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TRANSPORT CANADA

BUS SAFETY CONSULTATIONS

Final Report

**Prepared by Transport Canada
in collaboration with provincial and territorial representatives**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's bus safety record is extremely good - over the past decade, bus passengers comprised fewer than 0.3% of road fatalities. Nonetheless, bus passenger safety is an ongoing concern of Transport Canada, provincial and territorial governments, and the public.

Bus safety in Canada is a shared responsibility. Transport Canada generally is responsible for new vehicle safety standards, and for the safe movement of interprovincial buses - which responsibility it largely delegates to provinces in view of their historic enforcement and licensing responsibilities.

As part of its ongoing program, Transport Canada recently conducted a review of current bus safety research and regulations. This review included consultations to seek input from stakeholders.

Between June 1999 and June 2000, Transport Canada (assisted by its provincial and territorial partners, the Institute on Governance, and PriceWaterhouseCoopers) held regional consultations on school bus and motor coach safety. About 180 persons participated in the sessions held in Victoria, B.C., Moncton, N.B., Lloydminster, AB, Winnipeg, MB, Toronto, ON, and Quebec City, QC. Participants included representatives of the travelling public; school administrations; bus owners, operators and manufacturers; and government officials.

The consultations sought input on a wide range of safety issues, including the installation and use of seat belts in school buses and motor coaches. The consensus results of the sessions indicated that the installation of seat belts in buses was not a priority issue. Other major safety themes raised concerned safety devices (such as school bus mirrors and crossing gates); driver issues (for example, training and recruitment); and the regulatory regime itself (e.g. respecting smaller vehicles; seating capacity; and the lack of national consistency).

An electronic online consultation component was used to provide an open forum for interested citizens and to supplement the face to face sessions. All reports were posted on the site, and are available at http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/bus/consultations/index_e.htm.

A summary report including suggested next steps follows. The report also contains responses subsequently developed by senior federal and provincial officials involved in the consultations. Governments and stakeholders will be assessing the report over the coming months.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context

Bus passenger safety is an important issue for Transport Canada, provincial governments and the public. While Canada's bus passenger safety record is very good, any school bus or motor coach crash heightens ever-present bus safety concerns. Bus safety is therefore continuously under review.

Bus passengers are rarely killed or suffer major injury. Taking the ten-year period 1988 to 1997, there were 97 bus passengers killed, 43 of those in a single 1997 accident. Victims of collisions involving buses are more often drivers or passengers of another vehicle, 332 in the same ten-year period. For comparison, 35,923 persons lost their lives in all Canadian road accidents between 1988 and 1997.

The occasional tragic crash that involves serious bus passenger injury raises the question of seat belt installation. Canadians are well aware of the benefits of seat belts in cars and many find it inconsistent that buses are not similarly equipped. This is particularly true for parents who ensure young children are in child restraints and older children “buckle-up”.

Canada's buses are not required to be equipped with seatbelts. There are very few passenger injuries that would potentially be prevented by seat belts and there are potential hazards involved with the use of seat belts by bus passengers, especially children. The most successful safety solution for car occupants is not necessarily the best for bus passengers.

There are extensive federal safety standards for buses. For example, air braked heavy vehicles, including motor coaches and some larger school buses, are required to have anti-skid braking systems. A specific group of standards specifically address school bus passenger protection, including ingress and egress.

These school bus standards were developed in the mid-1970s among extensive discussion about passenger seat belts. The standards specify seats that provide compartmentalization together with carefully designed strength and energy absorption characteristics. Further laboratory testing in the mid-1980s and real world experience confirms the effectiveness of those passenger protection systems.

Despite the relative rarity of serious bus passenger injury and the effectiveness of existing standards for school bus passenger protection, governments face a continuing demand for seat belt installation, particularly in school buses. Transport Canada, together with provincial governments, therefore consulted with bus stakeholders to find ways of understanding and better addressing those points of view.

Information was sought for two kinds of buses: school bus and motor coaches. Whereas some issues may be similar for urban transit and smaller shuttle buses, these tend to operate under different conditions and were not included in the consultation.

1.2 Objectives of the Consultation

The objective of the consultation was to seek input from stakeholders on bus safety issues, particularly on, but not restricted to, the installation and use of seat belts in school buses and in motor coaches. This report provides information on a number of bus safety concerns.

More precisely, the consultation sought to understand participants':

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

1.3 Approach

In June 1999, Transport Canada, assisted by the Institute on Governance, held a pilot consultation session in Victoria, B.C. to discuss the issue of bus safety and identify actions that might further improve Canada's strong safety record. Six additional consultations were held as a follow up to that pilot session; these also involved PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Each of the seven consultation sessions was composed of a number of different stakeholder groups in order to exchange ideas and views on seat belts in school buses and motor coaches, as well as other related bus safety issues. The sessions were a full day in length and were conducted in the following locations:

- Victoria, British Columbia
- Moncton, New Brunswick;
- Lloydminster, Alberta;
- Winnipeg, Manitoba;
- Toronto, Ontario¹; and
- Québec City, Québec.

The locations were carefully selected to reflect regional differences and views. In total, the consultation sessions were attended by 178 participants representing: the public (i.e., public interest groups such as school trustees, students, parents' associations and seniors); transportation managers; bus manufacturers; bus operators; regulators; and federal and provincial governments. The following table provides the date and location of the sessions and the number of participants who attended.

Session Date, Location and Attendance Summary

Consultation Location	Date of Session	Location of Session	Number of Participants
Victoria, British Columbia	June 28, 1999 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Holiday Inn 3020 Blanshard Street	25
Moncton, New Brunswick	February 29, 2000 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Delta Beauséjour 750 Main Street	25
Lloydminster, Alberta	March 7, 2000 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Lloydminster Tropical Inn 5621 - 44 th Street	21
Winnipeg, Manitoba	March 14, 2000 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Place Louis Riel 190 Smith Street	26
Toronto, Ontario	May 11, 2000 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Royal York Hotel 100 Front Street West	28
Toronto, Ontario	May 12, 2000 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Royal York Hotel 100 Front Street West	17
Québec City, Québec	June 15, 2000 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Fédération des Augustines 2285 Saint-Louis Road	36

An invitation kit was distributed to all participants prior to the session. The kit contained a discussion paper developed by Transport Canada, which provided background on the issues with respect to school bus and motor coach safety and the objectives of the consultation sessions. In addition, the discussion paper outlined the different roles that federal and provincial governments play in setting and enforcing regulations and standards in the bus industry. The invitation kit was distributed with an invitation letter, a session agenda, and a registration form accompanied by a pre-stamped envelope. The discussion paper, and each consultation summary report, can be found on the Transport Canada website at http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/bus/consultations/index_e.htm.

¹ Two sessions were held in Toronto in order to deal with School Buses and Motor Coaches separately.

A list of potential participants was provided by provincial representatives of transportation departments. Substantial efforts were made to obtain a fair representation of the key industry stakeholders in each of the five regions. Recruiting students, seniors and motor coach representatives was particularly challenging.

Each session started with an introduction accompanied with some general rules of discussion. Following the opening introduction, a representative from the Road Safety Directorate of Transport Canada made a presentation on the context in which the consultation was 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. The need to discuss seat belts was explained as Transport Canada receives a number of enquiries 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.

The Transport Canada representative also noted that following each consultation session, participants would receive, electronically or by mail, a copy of the summary report of the session. It was also mentioned that a consolidated report would follow. Participants and other interested parties were invited to review the consultation outcomes on the web site (*e-Bus*) at http://www.policity.com/worksites_transport.htm. This web site was designed and maintained by the Institute on Governance. The *e-Bus* allowed workshop participants as well as interested citizens to participate in the consultations by offering their comments on the reports and/or posting their ideas in the bus dialogue section. A representative from the Institute on Governance elaborated on the web site and provided participants with a document explaining the site.

The general approach towards discussion was as follows: overall bus safety issues were first discussed in a plenary session. Participants were then separated into two groups where they discussed matters specifically related to school buses. The outcome of their discussions was reported to the whole group. Topics related to motor coach safety issues were either discussed in small groups or in plenary depending on the number of representatives from the motor coach industry. Groups were composed of a variety of stakeholders to ensure valuable exchange of ideas from knowledgeable participants from various domains.

The main issues discussed by the participants were as follows:

School Buses

- seat belts;
- public education;
- safety devices;
- driver recruitment;
- driver training;
- seating capacity;
- definition of a school bus;
- special needs transportation;
- standards and regulations.

Motor Coaches

- seat belts;
- drivers;
- enforcement;
- definition of a motor coach;
- passenger management.

The workshop held in Quebec City was different from the other sessions given that it was organised by La Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec representatives. The session was structured to discuss, in plenary exclusively, four themes for both school buses and motor coaches. These themes were: drivers, passengers, vehicles and regulations.

It should be noted that the intent of this document is to report on the views and ideas expressed by the participants on bus safety issues. Special effort has been made to capture the essence of the discussions that took place at the seven workshops, to analyse variances among sessions and to suggest possible next steps based on participants' input.

2.0 Findings Related to School Bus Safety Issues

This section of the report documents a synthesis of the comments provided by participants from the consultation held in Victoria, Moncton, Lloydminster, Winnipeg, Toronto and Quebec City. The findings include the discussions from both the plenary and break-out sessions on safety issues related to school buses. Items identified as Suggested Next Steps were those more frequently raised by participants. Responses subsequently were developed by senior federal and provincial officials involved in the consultations. Governments and stakeholders will be assessing the report over the coming months.

2.1 Main Issues

2.1.1 Seat Belts

Despite the fact that most participants did not perceive seat belts as a safety issue, this topic was made mandatory for discussion given that Transport Canada receives a number of inquiries requesting either the installation of seat belts on school buses or an explanation of their absence. Most participants felt seat belts were not a high priority issue. The following presents the highlights of the discussion on seat belts.

- The majority of workshop participants agreed that seat belts were not a key safety issue. However, some participants, particularly in the Winnipeg session, were unsure on the use of seat belts and felt that they required more information before they could assess seat belt safety on school buses. Further, it was mentioned in Moncton that the use of seat belts was a concern if there was a fire as a result of an accident. Participants also mentioned that the research shows that seat belts are only beneficial under very specific circumstances, such as a frontal collision.
- Participants in all six school bus sessions indicated that seat belts are more of an issue with the public than with the bus industry. There is a perception by the public (mostly parents) that seat belts should be installed on school buses; however, it was noted that the public have not been properly informed of the research. It was mentioned in the Winnipeg and Toronto sessions that there are some U.S. states (New York, New Jersey) that may have installed seat belts possibly in response to more political, than safety reasons. Methods proposed to educate the public are discussed in Section 2.1.2 – Public education.

