

Maritime Bus Passenger Safety Consultation

**Summary of the Stakeholder Discussion
Moncton, New Brunswick**

February 29, 2000

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1.0 Introduction

In June 1999, Transport Canada, assisted by the Institute On Governance, held a pilot session in Victoria, B.C. to discuss the issue of bus safety and identify actions which might further improve Canada's strong safety record. PricewaterhouseCoopers has been contracted by Transport Canada to assist, in conjunction with the Institute on Governance, in the Bus Safety Consultation across Canada.

The Maritime workshop was the next step following the pilot workshop. The session took place on February 29th, 2000 at the Delta Beauséjour, 750 Main Street, Moncton, New Brunswick, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. The facilitators were Ms. Nathalie Roy and Ms. Suzanne Forget of PricewaterhouseCoopers. Session participants included a number of representatives from different stakeholder groups: bus operators, bus manufacturers, Department of Transport, Department of Education, school boards, senior citizens' federation and the Canadian Safety Council.

Mr. Derek Sweet from Transport Canada made a brief presentation on the context in which the consultation is taking place. References to the information packages, the exemplary record on bus safety, the desire to touch base with the public, and the special effort devoted to obtaining a fair representation of the industry and the stakeholders were made. Mr. Sweet also mentioned that a report would be produced following each consultation session and that participants would receive, electronically or by mail, a copy of the report summarising the Maritime session. Participants and other interested parties were invited to review the consultation outcomes on the web site at http://www.policy.com/worksites_transport.htm. Mr. Phillip Haid from the Institute on Governance elaborated on the web site and provided participants with a document explaining the site.

Prior to entering into the discussion, the "Dine and Date" ice-breaker exercise was conducted. In groups of 5, participants chose one person, alive or dead, that the group would take out for dinner. This exercise brought out participants' personal interests and interaction to reach consensus. After 5 minutes, the group reported on the choice of their date and why. Following the exercise, participants introduced themselves and the organization they represented.

The discussion was designed to obtain input and feedback from the participants to better understand:

- their concerns regarding bus and motor coach safety;
- their views on putting seatbelts in school buses and motor coaches;
- their suggestions on how to prioritize these concerns;
- their opinions regarding possible strategies to address these concerns.

To exchange ideas on the various issues, participants first met in a plenary session where they identified issues related to school bus safety. They were then grouped by stakeholder category to discuss one of the top three issues. They subsequently reconvened as a larger group to share

highlights of their discussion, followed by further discussion by the larger group. The safety issue on motor coaches was also discussed in a plenary session. The main issues were as follows.

For school buses:

- Seat belts;
- Safety devices other than seat belts;
- Driver training;
- Regulations; and
- Public education.

For motor coaches:

- Seat belts;
- Enforcement;
- Driver training; and
- People issues.

It should be noted that the intent of this Report is to capture the views and ideas expressed by the participants at the workshop. We have endeavored to capture the discussion as accurately as possible, without offering any overall analysis or conclusions. The Final Report will cull all the ideas and suggestions provided in the sessions and on the website, and offer some overall analysis and conclusions on bus safety.

2.0 Main Themes

This section presents the main themes that were highlighted throughout the day's discussion.

