

# The Voice and Vision for Pupil Transportation in Virginia



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## VAPT Remembers

### Sonny Merryman

Floyd Withers Sonny Merryman, Jr., 89, of Rustburg, Virginia passed away peacefully on Saturday December 7, 2013. He is survived by his devoted wife of 60 years, Frances Taylor “Lou” Merryman of Rustburg; daughter A. Patricia “Pat” Merryman of Rustburg; son Floyd W. Merryman, III of Smith Mountain Lake and grandson M. Lee Merryman of Rustburg. Sonny was predeceased by his parents, Floyd W. and Margaret Muldowney Merryman, a sister, Anne Merryman Evans, and one brother, Thomas Merryman. In addition to his immediate family, Sonny leaves a large extended family and a host of close friends, business associates and co-workers who will miss him dearly.

Sonny proudly called Rustburg home his entire life. He graduated from Rustburg High School in 1942 and matriculated to VPI—now popularly known as Virginia Tech. He was a loyal Hokie fan who enthusiastically supported the university’s academic programs and athletic teams until his final days. In 2006, Virginia Tech presented Sonny with the university’s most prestigious individual honor - the Ruffner Medal recognizing his lifetime of contributions and service to his beloved alma mater.

In 1967, he and his wife, Lou, founded Sonny Merryman Inc. - a small trailer equipment and bus dealership. Six decades later the company has grown immensely and is widely respected as one of the nation’s most prominent bus dealers. In addition to the Lynchburg area corporate headquarters, where Sonny worked daily until recently, the company has two other locations in



Virginia with more than 125 statewide employees.

Sonny, along with Buster Bynum and Hamp Haislip, were the first recipients of the VAPT Hall of Fame Award in 2002.

Sonny’s loss will be felt by countless individuals and organizations that he touched in his lifetime. He was a staunch champion of the virtues and rewards of education. Sonny provided hundreds of young Virginians with scholarship assistance. He generously shared his success and good fortune with numerous youth development organizations and other community, benevolent and worthwhile causes. His positive impact on the lives of others is immeasurable and will continue for many years to come.

### Ruth Bynum

Sadly we also lost another member of our transportation family, Ruth Bynum passed away on December 5, 2013. She is survived by her husband of 60 years, R.A. “Buster Bynum; two sons, and three grandsons. Ruth was a supporter of the SESPTC and helped host the spouse events at the conferences.

## VAPT Board Members

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## District Cuts Vehicle Breakdowns by 50%, Crashes by 35%

Source: SchoolBus Fleet 10/03/13



Investing time in maintenance and money in better equipment for school buses has not only improved the performance of Prince William County Public Schools' fleet, it has cut costs significantly.

The fleet, composed of 850 Thomas Built route buses, serves 93 schools and transports 61,000 students daily, according to Director of Transportation Services Ed Bishop. The drivers log an estimated 11.3 million miles per year.

Cutting costs started with examination of data from a crash review board. The operation wanted to determine if bus design or maintenance had an impact on the numbers or types of crashes taking place. Data from the maintenance management system were also studied to see where the biggest expenditures were, and what types of common faults were being experienced.

The fuel management system was next on the list; fuel consumption data for every vehicle in the fleet

were observed to identify any abnormalities that caused expenses.

As a result, four areas were identified where significant costs were cut: major component replacement on mostly engines, expenditures on tires, expenditures on batteries and expenditures on brakes.

Engines were put through an internal fuel management program where fuels were sampled and tested to determine which fuel resulted in the least wear and tear on the engine. The other parts of the bus that add to engine wear and tear were inspected.

"We just took a look at simple things, such as the quality of fuel filters, oil filters and air filters," Bishop said. "We thought that if we were able to improve these filtering processes then that would also give us a cleaner-running engine."

Fuels and parts were then adjusted to better quality ones. This reduced the number of engine breakdowns and replacements, drastically cutting costs on usual engine repairs.

It was also discovered that a significant amount of avoidable expenses were due to tire replacement.

"We looked at the tires and said,

"Wow, we sure spend a lot of money on tires. What can we do to improve that?" Bishop said.

The fleet started a tire management program where tire pressures were maintained properly. Driver training programs were adjusted as well to make sure drivers weren't damaging tires by scraping curbs and hitting them.

Also, buses were bought with disc brakes to improve brake life cycles.

"We found that not only improved the braking of our buses, but changed the frequency with which we had to replace brake linings and the time required to do so," Bishop said. "You spend an extra \$1,500 [buying a bus with disc brakes versus conventional brakes], but over the 14-year life cycle, you save thousands."

Higher-quality batteries and alternators were purchased, and the number of situations where buses wouldn't start because of battery issues was cut by at least 50%.

The district's crash numbers are down by 35% and are being reduced every year. This has been aided by the predictive maintenance program, driver training programs and enforcement of safety standards and bus routing.

## Happy Holidays!



## Happenings

### Henrico County Public Schools:

Mr. Charles “Josh” Davis accepted the director of transportation position at Henrico County Public Schools serving the Richmond, VA., area after being the chief financial officer at Albemarle County for nearly five years. Mr. Davis also has a background in transportation and logistics with the U. S. Army, and before accepting the CFO position at Albemarle was the director of transportation there as well.

### Bedford, VA

At 75 years old, James Bryant has spent the majority of his life driving a school bus, and he’s thoroughly enjoyed it, with no plans to retire anytime soon. As reported in the 9/18/13 issue of SchoolBus Fleet, Mr. Bryant, started his career in 1959 and hasn’t

lost his enthusiasm for the job.

