

# Get Schooled on School Buses

School bus companies and, in turn, school bus drivers, are entrusted with the weighty responsibility to safely transport millions of students each day. It is estimated that in the United States, nearly 400,000 school buses drive over 5.76 billion miles each year.<sup>1</sup> For some children, a school bus driver may be the first person to see them each day. It's these drivers who transport them to their sporting events, extracurricular activities, field trips or after-school care. They are the last person to wish a student a happy summer vacation, and the first to welcome them back on the bus the following school year. In fact, some students ride with the same bus driver throughout their entire scholastic career, making that driver one of the most consistent parts of their educational experience. School bus drivers have a unique opportunity and role in shaping our nation's youth, a task that goes far beyond transportation. Let's look at some of those ways!

## Getting to School

According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are approximately 50 million students enrolled in public schools in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> Here's how students in grades K-8 get to school:<sup>3</sup>

When you take into account all grade levels, school buses transport nearly 26 million students each day!<sup>4</sup>

<b>FAMILY CAR</b>	<b>51.5%</b>
<b>SCHOOL BUS</b>	<b>29.8%</b>
<b>WALK</b>	<b>15.2%</b>
<b>BIKE</b>	<b>1.9%</b>
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>.04%</b>

## Safety

School buses are one of the safest means of transportation for students going to and from school. According to the NHTSA, students are 70 times more likely to arrive at school safely on a school bus as opposed to traveling by car.<sup>5</sup>

## Environment and Sustainability

School buses are both cost-effective and environmentally friendly. According to the American School Bus Council, a single school bus will drive an average of 12,000 miles each year to transport 54 students to and from school.<sup>6</sup> It would take approximately 36 vehicles to transport those same students to and from school each day, leading to 17.3 million more vehicles driving an additional 62 billion miles each year. School buses save American families time and money, while also reducing the amount of exhaust and vehicle emissions in the air. Additionally, with investments in propane,<sup>7</sup> CNG,<sup>8</sup> electric<sup>9</sup> and clean diesel buses,<sup>10</sup> the environmental and cost savings continue to grow.

## Danger Zones

You can do your part to help keep students and school bus drivers safe. Like other vehicles, school buses have danger zones and blind spots. However, unlike many other types of commercial transportation, school buses often have many more pedestrians and children walking near and around the vehicle, specifically in these danger zones. Students riding the bus, parents picking up their children and other pedestrians and motorists should always maintain situational awareness and exercise caution when moving around school buses.

A 2015 survey by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services identified that nearly 80,000 vehicles illegally passed school buses in a one-day survey conducted in 26 states. This represents a 77% violation rate, a rate that has been fairly consistent over the past few years. It was 78% in 2014 and 79% in 2013. A total of 102,371 school bus drivers participated, which represents about one-fifth (21%) of the nation's estimated 485,000 school bus drivers.<sup>11</sup> While the laws in each state are different regarding stopping around school buses, typically motorists who are traveling the same direction as a school bus are required to stop when a school bus's red lights are flashing. Additionally, motorists traveling the opposite direction of a school bus typically are required to stop unless the road is four or more lanes, or there is a substantial divide (a wall, 10 to 15 foot median, etc.) in

the highway. However, it is best to review your state's specific laws.<sup>12</sup>

**Sources:**

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