- There were some circumstances identified by participants where seat belts on school buses should be used. Moncton, Lloydminster and Quebec participants agreed the use of seat belts should be mandatory for bus drivers because they do not have the same protection as passengers. Toronto participants also felt that some passengers with special needs should also be required to wear seat belts for their own personal safety and the safety of others on the bus. It was also suggested in the Toronto session that more research is needed on the use of seat belts with younger children (i.e., junior kindergarten and kindergarten).
- While the majority of participants agreed that the lap belt did not increase safety, participants in Winnipeg, Moncton and Toronto suggested that more research needed to be conducted on the three-point belt. They believed that this type of seat belt could possibly increase safety on the school bus, but felt that research was needed to support this.
- One of the questions that arose from the consultation sessions was if seat belts were installed, who would be responsible for enforcing seat belt use on school buses. Some participants in the Toronto session suggested the province should be responsible. A participant in the Moncton session suggested a monitor on the bus could be responsible for ensuring children use their seat belts properly.
- Some participants in Moncton and Toronto believed that higher seat backs, compartmentalization, firmer seat fixations and more padding on the seats would have more potential to increase safety than would seatbelts.
- There was concern expressed in the Moncton, Toronto and Quebec sessions with proper installation of seat belts, the type of belt and overall design of the bus. More specifically, the structure of the floor and the seat, the fixation of the seat belts, and the adaptability of the seat belts for diverse passengers (i.e., kindergarten versus high school students). The bottom line with installation of seat belts identified in the Moncton session was that installation, monitoring and vandalism of seat belts all add up to increased costs.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Review the research available in various jurisdictions (within Canada and other countries) that have installed seat belts on school buses.*
Response: Transport Canada continually reviews all relevant research in the normal course of ensuring appropriate new vehicle safety standards. The Department also investigates all serious school bus collisions which occur in Canada, and of which it is made aware. The Department also obtains similar accident information from serious collisions, which occur in the United States and are reported by the US National Transportation Safety Board. This information allows the Department to review collisions involving school buses fitted with and without seat belts.
2. *Undertake further research on the use of seat belts for special needs individuals, pre-school students and on the impact of three-point belts.*
Response: Transport Canada participates on the various Canadian Standards Association Committees, such as D409 and Z604 and Z605 formed to develop industry standards for the transportation of persons with physical disabilities. To ensure added protection for pre-school children traveling in school buses, the Department is currently undertaking research aimed at developing an advisory for the installation of restraint systems for these pre-school aged children.

2.1.2 Public Education

Many of the participants agreed that a priority should be to educate the public about seat belt usage on school buses. Specifically, the participants felt that it was important to inform the public that seat belts do not necessarily enhance safety and may actually cause injury. Some of the participants in Moncton and Winnipeg felt that there was enough research that supported the non-use of seat belts; however, other participants in Winnipeg felt that it was premature to launch an education campaign directed at the general public because the research was confusing and contradictory. Generally, Winnipeg participants felt that there were insufficient dollars spent on research and more was needed. The following points summarize the discussions that took place around educating the public on the effects of seat belts.

- Some of the participants in the Toronto and Quebec sessions felt that transportation providers had some responsibility to prepare and distribute information to the parents. Others recommended a coordinated approach from organizations and governments with a vested interest in child safety that sent a consistent message across the province. It was suggested that the dissemination of information could be done through school boards and parent associations. It was also suggested by participants that the information should include documentation on the following topics: various statistics in favour or against the installation of seat belts; empirical data and research results; explanation that most accidents occur between the home and the loading zone; current bus design and how children are protected; and parents' role in educating children. It was also suggested that the education campaign could reach the target population (parents, teachers, the general public, school boards, students and decision makers, such as trustees and politicians) by the following methods: letters sent to students' homes either by mail or through the schools; television commercials; internet; videos accompanied by brochures; bed time stories; colouring books; and parent/teacher meetings.
- It was suggested in Moncton that the results of initiatives designed to improve safety records should be shown to the public and to members of the industry. Participants in Victoria also agreed that public awareness around current safety records should be improved. This could be done through methods such as: brochures; videos; publishing research and statistics; through the media; and through the Internet.
- Both Toronto and Lloydminster participants felt that a campaign aimed at educating the public about bus safety should be funded by Transport Canada. Participants in Toronto felt that the provinces should jointly fund the campaign. Generally, it was felt that the promotion activities should be the responsibility of both Transport Canada and the provinces. It was mentioned in the Lloydminster session that sharing of lessons learned and educational information/products would be beneficial for launching a public education campaign, and points of contact and partnerships should be leveraged.
- Some participants in the Lloydminster and Toronto sessions felt that it was not worth spending too much money on educating the public, and felt that the most effective method would be through the use of a web site.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Launch an education campaign to alleviate the public's concern with buses not being equipped with seat belts.*
Response: Transport Canada will consider developing a campaign in partnership with other stakeholders.

2.1.3 Safety Devices

Several safety features were discussed during the consultation sessions. Some of the issues were discussed in all consultation sessions, while others were only discussed in a limited number of the sessions. The issues raised included:

- eight lamp system;
- crossing gates;
- school bus mirrors;
- communications; and
- other safety features.

2.1.3.1. Eight Lamp System

- One of the concerns expressed in the Toronto, Moncton and Quebec sessions was that the general public (i.e., motorists) was unclear on when they were required to stop when school bus lights were activated. In particular, it was felt that the four-lamp system contributed to this confusion. (School buses come equipped with either 4 red, or 4 red + 4 yellow pre-stop warning) lights. Contributing to this confusion is the use of the four-lamp system in some provinces as a pre-stop warning, while others use them only when the bus is fully stopped. It was anticipated by participants in Moncton and Toronto that the eight lamp system would alleviate some of the confusion, and that educating the public, bus drivers and bus passengers, and enforcing the laws, would help to further enhance school bus safety. It was suggested by the Toronto participants that the training and educational campaigns should be consistent and uniform. Participants in the Victoria and Toronto sessions also suggested that mounting a camera on the school bus would help to enforce the public to abide by the laws.
- Congregated bus stops were also a concern expressed by some of the participants in the Toronto session because of the loading and unloading of numerous passengers. In particular, bus stops with no supervision where children gather to wait for school buses were a concern. It was felt that drivers' misunderstanding about the lighting system on school buses further added to the risks of safety for children using these types of bus stops.

2.1.3.2. Crossing Gates

- It was the opinion of some of the participants in Moncton, Lloydminster and some in the Quebec session that the crossing gates were the most effective safety device created in the past 25 years, in that they forced children to move away from the front of the bus.

- There was consensus in both the Moncton and Toronto sessions on the benefits of the crossing gates for both drivers and passengers. Some of the benefits mentioned include: improved visibility of children when passing in front of the bus; better protection against hitting the children if the bus is hit from the rear by another vehicle; and overall good training for children to cross at least 8 to 10 feet from the bus. It was suggested in the Toronto session that the installation of rear gates would also enhance the safety of a school bus.
- Despite the consensus regarding the safety advantages of crossing gates, some of the school board representatives in the Toronto session expressed concern with their quality. They explained that the gates have been known to fail in the past and justification of the associated costs versus the benefits has been difficult in provinces where they are not mandatory. The participants in Toronto recommended that the design of the crossing gates be improved before they are legislated to be mandatory.
- While it was recognized that there is an initial cost to install crossing gates on all school buses, participants in the Moncton session felt that the costs of the crossing gates outweigh the costs of using flat nose buses which are perceived by the public as being safer. As such, regular school buses with crossing gates will increase the bus driver's visibility of the children and would be more cost effective to implement than using flat nosed buses.

2.1.3.3. School Bus Mirrors

- In all sessions, participants strongly felt school bus mirrors actually decrease safety rather than enhance it. More specifically, they claimed the mirrors create driver blind spots. It was also noted the mirrors could create headlamp glare, which could cause accidents. In addition, participants in the Lloydminster session explained that the mirrors themselves were of poor quality. Participants said that the mirrors often vibrated to a point of breaking and the brackets (a large C bracket) and mount location were not appropriate.
- Several suggestions were put forth in both the Toronto and the Lloydminster sessions to improve the functionality of the mirrors. These included: installing the mirrors below the driver's sight line; making both the driver's seat and the mirrors adjustable to clear the driver's vision; changing the standard; retrofitting to the previous mirror model; and splitting the mirrors in two to decrease blind spots.

2.1.3.4. Communications

- The idea of equipping school buses with either a two-way radio or cellular phone was raised in both the Moncton and the Lloydminster sessions. Moncton participants suggested that this type of two-way communication should be mandatory and would improve emergency response in accidents and health-related situations. It would also provide a means of supporting drivers with student discipline and assist drivers with mechanical failure. In particular, it was agreed by participants in the Moncton session that these communication devices should be mandatory when transporting special-needs passengers.

2.1.3.5. Other Safety Devices

- Participants in the Moncton session felt that reflective tape on a school bus significantly increases the visibility of the bus, especially in fog or poor lighting conditions. In addition, while the participants in the Moncton session felt that reverse warning devices were critical on school buses, they also explained that driver training should not support the backing up of school buses, especially on school property where there are numerous children.
- Participants at the Lloydminster session identified other technical issues that they felt were important to enhance safety. These included: ensuring that the driver seat can be adjusted (i.e., forward/backward and up/down) to accommodate variations in driver height; having all the switches (i.e., overhead safety lamp, heater, fresh air, defrost, etc.) on the same location on the switch panels; and having all the gauges (i.e., fuel, temperature, oil pressure, speedometer, etc.) in a position where they are visible and not obstructed by the steering wheel or column.
- It was recommended in the Lloydminster session that school bus design should be consistent so that all drivers are familiar with the features and gauges in any bus they drive. Operators and manufacturers have encouraged drivers to provide feedback on the design of their buses, but it was felt that a more formal feedback process should be put in place between industry and regulators to facilitate on-going feedback on bus design.
- Victoria participants were concerned with the visibility problems associated with "conventional" school buses; that is, buses with front hoods. They felt these buses should be replaced with "flat-nosed" school buses to allow the driver a better view of traffic activity, and especially, children crossing in front of the bus.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Educate the public on the significance of the various light systems.*
Response: This could be encompassed in 2.1.2 #1.
2. *Establish uniformity of the light systems used for school buses (which should reduce confusion) and educate drivers on this standard light system.*
Response: Transport Canada is currently undertaking a research project to determine the effectiveness of different pre-stop warning signal systems in reducing traffic speed and illegal passing. The project involves completing video and radar speed observations of traffic approaching school buses in actual service when the flashing pre-stop warning lamps are activated prior to stopping to drop off or pick up students. Data on the 4-lamp (red) system are being collected as is information on the "8-lamp" and hazard warning lamp systems. The Department is completing this work in conjunction with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and the Ministère des transports du Québec. The Department will await the results of this research prior to commencing discussions on uniformity.