- Overall, workshop participants agreed that the installation of seat belts on school buses will not increase the level of safety for students. Manufacturers and operators clearly stated that injuries happen between the loading/unloading zone and the students' homes.
- No consensus was reached on the benefit of installing seatbelts on motor coaches. In fact, participants reported the lack of information, research and statistics on the motor coaches safety and clearly stated the need for further testing.
- The bus industry reported concerns related to safety devices such as the eight light system versus the four light system, stop arm, crossing gates, reflecting tape, reverse warning, two way radio and cell phones and the application of standards.
- The group commented that drivers have to be trained on the following: understanding the regulations, maintaining discipline and understanding their responsibilities. Training updates and drivers' certification were also raised as issues.
- The team responsible for discussing the regulation issue agreed that there was a need for consistency in the enforcement of regulations. Input from Transport Canada, in conjunction with the provinces, would be required to develop this consistency. Participants reported the same need with regards to vehicle inspection and drivers' certification.
- Most participants agreed that there was a need for better enforcement of the regulations. However, there was no consensus on the importance of consistency across provinces.
- The need to educate the general public on school bus safety was reported to be critical. Participants recommended that the industry use research, statistics and videos as evidence that the use of seatbelts do not necessarily increase safety on school buses. The use of the media and web sites were also reported as positive initiatives.
- The motor coach industry appears to be more reactive than preventive. Participants commented on the need for the industry to shift its mentality towards a more preventive mode. The production of paper trails on the maintenance and inspection reports was suggested to increase the focus on prevention.
- Participants commented on the importance of the application of standards and the respect of the regulations.
- A number of concerns were raised on the image of the bus industry. In fact, manufacturers and operators mentioned the lack of interest in the field and the recruitment challenges they are facing.

3.0 Specific Comments Regarding School Buses

This section presents a summary of the specific comments provided by participants during the plenary and break-out sessions on safety issues related to school buses.

As presented below, participants identified a total of 24 issues relating to school buses.

1. Lack of training for drivers
2. Special needs transportation
3. Seating capacity
4. Non-conforming van issues
5. School bus design
6. Bus driver authority
7. Vehicles inspection
8. Funding
9. Students' safety
10. Safety devices
11. Students' lack of discipline on buses
12. Ownership of liability/Insurance
13. Requirement for drivers
14. Cost of fuel
15. Application of regulations
16. Insufficient statistics on safety
17. Lack of public awareness on safety issues
18. Vehicle maintenance
19. Students and parents' education on safety
20. Environmental concerns such as pollution
21. Compliance
22. Drivers skills
23. Complexity associated with various quality of highway systems
24. Use of school bus for purposes other than transporting students to school (i.e. field trip)

The issues of safety devices (other than seat belts), driver training and regulations were identified as most important and were discussed in more detail. However, the issue of seat belts is perceived by the general public as being an issue and, therefore, was part of the discussion. The issue of seat belts was discussed in a plenary discussion, whereas the other topics were addressed in working groups.

3.1 Seat Belts

A summary of participants' comments on the installation and use of seat belts on school buses is provided below.

- The installation of seat belts on school buses was not reported as an important issue by the participants. In fact, participants requested an explanation on the reasons for identifying seatbelts as a mandatory item on the agenda. Mr. Derek Sweet and Mr. Dan Davis, both from Transport Canada, explained that their department receives a great deal of correspondence requesting either the installation of seat belts on school buses or an explanation of their absence. The questions raised by the general public made this item mandatory for discussion.

- Participants reacted negatively to the installation of seat belts on school buses. They commented that the discussion around the seat belt issue was unnecessary given that studies demonstrate that the addition of seat belts would not improve the safety record of school buses. It was perceived as a non-issue by most participants.
- Manufacturers and operators reported that higher seat backs with more padding and firmer seat fixation have a greater potential for increasing students' safety than seat belts.
- Participants concluded that the installation of seat belts is not the problem. The real issue is one of public education. Most accidents involving children occur outside the school bus, between the unloading zone and the children's homes. School boards and the Canadian Safety Council felt that the issue of seat belts was more a concern raised by parents than a safety issue based on facts.
- Major disadvantages were associated with seat belts especially in critical situations such as fire. The question of "who would help the students get out in a panic situation?" remains unanswered. In fact, participants reported that seat belts are proven beneficial only under very specific circumstances such as a collision with a train or a trailer.
- Manufacturers and operators raised technical factors related to seat belts. The type of belt is only one element. Consideration must also be given to the overall design of the bus seating system such as, including adequate structure of the floor and the seat, the fixation of seat belts, adaptability of seat belts for diverse clientele ranging from kindergarten to high school students. Children of various height and size get on board of school buses and "one size fits all" does not necessarily apply in this case.
- If the decision to install seat belts on school buses was made, it would be mandatory for all passengers. Such a decision would initiate the debate on how to ensure children "buckle up". It was stated that drivers could not verify that the belts were being used. Some school boards reported having considered hiring a person to monitor the use of seat belts. However, participants reported that no authority wants to take accountability for the use of seat belts.
- Senior representatives raised risks associated with "transportable goods" that could possibly fly and hit someone in the event of an accident. Children's misconduct and improper use of seat belts could decrease the safety of the school bus environment. For example, it was reported that children could hurt themselves or their peers by misusing the belts.
- Installation, monitoring, maintenance and vandalism would also contribute to increasing the costs associated with seat belts.

