

# The Voice and Vision for Pupil Transportation in Virginia



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## 2017 VAPT Conference Scheduled



**Waterside Hotel**  
**Norfolk, Virginia**  
**June 19-22, 2017**

*The Virginia Association of Pupil Transportation announced the 2017 State Conference will be held in Norfolk, Virginia on Monday, June 19 through Thursday, June 22, 2017. Keep an eye on our website for more information regarding classes, lodging, and vendors. This is a great way to network and connect with other transportation individuals in our state.*

### VAPT Board Members

- President: James Lash, York County
- Vice President: Cheryl Fisher, Fauquier Co.
- Secretary: Donna Carter, Franklin Co.
- Treasurer: Floyd Miles, Richmond City
- Past President: Lonnie Reavis, Loudoun Co..
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- Region 2: Steve Pappas, Poquoson Co.
- Region 3: Heather Handschin, Spotsylvania Co.
- Region 4: John Grubbs, Frederick Co.
- Region 5: Jason Ferguson, Lynchburg
- Region 6: Michael Stovall, Roanoke Co.
- Region 7: Gary Adams, Scott County
- Region 8: Torey Holmes, Prince Edward Co.

## VAPT Executive Director Position Open

The Virginia Association of Pupil Transportation is advertising for the position of

**Executive Director.** The job description is posted on the VAPT website.

The applications for this position will close on December 2, 2016.

Please send a letter of application and a current resume. Please include a list of references.

Applications will be screened and interviews will be given to qualified applicants.

This is a part time position and the selected individual will be offered a separate work/wage agreement.

Please send letters of application to: James Lash, CDPT VAPT President [jlash@ycsd.york.va.us](mailto:jlash@ycsd.york.va.us)

## Hero Driver Saves 32 Kids from Smoking Loudoun School Bus

Source: [http://www.loudountimes.com/news/article/hero\\_driver\\_saves\\_32\\_kids\\_from\\_smoking\\_loudoun\\_school\\_bus](http://www.loudountimes.com/news/article/hero_driver_saves_32_kids_from_smoking_loudoun_school_bus)

A few hours after saving dozens of students from a fuming bus with a gas leak, an image of driver Michele Coates smiling in a hospital bed, happy to hear her students were all safe, went viral. While driving her usual route to Harmony Middle School yesterday morning, Coates was faced with an emergency she's trained for, but never thought she'd have to encounter. When she smelled smoke and thought her bus might be catching fire, Coates put the lives of her students above her own to make sure they were all able to make it safely out. Even as she left the scene in an ambulance and recovered in the hospital, Coates kept asking if her kids were OK.

Coates' daughter posted a photo of the grinning driver laying in the hospital bed to Reddit with the caption, "[My mom smiling after saving 40 kids off a burning school bus today.](#)" The photo garnered over 1 million views on Imgur in 12 hours.

"It's something you never expect to happen and you never thought you would encounter," Coates told the Times-Mirror this morning. "It was very scary. My only thought was all these dear children's lives are in my hands and I have to save them."



The bus was on the way to school on Berlin Turnpike in Hamilton when Coates noticed an unusual smell. Her students told her they smelled smoke and thought they saw flames. She immediately pulled over.

"Your adrenaline kicks in and at that point, you don't think of yourself, you think of saving all the children," said Coates. "It wasn't until after they were all out and safe that I realized I didn't feel well."

The bus driver stressed how thankful she is her students listened to her direction and got out of the bus in a calm and orderly manner.

"I was very proud of them," she said.

Once the kids were out of the bus and all accounted for, she called emergency services for a bus fire. When emergency personnel from Loudoun County Fire and Rescue and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office arrived, the status of the emergency was changed to a smoke and gas leak.

Coates told emergency personnel she didn't feel well. Her body was in shock and she felt a lot of pain in her sinuses. But she was still more concerned with the safety of her students.

"I kept asking if all the kids were safe," she said. "Even in the ambulance and the hospital I kept asking."

Coates was taken to the emergency room at Cornwall Inova for smoke inhalation.

Seventeen of the students on the bus were taken to the Pediatric Unit at Inova Lansdowne for symptoms related to exposure to the fumes. Fifteen of the students continued to attend school, according to Harmony Principal Eric Stewart. Those students didn't report any health issues at the scene and were checked by the school nurse. None of the students suffered serious injuries.

"I'm so, so glad they are safe," said Coates. "That's all that matters."

