

# The Voice and Vision for Pupil Transportation in Virginia



February

2015

## Love The Bus

Source: LoveTheBus.com

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Love the Bus is an ongoing campaign to raise awareness and appreciation for the hundreds of thousands of school bus drivers who safely transport children to and from school.

School bus drivers have made the Yellow School Bus the largest and safest transportation system in the country and are deserving of our thanks. By understanding the value of student transportation to our education system, Love the Bus promotes the idea that every person involved in our schools is critical to our children's success.



While Love the Bus is an ongoing campaign, every February the American School Bus Council and schools across America take time out to celebrate Love the Bus month. Students can participate by sharing stories about their favorite bus drivers and making interactive Valentine's cards to email or print and give to their bus driver. Educators can download the Love the Bus toolkit, which provides resources for implementing a comprehensive program in your school. The American School Bus Council hopes to make February a month where parents students, educators, and administrators all show their appreciation for those responsible for getting our children safety to and from school every single day.

Please share memories and photos of your local event with VAPT. Memories will be posted in the next VAPT Newsletter. Send your information to Cheryl Fisher at [cfisher@fcps1.org](mailto:cfisher@fcps1.org).



### VAPT Board Members

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## 2015 Scholarship Opportunities

VAPT sponsors directly or supports several scholarship opportunities for our Transportation Community. These include the following scholarship awards:

Scholarships	Amount	Deadline
Clyde W. Morris Memorial Scholarship	\$2,500.00	April 30, 2015
Sonny Merryman Inc. (5 Virginia Tech Scholarships)	\$2,500.00 ea.	March 1, 2015
Southeastern States Pupil Transportation Conference		
Buster Bynum Education Scholarship	\$2,500.00	April 30, 2015
Sonny Merryman Memorial Scholarship	\$2,500.00	April 30, 2015

All scholarship information may be found on the VAPT website at [www.vapt.org](http://www.vapt.org)

## First Observer Program Returns

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) recently announced that its First Observer security training has been re-launched as a web-based program.

First Observer is a security awareness training initiative that focuses on enhancing security across highway surface transportation modes, including school buses.

The government program, which includes the School Bus First Observer module, had been dormant since December 2012, when its grant money ran out and wasn't renewed by Congress. Until then, First Observer (successor to the Highway Watch) had been administered by grantee HMS Co. since 2008. After the grant expired, TSA decided to bring the program in-house.

Ken Ward, a TSA transportation security specialist, said in a recent letter to industry stakeholders that the agency "re-tooled all of the critical training modules and have made them available online."

Drivers and others who go through the First Observer program, which is available at [www.tsa.gov/first-observer](http://www.tsa.gov/first-observer), can print a certificate of completion after viewing the lessons that are applicable to their job.

Source: School Bus Fleet, January, 2015

Ward said that the revamped First Observer will continue to focus on the core "Observe, Assess, Report" message program, but it will also grow into new areas.

Planned changes include expansion into additional surface transportation modes (mass transit/passenger rail, freight rail, pipeline); production of new videos; inclusion of training guidance that aligns with Public Law 110-53; information/record management capabilities, and a comprehensive train-the-trainer in-person instructional component. The first phase of implementing these enhancements could come about by the end of 2015.



## Happenings!

### New Transportation Director:

Loudoun County Public Schools has named a new director of its Department of Transportation.

Lonnie Reavis comes to Loudoun after overseeing transportation at Suffolk County Public Schools. Before he went to the transportation side of public school systems, he worked in the classroom. He served as a dropout prevention specialist and sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teacher at Southampton Middle School; a sixth grade teacher at John F. Kennedy Middle School; and an assistant principal at John Yeates Middle School.

He holds a bachelor's degree in sociology/

criminal justice from Norfolk State University and a master's degree in administration and supervision from Longwood University. Lonnie is also the current VAPT president.

### 2015 VAPT Conference:

Start making plans for a trip to downtown Roanoke in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This year's annual VAPT Conference will be held at the beautifully restored and historic Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center:

**June 21—25, 2015**

### National America's Best Technician Competition:

Don Ertel from Virginia Beach and the

VAPT representative to the National America's Best Technician Competition, earned a second place in Kansas City, Missouri. Don missed a first place finish by 3 points...

