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PA House of Representatives  
Republican Policy Committee

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414, Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120  
(717) 260-6144

**Rep. Joshua D. Kail**  
Chairman

**PA House Republican Policy Committee Hearing**  
**“Effective School Transportation for Our Drivers and Our Students”**

**May 2, 2023, at 9:30 a.m.**

**Republican Caucus Room**  
**Room 418, Main Capitol Building**  
**Harrisburg, PA**

9:30 a.m.	Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance
9:45 a.m.	<b>Aaron Sepkowski</b> <i>President, Pocono Transportation</i>
9:55 a.m.	<b>DJ Frye</b> <i>Owner, Frye Transportation Group</i>
10:05 a.m.	<b>Todd Rittenhouse</b> <i>Fleet Manager, Rittenhouse Bus Lines</i>
10:15 a.m.	Questions for the Panel
10:45 a.m.	Closing Comments and Conclusion



## Testifier Biographies

### PA House of Representatives Policy Committee Hearing *"Effective School Transportation for our Drivers and our Students"*



#### **Aaron Sepkowski** **President, Pocono Transportation**

In addition to serving as the President of Pocono Transportation, Aaron is also a farmer, a Madison Township Supervisor, and First Vice President of the PA School Bus Association, where he sits on the Special Needs, Finance and Legislative Committees and as the Chair of the Membership Committee.

Since volunteering with a fire department as a teenager, Aaron has spent more than 20 years serving his community, including a tenure as the Moscow Fire Chief.

After graduating from North Pocono High School, Aaron went on to Lock Haven University where he studied history education and military sciences (ROTC). During his tenure at Lock Haven University, Aaron began working in the industry for which he would later launch his first business—school transportation. The companies Aaron now owns and operates include Pocono Transportation Inc., Pocono Towing and Recovery LLC, Skelton's Towing and Auto Care Plus.

During the pandemic, when other businesses folded due to lockdowns and supply chain issues, Aaron started a fifth successful business—North Pocono Dairy. Currently, Aaron proudly employs more than 105 locals from his community.

In his free time, Aaron enjoys spending time with his son, Aaden, doing hands-on projects, including restoration of antique farm and road tractors, working the land, and sport shooting.

#### **DJ Frye** **Owner, Frye Transportation Group**

Frye Transportation Group began over 30 years ago, and DJ Frye currently serves as the third generation of ownership for the family-owned and operated staple in the Beaver County school bus industry. Frye Transportation Group and its subsidiaries account for over 100 employees and 100+ vehicles that are housed at two separate terminals in Beaver County.

DJ attributes the company's success as the reflection of the hard work and dedication of his staff and coworkers. Frye Transportation Group would not be possible if it wasn't for: the quality and experienced office staff, the well-trained and highly qualified, caring staff of drivers, and their investment in industry-leading equipment and use of new age technology and safety equipment.

DJ admits he couldn't do it without the support of his wife and three children, who he says make him a better business owner and person. DJ's favorite part of the business is serving and protecting the children of the community while working alongside his family every single day.





**Todd Rittenhouse**  
**Fleet Manager, Rittenhouse Bus Lines**

In addition to serving as the Fleet Manager for the family-owned and operated Rittenhouse Bus Lines, Todd is also a member of the PA School Bus Association's Board of Directors and is the Vice Chair of PSBA's Safety Education and Insurance standing committee.

For more than 40 years, Rittenhouse Bus Lines has been partnering with parents, teachers, administrators, and mechanics to ensure students have safe access to educational and athletic activities. Since 1951, Rittenhouse

Bus Lines, Inc (originally named Rittenhouse & Sons) began transporting students to and from school for the Uniontown School District.

Now, six decades later, Rittenhouse Bus Lines, Inc. has grown from the original four buses to thirteen buses and four vans. Additionally, they have branched out to include serving as a warranty/service center for Thomas Built buses, a pre-delivery service for Thomas Built buses purchased in the state, a CDL testing site, and a Thomas Built bus part supplier for other local bus contractors.





# PSBA ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUS TALKING POINTS

PSBA has assembled the following talking points to discuss with your school districts, intermediate units, parents and legislators. Using your knowledge of the industry and the points that our taskforce has organized, you will be able to discuss issues facing the electrification of School Buses. Below is an overview of the points that follow on the next page.

- Operational issues
- Environmental impact
- Changes in Safety protocol
- Impact on Infrastructure
- Charging Facilities
- Cost of EV Buses

If you have any questions with regards to this topic, please contact us via email at [office@paschoolbus.org](mailto:office@paschoolbus.org) with Subject line: **Electric Bus Task Force** or via telephone at 717-975-1951.

The Electric School Bus Task Force includes the following volunteers and subject matter experts, Fred Bennett (FishingCreek), Mike David (Rohrer), Denille Girardat-Myers (Girardat LP), Mason Hemphill (Brightbill), Matthew Jandrisavitz (RCKLA), Richard Kelly (RCKLA), Jack Lawver (Mlaker Transportation), Shawn McGlinchey (Krapf), Todd Rittenhouse, Chairman (Rittenhouse), Jeremie Nye (Rohrer), Aaron Sepkowski (Pocono Trans), Aaron Silverman (ABC Transit), David Watson (Watson's) and Richard Wolfington, Jr. (Wolfington).

