



For Immediate Release

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FMCSA Grants NSTA Extension Request of “Under the Hood’ Waiver

Yesterday, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) announced it had granted an extension to the “Under the Hood” waiver through June 30, 2022, as a change intended to support the recruitment of new school bus drivers. Originally issued on January 3, 2022, this directive gave States the option of waiving the portion of the commercial driver’s license (CDL) skills test that requires school bus driver applicants to identify the “Under the Hood” engine components. All other components of the written and road test must continue to be met. The extension of the waiver comes following a request sent by NSTA Executive Director Curt Macysyn to FMCSA, on March 9, 2022.

In its advisory, FMCSA states:

“FMCSA permits, but does not require, States to waive the engine compartment component of the pre-trip vehicle inspection skills testing requirement in 49 CFR § 383.113(a)(1)(i), also known informally as the “under-the-hood” component, for commercial driver’s license (CDL) applicants seeking the school bus (S) and passenger (P) endorsements and the intrastate only (K) restriction. Drivers issued a CDL pursuant to this waiver are restricted to the intrastate operation of school buses only. Additionally, FMCSA waives the requirement in 49 CFR § 383.133(c)(1) that States administer this portion of the pre-trip vehicle inspection test in accordance with an FMCSA pre-approved examiner information manual. FMCSA issues this waiver in response to multiple requests that the Agency provide regulatory relief to address the growing shortage of school bus drivers, which has been exacerbated by the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) public health emergency.”

The additional 90-day waiver temporarily removes a potential barrier of entry for the pupil transportation industry in its recruitment of school bus driver candidates, as the waiver aligns the process of obtaining a CDL more closely with the responsibilities of a school bus driver. This extension will take contractors into the beginning of summer months, which is peak recruitment season for school bus drivers.

Additionally, FMCSA determined that riding the school bus is the safest way for children to be transported to and from school, and the Agency believes this waiver can be implemented without any negative impact to safety. The Agency recognizes the importance of safe and reliable transportation for school-aged children, and this reliable transportation also plays a critical role in contributing to the economy by allowing parents and caretakers to get back to work. The positive impact to communities is wide-ranging.

“The extension of the ‘Under the Hood’ waiver by FMCSA provides another building block as student transportation continues to address the nationwide driver shortage. While we believe that there are additional steps that are critical in the industry’s efforts to recruit drivers, it is a



step in the right direction as we endeavor to and streamline the CDL process to more closely reflect the responsibilities of the school bus driver position. We appreciate the support of FMCSA for their willingness to work with NSTA on solutions to the critical school bus driver shortage,” said NSTA Government Relations Chairperson Bree Allen of National Express.

“NSTA would like to thank FMCSA for granting our request for further extension of the original ‘Under the Hood’ waiver issued on January 3. NSTA believes that this waiver allows the CDL process to better reflect the responsibilities of a school bus driver, without negatively affecting safety of our students. We look forward to working with the Agency in making permanent changes to assist in alleviating the bus driver shortage without impacting safety,” said NSTA Executive Director, Curt Macysyn.

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About NSTA: National School Transportation Association has been the voice of private school bus contractors, manufacturers and suppliers since 1964. The association provides school transportation professionals with the tools and resources they need to make school buses safe, affordable, and efficient nationwide.