## Who's Facing Driver Shortage?

School bus driver shortage in America? Absolutely. Google "School Bus Driver Shortage in America" and see almost a million results on this topic. Everyone asks the same question, "How can we dig out of driver shortage?" Several articles from the Google search from different parts of the country result in different solutions. Some have no solutions. They struggle daily to fulfill route duties; office staff, mechanics, and supervisors consistently drive in many jurisdictions to transport their students.

A human resource article on the HR Exchange website entitled, "Is Relief on the Horizon for Bus Driver Shortages in Texas?" states that while "an improving economy coupled with explosive growth in Texas oil and gas operations have exacerbated school bus driver shortages in Texas [because] they were enticed to the oil field by substantially higher salaries—salaries school districts could not match." However, the oil and gas industry has seen a plateau—but, driver shortages still remain.

Scott Carpenter, a reporter for the Union Democrat publication in California, wrote an article in August 2016 how their shortages is causing problem for schools. The article states, "that it's a lack of pay and not enough hours [and] to become a bus driver you have to have the training, a clean record [and] are held to high standards". Still the California district sees students on buses longer and arriving late. Some field trips did not have drivers to fulfill the needs; therefore, they were canceled.

Of all the articles cited, a call for higher wages seem to be the resounding solution. But, does that solve it all? Many districts are stepping up to provide higher wages, along with bonuses (quarterly, annually). In a December 30, 2015 post on the School Bus Fleet website, "Nashville District Boosts School Bus Driver Pay, Hours" written by Thomas McMahon states that the Nashville, Tennessee school division "will get pay raises, a 40-hour work week and attendance bonuses under a new plan to address driver recruitment and retention. The move is meant to align Metro Nashville Public Schools' driver compensation with local job market competition and to help fill a severe shortage of the drivers that caused widespread service delays this fall".

School divisions, no doubt, have a difficult challenge in the coming years. It's getting tougher to find individuals who can pass a physical examination, who can multitask, manage students, endure a flexible schedule, and drive in different types of terrain and weather. Regardless, students need to be transported. After all, no student can be educated unless they are first transported. What is your district doing to eliminate driver shortage?

### Sources:

<https://www.tasb.org/Services/HR-Services/Hrexchange/2015/December-2015/c-driver-shortages.aspx>  
[www.mthespec.com/opinion-story/6919822-school-bus-driver-shortages-the-new-norm](http://www.mthespec.com/opinion-story/6919822-school-bus-driver-shortages-the-new-norm)  
<http://www.schoolbusfleet.com/news/686320/nashville-district-boosts-school-bus-driver-pay-hours>

## VAPT Poster Contest 2017 REMINDER!

The slogan for this year is "My Driver —My Safety Hero!"

**Who May Enter** - Anyone enrolled in a public school. Five winning divisions that include: Division #1-Grades K-2; Division #2 –Grades 3-5; Division #3-Grades 6-8; Division #4-Special Education; and Division #5-Computer Aided Drawing (CAD). The first place winner from each division will entered in the national poster contest.

**Deadline Date** - Completed poster designs must be post marked by **April 30, 2017**. All entries become the property of the State School Bus Safety Committee, and will not be returned.

**Poster Specifications** - Completed poster size must be 12" by 18" only, with a one-inch (1") blank border completely across the bottom of the poster. This space must be available due to printing requirements. If not provided, poster will be disqualified. Poster may be illustrated on the vertical or horizontal axis.

**Prizes** - Prizes will be awarded for the first, second, and third places in each division as follows:

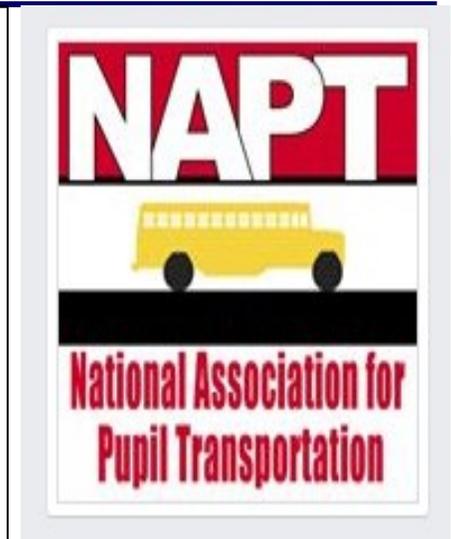
1st Place Winner for each division	\$100.00 Check and Blue Ribbon
2nd Place Winner of each division	\$ 75.00 Check and Red Ribbon
3rd Place Winner of each division	\$ 50.00 Check and White Ribbon

**For complete instructions and entry form go to the VAPT website at [www.vapt.org](http://www.vapt.org)**

## News from the NAPT Conference

With this news publication being written as the National Association for Pupil Transportation Conference is taking place in Missouri the "[National Transportation Safety Board](#)" issued a recommendation to NAPT "H-13-36" to "Provide your members with educational materials on lap and shoulder safety belts providing the highest level of protection for school bus passengers, and advise states or school districts to consider this added safety benefit when purchasing seat belt-equipped school buses."

