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*Official publication of the Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation*



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# Georgia School Bus

is published by:  
 DEL Communications Inc.  
 Suite 300, 6 Roslyn Road  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3L 0G5  
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 S.G. Bennett Marketing Services  
 www.sgbennett.com

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Publications mail agreement #40934510  
 Return undeliverable address to:  
 DEL Communications Inc.  
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 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3L 0G5

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PRINTED IN CANADA  
 11/2017



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# Message from the GAPT president, Benny Long

Dear friends,

It seems like only yesterday that Trey Studstill passed the gavel to me at the 2017 conference. The 2018 conference is rapidly approaching, and the board is working hard to plan for many great professional opportunities on Jekyll Island.

Dave Weber will be this year's keynote speaker with a presentation called "Leadership Redefined: The 12 Xs of Success for Today's Leader." Before the conference, I encourage you to research Mr. Weber and be prepared for a great presentation.

It was a pleasure to have the opportunity to help complete a task that has been discussed ever since I first became a member of our organization's board. I have the honor of announcing that Mr. Carlton Allen has been named executive director of GAPT. Many of us have known Mr. Allen during his 41-year career in transportation. The establishment of this position will be a benefit to our organization for many years to come.

Mr. Allen and this position will help ensure continuity and consistency throughout the organization as the board changes over the years.

Another first for this year is that the Special Needs Road-e-o Committee and the Regular Education Road-e-o Committee have joined forces to form the GAPT Safety Competition Committee. This brings both safety competitions together as one. The goal of this reorganization is to produce a better, stronger and more cost-efficient safety competition. I would like to say thank you to everyone involved with this process for your hard work and dedication to our students' safety.

I would like to close with a task for each of you. In 2010, Dan Cathy published a short video for Chick-fil-A: "Every life has a story...if we only bother to read it." I challenge each of you to take three minutes and watch this video. It has a strong message that is often forgotten in our fast-paced world. 🚌

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# GAPT's Heroism Award winner honored as the NAPT Heroism recipient

By Mark Lindstrom



Jeanine Buck (left) and Kimberly Ellis (right), director of transportation for Marietta City Schools.

Never in her mind did Jeanine Buck expect the events to unfold as they did last November.

It was a beautiful clear and sunny day in Marietta. Buck had completed her pre-trip inspection and driven to Marietta Middle School, parked her bus and waited on her students. She drove through the neighborhoods just north of North Marietta Parkway, dropping off her students with no issues in discipline, traffic or otherwise. It was one of those nice quiet trips.

She completed her bus route and went to her second-tier afternoon bus route, picking up her students at A.L. Burruss Elementary School, named for the long-standing Georgia politician and member of the House of Representatives. Driving along Whitlock Avenue towards the Marietta Square, the sun peaked around the overhead canopy which made the drive such a pleasant experience, especially at that time of day without traffic on a crisp autumn afternoon.

However, the quiet still of the afternoon suddenly became a lot noisier that Wednesday. Buck heard loud popping noises from outside her bus just after letting off a few of her students off at their stop. Quickly looking around the area surrounding the bus stop, she saw a man with a hand gun shooting past her bus towards a home across the street and which would have placed her and her children in the crossfire. Quickly recognizing the danger, she sounded her horn, and with her students quickly recognizing the SOAR danger signal, they immediately

stopped, looked at the her and, as she motioned to them, quickly boarded the bus placing themselves out of immediate danger.

Buck also noticed a Marietta Middle School student who was on her way to the stop to pick up her younger brother. She quickly had the young girl get on the bus again out of the way of the shooter who fired a total of 12 gunshots in the surrounding vicinity and in direct line of sight of the bus. Buck remained calm and collective and reported the incident to the dispatcher who then contacted the Marietta police who immediately responded to the scene.

Buck then drove the students out of danger without panicking, even after the gunman looked directly at her. Once police responded, she kept the students calm, reported the incident in detail to the police, met with parents who picked up their children and calmly drove the

remaining students home. She certainly didn't expect that bus ride to end up as it did. Buck was interviewed by the police, looked at mugshots and cooperated with the police. The American Traffic Solutions stop-arm camera system provided clarity not only for the pictures but also video footage, and provided insight to many who did not know that the stop-arm cameras film during the entire bus route not just when the stop arm is deployed. A powerful tool became even more useful.

Buck was highly commended for the Marietta City Schools' December employee of the month. In June, she was recognized as the GAPT Heroism Awardee for her quick thinking in keeping our Georgia students safe in a highly dangerous and unusual predicament proving that training and following basic tenants can make all the difference even on a crisp autumn afternoon.

Kimberly Ellis, director of transportation for Marietta City, remarked, "We are so proud of Ms. Buck and how she handled this event that could have turned tragic. Her commitment to student safety and her professionalism saved many lives that afternoon. Ms. Buck represents the many bus drivers and bus monitors who are very often the unsung heroes of our school systems."

