

December 30, 2021

Via e-mail to: ExecutiveSecretariat@ntsb.gov

Hon. Jennifer Homendy
Chairperson, National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20594

RE: Accident No. HWY18MH003
Report No. HAR-20/02 - Rec H-20-15 thru H-20-18

Dear Chairperson Homendy:

This response is in reply to findings and recommendations of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to National School Transportation Association (NSTA) regarding the above referenced safety recommendations sent to us on April 21, 2020. As you know, these recommendations arose from the NTSB *Vehicle Collision with Student Pedestrians Crossing High-Speed Roadway to Board School Bus - Rochester, Indiana October 30, 2018 Investigation*. To date, NSTA has thoroughly reviewed the findings and recommendations of the NTSB investigation, and we have completed the following activities in response.

(H-20-18) The top legislative priority of NSTA had been to address the epidemic of illegal school bus passing – seen throughout the country. To that end, the organization secured the introduction of the **STOP for School Buses Act** through obtaining bill sponsors – Senator Todd Young (IN) and Senator Gary Peters (MI), as well as House Members Jackie Walorski (IN-2) and Julia Brownley (CA-26) in 2019. These members responded quickly to the events in Rochester by introducing this important legislation in direct response to the fatal crash.

(H-20-16) (H-20-17) (H-20-18) As part of the NSTA effort to gain passage of the bill, the organization hosted a “School Bus Technology Summit” on Capitol Hill on October 23, 2019 that was attended by all four bill sponsors, as well as Dr. Meg Sweeney of NTSB. Our goal was to raise awareness of this legislation, as well as demonstrate several technological features that aim to keep student passengers out of harm’s way. We would note that children’s safety directly “outside of the school bus” has been of paramount importance to the organization in these deliberations.

(H-20-16) (H-20-18) We are pleased to report that our efforts to address these important issues reached a successful outcome with Presidential enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) on November 15, 2021. Of note, the new law includes - **Sec. 24110. Review of Laws, Safety Measures, and Technologies Relating to School Buses.**

This section would require the Secretary of Transportation to study the effectiveness of State laws that make it illegal to pass a stopped school bus on the road and identify best practices to address vehicles that illegally pass stopped school buses. This section would also require the Secretary to conduct a public safety messaging campaign to help prevent the illegal passing of school buses and improve the safe loading and unloading of school buses. This section would also direct the Secretary to research vehicle technologies and driver education methods that could further improve school bus safety.

Additional Actions:

(H-20-15) (H-2016) (H-20-17) (H-20-18) On July 21, 2020, at the *2020 NSTA Annual Meeting and Convention*, held via virtual platform due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr. Meg Sweeney of NTSB presented at a program entitled “*NTSB Safety Report with Transfinder & Safe Fleet*”. Dr. Sweeney reviewed the crash investigation, including maps and photographs,

as well as factors excluded as causal to the crash, the probable cause of the crash, similarities with respect to crash investigations in Baldwin and Hartsfield, and repeated safety issues in these types of crashes.

Attendees of the program were also reminded of a common theme seen in crash investigations of this type: “Failure of other drivers to stop or otherwise respond when approaching a school bus with its warning lights on and stop arm extended.”

Overall, the findings and recommendations of the 2018 Rochester, IN crash investigation was shared with conference participants. In addition, two school bus technology safety companies (Safe Fleet & Transfinder) provided information as to effectively utilizing technological advancements in student transportation - in order to prevent crashes of this nature. It should be noted that this session was recorded and then made available to any NSTA member who missed the live presentation.

(H-20-15) (H-20-16) (H-20-17) (H-20-18) Finally, you should also know that in its July/August 2021 edition of **NSTA-64** (the Association e-newsletter), an article entitled, “*Back-to-School Moment: Keeping Students Safe from Motorists who Pass School Buses*” was published as part of our “Return to School” theme. The contents of the article were taken directly from the summary information provided to us by NTSB and included information pertaining to bus crashes in Rochester (IN), Baldwyn (MS), and Hartsfield (GA). A copy of this publication is provided for your convenience.

With the passage and enactment of IIJA, NSTA believes that it has successfully completed its requirements set forth in April 21, 2020 letter and be advised that NSTA will continue to educate and advocate for remedies to eradicate the illegal passing of school buses. We look forward to working with the U.S. Department of Transportation, as well as NTSB, in the implementation of the new law. Additionally, NSTA frequently reminds members that the Association can assist them one-on-one as needed when issues or questions arise at their operations regarding safety or other matters.

NSTA thanks you for the opportunity to provide this response, and please do not hesitate to contact us at 703-684-3200 or email at info@yellowbuses.org , if you require clarification on the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,



Curt Macysyn
Executive Director
National School Transportation Association

Encl.