“I enjoy getting out in the morning, starting up the bus and making sure it’s warm for the children,” he told SBF. “I love children - I love to greet them and say goodbye as they leave. I look forward to that every day.”



### Fauquier County, VA

Fauquier County held its 2nd annual

Stuff the Bus event on November 14th. Eighteen schools and school division departments donated 4,506 pounds of food. Two school buses made the rounds that day to collect the donations for the local food bank. Students and staff all “Stuffed the Bus”. Loads of Fun for a worthwhile cause!



## Love The Bus

February is Love the Bus month in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Organized in conjunction with the American School Bus Council, Love The Bus festivities will be held by yellow school bus fans across the nation throughout the month of February. These events are designed to raise public awareness of the important safety, economic, and educational benefits of pupil transportation

On February 12, 2014 multiple sites in Virginia; Hampton Roads, Roanoke, Loudoun and Richmond, will host events. Information will be distributed at a later date with specific information and directions to the sites.

The festivities will include Love the Bus themed artwork

displays created by local school children, color guard presentations and other entertainment. Attendees will also have the opportunity to step aboard several modern schools buses to see firsthand the features that make the school bus one of the safest modes of ground transportation in the world.



## House Passes Bill Requiring FMCSA to Follow Rulemaking Process for Sleep Apnea

Source: School Transportation Director 10/8/13

In a unanimous bipartisan vote of 405 to 0, the U.S. House of representatives passed a bill last month that will require the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to follow its full rulemaking procedure, rather than simply issue guidance, when it addresses the issue of sleep apnea's impact on commercial drivers.

The bill, introduced by two Congressman only weeks earlier, mandates that any federal standards in governing sleep apnea in bus and truck drivers would be through the traditional rulemaking process. Such a process would ensure that a sleep apnea screening rule has been thoroughly considered and is not done too hastily.

In a letter to their congressional colleagues, Rep. Larry Bucshon, R-Ind., and Dan Lipinski, D-Ill., said guidance, as opposed to a rulemaking, would make carriers "extremely vulnerable" to litigation. "The rulemaking process allows for medical experts, the regulated commu-

nity, including professional drivers, to provide valuable data and input for the agency to consider in developing its regulations," said Bill Graves, president of the American Trucking Associations. "A formal rulemaking will also require an analysis of the benefits and costs of regulating sleep apnea, an analysis is not required for the issuance of guidance."

According to FMCSA, up to 28% of commercial driver's license (CDL) holders may have sleep apnea that, if left untreated, places them at increased risk for motor-vehicle crashes.

The House bill does not require FMCSA to issue any policy or regulation regarding sleep apnea but simply ensures that any policy issued includes a thorough analysis of the prevalence of obstructive sleep apnea among truck and bus drivers, the range of possible actions to address the problem and the costs and benefits of any policy.

## VAPT Updates

The Virginia Board of Education at its meeting on November 20, 2013, approved the 2013 Proposed Specifications for School Buses. Specifications will be effective December 20, 2013. Specifications are located at the following website:

[www.doe.virginia.gov/support/transportation/school\\_buses/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/transportation/school_buses/index.shtml)

Proposed changes to the VAPT By-Laws approved by the VAPT Board have been posted on RESOURCES PAGE for review by members. These will be voted on at the June VAPT conference in Norfolk. [www.vapt.org](http://www.vapt.org)

The VAPT Conference Committee will be adding more breakout sessions with more options and additional NAPT PDS courses at the 2014 conference.

During the October 17, 2013 VAPT Board meeting a question was raised about the DOE regulation concerning the purchase of used school buses and how it could possibly hinder the purchase of school buses in smaller school divisions. A motion was made by David Pace and a second from Tom Williams requesting the VAPT Resolution Chairman draft a resolution to change the wording in the regulation. Motion was passed.

## NASDPTS Alerts Position on School Bus Safety Belts

Source School Transportation Director 12/2/1013

In a surprising move, the National Association of State Directors for Pupil Transportation Services has altered its position on school bus safety belts.

The Association's prior position was to support lap-and-shoulder belts if funding was available. Now, it plans on removing that qualification, stating that it supports the use of lap-shoulder belts period.

Max Christensen, NASDPTS President, announced the group's new position at its annual meeting in October.

"All of us know that funding [for safety belts] is not currently generally available, and I doubt anyone thinks it will become available anytime in the near future," he said. "Thus our position really seemed to be a 'non-position.'" With that in mind, your

NASDPTS board has discussed whether we really want to base our position on such a highly regarded safety issue, on 5 cents per student per day."

Christensen tells *School Transportation Director* that the impetus to change NASDPTS' position was a school bus crash test demonstration he witnessed this summer at the Westfield, Ind., facilities of IMMI, the company that manufactures Safe-Guard seat belts and child restraint systems for school buses.

"After seeing that, it became very difficult to walk away and still defend our position," he said.

The Type C conventional school bus in the demonstration traveled at 25 mph down an 800 foot track, then crashed head-on into a concrete barrier. The crash dummies in the bus

that were not restrained with a lap and shoulder belt were thrown from their positions - some into the seat in front of them, some into the aisles or under seats if they were not facing forward. Those dummies who were restrained with a three-point lap and shoulder belt were partly thrown toward the seat in front of them but largely remained in place, a move that would likely result in less injury.

When asked if he thinks NHTSA would also change its position on seat belts now that NASDPTS has, Christensen said he didn't know.

"I think we've reached the point where we need to put this issue to bed," he said. "School buses are still safe - I don't want to take away from that. But we can make them safer."