3.2 Safety Devices

This section presents the results of the discussion in relation to safety devices other than seat belts. The following safety devices were discussed:

3.2.1 Eight Light System

- Participants explained that studies concluded that the 8 light system was more effective than the 4 light system. However, implementation of this device as a safety measure would require that all motorists be educated to the same standard as consistency promotes safety.
- The group felt that the endorsement of the 8 light system by the provinces would require federal regulations.

3.2.2 Stop Arm

- The Stop Arm device has been mandatory since 1996. The main issue regarding the implementation of this safety device is the cost associated with retrofitting.

3.2.3 Crossing Gates

- Crossing gates were perceived as the most effective safety device in 25 years. The gates force children to move 8 to 10 feet away from the bus.
- Participants reached consensus on the benefit of crossing gates to both students and drivers. However, the use of crossing gates as a safety device varies from province to province. The use of crossing gates is mandatory only in some provinces and this inconsistency raised major concerns among the group.
- Although an initial cost is incurred to install this device, the group suggested that it would save on the requirement to use flat nose buses viewed by the public as being safer. However, some participants stated that the use of regular school buses with crossing gates is actually safer as drivers' visibility of the student is increased. Safety increases as direct visibility is maximized.

3.2.4 Reflective Tape

The group explained that this safety device is better than strobe lights. The device significantly increases the visibility of the unit (school bus) in fog or poor lighting situations.

3.2.5 Reverse Warning Devices

Participants in this group felt that reverse warning devices should be required on all buses. However, the members of the group also acknowledged that drivers' training should not support the backing up, particularly on school property.

3.2.6 Two Way Radio and Cell Phones

The members of the working group agreed that the use of two-way radios and cell phones should be mandatory. They cited a number of benefits such as:

- Improved emergency response in both accidents and health-related situations;
- Provided a mean of supporting the drivers with student discipline as well as when mechanical issues arise.

Furthermore, the members agreed that the use of these devices should be definitely be mandatory when the driver is transporting special-needs or handicapped students.

3.2.7 Canada Safety Association Standards

- The working group felt that it was positive that all provinces have adopted CSA standards and should adhere to them.

3.3 Driver Training

This section presents the highlights of the discussion in relation to driver training. A summary of participants' comments is provided below.

- The majority of participants in this group reported recruitment as a major problem. The difficulty associated with recruitment is mostly due to the short and broken hours of work combined with the challenging work environment (having to work with children).
- Special personal attributes and the right personality to work with children increase the complexity of recruitment. Group members felt that to be successful, drivers must establish a relationship with children. The development of the required personal characteristics is perceived as difficult for drivers to acquire.
- The group commented that drivers have to be trained in: understanding regulations, maintaining discipline and understanding their responsibilities. Training updates and drivers' certification were also raised as issues by the larger group.
- Participants explained that knowledge of CPR and First Aid should be mandatory for all school bus drivers. It was also agreed that DDC should be made mandatory.