3. *Improve the design and the functionality of the crossing gates prior to making them mandatory across the country.*

Response: Crossing gate design is actively being discussed under the purview of the Canada Standards Council Working Group on Standard D250, which includes federal, provincial and industry officials. In addition to the D250 work, the Department is currently undertaking a survey of Canadian and US school bus fleets' experience with pedestrian-oriented school bus safety devices. The objective is to obtain factual data, including benefits and disadvantages, that may exist on the operational experience with such equipment, including ultrasonic and radar sensors, crossing control arms, physical barriers, passive alarms, and video cameras. The U.S. National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services is a partner in administering the survey.

4. *Take actions to improve the mirror requirements to consider road visibility in addition to pedestrian visibility.*

Response: Transport Canada is currently reviewing the mirror standard.

5. *Examine the cost benefit of two-way communications on school buses especially where special needs individuals are being transported.*

Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by school administrations and the school bus operator industry. (Note that British Columbia has considerable experience in this area).

2.1.4 Driver Recruitment

Participants reported challenges with recruiting school bus drivers. Bus operators were especially concerned by the recruitment issue. Some of the reasons for the recruitment challenges included: short and broken hours of work; challenges working with children; the image of the profession; the possibility of failing the driver's examination; and compensation. Several suggestions for improving recruitment were provided, ranging from improving the profession's image to providing better compensation packages. Specific issues discussed in the sessions include the following:

- Several suggestions were made to improve the recruitment process, including: amending the rule of three month gradual access to driving, improving the profession's image by improving standards and implementing a formal evaluation process; marketing the new image; better compensation packages; modern equipment (e.g., automatic transmissions); employee professionalism; having a pleasant and valued work environment; employer flexibility (i.e., job sharing, vacation time); increasing hours of work; improving support from school boards and assistance in maintaining the discipline of the children; and implementing a bonus structure for drivers to stay with an operator for a period of time to reduce turnover.
- Another important issue that was raised in the Lloydminster session was the gathering of personal information on drivers. For example, the collection of information such as criminal records and drug testing results was deemed to be a very "sensitive issue". In addition, the transfer of driver abstracts from one jurisdiction to another was reported as being a difficult undertaking.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Undertake a recruitment campaign that depicts the school bus driving profession as a professional and rewarding career to help the industry face the recruitment challenge.*
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the school bus operator industry.
2. *Review compensation packages across jurisdictions to help address recruitment and retention issues.*
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the school bus operator industry and school administrations.
3. *Introduce minimum performance criteria standards.*
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the school bus operator industry and school administrations.
4. *Take concrete action concerning the transfer of sufficient personal information to ensure that the employees being recruited are the best for the job.*
Response: Hiring of appropriate drivers is most appropriately addressed by the school bus operator industry. Note that the National Safety Code Standard #7 requires that every commercial driver maintain and make available when asked by a prospective employer a summary of his/her driving record (driver abstract).

2.1.5 Driver Training

Many participants felt that formal and informal training of bus drivers was a way to increase the safety of school bus transportation. This included training updates and re-certification, which was seen as a means to reduce human error, one of the main causes of bus accidents. It was also recommended that a standard for a minimum number of hours of training be established. Highlights of the sessions are as follows:

- Driver training was viewed as important in the Victoria, Winnipeg, Moncton, Lloydminster and Quebec sessions. Participants in all five of these sessions agreed that drivers require formal and informal training, and should also be required to update their training and certifications. It was suggested in the Lloydminster session that a more in-depth examination be administered for first time school bus drivers.
- Several areas for driver training were suggested in the sessions, including: knowledge of regulations; maintaining discipline; understanding their responsibilities; knowledge of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid; specific training on the vehicle they will drive; mechanical training; and how to drive on highways versus rural roads. In Lloydminster, participants recommended that a standard for a minimum number of hours of training be established.

- It was explained in the Victoria, Winnipeg and Quebec sessions that parents play a key role in the discipline of children on the school buses and their support is necessary to help bus drivers maintain order. It was also suggested in the Winnipeg session that there needs to be: respect for the transportation program; action taken to resolve discipline problems; the establishment of policies (e.g., a code of conduct) that provide an accountability framework and enforcement guidelines for drivers; and implementation of a uniform policy which may elicit more discipline from children. In addition, the ability of drivers to speak the language of the children in the regions serving diverse cultural communities would also be beneficial to maintaining discipline. In Victoria, it was further recommended that monitors and videos be used on school buses and that fines be increased as another way to help with disciplinary problems. In Quebec, it was expressed that school transportation is a privilege, not a right, and that students who do not behave appropriately should see their privilege suspended.
- Participants in several sessions (Winnipeg, Moncton, Lloydminster) agreed that both Transport Canada and the provinces should be responsible for training programs for bus drivers. However, it was recognized that a lack of funding was the main reason why there have been only minor improvements in the current training programs. It was also suggested in the Moncton session that the provinces work with Human Resources Development Canada's Employment Insurance (EI) program to train individuals to become bus drivers. They felt that this option would help solve some of the funding issues for training and would address some of the recruitment issues. It was also reported in Quebec City that the Centre de formation du transport routier has developed and offers a training program designed exclusively for school bus drivers.
- Winnipeg participants felt that annual evaluations should be regulated and mandatory. It was suggested that an evaluation should be undertaken to address "old habits" that drivers may have developed. However, the measures to evaluate drivers need to be established and issues with regards to funding these evaluations would also need to be addressed.
- Participants in the Lloydminster session indicated that the establishment of national standards would also contribute to the improvement of driver skills. However, participants felt that stricter standards have the risk of "scaring drivers away". In the Winnipeg session, participants identified several standards that need to be established: a minimum number of training hours and service; a minimum number of driving hours; and a physical standard (i.e., medical and fitness test) that could also address the fact that there is no maximum age for bus drivers. It was recommended in the Winnipeg session that the province should be responsible for setting the training and evaluation standards and the initiative should be led at the federal government level. In addition, partnerships with various organizations should also be developed to raise the bar for driver training.
- It was suggested in the Lloydminster session that an inventory of training products should be developed and a process for sharing this information within the province as well as with other provinces should be established.
- A sensitive issue raised in the Winnipeg session was the establishment of drug and alcohol programs. Limited testing does take place in some jurisdictions and some of the participants reported having a list of procedures to follow in case of a positive test result. Some participants felt that a list of "do's and don'ts" would be useful to address issues in the area of drug and alcohol abuse.

Suggested Next Steps

- 1. Introduce national standards for training.
Response: While provinces/territories are responsible for driver testing and licensing pursuant to the National Safety Code, no standard exists for training. The CCMTA is currently studying training as it might apply to commercial drivers.*
- 2. Implement an annual evaluation process.
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the school bus operator industry, and school administrations.*
- 3. Implement more extensive training programs in addition to programs for training upgrades and re-certification.
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by jurisdictions, the school bus operator industry, and school administrations. Note that Nova Scotia is very active in this area.*
- 4. Develop and implement policies and guidelines for accountability and enforcement that support drivers' needs concerning passenger disciplinary problems.
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the school bus operator industry and school administrations. Nova Scotia is also active this area.*

2.1.6 Seating Capacity

There are no national regulations on seating capacity according to participants in the Toronto and Winnipeg sessions. This is an area of concern for many participants (students, drivers, operators and school boards) as it directly affects the safety of passengers on the school buses, specifically with overloaded buses. Several of the concerns with capacity are described below.

- It was reported that some school boards implement their own decisions in regard to seating capacity, but it is not a standard practice across school boards or across provinces. The result of non-standardized seating capacities is overloading of school buses. In general, the school boards implement policies linked to students' age and weight. For example, attendees in Toronto agreed that three students per seat for children from kindergarten to grade six was acceptable for safety, and two students per seat for older passengers. Participants in Victoria also agreed with these guidelines. It was suggested in the Toronto session that an official maximum seating capacity reflecting the presence of special need passengers on school buses be developed. Seating capacity policies also enable the driver to refuse passengers when the bus has reached its capacity and that drivers should be educated on the impacts of overloaded buses to prevent injury.
- Some participants in the Winnipeg session explained the costs associated with seating under-utilization and the costs that were associated to implementing a seating capacity guideline. One student in the session said that some school boards have seating plans and felt this would have a positive impact on traveling to school. Quebec participants reiterated that the number of allowed passengers on a school bus is a major concern. However, they added that in reducing the number of passengers it would mean that more buses would be required and consequently would reduce the drivers' pay. For one participant in particular, a reduction in seating capacity must be accompanied by an increase in the budget allocated to transportation.

- It was also mentioned in the Toronto session that allowing passengers to stand compromises the safety provided by compartmentalization and other safety attributes. In addition, the safety deficiency increases when compounded with back packs and audio equipment that could harm other passengers who are standing or seated on the bus.
- One of the new trends identified in the Toronto session was integrating students from various schools and different grades (primary and secondary levels) onto the same bus. This increases the difficulty associated with seating capacity. In addition, there is also an emerging trend for special needs passengers to use regular school buses and wheelchair accessibility is impacting the seating capacity even further.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Develop a national seating capacity standard that considers standing passengers, passengers with special needs and passengers of different ages (i.e., kindergarten to high school).
Response: A national working group will be lead by BC. (Note that BC and NS have strict policies concerning standees).*

2.1.7 Student Tracking

Winnipeg was the only session that discussed student tracking as a safety issue. Based on the discussion, parents made student tracking a priority. Parents see the school as being responsible for their children; on this basis, student tracking becomes a priority for school officials as well. The participants in the session did not reach consensus on how to track students, but concluded that there would be considerable costs associated with implementing a student tracking system. The discussion in the Winnipeg session focused on the following issues:

- Most of the participants agreed that student monitoring should be the responsibility of the schools, not the drivers. It was reported in the session that parents expected the school to know where their children are. One method suggested for tracking students was the use of a credit card with bar codes (with radio frequency). This was deemed to be effective for younger children, but was not well received by high school students. It was also suggested that students not be allowed to take another bus without parent authorization. In addition, participants suggested the presence of a teacher or another figure of authority to monitor the schoolyard to ensure students do not miss their bus.
- Winnipeg session participants suggested that an understanding of what the public wants and what the available resources are, needs to be determined before an action plan is developed.