At the annual conference, Buck was awarded the NAPT's Heroism Award sponsored by Blue Bird for her quick thinking and true heroism during the shooting in maintaining her composure, even while the gunman made eye contact, and ensuring she got not only her students back on the bus but an older sibling as well. Buck certainly represents the best of Marietta City and the state of Georgia. 🚌

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## MEMBER PROFILE – SHEBA NELSON



### A whole new world

*By Cindy Chan*

Sheba Nelson walked into her role as transportation specialist without so much as a clue as to what she would be doing since it was newly created, but now she can't imagine doing anything else.

As transportation specialist for Baldwin County Schools, Nelson says her duties include coordinating routes (regular, field trip and special needs) for the county. However, before she took on this job, she attended Georgia College and State University where she planned on getting a degree in education.

Instead, Nelson took a job as a secretary at Harrisburg Elementary School in 1987. When the school shut down, she moved on to work as a front office receptionist and attendance clerk at Baldwin High School in 1988 for 11 years. Afterwards, Nelson applied for the transportation specialist job and she's held that position since.

"The adjustment process wasn't difficult, but there were a lot of things about transportation I had no clue about," Nelson says. "Transportation

was a whole other beast." However, Nelson credits her supervisor and director at the time for their guidance and advice, which led to a smooth transition. She also says attending GAPT summer conferences and going to the different training classes helped her hone her skills.

One of the challenges Nelson had to conquer was how to coordinate field trips. In the past, she had always assumed bus drivers were readily available, but she quickly learned that wasn't the case.

"I didn't know about all of the logistics – coordinating special needs transportation and accommodating students that have half days," Nelson lists. "There were a lot of things I didn't regularly think about."

Nelson also remembers having to familiarize herself with the fleet. She had to know which driver was driving which bus, where each bus was heading and so on.

"After a while, everything eventually became second nature," Nelson says. "If someone calls me and asks which

bus goes to North Jefferson Street, I can give them the exact bus number."

Every day is different when working in pupil transportation, but Nelson says her day usually starts between 7 to 7:30 a.m. and ends around 5 to 5:30 p.m. However, there have been days when she starts at 6 a.m. and doesn't get home until 7 p.m.

"You have to get things done," Nelson says. "That's the exciting part – you never know what you're going to get. You could have a quiet day, or a day where everything pretty much comes off the wheels."

Baldwin County Schools' transportation department has 57 routes on which 2,900 students are transported daily. The department consists of 105 employees.

"My favourite thing about this job is working with my drivers and monitors," Nelson says. "We also try to build positive relationships with students and parents. If it weren't for the kids, we wouldn't have jobs." 🚌



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## VENDOR PROFILE

### TRANSPAR GROUP OF COMPANIES

# Call on TransPar for management, consultation

By Cindy Chan



Whether through management or consultation, TransPar Group of Companies' goal is to help any organization's transportation department run a lot more smoothly.

According to chief of business development Tim Ammon, TransPar Group of Companies is a full-service provider of transportation consulting and management and fleet management services for transportation operations. The group leverages the expertise and resources of TransPar Group, School Bus Consultants (SBC) and Transportation Services Co. (TSC).

"The group of companies provides us a unique set of capabilities to help districts in whatever transportation they may have. In essence, we have three unique organizations that can treat transportation as an integrated whole. SBC is a pure consulting and advisory business. TransPar assists school districts with management and operation of their transportation departments. And TSC provides a unique package of products and services to manage the life cycle of school buses," Ammon says.

TransPar has the ability to oversee either all or some portion of a transportation department, Ammon says. Currently, TransPar has 16 sites in the United States, including Hawaii, in which individuals are responsible for the whole department or a specific function.

"That may include being the department head, being responsible for managing the routing functions or the fleet or maintenance services," Ammon lists, adding TransPar's management services provide school districts with a blend of expertise and tools. "How do we get better at being efficient? How do we make sure

we're delivering the most amount of services? Those are the questions that TransPar staff are trying to address for their clients every day."

The consulting services of SBC are quite different. Instead of directly managing services, SBC's primary function is to offer advice on improving operational performance. SBC looks at policies and procedures, routing, organizational structures, cost of the organizations and so on. Afterwards, they collect the information, validate or suggest tweaks on how to improve the processes in place. Supporting the implementation of the recommendations through a disciplined change management process allows SBC to continue to provide assistance to districts after any initial engagement.

Moving forward, Ammon would like to continue to focus on how TransPar, SBC and TSC interact with their customers.

"Organizations like ours can occasionally be perceived as threatening. It's sort of like going to a doctor," he says. "A checkup, whether you are a person or an organization, is never all that much fun. However, it can make you better."

Ammon hopes that customers will see the TransPar Group of Companies as advocates for the difficult mission that school transportation providers undertake.

"Our goal is to help our clients maximize every dollar they spend, but also to help ensure they get the financial and operational resources they need to provide the services expected of them."