- Group participants felt that recruitment of suitable candidates could improve with the following conditions: increased hours of work, automatic rather than standard buses, improved compensation packages, increased support from school boards and assistance in maintaining discipline. Participants recognized the costs associated with these options.
- This working group reported on the advantage that a provincial training program would have on recruitment and training. However, it is perceived that the provinces do not have funding for such initiative. Working in collaboration with the Department of Human Resources and Development Canada through Employment Insurance was also proposed as an option to assist in recruiting drivers.

3.4 Regulations

This section presents the highlights of the discussion surrounding regulations. A summary of participants' comments is provided below.

- The team responsible for discussing the regulation issue agreed that there was a need for a single set of regulations. Input from Transport Canada, in conjunction with the provinces, would be required for the development of new regulations. Participants reported the same need for vehicle inspection and driver certification.
- The group defined regulation as being synonymous with safe and quality vehicles. However, while discussing this issue with the larger group, there was no consensus on the importance of consistency across provinces.
- A single set of specifications was perceived as providing the opportunity for economies of scale. For example, participants raised the first aid kits that could be bought nationally, reducing consequently the cost per kit.
- There are federal standards that must be met by operators. However, suggested standards such as CSA D250 may be overruled by provincial specifications. It should be noted that provincial standards vary and the latitude of the provincial jurisdiction was perceived as challenging by the participants.
- The team expressed the need for regulations in three areas: first, relating to the vehicles, i.e. building, operating and maintenance standards; second, relating to drivers, i.e. training and certification; and third, relating to student education.
- The next step identified by group participants in terms of regulations was enforcement. It was perceived that Transport Canada, in collaboration with the provinces, ensure drivers

follow the rules: it is a question of having the right people to apply the existing regulations and the national standards.

3.5 Public Education

This section presents highlights of the discussion in relation to public education. A summary of participants' comments is provided below.

- As per the discussion that took place on school buses, participants generally agreed that educating the public is important, as is informing them of the results of various initiatives on increasing the bus safety record.
- Workshop participants agreed that the industry needs to change the public's perception that seatbelts on school buses increases the level of safety of students.
- Participants in the plenary session asserted that the industry should use research, statistics and videos as evidence that seatbelts do not necessarily increase safety on school buses. The use of the media and web sites were also reported as positive initiatives.
- Some representatives reported on the material they had sent to children's home and the difficulties faced with the initiative. One clear message emerged: while educating students and parents, the same message should be sent out. One participant suggested the book *Unreported Miracles – What You Probably Don't Know About Your Child's School Bus* by Dr. Carl Lemon, as a good reference.

4.0 Specific Comments Regarding Motor Coaches

This section presents a summary of the specific comments provided by participants during the plenary session on safety issues related to motor coaches. A summary of participants' issues is provided below.

The workshop participants identified a number of issues regarding safety on motor coaches. The issues were:

1. The willingness of customers to pay more for tickets to obtain a higher level of safety
2. The potential need for seatbelts in motor coaches. Tied to this issue is the need for testing standards to provide the public with evidence of increased safety as a result of seat belt usage. However, industry participants agreed that they need standards to test against.
3. The need for enforcement; this relates to a number of issues such as:
 - Hours of work
 - Respect of mechanical safety standards
 - Regular inspections as well as drivers' trip inspection
 - General enforcement of a number of regulations such as the National Safety Code
4. The need for driver training. It was recognized that on-going training is required for drivers. As well, there is a need to address the problem that has been created by the Human Resources Development Department (HRDC) through their reduction in the funding of vocational training programs such as mechanical training
5. The need to deal with a number of people-related issues such as:
6. The current and estimated future inability of the industry to recruit drivers. This is a serious issue for participants. The industry is currently growing. However, the pool of qualified candidates keeps getting smaller. A number of factors are contributing to this problem, including HRDC's recent vocational training policies which give priority to people on unemployment training in these programs.
7. The need to "market/sell" the work, to change the image of the profession to make it more attractive as an employment option.
8. The need to improve working conditions as well as compensation.
9. Finally, the need to use retention programs such as award programs.
10. TC Safety regulations. Whereas, seven special TC regulations exist for school bus safety, only one exists for motor coach safety. It deals with emergency exits.
11. The public's perception that new buses are actually safer.