2.1.8 Definition of a School Bus

Participants acknowledged that various types of vehicles are used for school transportation. This raised some concerns regarding the definition of a school bus and the applicable legislation. The issues raised in the sessions around the definition of a school bus are presented below:

- Participants in the Victoria, Toronto and Quebec sessions identified public transit, mini vans, sedans and small buses as other means for students to travel to school. Some participants indicated that these alternatives were not as safe as school buses and some of them are not regulated. They recommended that the definition of a school bus be revisited so that alternative means of transportation can be regulated. Participants in the Lloydminster session also indicated that the definition of a school bus was not consistent across jurisdictions and questioned whether mini vans driven by parents should be considered school buses. Participants reiterated the need for one definition because in some instances, children are taken off the safest mode of transportation, the standard school bus.
- Winnipeg participants proposed that research should be conducted to determine the life span and safety fitness level of buses, specifically older buses, and to educate the public about it. The public perceives that older buses are not as safe. While older buses are still safe, it was mentioned in the Winnipeg session that lack of funding from the province limits the use of newer buses, which are built for maximum safety. In addition, there is concern with the “grandfather clause” which dictates that older buses do not have to be retrofit with equipment modifications which are seen to add safety to the buses.
- Participants in the Winnipeg session suggested that a working group be formed to prepare a business plan to make the case for funding of new school buses to the Ministry of Education. It was suggested that the working group be composed of representatives from each key stakeholder group and should include members of both the Association of School Business and the Association of School Trustees. In addition, they agreed that the business plan should include the following components: an explanation of why additional funding is required; the safety benefits that would be achieved; a cost analysis of buying versus maintaining aged school buses; other options for funding (including advertising on buses, alternative use of school buses), and changing the definition of a school bus so that other vehicles could be used to transport children to school. However, participants also expressed concerns over the liability issue for the last two options and agreed that the liability implications would need to be clearly researched and articulated in the business plan.
- More and more passenger vehicles (cars, vans, etc.) are being used for school transportation. This use of such vehicles was discussed extensively in Quebec City where many participants expressed strong feelings about such vehicles. In fact, serious concerns were reported because of the lack of regulations applying to them and some participants even said that they should not be used for school transportation. However, given the increasing number of cars and vans used for this purpose, many participants felt that these vehicles should be regulated like the regular school buses. Participants concluded that passenger vehicles are mostly used as a secondary transportation and are targeted towards a limited number of students, mostly those living in rural areas.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Revisit the definition of a school bus so that alternative means of transportation can be regulated.*
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by jurisdictions and Transport Canada. NWT has agreed to lead a national working group.

2.1.9 Special Needs Transportation

The issue of special needs transportation was raised predominately in the Toronto session. The fact that few regulations exist for transporting special needs children on “adapted” buses was a concern for many of the participants but particularly for medical and special needs children organizations. Bus driver knowledge of special needs children and training to react in emergency circumstances were also areas of concern. More detail of the discussion points raised is presented below.

- It was mentioned that no regulations exist for transporting special needs individuals on “adapted” or “converted” buses. Most of the attendees recognized the difficulty of regulating adapted vehicles and having only Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards to follow. Representatives for the special needs children requested that regulations and policies be developed to reflect this issue.
- It was suggested in the Toronto session that drivers should be made aware of special needs children and be provided with sufficient information and training to react appropriately in case of an emergency. It was noted that parents generally provide medical information to the school, but this is not always the case.
- Participants indicated the United States was more advanced in its research and regulations/policies with respect to special needs passengers. Canada should take advantage of the lessons learned and best practices that are available from the U.S. industry. In addition to cooperation with outside industry, on-going consultation with representatives of special interest groups should also be held to address these issues.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Review the “adapted” or “converted” bus sector (including U.S. practice) to gain a better understanding of the issues and needs, in order to develop regulations and policies that will improve the safety of special needs passengers.*
Response: This issue is under active review by the Canadian Standards Association Working Group on Standard D409.

2.1.10 Policy/Standards/Regulations

School buses are the most heavily regulated and inspected vehicles on Canadian highways. Participants said there were a number of existing policies, standards and regulations related to bus operations that were different across school boards, accreditation organizations, government jurisdictions and on an international and national level. However, the inconsistency of regulations and policies across jurisdictions causes many concerns for the participants. More detail on the issues surrounding policies and regulations is discussed below.

- Participants in the Lloydminster session agreed that school buses were the most heavily regulated and inspected vehicles. In addition, participants in the Toronto session said that there were a number of existing policies, standards and regulations related to bus operations that were different across school boards, accreditation organizations, government jurisdictions and on an international and national level. Participants in Victoria, Winnipeg, Lloydminster and Moncton agreed that one set of consistent regulations and standards needs to be established. However, participants also indicated that the standards needed to be flexible so that industry can be proactive in introducing measures that improve bus passenger safety. Some references were made in the Lloydminster session about the Partners in Compliance (PIC) program, where organizations voluntarily agree to improve their standards and be audited according to those standards.
- According to participants in the Moncton session, there was a need for standard regulations in three areas. These included: vehicles (i.e., manufacturing, operating and maintenance); drivers (i.e., training and certification); and student education. The Moncton participants also said that Transport Canada and the provinces need to work together to develop the new standards and regulations.
- One of the advantages of consistent standards and regulations identified in the Moncton and Lloydminster sessions was the opportunity for economies of scale (i.e., bulk purchasing power). For example, first aid kits could be bought nationally, reducing the cost per kit.
- The question of regulation enforcement was raised in the Moncton session. Participants suggested that Transport Canada, in collaboration with the provinces, should enforce the regulations. However, it was also noted that standards such as CSA D250 can be overruled by provincial specifications and the latitude of the provincial jurisdiction was perceived as a challenge for establishing consistent regulations and standards across the country.

Suggested Next Step

1. *To further improve the national safety record in Canada, one set of regulations and standards needs to be developed and enforced across all jurisdictions.*
Response: Many national standards are in place by virtue of the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, CSA standards (vehicles) and the National Safety Code (operations). Implementation by jurisdictions of the new NSC Standard #14 is underway and will require all school bus operators to have a safety rating (publicly available).

3.0 Findings Related to Motor Coach Issues

This section of the report documents a synthesis of the comments provided by participants from the consultations held in Victoria, Moncton, Lloydminster, Winnipeg, Toronto and Québec City on motor coaches. The findings include the discussions from both the plenary and break-out sessions on safety issues related to motor coaches. Items identified as Suggested Next Steps were those more frequently raised by participants. Responses subsequently were developed by senior federal and provincial officials involved in the consultations. Governments and stakeholders will be assessing the report over the coming months.

3.1 Main Issues

3.1.1 General

In addition to the key topics of discussion (seat belts, drivers, enforcement, definition of a motor coach and passenger management), several other issues arose in the sessions. The issues that were discussed include:

- Participants in the Winnipeg session felt the media played an important role in informing the public about motor coach safety. Like the school bus industry, the public's perception is that new buses are safer. It was mentioned that regulators should be careful and rely on solid research to make decisions. Participants in the Winnipeg session commented that the motor coach industry has a very demanding clientele and, therefore, it needs to continue to improve its service, including safety. As such, valid sources of information and data should be the basis for making informed decisions about improving the motor coach industry.
- Participants in the Lloydminster session voiced serious concerns related to retrofitting old school buses for use as motor coaches. They said that new owners should be obliged to repaint the buses and remove all decals to ensure that people know the buses are not school buses. The concern was that children may board the wrong bus believing it was their bus or the public may be concerned that the bus is not obeying the laws (e.g., stopping at railroad crossings).
- Participants in the Moncton session noted that the motor coach industry appears to be more reactive than proactive when dealing with safety issues. Participants commented on the need for the industry to shift towards a more preventative approach. The production of paper trails, i.e. reporting practices, on maintenance and inspection reports was one way to increase the focus on prevention.
- Similar to the school bus industry, it was noted that there are many benefits to be gained in the motor coach industry that come from learning and sharing information with other countries, such as Europe. It was also mentioned that other countries could also learn from the industry in Canada.

3.1.2 Seat Belts

The issue of seatbelts was raised at each of the sessions because of its importance to Transport Canada. The reason for this is mainly due to the public perception that there should be seatbelts in motor coaches (based in part on the fact that most other vehicles require the use of a belt). The call for seatbelts is most acute after an accident, such as the one in Quebec at Les Éboulements.

When raised during the sessions, however, the overwhelming majority of stakeholders did not feel the installation of seatbelts was an issue. The reason for this is twofold: the motor coach industry's strong safety record and inconclusive evidence that seatbelts would prevent injury. Some participants did feel further research on three point belts would be useful and that passengers seated in non-compartmentalized areas should be fitted with seatbelts. However, representatives of bus manufacturers argued the industry does a good job investigating crashes and the current lessons do not point to the need for seatbelts in motor coaches.

- Participants in the Winnipeg session said that customers in the motor coach industry are more focused on luxury than safety and would make requests for better televisions rather than making a request for seat belts. Participants in the Moncton session questioned whether clientele would be willing to pay more for bus tickets in order to obtain a higher level of safety.
- In addition, participants in the Toronto, Winnipeg and Moncton sessions felt that there was insufficient information to determine if seat belts would improve the safety of passengers on motor coaches. Participants in Winnipeg acknowledged that seat belts could in fact increase injuries and that they were designed for frontal impact, therefore limiting the benefits in different types of accidents. Similar to the school bus findings, participants in Winnipeg felt that passengers who are sitting in seats that are not compartmentalized should use seat belts. In Toronto, it was noted that many motor coaches are moving towards larger passenger windows, and that in the event of a crash the windows could separate from the bus reducing passenger protection. Moncton participants suggested that there was a need for testing the standards to provide the public with concrete evidence with regard to the use of seat belts. However, the industry participants recognized that they need standards to test against.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Conduct more research to determine the safety impact of seat belts, including three point belts.*

Response: Transport Canada keeps current on all relevant research initiatives, including that done recently in Australia and Europe, and does not feel further Canadian research is warranted at this time.

3.1.3 Drivers

Many participants felt that driver training was a way to increase safety in motor coaches. Driver behaviour related to drugs and alcohol, and driver recruitment were also raised. The details of the discussion are as follows:

- The Victoria session reported driver training to be a major safety concern, and participants in the Moncton session said driver training was the second most important issue, next to enforcement. They explained that motor coach drivers have many of the same training issues as the school bus drivers, except that their clientele is different. They felt that there should be on-going training for drivers. In addition, they feel that the reduction of funding by Human Resources Development Canada for vocational training programs such as mechanical training needs to be addressed.
- Participants in Winnipeg said that there was no national standard except for the ownership of the proper class of license. It was reported that the establishment of minimum standards would be very difficult to sell. Some comparisons with the United States were made to show the difficulty with introducing minimum standards.
- Similar to the school bus industry, some of the participants in the Moncton session felt that motor coach drivers should be knowledgeable about regulations and should also have training in the mechanics of their vehicles. In addition, senior representatives suggested that proof of driver certification should be displayed where passengers can see it. It was also suggested that drivers who do not follow the regulations should be reported. Bus operators supported this position.

