

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

STATE BOARD MEETING

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Saturday September 20, 2014

CALIFORNIA'S BUDGET

The State's budget was adopted on time this year. School transportation is a part of the Education Budget and is still funded at the same level as last, which is a 20% reduction from our Approved Entitlement level of the 2008-09 school year. Our funding has been flat for the past five school years. We did not receive a COLA. School transportation funding is not flexible and restricted to be spent only for its intended purpose. In addition, there is a "maintenance of effort" clause that requires all school districts to spend at least as much as they receive. Funding for school transportation JPAs is set to expire at the end of the 2014-15 school year. It is expected that there will be a "fix" by this time.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING LEGISLATION

SB 1137 TORRES was a bill introduced by Senator Torres and was intended to fund school transportation to 50% of approved costs. We got very close, but in the end, the bill remained in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

This bill, although not perfect, was crafted to respond to the support that legislators have expressed. There was another bill introduced by Senator Vidak, SB 1166 that would have fully funded school transportation. That died very quickly without support.

SB 1137 moved unanimously through the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Appropriations Committee prior to June 15. That is the date of the budget deadline. In the Senate version of the budget, the first year's appropriation was included. That was incredible news. The budget conference committee, however, did not include the amount in the final version of the budget.

At that time, we amended the bill to push it back another year. The bill went to the Assembly Education Committee and was unanimously passed. There was another amendment there that addressed funding districts or charter schools that previously had never received the funding. The bill then went to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. It most likely would have sailed through that committee; however we discovered that if the bill did end up on the Governor's desk, he would not sign it.

Please remember, the Governor has a very large staff, and the recommendation for this was coming from the Department of Finance who builds the budget and monitors the revenue to pay for things. Although we had worked hard with this staff, they were not yet ready to make any changes.

Another big concern that they have consistently articulated is that reimbursing a percentage of approved costs is a moving target, and likely a much higher number than they would want to anticipate.

We may need to explore other funding language that would create a more stable and even funding mechanism. They are so used to funding things based on a dollar amount per ADA. That is a much more predictable model. We may have to craft something around that to be successful.

SB 1137 was sponsored by CSEA and CSBA with significant support from CASBO, CTA, SEIU, Kern County Superintendent of Schools, Central Valley Education Association, Suburban School District Association, School Transportation Coalition and the Small School District's Association. CASTO and our lobbyist Strategic Education Services played the lead in coordinating meetings with the group and working towards consensus and a game plan throughout the process. If you know anyone from these groups, thank them for their tireless effort. It was truly a remarkable group of very talented Lobbyists. Strive to have your district or operation become a member of the School Transportation Coalition. Membership is relatively inexpensive and a broader coalition can help support significant action. We are very hopeful that our momentum will continue and a fix for school transportation funding will occur this year.

This two-year legislative session is over. Any bills in suspense are essentially dead. New bill will need to be introduced by about February 20. Elections will change the landscape of the California legislature. Some of our supporters have termed out, and we will need to work with new legislators to gain their support.

CARB: LOWER EMISSION SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM CLARIFICATION ON DISMANTLING REQUIREMENTS

CARB just issued the attached letter that is available on the LESBP location on their website. It clarifies their rules and addresses questions relative to dismantling old buses replaced on this program.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER DAY RESOLUTION

Attached is a story and some photos that highlight the Assembly's passage of HR40, a resolution to recognize School Bus Driver Day. Unfortunately, due to scheduling issues, the presentation did not occur until August. Assembly Member Medina made the presentation. Included in the presentation were Nikki Hughes, Donna Anderson, Tony Peregrina and me. Assembly Member Medina was a high school teacher and enjoyed chatting with us about his positive experiences with the school bus. A number of legislators joined in on the floor to support school transportation.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK

Annually, School Bus Safety Week is the third week in October. This year it is October 20-24 this year. CASTO spearheads a Governor's Proclamation announcing and supporting School Bus Safety Month.

The presentation of the Governor's Proclamation is set for Friday October 3 at the office of the Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol. Our relationship with CHP is long and deep. Commissioner Farrow is a champion of School Bus Safety and significantly supports our common mission.

NAPT SCHOOL BUS RATIONALE

Attached is an article authored by Mike Martin in the September issue of School Bus Fleet. Mike clearly articulates some of the great reasons we advocate the use of school buses. This is a great piece to share with your boss, school board or community!