Although not identified as an issue by the participants, the use of seatbelts was discussed in the plenary group. Whereas all participants agreed that the use of seat belts would not improve the level of safety on school buses, no consensus was reached on the value of installing seatbelts on motor coaches. In fact, participants reported the lack of information, research and statistics on motor coach safety, and clearly stated the need for further testing to enhance the decision-making.

The Primary Issues

The workshop participants were asked to vote to determine which of the above issues were most important to them. The following three were voted most important:

- Enforcement
- Driver training
- People issues

4.1 Enforcement

- It was noted that where the population serviced is high, the number of regulators is also high such as in the case of school buses. However, where the population serviced is smaller, the number of regulators is also smaller.
- Participants strongly expressed the need for the National Safety Code to be enforced. Participants asserted that Transport Canada is the best body to promote and ensure the enforcement of the National Safety Code.
- Enforcement concerning the inspection of motor coaches should also be considered. References to unqualified inspectors were made. One participant suggested that audits be conducted on a random basis; this approach was perceived as a positive way to ensure good maintenance of vehicles.
- In addition to mechanical usage, the many consecutive hours worked by drivers without rest is alarming. Many participants reported real life examples of excessive driving.

4.2 Driver Training

- Issues regarding motor coach driver training are similar to school bus driver training issues with the exception of their clientele. The application of the National Standard is a major preoccupation.
- The question of trip inspection was raised regarding motor coach safety. As part of their training, participants felt that drivers should not only be knowledgeable about regulations, but also about the mechanics of their vehicle.

- As frequent users of motor coaches, senior representatives, proposed that certification proof be made visible to passengers. This group also added that drivers who do not follow the regulations be reported, and bus operators supported this proposition.
- The question of who is ultimately responsible for the standard application was perceived as a major problem. The group suggested that the entity funding the initiatives should also be held responsible.
- The motor coach industry appears to be more reactive than preventive. Participants commented on the need for the industry to shift its mentality towards a more preventive mode. The production of paper trails on maintenance and inspection reports was suggested to increase the focus on prevention.

4.3 People Issues

- A number of concerns were raised on the image of the bus industry. Manufacturers and operators noted the lack of interest in the field and the recruitment challenges they are facing. Some participants perceived the emphasis put on university degrees as an important factor contributing to the decreasing interest in high school and college education in mechanics.
- Various stakeholders anticipate a greater shortage of knowledgeable workers in the near future due to public perception of the industry. Some options for changing the negative perception of the drivers' situation are: offering better compensation, allowing for better family quality life, and better hours of work.
- Participants agreed that the industry should work with HRDC to "profile" the industry as well as to highlight the employment opportunities in the profession. It was also suggested that the industry provide information on the types of competencies required by a motor coach driver.

Appendix A - Agenda

The purpose of the consultation session is to capture the views of the participants on the issue of bus passenger safety, including seatbelts in school buses and motor coaches.

More precisely, we seek to understand what are:

- your concerns regarding bus and motor coach safety;
- your views on putting seatbelts in school buses and motor coaches;
- your suggestions on how you would prioritize these concerns;
- your opinions regarding possible strategies to address these concerns.

9:00 - 9:30	Continental Breakfast
9:30 - 9:50	Introduction <i>opening remarks by Mr. Derek Sweet from Transport Canada, workshop objectives, participants' expectations</i>
9:50 - 10:00	Presentation of Context by Transport Canada
10:00 - 10:15	General Views on Bus Passenger Protection discussion of participants's views on bus passenger protection
10:15 - 11:00	School Buses: Safety Factors and Related Concerns <i>identification of areas of concern</i> <i>exploration of the issue of seatbelts</i>
11:00 - 11:15	Refreshment Break
11:15 - 12:15	School Buses: Safety Factors and Related Concerns (con'd) <i>further discussion on identification of areas of concern and seatbelts</i> <i>prioritization of issues</i>
12:15 - 1:15	Lunch <i>salads, sandwiches and beverages will be provided in the meeting room</i> <i>round table discussion over lunch</i>
1:15 - 1:45	School Buses: Action Scenario(s) potential initiatives to address safety issues