For more information, visit [transpargroup.com](http://transpargroup.com). 🚌

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# ‘This is what I was supposed to do in life’

By Cindy Chan

There wasn’t a single question or doubt about it – Belinda Parrish knew her calling in life was pupil transportation.

Currently the director of transportation and custodial services for Dalton Public Schools in Dalton, Ga., Parrish’s resume in the industry began in 1983 when she was a bus driver for the county school system.

“I was a stay-at-home mom. [That job] provided me a chance to be home with my children or take them with me on the bus,” Parrish says of her two daughters, Ericah and DeeAnna.

Parrish’s love for the pupil transportation industry began with someone special – her own bus driver from her youth named Catherine Hight.

“I just admired her so much. I used to love to watch her drive the bus. She was my role model and I wanted to be like her when I grew up,” Parrish says with a laugh. “She was somebody I had known all my life. She lived in my community and knew all of our families and us. We all admired her.”

Hight ended up training Parrish to be a bus driver, and she has since retired from the county school system. Parrish drove the bus for the county for 10 years. In 1993, Parrish moved to the city as a driver, but also worked in the transportation office.

“In 1998, I was given the opportunity to be the director [of transportation], so I took it,” Parrish says, adding she has worked for Dalton Public Schools for 24 years – and 34 years overall in pupil transportation.

“It’s really all I’ve ever done, and it’s something that has always been close to my heart,” Parrish explains.

As the director of transportation and custodial services, Parrish’s duties range from dealing with all things field trip-related, attending the Northwest Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) meetings where she is a moderator and supervising custodians. The second part of Parrish’s job title means that she also has to order supplies and make sure custodians have uniforms. Parrish also sits on the Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation board of directors.



Alan (left) and Parrish (middle) with their grandchildren, Anna Wynn, Asher and Adleigh.



Parrish (third from left) with her daughters, Ericah and DeeAnna, and her husband of 39 years, Alan.

“I enjoy meeting with other directors and talking about what goes in our system,” Parrish says. “We have a round table and hear information from the Department of Education. It’s just a really good time to be together.”

Parrish says in her email signature – in addition to her name and information – she features the quote, “School bus transportation keeps education in motion.” And it is something she strongly believes in.

“I think it’s important that we are the first people to see those children every day, greet them, start their day off right, get them to school where they can have a good breakfast, education and lunch and then take them home safely,” Parrish says. “I feel like this is what I was supposed to do in life, and I take that very seriously.” 🚌



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## VENDOR PROFILE

### CHALK'S TRUCK PARTS, INC.

# Providing parts for buses and trucks

*By Cindy Chan*

Chalk's Truck Parts, Inc. may be based out of Houston, Texas, but the company is warming up quite nicely to the state of Georgia.

Chalk's Truck Parts began selling truck parts in 1957, making 2017 its 50th year in business. The business initially sold new and rebuilt transmissions, differentials, driveline and steering parts. Since its establishment in 1957, however, the company has grown to include school bus parts. With about a \$3 million inventory, Chalk's Truck Parts is housed in multiple buildings covering three acres, encompassing 70,000 square feet.

"We don't sell trucks and we don't sell buses. We just have the parts for buses and trucks," Richard Davis, sales

manager for Chalk's Truck Parts' school bus division, says with a chuckle. Other divisions of the company include parts, the transmission and differential shop and power steering/fan clutch.

Chalk's Truck Parts started offering school bus parts in the early 1990s to many school districts located in Texas and throughout the southwestern part of the United States. Davis says they carry all types of bus parts for all makes of buses. School bus parts include seat covers, mirrors, light switches and more.

"When our customers call and ask for a part, we can call anywhere in the country to find that part," Davis says, adding Chalk's Truck Parts boasts about 53 to 54 employees.

Davis says, for him, working with individuals in pupil transportation has been enjoyable. He recalls attending the Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation conference this past summer and speaking with one of the districts.

"Georgia is beginning to be a very strong state for us. We like dealing with the folks in Georgia," he says.

Chalk's Truck Parts is open from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

"We don't break for lunch. We eat at our desks, take phone calls and service our customers," Davis says.

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# Atlanta boosts efficiency, service with school bus fleet department overhaul



When John Franklin came to Atlanta Public Schools as executive director of transportation in May 2014, one of his top priorities was bolstering school bus maintenance.

“There were serious but solvable mechanical issues taking place that did not allow our bus operators to have reliable buses to perform their jobs,” Franklin says.

Atlanta Public Schools reportedly had the newest fleet of school buses in the state of Georgia, but the fleet was plagued by maintenance issues that affected all aspects of service: routes, athletics and trips.

“This all came to a head with repeated parental concerns and a local news exposé on the number of buses being towed due to mechanical failure,” Franklin says.

In December 2015, funding was appropriated to create new fleet leadership positions, technician positions with stronger skill sets, higher salaries and service writers. All of the new positions required ASE school bus and automotive certifications. A number of long-term successful technicians were retained.