### Congratulations Don!

Are you a member of VAPT? Would you like to join? Check out the VAPT website at [www.vapt.org](http://www.vapt.org). VAPT is the premier organization in Virginia dedicated to promoting safety, professionalism, and excellence within the Pupil Transportation industry.

## DOE Train the Trainer

The 2015 "Train the Trainer" training schedule has been posted and class registration is now open. If you have trainers whose certification has expired, to continue as a trainer they must be registered to attend a "certification class." If you have trainers whose certification will expire during calendar year 2015, they may be registered in a "re-certification class." Additionally class registration for new directors/supervisors training is also open. Class information and class schedules can be found at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/transportation/training/index.shtml>.

To register:

- Log into SSWS
- Select the application "School Bus Driver Instructor Certification "
- Select the class that you'd like to attend

We anticipate that class seats will fill up quickly and recommend registration as soon as possible.

**With the exception of Fairfax class dates of March 30<sup>th</sup>, all registration should be completed by May 29, 2015.** If you have questions concerning registration, please contact our office at 804-225-2037.

## Laugh Often!

These are not school bus related - but they are really funny!

The following questions from lawyers were taken from official court records nationwide (names were changed to protect the innocent).

1. Q: What happened then?  
A: he told me, he says, "I have to kill you because you can identify me."  
Q: Did he kill you?
2. Was it you or your brother that was killed in the war?
3. Were you alone or by yourself?
4. Do you have any children or anything of that kind?
5. Q: I show you exhibit 3 and ask you if you recognize that picture.  
A: That's me.  
Q: Were you present when that picture was taken?
6. Q: Now, Mrs. Johnson, how was your first marriage terminated?  
A: By death.

Q: And by whose death was it terminated?

7. Q: Mrs. Jones, do you believe you are emotionally stable?  
A: I used to be.  
Q: How many times have you committed suicide?
8. Q: You say that the stairs went down to the basement?  
A: Yes  
Q: And these stairs, did they go up also?
9. Q: Have you lived in this town all your life?  
A: Not yet.



## Carrollton Crash Survivor-School Bus Driver

Source: SchoolBus Fleet November 20, 2014



ELIZABETHTOWN, Ky. — A few years ago, Quinton Higgins took a surprising career turn: He became a school bus driver.

Few would have guessed that Higgins would end up behind the wheel of a school bus considering what he had been through more than 20 years earlier. As an eighth grader, he was one of the survivors of the fiery Carrollton, Kentucky, bus crash in 1988.

Higgins' church group was in a retired school bus that was built just a few days before the critical 1977 federal safety standards for school buses went into effect. As the group was on its

way home from an amusement park, a drunken driver barreled head-on into the bus.

Gasoline from the bus' punctured fuel tank was ignited, and fire quickly engulfed the bus as the passengers scrambled to get through the rear emergency exit. The front door was disabled by the crash and blocked by flames, and there were no other emergency exits on the vehicle. Twenty-seven people — mostly teenagers — died in the inferno.

In response to the Carrollton crash, numerous safety measures were implemented to improve school bus safety and to crack down on drunken driving.

More than 20 years after that disastrous day, Higgins had lost his job running a mailroom. At the suggestion of someone from his church, he decided to give school bus driving a try in 2010.

Four years later, Higgins is still shuttling students — and enjoying it — at Hardin County (Ky.) Schools. He also helps teach school bus safety to middle school students, and his story about the Carrollton crash makes his message all the more powerful.

## Did You Know?

A crocodile cannot stick its tongue out.

The electric chair was invented by a dentist.

It is physically impossible for pigs to look up into the sky.

## VAPT Hall of Fame

The Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation (VAPT) is accepting nominations for an inductee to be honored for outstanding contributions to VAPT and school transportation safety on a national, state, local, or industry level. We invite you to nominate someone deserving of this Hall of Fame Award.

Induction into the Hall of Fame is intended to be a special honor to living persons rather than a memorial to those who have passed away. However if an individual is deemed worthy the award may be given posthumously. It represents the highest honor in school transportation that the VAPT can bestow upon an individual. Nominees must be strong supporters of school bus safety.