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## Operational, Environmental & Safety

**Mileage** - Electric School Buses have an average range of between 100 and 155 miles per charge which is dependent on terrain, how the driver drives, the particular routes, etc. Clean Diesel, by comparison, has an average range of over 600 miles per tank of fuel. If you have a long-distance school field trip or sporting event, this may preclude the use of an Electric School Bus due to their limited range and the lack of availability of remote Electric School Bus charging infrastructure.

**Environmental** - Electric School Buses are impacted by ambient temperatures. A study found cold weather can reduce electric vehicle range by as much as 41%. Since Electric School Buses must use on-board battery capacity to provide passenger climate control which will affect the range capabilities of the bus along with charging and potentially long-term battery life.

**Safety** - With the drastic change in power source, electric versus fossil fuel powered buses, Electric School Bus operators must address new and different safety considerations for drivers, maintenance staff and local emergency responders. First responders must have the equipment, suppression materials and training to respond to an accident involving an Electric School Bus.

## Charging Infrastructure

**Power Provider & Facility** - Based on the size and quantity of Electric School Buses, charging systems may require your local utility to be engaged to ensure the power system supplying your facility can support the additional power load. Also, your facilities' electrical infrastructure should be studied to confirm its' readiness for charging infrastructure additions for both the short and long term. Early engagement with your power supplier is a MUST!

**Electric School Bus Chargers** - There are 2 main types of electric chargers – AC and DC.

- **AC Charging** - Typically is a 110V or 240V single phase connection which requires significant (>8 hours) for charging. This type of charging method is utilized for most home car charging and is not applicable in most Electric School Bus situations.
- **DC “FAST” Charging** - Requires a 480V 3-phase connection with between 75 and 250A available to support the DC converter, which is a **MUST** for Electric School Buses. Fast chargers range in size from 60 to 200W of output power and are capable of charging up to 4 School Buses but in a sequential order, not in parallel typically. Of course, DC charging technology is improving rapidly which will increase the quantity of Electric School Buses that can be simultaneously charged and reduce recharging times in the future.
- **Variables** - Electric School Bus charging times and efficient have many variables which must be considered such as:
  - 1) Size and capacity of the DC charger
  - 2) Number of Electric School Buses that are connected to the DC charging dispenser
  - 3) Amount of residual battery charge for each bus connected, to ensure adequate charging time for next run/day
  - 4) Ambient temperature impacts time and ability of battery to take charge, especially if below 32° and above 105°.

## Costs and Funding Sources

**Electric School Bus Costs** - Electric School Buses can cost up to four (4) times that of a typical diesel school bus. An Electric School Bus may cost up to \$400,000 per bus which doesn't consider the electrical infrastructure costs.

**Charger Costs** - The full charging infrastructure cost is difficult to estimate. The AC chargers range from \$2,000 to \$5,000 and DC chargers between \$20,000 and \$75,000, not including the cost of installation.

**Clean School Bus Grants** – EPA Clean School Bus (CSB) Rebates Program opened in 2022 (\$5 Billion Dollars over 5 Years) to eligible school districts, manufacturers, and associations to help provide funding for electric school buses. Initially, school bus contractors were not directly eligible and could only apply via their districts or bus dealers. Successful applicants were required to ensure the school buses remained in a specific District for five (5) years, with no exception. As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023 signed on December 29, 2022, the CSB is now available **directly** to school bus contractors. Clean School Bus vehicles can be moved to a different School District, as long as the new District is eligible for the same or higher priority as the initial District. The changes to the law are likely to result in easier access for contractors and more applications for 2023, but may also make it more difficult for any one individual contractor to receive funding. More information on the Clean School Bus Program can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus>.

**Priority Status** - The EPA prioritized certain school districts (High-Need School Districts and Low-Income Areas, Certain Rural School Districts, and Tribal School Districts) giving them preference in the selection process and more funding per bus, if selected. 121 of 500 School Districts in Pennsylvania were given “Priority Status” but only 30% of Priority School Districts (12 of 40) in Pennsylvania that applied for funding received awards. No “Non-Priority” school districts in Pennsylvania received funding.

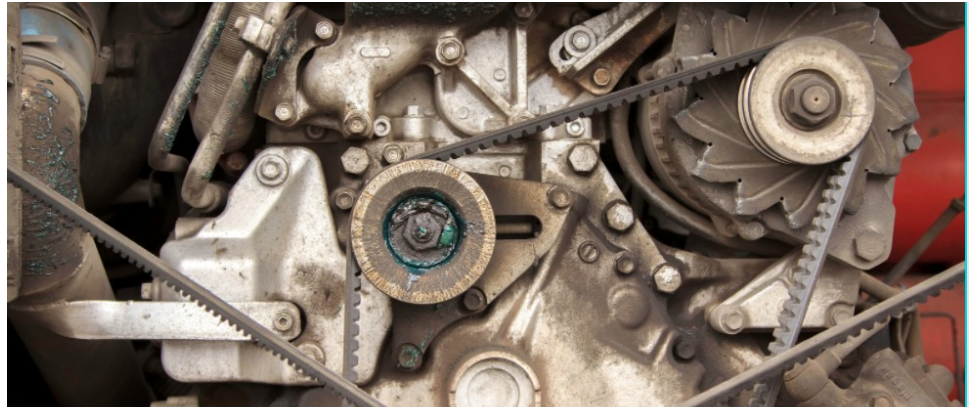
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## FMCSA Waiver of “Under the Hood” CDL Testing Requirements