This recommendation reiterates a recommendation that NAPT received previously from the Board and satisfactorily completed approximately three years ago. See the video posted on the NAPT Summit Connect Facebook page.



NAPT highlighted

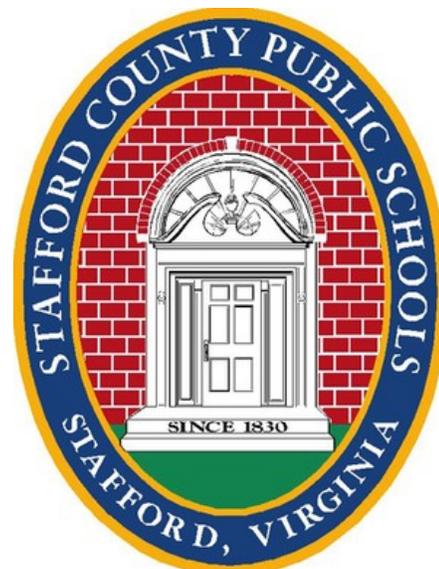
**Stafford County Public Schools, VA**

on their Facebook page on

October 21 as they celebrated

*"Bus Driver Appreciation Day"*.

Tune in to their Facebook page to watch it.





## NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD NEWS RELEASE

An independent federal agency

### NTSB Releases School Bus Safety Video

November 7, 2016

Washington — The [National Transportation Safety Board](#) released Monday a video highlighting school buses as the safest form of transportation for children traveling to and from school – even safer than riding in a car with their parents.

Children are safer in school buses because the buses are designed with a form of occupant protection called compartmentalization. The design of the seats — featuring high seatbacks, closely spaced apart, with energy absorbing properties — creates a compartment that protects children.

"NTSB has found that compartmentalization works well to protect children in frontal and rear impact crashes, but, in some side-impact or high-speed rollover crashes, compartmentalization is not enough to prevent injuries," said [NTSB Chairman Christopher A. Hart](#). "This is because the seatback does not prevent motion from side-to-side or up-down. In those very rare instances, for some children, a seat belt could have reduced injuries and even saved lives."

The [video](#) also examines three recent crashes in [Chesterfield, New Jersey](#), Port St. Lucie, Florida, and [Anaheim, California](#) that have provided the NTSB with valuable information about school buses, compartmentalization, and seat belts. Additional information about these crashes, along with the safety video, can be found on the NTSB website page dedicated to school bus safety at [www.nts.gov/safety/Pages/schoolbuses.aspx](http://www.nts.gov/safety/Pages/schoolbuses.aspx).

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### Contact Information

Office of Public Affairs  
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20594

Keith Holloway  
(202) 314-6100  
[keith.holloway@ntsb.gov](mailto:keith.holloway@ntsb.gov)

## ***Crash report: School bus driver took seizure meds, wife said***

By Brian Witte and Sarah Rankin | AP

BALTIMORE — The driver of the school bus involved in a deadly crash this week in Baltimore was taking medication for seizures when he had an accident two years ago, his wife told investigators at the time, according to records obtained Friday by The Associated Press.

Glenn Chappell's wife spoke with officers after her husband apparently lost consciousness, crashing into trees and shrubbery but emerging unscathed from the single-car accident in Howard County on Feb. 9, 2014.

Chappell, 67, died Tuesday morning along with five other people when the school bus he was driving rear-ended a car before colliding with an oncoming Maryland Transit Administration bus. Eleven people were injured. A probe into the cause of the crash is ongoing, and a federal investigator said Friday that no mechanical defects have been found in the two buses.

The National Transportation Safety Board has completed the mechanical inspections of both vehicles and found no deficiencies, investigator Jennifer Morrison said at a news conference.

The NTSB and Baltimore police have also obtained four surveillance videos that show the school bus on its approach to the crash site, but none shows the collision, Morrison said.