According to Franklin, the district was able to recruit strong techs from diverse locations, and their variety of mechanical backgrounds fostered better group problem-solving.

“I wasn’t necessarily looking for school bus mechanics,” Franklin says. “I was looking for inquisitive mechanical minds with a strong work ethic who weren’t afraid of such applications as computer diagnostics, anti-lock brakes, multiplex wiring, smart switches and DPF/after-treatment.”

The techs’ maintenance experience included such fields as waste management, military contracting, oil field pumps and support, transit and airport ground support equipment. The group came together in June 2016, just in time for another initiative: the outsourcing of school bus inspections to a vendor at night.

“Too often in K-12 school bus shops, the labor and production hours needed to complete the state inspections eat up labor for service and repair,” Franklin explains.

Having a vendor conduct the state inspections freed up Atlanta Public Schools’ techs to focus exclusively on repairs, preventive maintenance and service.

“The techs felt more engaged in repairs, and there was ample time to pro-



vide training so that skills were maintained and increased,” Franklin says.

During the first month of inspections by the vendor, the dire condition of the fleet was clear: around 90 percent of buses were red-tagged with maintenance issues. The new tech crew began making critical repairs to get the buses ready for the beginning of the 2016-17 school year.

“That was the beginning of the fleet turnaround in Atlanta,” Franklin says.

One of the key improvement areas has been in the fleet’s diesel particulate filter (DPF) program. The department purchased a DPF baker and blower and has been cyclically changing out filters as part of preventive maintenance service.

The DPF program improvement led to a 61-percent decrease in Atlanta Public Schools’ number of school buses towed, bringing down the costly tow invoices.

The department has also saved about \$70,000 in fuel with improved battery and charging system diagnostics. And

with the newer techs’ higher skills sets, they are able to conduct some of the engine rebuilding work that was previously outsourced.

Atlanta Public Schools also recruited a new fleet manager and a new fleet foreman. Both have diverse backgrounds in heavy diesel applications such as trucking, automotive and ground support.

Franklin said that he looked for a fleet manager who was versed in vehicles that had new-technology diesels but never experienced sustained speeds to force manual regeneration of DPFs. He found that in Oliver Baird, a former fleet manager for Tug Technologies and Coca-Cola.

In addition to their technical expertise, the new maintenance crew has exhibited strong teamwork.

“One of the best outcomes of this reorganization has been the ‘esprit de corps’ and professionalism exhibited by this group,” Franklin says. “They collaborate and coordinate on problem-

solving mechanical issues, and they have great leaders. ... Productive shops are more than just a conglomerate of technicians — it is about leadership, organization and having the right people committed to [Atlanta Public Schools’] first core value of putting students and schools first.”

The fleet department has also sponsored student intern programs. Two students from Atlanta Public Schools’ alternative education academy have begun internships in the shop. Also, a French exchange student who was studying diesel technology in Toulouse, France, came to work in the department for three weeks.

Atlanta Public Schools runs 295 route buses and transports 27,000 students daily. The district is ranked No. 63 in *School Bus Fleet’s* Top 100 School District Fleets list for 2017, which will appear in the upcoming October issue of the magazine. 🚐

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# Student hit walking to bus in San Bernardino County awarded \$32 million

By Steven M. Sweat

A tragic case in San Bernardino County that involved a six-year-old girl who was struck by a car while crossing the street to catch her school bus demonstrates several things. Isabella Escamilla Sanchez, a minor, by and through her guardian ad litem, Carina Sanchez v. County of San Bernardino, a public entity; City of Highland, a public entity; et al., San Bernardino Superior Court, case no. 1309504, shows that accepted practices are not necessarily safe. The case also demonstrates how notice can affect the outcome of litigation and the vicarious liability that employers have when their employees' negligence result in injuries to others.

## Factual background

On Oct. 3, 2012, Isabella Escamilla

Sanchez, a six-year-old, attempted to catch her school bus by crossing the street at mid-block. She was struck by an oncoming Subaru Impreza and suffered numerous injuries, including a traumatic brain injury that left her with lifelong disabilities requiring round-the-clock nursing care. Her family filed a lawsuit against the Durham School Services because the drivers failed to report mid-street crossings by children in violation of their own policies.

## Plaintiff's arguments

The plaintiffs argued that Isabella's accident could have been avoided if the Durham School Services had warned the parents against mid-block crossings. The parents of the children who got on the bus from the same bus stop

as Isabella Sanchez testified that all of the children crossed the street at mid-block rather than by using the marked crosswalk at a nearby intersection in order to catch the bus. In its policies and procedures, Durham School Services drivers were supposed to notify the San Bernardino School District when they witnessed mid-block crossings. Both the school district and Durham had witnesses who testified that they had progressive discipline systems in place for parents and children who crossed mid-block. However, all of the parents whose children used that bus stop testified that they were never warned about mid-block crossings in full view of the bus drivers. The district also testified that it never received any reports of mid-block crossings from any of its bus drivers.