- In Toronto, participants recognized some operators offer training courses to new employees, but fewer offer refresher courses during employment. They also showed concern that in Ontario a truck driver can obtain a motor coach licence with only a written test. Participants felt a more thorough licensing process, and improved driver training were key components for improved safety.
- In the Winnipeg session, recruitment did not appear to be as critical for the motor coach industry as it was for the school bus industry. Nevertheless, the representatives from the motor coach industry observed a reduction in the pool of suitable candidates.
- Participants in the Moncton and Quebec sessions felt there was going to be a serious problem in the future with the recruitment of drivers. They indicated that the industry is growing at a time the pool of qualified drivers was decreasing. They attributed Human Resources Development Canada's (HRDC) vocational training policies, which give priority to people on EI, as one of the factors contributing to the recruitment problem.
- Participants in the Moncton session suggested that the industry needed to change the image of the profession to make it more attractive as an employment option and market the profession. In addition, the need to improve working conditions (number of hours, family and quality of life), as well as improving compensation and implementing awards programs was mentioned. The emphasis on university degrees for mechanics was also contributing to a decrease in interest by high school and college students. Participants in the Moncton session also 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 types of competencies required for a motor coach driver be provided. In Quebec, participants requested formal training programs.
- There are some guidelines related to "drinking and driving" and the use of drugs and alcohol that were mentioned in the Toronto and Winnipeg sessions. It was explained that some organizations test their drivers for drug and alcohol use, but the test results are confidential and cannot be shared with other organizations. In Winnipeg, it was proposed that a structure be developed to increase the value of the shared information. Participants felt that it would need to be regulated to obtain the unions' support regarding the dissemination of personal information.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Review current training programs and modify as needed.*
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the motor coach operator industry.
2. *Make training programs (including upgrading and re-certification) mandatory for all motor coach drivers across the country.*
Response: CCMTA is currently examining training as it might apply to commercial vehicle licensing.
3. *Display driver certification to make passengers feel safer.*
Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the motor coach operator industry.

4. *Launch an advertising campaign that depicts the motor coach profession as professional and rewarding.*

Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the motor coach operator industry.

5. *Examine the working conditions (number of hours, family and quality of life) and compensation packages to address some of the recruitment and retention issues.*

Response: This would most appropriately be addressed by the motor coach operator industry.

6. *Regulate the sharing of the information on use of drug and alcohol by drivers and to establish a process to share the information between organizations and jurisdictions.*

Response: See Item 2.1.4 #4.

3.1.4 Enforcement of National Standards

The issue of enforcement of national standards emerged in each of the sessions. It focused five main categories:

speed – no set ceiling exists even though many operators adopt their own speed limit cap;

mechanical safety – enforcement of the standards vary across the country;

pre-trip and trip inspection – standardized and enforced random audits may help ensure good maintenance;

the National Safety Code – it is not properly enforced; a responsibility many participants felt should lie with Transport Canada; and

hours of service – enforcing rest times and preventing driver fatigue.

- Winnipeg participants commented that high volumes of traffic combined with high speeds increase the risk of accidents and motor coach drivers must be made aware of this. Participants in the Lloydminster session also expressed this opinion and added that the number of consecutive hours of driving also played a role in safety. Winnipeg participants also said that a maximum speed has been set for the buses in his fleet and other participants reacted well to this type of initiative. In addition, many participants in the Winnipeg session felt that the safety record for motor coaches can always be improved and it was important that operators enforce maintenance standards.
- Participants in the Moncton session identified several areas where enforcement was needed. These included: the number of hours worked; respect of mechanical safety standards; regular inspections as well as driver's trip inspection; and general enforcement of a number of regulations such as the National Safety Code. It was strongly expressed by participants in Moncton that the National Safety Code needs to be enforced and that Transport Canada is the best body to promote and ensure it is enforced.
- The Victoria session noted a serious lack of enforcement officers to keep up with the growing number of carriers in their region.

- The enforcement of motor coach inspections was also a concern for participants in the Moncton session. One participant suggested that audits should be conducted on a random basis, which would help to ensure good maintenance of vehicles. However, participants in the Lloydminster session believed that maintenance was not typically an issue because the passengers are usually more demanding, the National Safety Code is in place and audits are performed. Pre-trip inspections are believed to increase safety and it was noted by participants that there is a national committee, the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators (CCMTA) that is currently looking at making these inspections mandatory.
- Participants in Toronto felt enforcing hours of service to be the most complicated issue discussed. They stated that buses and trucks must be kept separate in regulations concerning driver hours of service. While a truck driver is on the highway for long hours with a single destination, bus drivers go to several destinations in one day, with "down time" at tourist sites contributing to driver fatigue. They also noted that drivers are often forced between customer service – "going the extra mile" – and pushing the boundaries surrounding hours of service. Participants also discussed driver speed and behaviour, but felt the main responsibility here remains with the drivers and operators.
- According to participants in the Moncton session, the number of consecutive hours worked by drivers without rest was "alarming". Participants in the Winnipeg session explained that despite the requirement for mandatory breaks before driving, bus owners were unable to monitor the driver's activities prior to their shift. An example of a driver working at home all day then starting a long trip was mentioned. The introduction of a resting shift (or rotation) was proposed by one participant.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Improve the enforcement of a number of standards and regulations, including: the number of hours worked; mechanical safety standards; regular inspections as well as driver's trip inspection; and other National Safety Code standards.*
Response: Enforcement is a responsibility of the jurisdictions, and regulations generally are patterned after the National Safety Code. The Code is continually being revised and improved; for example, jurisdictions are in the process of implementing the new Standard #14 which will require all commercial bus operators to have a rating based on their safety performance. Other standards under revision include those relating to regular vehicle inspections and to driver's hours of service.
2. *Educate drivers on the safety impact if they do not abide by the regulations.*
Response: This issue would most appropriately be addressed by the motor coach operator industry.

3.1.5 Definition of a Motor Coach

The safety concern with the current definition of a motor coach (ten or more passengers being transported) is that it excludes smaller vehicles that are being used for commercial purposes and fall outside the current regulations. Participants throughout the sessions argued that a standard definition is necessary in order to classify buses for documenting accidents, safety reports and standards. They also argue that a coordinated definition with the United States would be helpful for statistical and comparative purposes.

- Participants in the Winnipeg session questioned the definition of a motor coach because of the variability of services provided. For example, services provided by a luxury bus versus services provided by a senior's home shuttle or shuttle services at the airport. Some types of motor coaches have similar issues with respect to vehicle equipment (mirrors, driver's seat and controls) but not to the same extent. The absence of regulations (including seat belt regulations) pertaining to some of the smaller motor coaches (i.e., airport shuttles) was somewhat of a concern. They explained that in many instances, the problem goes back to the definition of a motor coach.
- Participants in Toronto had similar reservations about the current motor coach definition, and suggested the definition should include any vehicle carrying passengers on a regular basis for compensation, rather than focus on a set number of seats.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Revisit the definition of a motor coach to take into consideration the other types of vehicles, such as shuttle buses.*
Response. Transport Canada, with selected jurisdictions, will examine this issue on behalf of CCMTA.

3.1.6 Passenger Management

Several safety issues were raised in the area of passenger management. Poor behaviour on buses, such as drinking and rowdiness, was seen as a serious concern. Passengers standing in the aisles can lead to injury in the event of a sudden stop or crash and distract the driver. Participants also felt that public attitudes, such as the desire for entertainment devices and arriving on time regardless of safety, did much to contribute to safety risks. Access was another problem, as some elderly people have difficulty boarding and manoeuvring on motor coaches. This issue is an ongoing concern and is currently being looked at by the industry.

Suggested Next Steps

1. *Launch a public education campaign to help curb improper passenger behaviour and shape public attitudes.*
Response: This issue would most appropriately be addressed by the motor coach operator industry.

Appendix A

Web Site

Background

As part of the face to face consultations taking place across the country on bus passenger safety, the Institute On Governance proposed to Transport Canada an on-line component to supplement what was taking place in real time. The rationale for creating an electronic consultation dimension was as follows:

1. It would provide an opportunity for interested citizens and stakeholder groups who are not present at the face-to-face consultations to get involved and follow the process.
2. It would provide a forum for those that are involved in a face-to face session to be engaged throughout the process.
3. It would provide a space where interested citizens and stakeholder groups could offer feedback, comments and questions on the bus safety consultations.
4. It would provide an opportunity for Transport Canada officials, provincial officials and the Institute On Governance to plan and coordinate the workshops on-line, through the use of a virtual worksite.²

Based on this rationale, Transport Canada agreed to the creation of the Electronic Bus Safety Consultation (http://www.policy.com/worksites_transport.htm).

Objectives

The objectives of the electronic consultation were to:

- Gain feedback on the consultation reports;
- Encourage dialogue on bus safety; and
- Provide background information on bus safety.

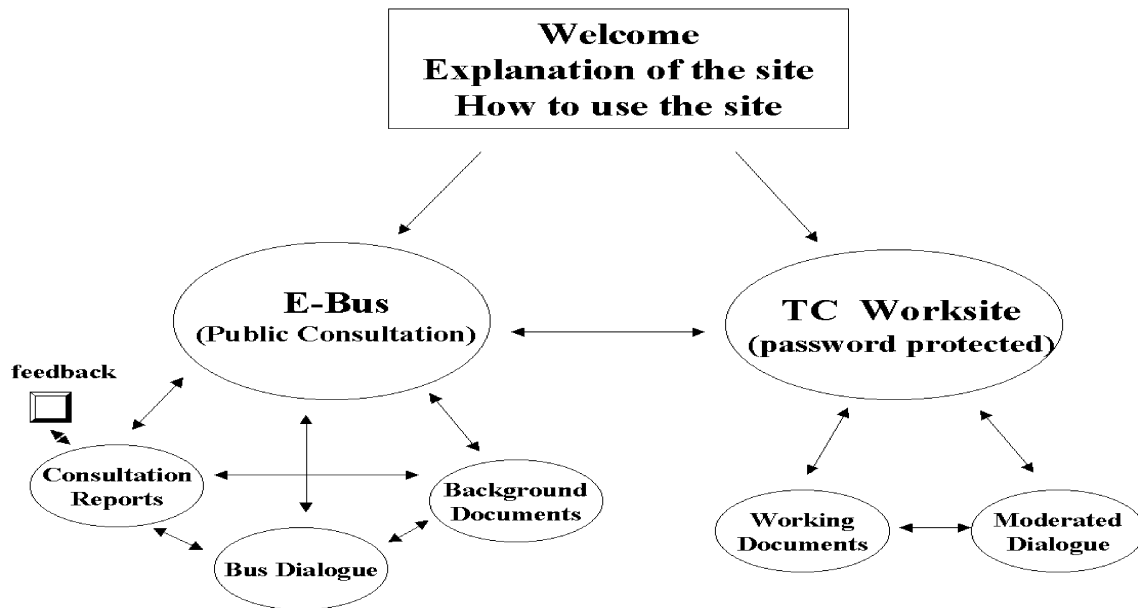
Layout of the site

The *Transport Canada Electronic Bus Safety Consultation* had two main sections: e-Bus and the TC Worksite. e-Bus was the public consultation arm of the site inviting the user to read consultation reports and post feedback directly on the site, post messages and questions on bus safety, and/or read background documents on the subject.

