advocacy, and Public Relations; and Scheduling , Routing, and School Buses. The goal is to develop specific recommendations, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to encourage transportation professionals at all levels to insert themselves into the state and local work groups that are already working on “return to school” issues, sometimes without transportation challenges and solutions being fully considered. In that vein, we have invited participation from several national education and policy making associations. We believe the work of STARTS and your transportation expertise will facilitate your logical entry point into these conversations and procedures among other state and local education leaders and governors’ offices.

We have set up a central email portal for communications among interested parties. If you would like to participate on the STARTS Task Force, please feel free to contact us at STARTS@napt.org. Once again, thank you for your dedication in making the largest transportation system in the United States also the safest one.

Sincerely,



Steve Simmons
President
NAPT



Mike LaRocco
President
NASDPTS



John Benish, Jr.
President
NSTA