We are now in the heart of the 2021-2022 school year, and contractors are continuing to face the harsh reality of the nationwide driver shortage. Recently, FMCSA took action intended to enhance school bus driver recruiting and retention by waiving CDL skills testing requirements that tended to intimidate and discourage school bus driver candidates. On January 3, 2022, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association (FMCSA) published a “Waiver of Certain Pre-Trip inspection Skills Test Requirements”, waiving the “under the hood” testing requirements and effectively creating a “school bus only” CDL. To date, PA has not yet implemented this waiver; however, the states of NJ, TX, OK, MD, KS, ME, and WI have already adopted it. Continue reading for more information.

### How Does the FMCSA Waiver Affect CDL Applicants?

In recognition of the severity of the nationwide driver shortage, the FMCSA has issued a temporary waiver of certain pre-trip skills test requirements found in 49 CFR



§383.113(a)(1). Specifically, the waiver waives pre-trip testing of the engine compartment under §383.113(a)(1)(i), otherwise known as the “under the hood” testing requirement. Testing “under the hood” requires an applicant to have knowledge of components such as the water pump, alternator, air compressor, as well as oil and coolant levels, among other components that a school bus driver typically does not need to have knowledge of to operate a school bus. Individuals holding a commercial learners permit (CLP) who would like to drive a school bus, but do not want to be tested on the “under the hood” portion of the pre-trip inspection skills test, are eligible to apply for a CDL

under this waiver and will not be required to test “under the hood”.

In order for the “under the hood” testing requirements to be waived, a CPL holder applying for a CDL must indicate that the applicant wants: 1) a “K” restriction for intrastate only transportation; and 2) a “P” Passenger endorsement; and 3) an “S” School Bus endorsement. If an applicant indicates they would like the appropriate restriction and endorsements, the applicant is permitted to test for a CDL but is exempt from the “under the hood” portion of the pre-trip inspection skills test. The combination of the “K” restriction and “P” and “S” endorsements effectively creates a “school bus only” CDL, and a driver

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Call or email us your suggestion, we’ll do the research and publish the information  
in an upcoming article. Contact [help@rckelly.com](mailto:help@rckelly.com) or 215-896-3846

with that combination of restrictions and endorsements can only operate a school bus intrastate.

### **What Does the FMCSA Waiver Require States to Do?**

States implementing the waiver are instructed to adopt a “school bus only” restriction code or some other marking which appears on the CDL of a license-holder who was granted a license under the waiver that clearly indicates that the license-holder is authorized to operate a school bus intrastate only, in accordance with 49 CFR §383.153(a)(10)(ix). But as noted above, the existing combination of a “K” restriction with “P” and “S” endorsements are already available as indicators on CDLs issued by states. Per the FMCSA Frequently Asked Questions relating to the waiver, located [here](#), FMCSA will allow states some flexibility in how it labels the school bus only restriction. In addition, states that implement the waiver must continue to conduct testing of the remaining pre-trip vehicle inspection components listed in 49 CFR §383.133 (a)(1)(ii) through (ix), but opening the hood to inspect the engine compartment is not required under the waiver. FMCSA is also granting states authority to develop their own method for scoring the items that are waived on the skills tests, as well as the authority to develop their own procedure for removing a school bus

only restriction from a CDL that was issued pursuant to this waiver, in the event that the license holder subsequently desires to operate interstate.

### **What Should Contractors Do?**

Bear in mind that the FMCSA waiver is temporary and set to expire on March 31, 2022; however, advocacy efforts are underway requesting that FMCSA extend the waiver or make it permanent. Contractors should also remember that they can still choose to have their CDL students test without the waiver so they can drive interstate and are not restricted to only school bus. As noted above, PA has not yet implemented the use of this waiver, and so Contractors can reach out to the state department of motor vehicles to request implementation of the waiver as soon as possible in order to get some relief from the school bus driver shortage. As noted, the issuance of a CDL under the FMCSA waiver will restrict a CDL holder from driving non-school bus commercial vehicles and restrict interstate transportation in any commercial vehicle. Ultimately, the waiver may provide benefits to contractors in both hiring, as applicants under the waiver will not be intimidated by “under the hood” testing, and retention. Contractors should review the FMCSA FAQ, as noted above, which touches on a number of questions not addressed

here. Should you have any questions on the recent FMCSA guidance, or would like to discuss how to approach this topic with the appropriate state agency, please contact RC Kelly Law Associates at 215-896-3846 or [help@rckelly.com](mailto:help@rckelly.com).

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