1:45 - 3:00 Concerns	<p>Motor Coaches: Safety Factors and Related</p> <p><i>identification of areas of concern</i> <i>exploration of the issue of seatbelts</i> <i>prioritization of issues</i></p>
3:00 - 3:15	Refreshment Break
3:15 - 4:00	<p>Motor Coaches: Action Scenario(s)</p> <p><i>potential initiatives to address safety issues</i> <i>next steps</i></p>
4:00 - 4:30	<p>Synthesis</p> <p><i>review of overall discussions on school buses and motor coaches</i> <i>wrap up and evaluation</i></p>
4:30	End of Session

Appendix B - List of Participants

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5.0 1. Introduction

This report presents a brief summary of the participants' reaction to the workshop held in Moncton on February 29, 2000 and recommends some ways to improve the remaining stakeholders consultation interactions. This document is based on participants' evaluation comments, PwC experience and Transport Canada/Institute on Governance debrief information.

6.0 2. Participants' Reaction

The facilitators requested that the participants list, on a "recipe card", 3 things they liked about the workshop (or worked well) and 3 things they did not like (or would recommend be improved). This section presents a summary of the comments received.

- In general, the group commented on the pertinence of the topics discussed. Given that very good ideas were shared, a few participants felt that some actions should be taken following the workshop. They liked the mix between plenary discussions and the working group activities and many reported having learned a great deal..
- Positive feedback was received on the hotel facilities, including service and food. One participant recommended a different layout to better accommodate the group discussions.
- Overall, workshop participants were satisfied with the facilitation team. They reported good guidance and control over the discussions. However, 2 people commented on some participants talking too much, but also recognized that they contributed positively to the discussion.
- There was no consensus on the "working lunch". Some liked and some disliked.
- Many participants were pleased with the industry/stakeholder representation. However, 3 references were made to the small representation of the motor coach industry, as well as the absence of bus drivers, parents and schools at the table. It was also felt that participants' affiliation should have been made more obvious throughout the day.
- Some participants talked about the length of the workshop. Comments varied: some were pleased that the session was long enough to allow everyone's opinions to be heard, whereas others felt it was too long. One participant asserted that insufficient time was devoted to motor coach-related issues.
- The need to elaborate on the Bus Safety Consultation initiative was reported on the recipe cards. Participants also expressed a need for more information about the context in which the consultations are taking place, as well as the intended outcome. Some participants wished Transport Canada had provided more input.

- One participant mentioned that pre-consultation homework would have allowed participants to prepare better.
- Participants commented negatively on the seat belt issue. Many participants felt that the issue of seat belt was pushed on them regardless of their argument against the installation of seat belts as supported by research studies.
- It was also proposed that business cards be exchanged to increase participants' ability to network in the industry.

7.0 3. Recommendations

This section presents some recommendations to improve the next consultation sessions. Most recommendations were discussed with representatives from Transport Canada and the Institute on Governance.

- Increase senior and school board participation; control manufacturer and operator interventions.
- Structure the workshop with more breakout sessions of shorter length.
- Add one or 2 breaks to the day, especially in the afternoon.
- Let participants rest for the half-hour lunch break; eliminate the working lunch.
- While facilitators must raise the issue of seat belts, some explanation for this may be required, as it may not be a key issue for participants. It may be useful to quickly re-direct the seat belt issue towards the public education issue, and to build on the Moncton session to drill down into the best ways to reach and inform people and allow the message to be communicated.
- Facilitators should reiterate the status of the discussion and link the various discussions together; they should also clearly state where the discussions fit in the consultation session.
- Edit the Lloydminster agenda to reflect these recommendations.