² Virtual Worksites are password protected areas that allow a small group of people to work on-line across distance and time through the use of message boards and posted documents. Virtual worksites were created by the Institute On Governance on its [policy.com](http://www.policy.com) website.

The TC Worksite was a closed password protected area designed for Transport Canada and the provinces to work with the Institute on developing the consultations as they unfolded.

The following diagram illustrates the overall architecture of the site.



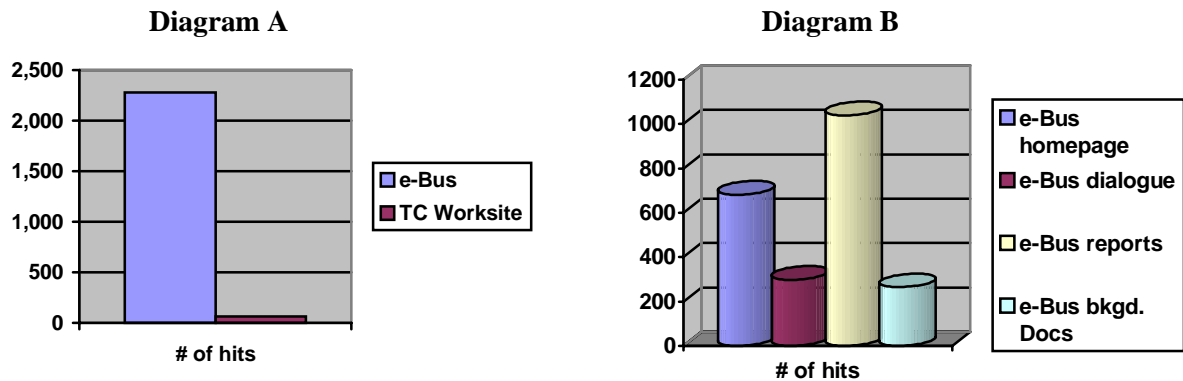
Analysis

As one of the first electronic consultations of its kind put on by a federal government department, the electronic bus safety consultation can be considered a success. While it did not generate a lot of traffic, it did provide an open forum for interested citizens to find out when the consultations were taking place, read about the key findings from each individual session, learn about bus safety, and post comments and questions. Although electronic consultations are relatively new and to some degree untested, they provide a dynamic and interactive tool to generate greater transparency, accountability and awareness to a larger audience.

User Traffic

In comparison to commercial or political sites, the electronic consultation did not generate a lot of traffic. Between February 1 and June 30, 2000, the Transport Canada worksite generated 3,300 hits or approximately 660 hits per month.

Of the traffic that was generated, the overwhelming majority was directed to the public component (e-Bus) as opposed to the closed worksite. This is illustrated by **Diagram A**. Within e-Bus, the largest amount of traffic was pointed at the consultation reports, followed by the homepage (which cited the consultation objectives and dates), bus dialogue and background documents. This is illustrated by **Diagram B**.



Benefits

Despite the low levels of traffic on the site, there were a number of benefits that serve Transport Canada, the provinces and the public well. Therefore, “success” should be measured in terms other than statistics alone. These include:

- *Access* – the site provided a means for those who could not attend or were not invited to the face to face consultations to take part, and to access the consultation reports in a timely and efficient manner (saving the Department money in postage);
- *Follow through* – the site provided workshop participants with a means to stay connected throughout the consultation process;
- *Eliminating duplication* – the site cut down on the amount of materials that needed to be sent in advance since most of the material was already posted electronically.
- *Interaction* – the site provided anyone interested in the consultation a direct way to ask questions, post comments and learn about bus safety.
- *Optics* – the site demonstrated that Transport Canada is a “technology friendly” department, open to new technologies that can improve consultation processes.

Challenges

In some respects the on-line consultation, including the password protected worksite, was an experiment in on-line citizen participation. As an area of growing importance, the Institute felt that Transport Canada would be well served to supplement its face-to-face process with an electronic dimension, even if all aspects did not succeed. The three main areas where the web site did not succeed were the *TC Worksite*, the *bus dialogue* and the *feedback* component to the consultation reports.

The main challenges associated with the TC Worksite was the familiarity, comfort and time necessary to prepare Transport Canada and provincial officials to use the worksite. Despite attempts to explain and engage officials on its uses, very few ever bothered to visit it. There are several factors that contributed to the worksite's lack of use:

1. Government officials preference to use the phone and fax as a means of communication (the demographic of public servants involved in this consultation are not high users of the Internet);
2. Lack of interest among most of the jurisdictions to learn and share from one another – i.e. to find out what worked and didn't work in each consultation (the exception being Quebec);
3. Lack of familiarity with discussion based software, contributing to a low level of interest to take the time to learn; and
4. Short time frames between the first three consultations, making it difficult to engage all provincial officials in the moderated dialogue.

The challenge confronted in the bus dialogue section of the e-Bus was that not many stakeholders were interested in re-visiting the consultations once their workshop was complete. The assumption made at the outset of the consultation process was that the electronic dialogue would provide a means to re-engage participants throughout the process. Unfortunately, despite e-mail attempts by the Institute to generate discussion on certain ideas or trends that were emerging, very few workshop participants responded. Reasons for this may include time constraints, access to a computer, or a general feeling among participants that they contributed all their ideas in the workshop and had nothing more to add.

The feedback button added to each consultation report (the user clicks on a button to post a comment) also proved disappointing, due to the low numbers of people who used it. Even though the consultation reports were the second most frequented area of the site (after the welcome page), users did not take advantage of its interactive component. One can only speculate that either participants and interested citizens had nothing to add, or, did not have the time or inclination to post a comment.

Suggestions

In the event that Transport Canada or any provincial government decides to undertake a future on-line consultation, there are a few suggestions worth noting to improve upon this attempt. They include:

- A user survey of government officials who will be working on a project to assess their familiarity, comfort and time limitations, as it relates to on-line software;
- More preparation time with government officials to make them familiar and comfortable with discussion based software, moderated forums and one another;
- Communicating the site with more traditional media sources, in order to hit a larger segment of the general public (this requires more resources); and
- Purchasing a more user friendly and dynamic discussion-based software package (suggestions include Vicinities and Orchestra).

Appendix B

List of Participants

<p>Mrs. Cynthia Andrew Ontario Public School Board Association 429 University Avenue Toronto, ON M5G 1Y8</p>	<p>Mr. Ron Bannister Meadow Lake School Division Trustee Bussing Committee Meadow Lake School Division 606 - 5th Avenue West Meadow Lake, SK S9X 1A9</p>
<p>Mme Marie-Josée Banville, Directrice Transport nolisé, touristique, abonnement Association des propriétaires d'autobus du Québec 225, boulevard Charest Est, bureau 107 Québec (Québec) G1K 3G9</p>	<p>Ms. Helen Bateman New Brunswick Senior Citizens' Federation 136 St. George Moncton, NB E1C 1V9</p>
<p>Mr. Charles Beaudry Manitoba Education and Training, Pupil Transportation Unit 507 - 1181 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3G 0T3</p>	<p>Mme Anne Beaulieu Fédération des comités de parents de la province du Québec 389, boulevard Rochette Beauport (Québec) G1C 1A4</p>
<p>Mr. Jim Bedingfield, Director Vehicle Safety Alberta Infrastructure 4999 - 98 Avenue Edmonton, AB T6P 2X3</p>	<p>Mme. Diane Bernard-Riberdy, Présidente Commission scolaire des Samares 4671, rue principale Saint-Félix-de-Valois (Québec) J0K 2M0</p>
<p>Mr. Carlo Bevilacqua Ontario Legislative Board United Transportation Union 530 Cartier Street North Bay, Ontario P1B 8N5</p>	<p>Mme. Lucie Bordeleau Responsable du transport scolaire Fédération des Commission scolaire du Québec 2072, rue Gignac Shawinigan-sud (Québec) G9P 4E6</p>
<p>Mr. Jean-Pierre Boudreau Department of Education P.O. Box 6000 Kings Place Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1</p>	<p>Mrs. Susan Boulter Manitoba Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department of Highways and Transportation 201 - 1075 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3G 0S1</p>
<p>Mme Marie Brillon Directrice des programmes Ligue de sécurité AQTR 1595, rue Saint-Hubert, bureau 100 Montréal (Québec) H2L 3Z2</p>	<p>Mme Gabrielle Brochu Association des propriétaires d'autobus du Québec 225, boulevard Charest Est, bureau 107 Québec (Québec) G1K 3G9</p>

<p>Mr. George Brookins, Manager Trius Tours Ltd. P.O. Box 2288 Charlottetown, PE C1A 8C1</p>	<p>Mr. Rob Brown Navistar International 120 King Street West, Suite 900 Hamilton, ON L8N 3S5</p>
<p>Mr. Gerry Buchan Perry Rand Limited P.O. Box 10 Waterville, NS B0P 1V0</p>	<p>Mrs. Hélène Cameron, Executive Director BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils 1185 West Georgia Street, Suite 1540 Vancouver, BC V6E 4E6</p>
<p>Mrs. Sandy Campbell Manitoba Education and Training Pupil Transportation Unit P.O. Box 250 Rivers, MB R0K 1X0</p>	<p>Mr. Ron Campbell, Sales Manager School Bus Division Autobus Girardin Inc. 82 Delavan Drive Cambridge, ON N1S 4S3</p>
<p>Mme. Lise Cardinal, Médecin conseil Sécurité dans les milieux de vie Centre de santé publique de Québec 2400, D'Estimauville Beauport (Québec) G1C 7G9</p>	<p>Mr. Ronald Carr, Executive Director New Brunswick Safety Council 440 Wilsey Road, Suite 204 Fredericton, NB E3B 7G5</p>
<p>Mr. David Carroll Ontario Motor Coach Association 4141 Yonge Street, Suite 306 Toronto, ON M2P 2A8</p>	<p>Mr. Carrol Carson Business Information Analyst Transportation Supervisor for Eastern School Board 24 Linden Avenue P.O. Box 8600 Charlottetown, PE C1A 8V7</p>
<p>Mme Jeanne D'Arc Champagne Fédération de l'Âge d'or du Québec 4545, boul. Pierre de Coubertin C.P. 1000, succ. M Montréal (Québec) H1V 3R2</p>	<p>Mrs. Fay Christie BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils 43749 South Sumas Road Chilliwack, BC V2R 4L6</p>
<p>Mrs. Chelsea Clague St. Boniface School Division 50 Monterrey Road Winnipeg, MB R2J 1X1</p>	<p>Mr. Bud Coles, President Maverick Coach Ltd. 7984 Webster Street Delta, BC V4G 1G6</p>
<p>Mr. Brian Crow, President Motor Coach Canada 4141 Yonge Street, Suite 306 Toronto, ON M2P 2A8</p>	<p>Mr. Michael Crowther, Road Safety Coordinator New Brunswick Transportation P.O. Box 6000 Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1</p>