Nominations are due no later than April 30, 2015. Nomination form may be found on the VAPT website at [www.vapt.org](http://www.vapt.org)

## Catching Unlawful School Bus Passers with Cameras

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

While yellow school buses are by far the safest option to transport students to and from school, it can be dangerous to be outside the bus. Traveling by school bus is about seven times safer than traveling by personal vehicle, and only 1 percent to 2 percent of student transportation fatalities are associated with school-bus travel. Boarding and exiting the bus put students most at risk of injury or death because drivers may ignore or don't understand laws requiring them to stop for school buses. Between 2003 and 2012, 84 pedestrians between ages 5 and 13 died in school transportation-related crashes.

Typically, state laws require vehicles on both sides of a road without a median to stop and remain stopped while school bus stop arms and flashing red lights are deployed. However, an annual survey of school bus drivers organized by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services reported that 75,966 vehicles passed school buses illegally on a single day in 2014. Similar studies conducted by states and school districts also indicate that motorists' failure to stop for school buses is a persistent problem. Now, states are looking to increase their ability to catch school-bus-passing scofflaws by allowing counties, cities or school districts to install cameras on school buses to record such violations.

**State Action:** Laws in 13 states—Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, Wyoming and West Virginia—authorize the use of school bus cameras to catch motorists who illegally pass a school bus.

In 2014, the Wyoming Legislature became the first state to require that all school buses have cameras, beginning with the 2016-17 school year. The costs associated with installing the cameras may be reimbursed similarly to other district-covered transportation costs. South Carolina also enacted legislation in 2014, allowing a school bus to be equipped with a recording device that can capture a clear view of vehicles passing, the date and time of the infraction, and an electronic symbol indicating activation of the amber lights, flashing red lights, stop arms and brakes. Indiana, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Tennessee debated, but did not pass, bills in 2014 authorizing the use of cameras to catch illegal passing of school buses.

In 2013, Illinois and North Carolina enacted laws concerning the use of cameras on school buses to reduce illegal passing. Illinois expanded its definition of automated traffic law enforcement to include school bus cameras designed to capture images of vehicles unlawfully passing a stopped school bus. For each violation, the locality with jurisdiction sends a ticket to the violator captured in the image, with a fine not exceeding \$150 for a first violation

and \$500 for a second or subsequent violation. North Carolina's original school bus camera law was backed by the state's Child Fatality Task Force, which was created in 1991 by the legislature. Legislation in 2013 created minimum fines for illegal passing, revocation of the driver's license for a second offense within three years, and stiffer penalties for striking and/or killing a person while illegally passing a school bus. The law also encourages local boards of education to use fine proceeds to purchase cameras for school buses to help detect and prosecute violators. The Child Fatality Task Force is considering introducing 2015 legislation to give cities the option to contract with private firms to administer a school bus camera program.

State laws vary on distribution of proceeds from school bus camera violations; some direct a certain amount to a locality, while others use the revenues for school safety zone improvements. Illinois law requires that fine proceeds be divided equally between a school district and municipality or county. It also states that compensation to vendors must be for equipment costs and services, not for the number of tickets issued or revenue generated. In Maryland, revenue can be used to cover the costs of implementing the program, with any remaining balance to be used for public and pedestrian safety programs, as long as the fine revenue is not more than 10 percent of the total revenue for the locality that year. The Washington Legislature authorized school districts to use school bus cameras, with any revenues beyond administrative and operating costs directed to school zone safety projects.

Some states give school districts or local governments the option of administering a program themselves or contracting with a private vendor. In Connecticut, for example, the law allows a municipality or local or regional board of education to install, operate and maintain a live digital video school bus violation monitoring system or to enter into an agreement with a private vendor. Some state laws, such as Maryland's, require the local jurisdiction to approve the use of cameras. In Maryland, a locality's governing body may approve their use following a notice and public hearing.

A few states—including Connecticut, Illinois and Rhode Island—require alerting motorists to the presence of a camera. Illinois has the most detailed requirements: A sign must be posted on each school bus equipped with a camera, and localities must post on their websites a list of school districts that use school bus cameras. The locality also must conduct a statistical analysis to assess the safety of cameras on school buses, using available before-and-after data.