**Employers hold vicarious liability when the negligence of their employees while they are acting in the course and scope of their employment results in injuries to others.**

## Defendant's arguments

Durham School Services argued that it did not cause the girl to run into the street. It also argued that the girl and her mother were at fault in the accident because the girl's actions caused it, and her mother had not taught her the right way to cross the street. The defendants also argued that their drivers had not witnessed any mid-block crossings, so they did not have any notice that they were occurring.

## Demands and offers

Before trial, Durham School Services made a final offer of \$2 million, but the plaintiffs did not accept it. During the trial, the plaintiffs made a demand of \$20 million, which was not accepted by the defendant. The plaintiffs settled the claim against Subaru driver Lillian Thanh Vo for \$50,000, but she remained in the case because the judge did not approve the settlement until the trial's conclusion.

## Trial and verdict

After a trial that lasted for five weeks, the jury deliberated for two days be-

fore returning with a verdict in favor of the plaintiff in the gross amount of \$36,143,291. Carina Sanchez, the plaintiff's mother, was found to be 20 percent at fault, so the award of non-economic damages was reduced by that amount. Durham School Services was ordered to pay \$32,943,291 after the 20 percent reduction of the gross award, and the school's bus driver was found to be jointly and severally liable along with Durham School Services to pay \$24,943,291.

## Notice in negligence lawsuits

In California, school bus drivers have a duty to warn parents and children about dangerous conditions about which they are aware. If they have no notice of these conditions, they will not be liable. In this case, the other parents' testimony that all of the children crossed the street in the same manner that the plaintiff did in full view of the drivers was enough to show that the bus drivers should have reasonably known that the children were crossing the street at mid-block and so had adequate notice of the danger. The failure to warn the parents

and to notify the school district formed the basis of liability.

Even though Durham School Services did not receive reports from its bus drivers of mid-block crossings, it was still held to be liable in the lawsuit along with the bus driver. Employers hold vicarious liability when the negligence of their employees while they are acting in the course and scope of their employment results in injuries to others.

The finding that Carina Sanchez was 20 percent at fault in the accident demonstrates the principle of comparative negligence. California follows the doctrine of pure comparative negligence. Under it, the jury will determine the percentage of fault that is held by each of the parties. If the plaintiff holds any of the fault, his or her award will be reduced by the percentage that is allocated to him or her. 🚗

*This article was originally published in the National Law Review by attorney and legal author, Steven M. Sweat. Link: <https://www.natlawreview.com/print/article/student-hit-walking-to-bus-san-bernardino-county-awarded-32m>*

**In California, school bus drivers have a duty to warn parents and children about dangerous conditions about which they are aware.**



## MEMBER PROFILE – DUANE PETERSON



### His one route in life

By Cindy Chan

Duane Peterson found his dream job when he was 17 years old. He'll be turning 50 years old in 2018, and he hasn't lost any of the same enthusiasm for his work since he was a teenager.

Peterson is currently the director of transportation for Oconee County Schools. He started driving a school bus at age 17 for the YMCA. He moved on to coaching for several years and dove into the business world for a bit. He eventually returned to his roots – driving buses – as well as working in management within the school system. Peterson received formal training as an early childhood educator, so kids have always been a part of his career.

As director of transportation, Peterson manages the shop, takes care of routing and field trips, makes sure the bus drivers are where they need to be and so on. If it is related to transportation, Peterson is involved.

"I manage the budget, work with vendors and make sure buses are running safely, the department has supplies and parts and substitute drivers are where they're supposed to be," Peterson explains.

It helps that a couple of Peterson's previous jobs involved a lot of routing and knowing the streets of the county. For example, Peterson used to work for a large company in the private sector in which he not only handled the plant but also the routing for delivery.

"I kind of got into routing through that," he says, adding he returned to pupil transportation in 2005 because he enjoyed work-

ing with kids and missed it. "This is my fifth year as the director I was route coordinator and supervisor for eight years for the district before that."

In Oconee County, around 7,200 students ride the bus every day on 78 routes. Oconee County Schools' transportation department has 82 bus drivers. Peterson says Oconee County is growing each year, and his department continues to work hard to accommodate those changes.

Oconee County School is building a new elementary school called Dove Creek Elementary, which is set to open in August 2018. This brings the total number of schools in the county to 11. Peterson says this new addition required a rezone, as well as additional routes.

"My main goal is to continue to maintain our safety record in making sure our drivers are trained. We've improved our training program that we use here, and that's something I worked on 10 years ago," he says. "With our growth, we are constantly training new drivers here. My biggest goal is to see this transportation department become the best in the state in terms of safety."