<p>M. Georges Cyr Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec 333, boulevard Jean-Lesage C.P. 19600 Québec (Québec) G1K 8J6</p>	<p>Mr. Dan Davis Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Transport Canada Place de Ville, Tower C, 8th Floor 330 Sparks Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5</p>
<p>Mr. Larry Dawe BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils P.O. Box 171 Gillies Bay, BC V0N 1W0</p>	<p>Mme. Louise De la Sablonière, Directrice Direction de la prospective et des politiques de financement Ministère de l'éducation du Québec (MEQ) 1035, rue de la Chevrotière MG: 14 e étage, Québec (Québec) G1R 5A5</p>
<p>M. Jean Desroches Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec 333, boulevard Jean-Lesage C.P. 19600 Québec (Québec) G1K 8J6</p>	<p>Mme. Marie-Michelle Dion Agent de recherche Service du transport terrestre des personnes Ministère des Transport du Québec 700, boul. René-Lévesque Est, 24e étage, Québec (Québec) G1R 5H1</p>
<p>Mr. Richard Donaldson, Executive Director Ontario School Bus Association 295 The West Mall, Suite 100 Toronto, ON M9C 4Z4</p>	<p>Mme Claire R. Drolet, Directrice Transport scolaire Association des propriétaires d'autobus du Québec 225, boulevard Charest Est, bureau 107 Québec (Québec) G1K 3G9</p>
<p>M. Bernard Dubé, Directeur général Autobus Thomas 2275, Canadien Drummondville (Québec) J2C 7V9</p>	<p>Mr. Charles Easter Dept. of Transportation and Public Works P.O. Box 2000 Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8</p>
<p>Mr. Terry Elliot, Bus Supervisor Meadow Lake School Board 606 - 5th Avenue West Meadow Lake, SK S9X 1A9</p>	<p>Mrs. Mary Elliott Age and Opportunity Centre 831 College Avenue Winnipeg, MB R2X 1A8</p>
<p>Mrs. Louise Ervin, Trustee Waterloo Region Roman Catholic Seperate School Board 91 Moore Avenue Kitchener, ON N2H 3S4</p>	<p>Mr. Bob Evans Canadian Urban Transport Association 55 York Street Toronto, Ontario M5J 1R7</p>

Mr. John Fehr 339 Archibald Street Winnipeg, MB R2J 0W6	Mr. Cassey Fitzpatrick, Student P.O. Box 1957 Corunna, ON N0N 1G0
Mr. Kevin Fitzpatrick, Transportation Manager Lambton Ken District School Board and St. Clair Catholic District Board P.O. Box 1957 Corunna, ON N0N 1G0	Mr. Shawn Francis, President Dynamic Specialty Vehicles Ltd. 18550 - 96th Avenue Surrey, BC V4N 3P9
Mr. Bill Gardner, Crashworthiness Engineer Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Transport Canada Place de Ville, Tower C, 8th Floor 330 Sparks Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5	Mr. Yves Gemme, Agent de recherche Commission des Transport du Québec 545, boul. Crémazie Est , bureau 1000 Montréal (Québec) H2M 2V1
M. Robert Geoffrion, Conseiller en formation Centre de formation du transport routier 17000, rue Aubin Mirabel (Québec) J7J 1B1	Mrs. Deborah Giesbrech Manitoba Association of Parents Council 401 York Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3T 0C2
M. Romain Girard, Directeur Association des propriétaires d'autobus du Québec 225, boulevard Charest Est, bureau 107 Québec (Québec) G1K 3G9	Mr. Ron Gregory Facility Planning and Transportation Department of Education P.O. Box 578, Suite 402 Halifax, NS B3J 2S9
Mr. Steve Groat, Engineering Manager Thomas Built Buses of Canada 275 Tecumseh P.O. Box 580 Woodstock, ON N4S 1Z5	Mr. Phillip Haid, Program Manager Institute on Governance 122 Clarence Street Ottawa, ON K1N 5P6
Mrs. Linda Haldenby, Manager Road Safety Program Office Road User Safety Ministry of Transportation, 1201 Wilson Avenue Building A, Room 212 Toronto, ON M3M 1J8	Mr. Michael Hall Regional Manager Driver Safety Greyhound Canada 1150 Station Street, Suite 200 Vancouver, BC V6A 4C7
Mr. Walter Hardy, Trustee Battle River School Division #60 P.O. 827 Lloydminster, SK S9V 1C2	Ms. Connie Harrigan BC School Trustees' Association 3265B Galloway Road Victoria, BC V9C 2S8

<p>Mr. Rocky Hecimovich Chignecto-Central Regional Schoolboard P.O. BOX 911 Westville Road, NS BOK 2A0</p>	<p>Mr. Claude Huot St. Boniface School Division 50 Monterrey Road Winnipeg, MB R2J 1X1</p>
<p>Mrs. Tina Hurley Chignecto-Central Regional Schoolboard 762 Mines Road Chignecto, NS B0L 1B6</p>	<p>Mr. Carol James, President BC School Trustees' Association 3265B Galloway Road Victoria, BC V9C 2S8</p>
<p>M. Gaston Jobin, Président Commission professionnelle des responsable de transport Commission scolaire des Premières Seigneuries 2233, ave Royale Beauport (Québec) G1C 1P3</p>	<p>Sergeant Gordon Jones Toronto Police Service Traffic Services Collision Reconstruction Office Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police 45 Strachen Avenue Toronto, ON M6K 1W7</p>
<p>Ms. Arminta Kennedy Nova Scotia Safety Council 2786 Agricola Street, Suite 207 Halifax, NS B3K 4E1</p>	<p>Mr. Robert Kidd, Supervisor of Transportation Upper Grand District School Board 500 Victoria Road North Guelph, Ontario N1E 6K2</p>
<p>Mr. Glenn J. King Ontario Legislative Board United Transportation Union 530 Cartier Street North Bay, ON P1B 8N5</p>	<p>Mr. John King, Division Manager Operation and Maintenance BC Transit Victoria 520 Gorge Road East Victoria, BC V8W 2P3</p>
<p>Mr. Cliff Kirkland Canadian Blue Bird Coach Ltd P.O. Box 880 Airport Road Brantford, ON N3T 5R7</p>	<p>Mr. Brian Kline, Manager Vehicle Standards and Inspection SGI 2260 - 11th Avenue Regina, SK S4P 2N7</p>
<p>Ms. Hanne Kohout BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils c/o Ms. Hélène Cameron 1185 West Georgia Street, Suite 1540 Vancouver, BC V6E 4E6</p>	<p>Mr. John Krastins, Staff Sargent Traffic Services Unit Toronto Police Service 45 Strachen Avenue Toronto, ON M6K 1W7</p>
<p>Mrs. Florence Krulicky Age and Opportunity Centre 313 - 865 Sinclair Street Winnipeg, MB R2V 3H3</p>	<p>Mr. Jerry Kutzschan Transport Supervisor 1962-148th Street Surrey, BC V4A 6A3</p>

M. Luc Lafrance, Directeur général Association du transport écolier du Québec 5300, boulevard des Galleries, bureau 300 Québec (Québec) G2K 2A2	M. Langis Lafrance Conseiller aux établissements ASTE 6555, boul. Métropolitain Est, bureau 401 St-Léonard (Québec) H1P 3H3
Mr. Bill Laing Lord Selkirk School Division #11 204 Mercy Street Selkirk, MB R1A 2C8	Mr. Lloyd Laing, Supervisor Department of Education School Transportation P.O. Box 8700 St. John's, NF A1B 4J6
Mr. Paul Landry, President BC Trucking Association 1 - 1610 Kebet Way Port Coquitlam, BC V3C 5W9	Mr. Bill Langdon King Transportation 3051 St. Mary's Road St. Germain, MB R0G 2A0
M. Félix Lapointe, Régisseur du transport Commission scolaire du pays des Bleuets 1950, boul. Sacré-Cœur Dolbeau (Québec) G8L 2R3	Mrs. Jackie Laurie Safety & legislative Coordinator Ontario School Bus Association 295 The West Mall, Suite 100 Toronto, ON M9C 4Z4
Mr. Bruce Law Lakeshore School Division #23 P.O. Box 100 Eriksdale, MB R0C 0W0	M. Jean-Yves Le Bouthillier Responsable des normes Les entreprises Michel Corbeil 304 - 12e Avenue Ville des Laurentides (Québec) J0R 1C0
M. Serge Lefebvre, Président Association du transport écolier du Québec 5300, boulevard des Galleries, bureau 300 Québec (Québec) G2K 2A2	Mr. Wayne Lehman Manitoba Association of School Bus Operators 1031 - 6th Street Brandon, MB R7A 4K5
M. Gaston Lemay, Vice-président Transport Scolaire Émilie Lemay 129, Auger, St-Édouard C.P. 158, St-Édouard, Qc G0S 1Y0	Mr. Ken Lemke, District Sales Manager First Bus Centre P.O. Box 3250 100th Street Matthews Avenue Spruce Grove, AB T7X 3A6
Ms. Mary Leonard New Brunswick Senior Citizens' Federation 136 St. George Moncton, NB E1C 1V9	Mme. Francine Levesque, Coordonnatrice Formation et sécurité routière Société des transports de la CUQ 720, des Rocailles Québec (Québec) G2J 1A5

<p>Mr. Paul Levine Canadian Standards Association International 178 Rexdale Boulevard Toronto, ON M9W 1R3</p>	<p>Mr. Wayne Lilley, Manager National Safety Code and Operating Authority Vehicle Safety and Carrier Services Alberta Infrastructure 4920 - 51 Street Red Deer, AB T4N 6K8</p>
<p>Mr. Lesley MacLaurin Hastings & Prince Edward District School Board, Algonquin & Lakeshore Catholic District School Board 156 Ann Street Belleville, ON K8N 1N8</p>	<p>M. Pierre Maheux, Vice-président Autobus Maheux 3280, rue Saguenay Rouyn Noranda (Québec) J9X 5A3</p>
<p>Mr. Brian Malchow BC School Trustees' Association P.O. Box 129 Vanderhoof, BC V0J 3A0</p>	<p>Mrs. Claire Marshall, Director Institute on Governance 122 Clarence Street Ottawa, ON K1N 5P6</p>
<p>Mr. Dave Martin Student Transportation Services of York Region 1011 Jacarandah Drive Newmarket, ON L3Y 5K6</p>	<p>Mr. Doug McGiffin, President Manitoba Association of School Trustees 191 Provencher Blvd. Winnipeg, MB R2H 0G4</p>
<p>Mr. John McGowan Canadian Association of Retired Persons 11 Shenley Road Toronto, ON M1K 3V5</p>	<p>Mr. Malcom McHattie Chief, Motor Vehicles Road Safety Programs Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Transport Canada Place de Ville, Tower C, 8th Floor 330 Sparks Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5</p>
<p>Mrs. Wendy McLandress Transportation Policy Branch Ministry of Transportation 2nd Floor, West Tower 1201 Wilson Avenue Downsview, ON M3M 1J8</p>	<p>Mr. Rod Meir, President Prairie Bus Services P.O. Box 25101 Saskatoon, SK S7K 8B7</p>
<p>Mr. Ben Mikkelsen, Manager Vehicles Standards and Inspection Insurance Corporation of British Columbia 2631 Douglas Street Victoria, BC V8T 5A3</p>	<p>Mr. Peter Milovanovich, Vice Principal Unionville High School 201 Town Centre Blvd. Unionville, Ontario L3R 8G5</p>

