

For Immediate Release

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Back-to-School Reminder: NSTA Highlights Alarming Survey Results on Illegal Passing of School Buses

YARDVILLE, NJ – As students across the nation return to school, the National School Transportation Association (NSTA) is urging motorists to exercise vigilance and follow the law when driving in close proximity of school buses. Recent national survey results showcase the persistent and dangerous problem of motorists illegally passing stopped school buses, putting our school children at risk.

At the 2025 NSTA Annual Meeting and Convention held this past July in Boston, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) released the results of its 2025 one-day illegal passing survey. More than 114,000 school bus drivers participated nationwide, reporting 67,258 violations in a single day. Extrapolated across the typical school year, the findings suggest drivers illegally pass school buses millions of times nationwide, putting children at significant risk for injury or death.

The scope of the problem is further highlighted by the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in its "Driver Knowledge of School Bus Passing Laws: A National Survey." NHTSA found that while many drivers understand the rules for stopping on two-lane undivided roads. However, significant confusion remains on multi-lane roads and when buses are stopped in school loading zones. Misunderstandings about when and where to stop contribute to dangerous driving behaviors and endanger students every day. The NHTSA study also revealed that many drivers lack awareness of the penalties associated with violations. This gap in knowledge suggests that greater public education, stronger enforcement, and more consistent messaging are urgently needed. Interestingly, nearly 70 percent of survey respondents indicated they would support camera enforcement and ticketing the registered owner of a vehicle involved in an illegal pass — an approach that could help deter violations and strengthen accountability.

Both the NASDPTS survey and NHTSA's findings emphasize the need for consistent national outreach to change driver behavior. NSTA remains committed to supporting initiatives that promote compliance with state laws, educate the public, and advance data-driven strategies that safeguard children on their daily trips to and from school.

For decades, school buses have been recognized as the safest form of student transportation. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), children are seventy times more likely to arrive at school safely when riding a school bus than when traveling by car. Riding the bus is significantly safer than walking, biking, or being driven to school in a passenger vehicle. While the yellow bus remains the gold standard for safety, its effectiveness is undermined when motorists fail to obey the law and put children at risk outside the school bus.

As the new school year begins, NSTA urges all motorists to do their part in keeping children safe. Stopping for a school bus with its flashing red light and an extended stop arm is the law, and failure to



adhere to the law, can place students' lives in jeopardy. Motorists should remain especially alert in school zones, on highways, high volume traffic areas, residential neighborhoods, and rural roadways as well, where children can be more difficult to see. Exercising patience and caution can make the difference between a safe trip to school and a preventable tragedy.

Both the NASDPTS annual survey and NHTSA's national study point to the same conclusion that driver education, targeted law enforcement, and situational awareness are key to reducing illegal passing. NSTA remains committed to supporting campaigns and policy initiatives that promote compliance with school bus laws, strengthen safety practices, and protect students across the country.

"As a new school year begins, we must send a clear message to the motoring public that stopping for a stopped school bus isn't just the law, it will prevent a potential traffic fatality," said Curt Macysyn, NSTA Executive Director. "As a society, we must continue to raise awareness of the laws governing motor vehicle navigation around school buses because any incident involving a stopped school bus is entirely preventable. NSTA also urges law agencies to step up enforcement of these violations throughout the school year, and our courts can do their part by treating these offenses as the serious violations that they are and avoid expediency – just to get the case off their dockets."

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About NSTA: The National School Transportation Association has been the voice of private school bus contractors, vehicle manufacturers, and vendors for more than 60 years. Founded in 1964, the Association provides school transportation professionals with the tools and resources they need to make school buses safe, affordable, and efficient nationwide.