With so much drive and passion, Peterson says retirement is the furthest thing from his mind. Outside of work, Peterson enjoys spending time with his family, playing golf and watching UGA football. Peterson is married with two sons, ages 16 and 20, a daughter, age 18. 🚗



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# Transportation is his mission

By Cindy Chan

Pastor, beekeeper, chaplain with the sheriff's office and transportation director – is there anything Jason Long can't do?

As transportation director of Pierce County School District, Long oversees the safety and direction of the fleet, coordinates the routes and is the only driver trainer in the district. Needless to say, Long wears several hats.

He is also one of the individuals responsible for the bus route enhancement service (BRES) program, which was established in-house in 2013. According to Long, Pierce County School District runs 34 buses on 68 routes, so he and his staff needed to come up with the best possible method to transport students, since they had more pupils than drivers and buses.

"We transport 2,500 to 2,600 students in the afternoon and 1,800 to 1,900 in the morning," Long says.

For Long, his days usually begin at 5:30 in the morning and end at around 5 to 5:15 in the afternoon. While Long says he likes having a routine and checking things off of his to-do list, one thing he enjoys about his job is that every day is different.

"You may do the same things every day, but every day never looks the same," Long says. "For example, in one afternoon at 1 p.m., we had a couple drivers call in sick. We had to drop what we were doing and revisit how the afternoon would go."

As transportation director, Long says he wants to continue improving on safety within the school district.

"We have a slogan at GAPT (Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation): 'Protect 100 percent of our students, 100 percent of the time.' That means, to me, I want to deliver the kids safely 100 percent of the time," Long says, adding he was just selected to serve on the school bus specs committee which deals with technical aspects of pupil transportation, such as safety features, what has worked or not worked in the past and so on. "We've actually just rolled out the new school bus specs for 2018."

Before Long got into the pupil transportation industry, he was – and still is – a pastor for a church in his town. Long



has a master's degree in biblical theology and counseling, but when he overheard someone in his church talking about a bus driver job that came with insurance and benefits, he was immediately interested.

"I needed benefits more than anything, so I started out driving a bus as a substitute driver," Long recalls, adding he eventually worked his way to becoming a full-time driver. He then became the driver instructor, route coordinator and then bus support. In 2011, he was hired to be the transportation director.

Outside of work as a pastor, chaplain with the sheriff's office and transportation director, Long is a beekeeper with a small farm. He and his wife, who also works in the school system, have been married for 15 years.

"I feel like this is my mission – being in transportation," Long says. 🚐



# Always seeking continuous improvement

## John Franklin named Administrator of the Year

By Cindy Chan



For John Franklin, a part-time job in graduate school led him to a lifelong career.

Franklin is currently the executive director of transportation for Atlanta Public Schools in Atlanta, Ga. In the mid-1990s, he was attending graduate school, studying public administration and information systems at night, when he decided to drive a school bus part-time for the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District in San Marcos, Texas.

“I liked driving a bus,” Franklin says – so much so that he ended up writing his master’s research thesis on the economics of privatizing pupil transportation.

Franklin then started working for the San Antonio Independent School District as an assistant director and, later on, as a director of transportation for Southwest Independent School District. He moved on to work at Hillsborough County School District in Tampa, Fla. as the general manager of transportation before settling down at Atlanta Public Schools. Franklin was recently awarded the title of School Bus Fleet’s Administrator of the Year at the National Association for Pupil Transportation conference in Columbus, Ohio.

As executive director, Franklin says his duties include everything and anything related to the department and bus operations, as well as looking after the personnel, budget and finance, recruitment and human resources. A typical day for Franklin begins with coming into work at 5:30 a.m., answering emails, working with principals, solving issues

and working toward planning and the future. He also enjoys interacting with lots of people, such as employees, parents and citizens.

Atlanta Public Schools boasts 336 bus drivers that drive 292 different routes and transport 27,000 students daily. He works with 449 employees in the transportation department consisting of fleet technicians, routing and planning staff, operations, payroll, quality control, supervisors and monitors. While Franklin is pleased that the transportation department covers all of its routes, he adds it would be nice to have additional padding. In the meantime, Franklin has plenty to be proud of – the transportation department has achieved plenty of goals and is working on several more.

“We’ve implemented an electronic field trip request system. Right now, we’re working on a comprehensive project with a consultant and grant from the Walton Family Foundation on school transportation of choice,” Franklin says. “We’re implementing a new fuel management system, and we will be implementing a new fleet maintenance system soon. We’re constantly looking for methods of improvement.”

One thing Franklin wants to improve within Atlanta Public Schools is effectively communicating with students and parents and to find and use various tools and methods to do so.

“I really enjoy working with the people I work with. They are the reason that I’m successful. I take great joy in watching them do great things every day,” Franklin says. 🚐

# Retired, but not tired

By Cindy Chan



Vernon Hardy retired in the summer of 2017, and he has enough memories from his fulfilling career to last a lifetime.