It appears from the surveillance video that the bus, which was not carrying children, was traveling faster than the posted speed limit, but its exact rate is still being determined, police spokesman T.J. Smith said.

Authorities have also said they are looking into Chappell's health records but have declined to answer specific questions about whether he suffered from any medical conditions.

Source: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/school-bus-driver-in-crash-shouldnt-have-been-behind-wheel/2016/11/04/c20900d2-a25e-11e6-8864-6f892cad0865\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/school-bus-driver-in-crash-shouldnt-have-been-behind-wheel/2016/11/04/c20900d2-a25e-11e6-8864-6f892cad0865_story.html)



## ***Franklin County, Virginia School Bus Incident; September 2016***

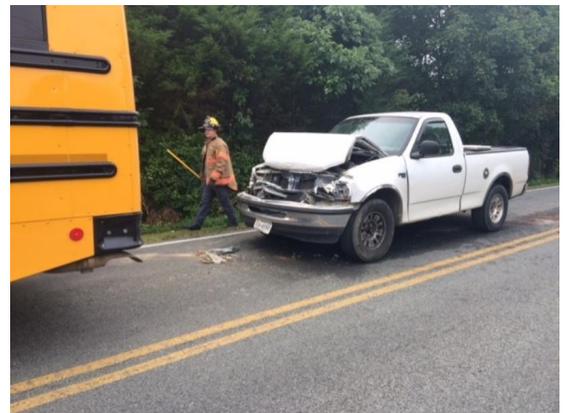
FRANKLIN CO., Va. (WDBJ7) No children were hurt in a school bus accident in Franklin County on Tuesday morning.

It happened on Bethlehem Road in Boones Mill around 7:35 a.m. The school bus was slowing or stopping when a pickup truck hit the back end of the bus. There were 19 students on the bus, but none of them were hurt. The bus driver was also uninjured. The driver of the pickup, Stephen Yopp, 50, of Boones Mill, was treated for injuries and released.

Yopp was charged in the crash. Franklin County Public Schools Superintendent Mark Church said parents have been contacted, and students will be monitored throughout the day. Two students asked to go home.

Church said the school division is very thankful that there were no major injuries.

Source: <http://www.wdbj7.com/content/news/Franklin-County-school-bus-involved-in-accident--393234571.html>



## Wellness Corner

What impact would a wellness program do for School Transportation Departments? The annual physical is an important key to keeping our students safe. But, what does your division do to encourage good wellness? A November 2015 article from [www.truckinginfo.com](http://www.truckinginfo.com) says, “The payback on driver wellness is best measured with a different stick [and] it’s logical to think that helping drivers improve their physical health and general well-being will make a dent in the runaway turnover rates”. One trucking organization, Melton Truck Lines, Tulsa Oklahoma, decided to take matters into their own hands when the some drivers could not pass the physical back in 2003. They began small and offered a “structured approach to health and wellness based on education” and by 2007, launched a weight loss program and voluntary lipid-panel blood testing. They provided a 3,500 square foot health and fitness area and even created a small café named “Fuel Café” that only offers healthy meal options. Melton’s VP of human resources “concedes that it’s hard to measure the impact of the health and wellness program on driver turnover—but, we hear that no one else has this. And, when we can help a driver pass the physical and then stay on a healthy track with our coaching, I think that has a positive effect on recruiting and retention.”



### Source:

<http://www.truckinginfo.com/article/story/2015/11/how-to-measure-driver-wellness-programs.aspx>



## Spotlight On...

Amelia County was established in 1735 from parts of Prince George and Brunswick counties. The County is named for Princess Amelia Sophia of Great Britain, daughter of King George II.

Just 35 miles southwest of Richmond, Amelia County, Virginia has access to all the resources of a large urban center, while providing the benefits of a small community. Amelia is known for its minerals, including the nation's best supply of Amazonite found at the Moorefield gem mine.

Amelia County, Virginia has a population of approximately 12,903 residents. Amelia County Public Schools (ACPS) has approximately 1,875 students, on 28 regular routes and 3 Special Needs routes along with 5 vans for special transportation. Mrs. Mary Webb, has been the Transportation Supervisor for a year and a half. The first day of school was on August 15, 2016 with an end date of May 26, 2017.

Amelia County Public Schools website is <http://amelia.k12.va.us>. You can follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/AmeliaCountyVAPublicSchools>. Our theme for this new academic year is “Going the Distance”. *ACPS mission statement is Amelia County Public Schools will provide educational opportunities for all students to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them to live, learn, and work productively in a global society.*