<p>Mr. Bill Mocsan, Manager Carrier Safety & enforcement Branch Ministry of Transportation 301 St. Paul Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R4</p>	<p>Mr. Rob Monster Carrier Safety & Enforcement Branch Ministry of Transport 301 St. Paul Street, 3rd Floor St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R4</p>
<p>Mr. Gordon Moore, Fleet Manager Cardinal Coach Lines Ltd. 6304 52nd Street Taber, AB T1G 1J7</p>	<p>Mr. Randy Morris Laidlaw Transit Ltd. P.O. Box 920 Amherst, NS B4H 4E1</p>
<p>Mr. Paul Murphy Motor Coach Industries Limited (MCI Canada) 1149 St. Matthews Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3G 0J8</p>	<p>Mrs. Brigitte Nowak Road User Public Education and marketing Ministry of Transportation 1201 Wilson Avenue Downsview, ON M3M 3G8</p>
<p>Mr. Tom Nyuli, Regional Manager Inspection Services Alberta Infrastructure 4920 - 51 Street Red Deer, AB T4N 6K8</p>	<p>Mrs. Bonnie O'Grady, Trustee Battle River School Division P.O. Box 6 Neilburg, SK S0M 2C0</p>
<p>Mr. Ron Oliver, Parent Representative Battle River School Division RR #2 Lloydminster, SK S9V 0X7</p>	<p>Mme Nicole Pageot, Director General Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Transport Canada Place de Ville, Tower C, 8th Floor 330 Sparks Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5</p>
<p>Mr. Lance Peat, Officer SGI 2260 - 11th Avenue Regina, SK S4P 0J9</p>	<p>Mrs. Amanda Percel West Hill Collegiate Institute 350 Morningside Ave. Scarborough, ON M1E 3G3</p>
<p>M. Jules Perreault, Vice-président Fiabilité, maintenabilité et sécurité Prévost Car inc. 35, boulevard Gagnon Sainte-Claire (Québec) G0R 2V0</p>	<p>Mr. Ray Poirier British Columbia Safety Council 225 - 21331 Gordon Way, Richmond, BC V6W 1J9</p>
<p>M. Guy Poliquin, Conseiller Camo-route inc. 1100, boul. Crémazie Est, bureau 202 Montréal (Québec) H2P 2X2</p>	<p>Mrs. Dona Pollard Ontario Parent Council RR1, RMB 206 Fort Frances, ON P9A 3M2</p>

<p>Mr. Shona Pooyak Sweetgrass School Sweetgrass Indian Reserve North Battleford, SK S9A 0V0</p>	<p>Mr. Dennis Powell Coordinator of Services School District #63 2125 Keating Cross Road Saanichton, BC V8M 2A5</p>
<p>Mrs. Glenda Prudom Carrier Safety & Enforcement Branch Ministry of Transportation 301 St. Paul Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R4</p>	<p>Ms. Margaret Ransford BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils 2 - 4030 Lockside Drive Saanich, BC V8X 2C8</p>
<p>Mr. John Ratel, Director Automobile Association of British Columbia Head Office 4567 Canada Way Burnaby, BC V5G 4T1</p>	<p>Mr. Dan Reimer, Manager Special Needs Diversified Red Arrow 8351 McIntyre Road Edmonton, AB T6E 5J7</p>
<p>Mr. Leo Richards Watson & Ash Transportation Co. Ltd. P.O. Box 100 Lazo, BC V0R 2K0</p>	<p>Mr. Gary Rietsman, Transportation Manager Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools 617 Garner Road East Ancaster, ON L9G 3K9</p>
<p>Mr. Doug Robinson Head of Regional Traffic Section Northwestern Region Operations Division Ministry of Transportation, 615 South James Street Thunder Bay, ON P7E 6P6</p>	<p>Mr. Bill Rocket, Manager Briggs Bus Sales BC 44580 Yale Road West Chilliwack, BC V2R 4H1</p>
<p>Mr. Vince Rodgers, Secretary Treasurer Buffalo Trail Regional Division #28 1041 - 10A Street Wainwright, AB T9W 2R4</p>	<p>Mr. Patrick Rougeau Manitoba Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department of Highways and Transportation 201 - 1075 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3G 0S1</p>
<p>M. Fernand Roy Girardin minibus Route Transcanadienne Drummondville (Québec) J2B 6V4</p>	<p>Mr. Steve Ryan Bloorview Macmillan Centre 350 Rumsey Road Toronto, ON M4G 1R8</p>
<p>Mr. Bal Sekha Capital Administrator Officer Ministry of Education P.O. Box 9147, Stn. Prov. Gov. Victoria, BC V8W 9H1</p>	<p>Mrs. Dorothy Serediuk Age and Opportunity Centre 211 - 865 Sinclair Street Winnipeg, MB R2V 3H3</p>

<p>Mr. Ron Siggs, Safety Supervisor Cardinal Transportation BC Inc. 1420 Venables Street Vancouver, BC V5L 2G5</p>	<p>Mr. George Simpson British Columbia Safety Council 225 - 21331 Gordon Way Richmond, BC V6W 1J9</p>
<p>Mr. James Skuce Wayne Bus Ltd. 140 - 4th Avenue East Regina, SK S4P 3M7</p>	<p>Mrs. Kathy Soundy, Director Driver Development and Safety Laidlaw Education Services 3221 North Service Road Burlington Road, Ontario L7R 3Y8</p>
<p>Mr. Lin Steffler, Transportation Manager Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board P.O. Box 70 Dublin, ON N0K 1E0</p>	<p>Mr. Jeff Stewart, Assistant Manager Transportation Supervisor for Eastern School Board 24 Linden Avenue P.O. Box 8600 Charlottetown, PE C1A 8V7</p>
<p>M. André St-Laurent, Project Manager Site Survey Program Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Transport Canada 330 Sparks Street, Tour C, 20th Floor Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5</p>	<p>Mr. Dan Stock, President Stock Transportion Ltd & Ontario School Bus Association 320 Bloomington Road West P.O. Box 732 Aurora, ON L4G 4J9</p>
<p>Mr. Don Stonehouse, Manager Transportation Policy Development Dept. of Transportation and Public Works P.O. Box 186 Halifax, NS B3J 2N2</p>	<p>Mr. Richard Sutcliff West Hill Collegiate Institute 350 Morningside Scarborough, Ontario M1E 3G3</p>
<p>Mr. Derek Sweet, Director Road Safety Programs Road Safety and Motor Vehicle Regulation Transport Canada Place de Ville, Tower C, 8th Floor 330 Sparks Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5</p>	<p>Mrs. Laurie Taylor Transportation Supervisor School District #79 2557 Beverly Street Duncan, BC V9L 2X3</p>
<p>Mr. Milton Tenenbein, MD Children's Hospital Emergency Services 820 Sherbrook Street Winnipeg, MB R3A 1R9</p>	<p>Mr. Keith Thomas Manitoba Association of School Trustees 191 Provencher Blvd. Winnipeg, MB R2H 0G4</p>
<p>Mr. Rey Toews, Vice-President Manitoba Associations of School Trustees 191 Provencher Blvd. Winnipeg R2H 0G4</p>	<p>M. Pierre Tremblay, Contôleur Autobus Tremblay et Paradis 2625, rue Watt Sainte-Foy (Québec) G1P 3T2</p>

<p>Mme. Louise Tremblay, Conseillère Financement en transport scolaire Fédération des Commission scolaire du Québec(FCSQ) 1001, avenue Bégon C.P. 490 Sainte-Foy (Québec) G1V 4C7</p>	<p>M. Michel Tremblay, Coordonateur Commission Scolaire de Montréal 3737, rue Sherbrooke est Montréal (Québec) H1X 3B3</p>
<p>Mr. Wayne Tyerman, Transportation Manager Interlake School Division #21 192 - 2nd Avenue North Stonewall, MB R0C 2Z0</p>	<p>Mr. Jeff Ulliyot Transportation Manager School District #34 2790 Tims Street Abbotsford, BC V2T 4M7</p>
<p>Mr. Hugh Venables Road Safety Strategic Initiatives Insurance Corporation of British Columbia 151 West Esplanade North Vancouver, BC V7M 3H9</p>	<p>Mr. Erin Verrier, Student Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive Secondary School 401 - 421 Assiniboine Winnipeg, MB R3C 0Y4</p>
<p>Mr. Gary Walsh, Assistant Director Motor Vehicle Division Department of Transportation P.O. Box 1320 Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9</p>	<p>Mr. David Ward, Safety Policy Officer Road Safety Program Road User Safety Ministry of Transportation 1201 Wilson Avenue Downsview, Ontario M3M 3G8</p>
<p>Mrs. Lynn Warda, MD IM-PACT Injuries Manitoba-Prevention of Adolescent & Childhood Trauma Children's Hospital 820 Sherbrook Street Winnipeg, MB R3A 1R9</p>	<p>Ms. Rilla Warwick BC School Trustees' Association 1223 Dog Creek Road Williams Lake, BC V2G 3G9</p>
<p>Mr. Marcus Weinkauf Lloydminster Roman Catholic School Division 5411 50th Avenue Lloydminster, SK S9V 0R1</p>	<p>Ms. Helen Welling New Brunswick Senior Citizens' Federation 136 St. George Moncton, NB E1C 1V9</p>
<p>Mr. Dave White, Manager Public Passenger Division Dept. of Transportation and Public Works P.O. Box 186 Halifax, NS B3J 2N2</p>	<p>Mrs. Valerie Willians Operations Manager Ontario Safety League 5045 Orbitor Drive Mississauga, ON L4W 4Y4</p>

<p>Mr. John Wilson Operations Manager Wilson's Transportation 31 Regina Avenue Victoria, BC V8X 7G2</p>	<p>Mr. Phil Wilson , Vice-President Transportation Supervisor School District #68 395 Wakerisiah Ave. Nanaimo, BC V8Z 1H8</p>
<p>Mrs. Mary Woroniak Age and Opportunity Centre 831 College Avenue Winnipeg, MB R2X 1A8</p>	<p>Mrs. Amy Zierler Safe Kids Canada Hospital for Sick Children 180 Dundas Street West, Suite 2105 Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8</p>
<p>Mrs. Marlene Zyluk Manitoba Driver and Vehicle Licensing Department of Highways and Transportation 201 - 1075 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3G 0S1</p>	