Hardy's most recent job was director of transportation and maintenance for the Emanuel County School District. He was in charge of the budget, maintenance of all the schools within the district and special projects. His role also involved purchasing buses, training school bus drivers, maintaining routes and making sure students were safely transported to and from school. He loved every aspect of his job, which made leaving it more difficult. However, he knew it was time.

"It was just time to pursue other things in my life," Hardy says. "Forty years was enough in education. It wasn't just a job. I enjoyed the work and the people."

In Hardy's 40-year career, he's been a speech therapist, a principal, a program coordinator and an assistant superintendent. In 1975, Hardy graduated with a degree in speech therapy. He taught hearing-impaired students in Savannah-Chatham County Public

Schools for two years. Afterwards, he went back to school to get his master's degree and, later, his education specialist degree in administration and supervision.

"I was assistant principal and principal at two different campuses in Jefferson County schools for 15 years, and began in Emanuel County Schools as a high school-to-work/apprenticeship transition coordinator from 1993 to 1994," Hardy recalls.

Hardy's roots began in education, but he eventually started focusing on transportation. He says, "I went from coordinator of a special program to assistant superintendent of transportation and maintenance."

However, Hardy didn't have formal training in the areas of transportation or maintenance – but that didn't stop him from doing his job.

"I just learned on the job," he says, adding that he gained his knowledge and expertise by attending conferences, talking to other directors and so on. "You don't really get a degree in those areas, generally. I know we have come a long way from hand-plotting student bus routes and eight-track

tape videos on buses to computer-generated routing and GPS/microchip video recordings on buses."

Even though Hardy is currently retired, he is still learning how to be retired.

"I just got married in late May," he says with a chuckle. "I'm learning how to be a good husband/grandfather. We're going to be selling or building a home. I'm going to travel a bit, and hunt and fish."

Regardless, Hardy misses his job and, most of all, his colleagues.

"I'm just proud of the people that worked with me," he says. "You can't have a good transportation department unless you have your mechanics, drivers and administration working with you. You also need the support and cooperation of parents and other services within the county, such as county maintenance, road service and so on. We have the most dirt road mileage in the state, so when it rains we scramble a lot and ask for favors to get those roads ready. We have good training, good people and good buses." 🚌



# Next-generation bus wash on wheels



Bitimec's next-generation Wash-Bots line of portable 'single-brush' bus-washers provide reimagined functionality and winning features for affordable school bus washing solutions. Thirty years in the making, these mobile high-tech machines are so simple to use, a grade schooler can wash a full-size school bus in six to eight minutes.

Hurdles are anticipated and averted by layers of clever features, crafted into every machine – nozzle cutoff valves to wash smaller vehicles, 'brush-only' inclination to better reach bus contours and automatic water refill shutoff to work uninterrupted, to name a few.

The full Wash-Bots line has electric, battery, diesel and even a hybrid-powered model, ranging from \$19,900 to \$45,000 installed. The electric model 101-BB is ideal for fixed wash bays, plugged in to the building's water and electricity, with the hose and electric cord installed on a trolley (festoon line) overhead and out of the way. Portable models running on battery or diesel are totally self-contained bus wash machines with a push button. Self-traction, soap, brush and rinse-water all available at the touch of a button. A hybrid 'ride-on' model completes the line, able to wash on battery power or

on diesel power. Seeing the whole package of high-tech simplicity at work never fails to impress first-timers.

Every model delivers immediate ROI, by allowing a single operator to do exterior washing as fast as a four-to-five-person wash crew. The operator simply walks (or rides) the Wash-Bots around the vehicles, as they apply soap, rinse-water and power-brush functions – all at the touch of a button. The small footprint machines do not need a dedicated building because they can be tucked out of the way when not in use.

For more information please contact [info@wash-bots.com](mailto:info@wash-bots.com). 🚐

# Reclaiming your bottom line

## How loss of use and diminished value subrogation can recoup costs and retain your drivers

*By Todd Eskra, President of Transportation Services Co.*

Rebates. Credit card points. Box Tops for Education. Even the last couple of dollars on an expired gift card. The list of cash-back opportunities in our day-to-day lives goes on and on, and all it usually takes is a little bit of paperwork to stake your claim. But did you know that you also have opportunities to recoup costs and get money back when bad things happen to good buses?

We all know that the school bus is the safest vehicle on the road for transporting children to and from school each day – but it's not the only vehicle on the road. And let's be honest: your school buses are going to be involved in accidents.

When that happens, fleet owners often think they have only two options. They can either wait for the police investigation to be completed, which can take weeks, during which time your vehicle is out of service while you wait for the other party's insurance to pay for damages.

Or, you can cobble together a speedy repair job using the materials, parts and labor found in your own shop to get your bus back on the road. However, there is a third option that can not only get your bus repaired quickly, but it can also get cash back into your operation in no time.

Where does this money come from? Through an insurance claims process known as subrogation.

