



NEW YORK ASSOCIATION
FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

NYAPT

New York Association for Pupil Transportation Calls on the Legislature and Governor to Maintain Existing School Transportation Funding Formula and Cover Pandemic Stand-By Costs
Executive Budget May Inadvertently Shift Cost Increases to Local Property Taxpayers

(Albany, NY) March 4, 2021 – The New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) today called on the Legislature and Governor Cuomo to amend the executive budget proposal by abandoning the capping and consolidation of eleven expense-based aid categories, including school transportation, into one services aid block grant, and to reimburse districts for transportation stand-by costs associated with the pandemic.

According to an analysis conducted by the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, the Governor’s proposal would effectively cut expense-based aid by nearly \$683 million – a more than 10% reduction from previous funding levels and leave school districts and local property taxpayers on the hook for stand-by costs caused by the state shutdown of schools during the pandemic.

The school transportation industry across the state was in limbo for much of 2020 due to the pandemic, standing by, maintaining their fleets and ability to answer Governor Cuomo’s call to leap back into service at a moment’s notice and resume transporting more than 2.3 million children each day.

Further, school district transportation departments and their private contractor partners have experienced a number of unforeseen short and long-term costs associated with COVID-19 that have not been fully addressed by the Executive Budget proposal. These expenses include additional labor costs to clean and disinfect school buses; as well as the costs to purchase PPE, sanitizing equipment and products to ensure that the Empire State’s fleet of yellow buses are safe to transport New York’s school children.

“We understand that the Governor is facing difficult budget decisions; however, school transportation departments and school bus contractors did not cease operations during the COVID stand-by. Instead, they were busy delivering meals and instructional materials, and maintaining their fleets and operations while schools were closed,” said NYAPT Executive Director David Christopher. “We appreciate that the Executive Budget proposes to reimburse school districts for meal and school supplies delivery however that does not go far enough. The failure to address standby expenditures and the proposed cost capping and burden shifting to local school districts compromises our mission of transporting our children to and from school safely.”

Christopher added, “The existing expense-based aid model is a proven and fair way for New York to fund school transportation, and it allows local school districts to effectively manage the unpredictable nature of transportation costs such as we are experiencing from the pandemic.”

Interestingly, the 2021-22 Executive Budget proposal includes an increase in funding for universal pre-k, but it does not include a corresponding increase in funding to ensure that these children have access to safe transportation to their places of learning. Accordingly, New York state’s school transportation officials encourage the Governor and legislature to provide adequate funding to our school districts to ensure that sufficient transportation capacity is available, drivers receive necessary safety training, and fleets are maintained to the highest standards.

Robert Reichenbach, president of the New York School Bus Distributors Association echoed the concerns expressed by many school districts and private school transportation providers when he observed, “The state’s budget should not be balanced on the backs of our children, and costs should not be shifted to already struggling families in the form of higher property taxes to make up for the budget cuts associated with the Services Aid block grant proposal. We owe it to New York families to ensure we have the safest school transportation system possible and that means we need to ensure our schools and their school transportation departments are adequately funded.”

About: NYAPT is a membership-based professional association incorporated in 1974 as a “501-c-6” non-profit corporation. Our members are employed in school districts, BOCES, community and technical colleges, private school bus operators and community-based programs, and include our industry partners. Our members come from many levels within the school bus industry, including supervisors and managers, mechanics and technicians, trainers and safety specialists, dispatchers and drivers.

www.nyapt.org

About: The New York State Bus Distributors Association represents school bus dealers from across New York that sell, service, and help maintain safe, environmentally friendly school buses for school districts and private school transportation providers. The association’s members provide important services and support to nearly every school district in the state helping them save valuable education resources and ensuring their school buses are running efficiently. **www.nysbda.com**

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