### What subrogation is and why you should be paying attention

When a Georgia school bus is involved in an accident, the incident and details of the damage must be reported not only in the vehicle's history chart, but a claim should also be filed with your fleet's insurance carrier. When the other party is at fault, it is your carrier's job to seek to recover those costs from the faulty party. But meeting a high deductible to get a damaged vehicle repaired in a timely manner can be difficult for many smaller operations to afford upfront. This is where subrogation comes in.

Subrogation is defined as the process by which your insurance carrier collects money from a party at fault in order to recover funds that you, or your insurance carrier, have already paid – including your deductible.<sup>1</sup>

So let's go back to the Georgia school bus. A passenger vehi-

cle runs into the back quarter of your vehicle and damages the bumper. There are no injuries and the initial police report cites the other driver is at fault. The insurance appraiser estimates your vehicle to have about \$3,000 worth of damage, but your policy has a \$2,500 deductible. The full investigation is going to take weeks. So what do you do?

Many transportation directors will go to the bus yard and talk with their mechanics about replacing the damaged bumper in-house. Sounds like a cost-free repair job, doesn't it? They pull a bumper from an older, out-of-service vehicle and use paint and other shop materials to fix any minor body damage. A spare bus runs the route until your original vehicle has been repaired and can return to the road just a few days later. You didn't have to wait for the police to complete their investigation, and you didn't have to spend a dime. Or did you?

### Why most Georgia school districts aren't collecting all they are due

Most folks do a good job of recovering their actual costs for the repair work completed to fix the physical damage to their bus, but a lot of the time they are due more. You can recoup reasonable retail value of the parts and labor, loss of use for the time the bus is down, and potentially the diminished value that is caused by the bus being in an accident. School transportation operations tend to shy away from loss of use and diminished value subrogation claims because your participation in the process is administrative by nature and takes relentless follow up with the insurance carriers.

So while it might be quicker and seem easier to skip the full claims process and fix minor damage on your own, it is hardly a cost-free solution. You pay your shop foreman and your mechanic a salary, therefore the hours spent on that bumper is a direct hit to your budget. And that bumper from the yard wasn't free, after all -- it may have been a long time ago, but at one point, that bumper was part of a new vehicle purchase.

Making a claim for loss of use and diminished value takes a specialized knowledge of the process and a lot of time and persistence, but it is worth it. In some states, you can recover up to \$850 per day per bus for every day your bus is out of service getting fixed. In addition, there is also typically a "look

back” period in which you can go back and re-open old claims and file for loss of use that is due to the district. Depending on the state, that could be up to 10 years. The trusted advisors and industry experts with the TransPar Group of Companies have seen examples of subrogation review processes yielding hundreds of thousands of dollars.

### How you can apply it to your bottom line

So how does a transportation department begin to recover funds using subrogation? First, get and keep your paperwork in order. Proper documentation will be key to the process. Second, talk to your risk manager about the options available to you through existing carriers. Ask how much in loss of use claims and diminished value claims you recovered over the last few years – it should not be zero. If your team doesn’t have the expertise, time or awareness of how to make loss of use and diminished value subrogation work for you, it is time to seek outside help. The TransPar Group of Companies is one of a number of companies that specializes in facilitating subrogation claims for transportation operations. The critical point is finding a way to begin reaping the benefits of this little understood revenue source.

The next question then, is what should you do with money you recapture? Consider those dollars not only as recouped

money owed to your operation, but think of it as a safety incentive and driver retention tool. When an insurance carrier is able to recoup costs in excess of the paid deductible, take that money and deposit it into a segregated account. From this account, reward your employees for accident-free driving and exceptional service, or host employee appreciation events throughout the school year. Drivers that feel appreciated and fulfilled in their jobs are more dedicated to the role and exhibit a higher buy-in to the safety culture that all school districts and school transportation operations strive for. Happy drivers are safer drivers, and safe drivers provide the quality of service that keep operations running smoothly. Who doesn’t want that?

### About TransPar Group of Companies

The TransPar Group of Companies is a partnership of three leading organizations from across the school transportation industry that offers a diverse portfolio of products and services which represent the most comprehensive and responsible offering in the industry. 🚌

<sup>1</sup> *WalletHub*: Subrogation: What It Is and How It Applies to Car Insurance Karl Eisenhower, Jan. 16, 2015, <https://walletHub.com/edu/subrogation/9554/>



## How Do you Close the Gap Between What you Have Versus What you Need?

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# Affordable HD/IP video storage with the Vulcan™ Series V5X3 MDVR



AngelTrax, a leading innovator in mobile video surveillance, introduces the Vulcan Series V5X3 mobile DVR, an affordable surveillance storehouse for fleets of small or large vehicles. The V5X3 records up to five camera channels to capture interior and exterior views and is compatible with all current Vulcan Series cameras.

## Multiple Camera Types

This versatile digital video recorder is capable of recording D1, WD1, 720P or up to 1080P on four channels and has a fifth channel dedicated to IP recording at up to 1080P resolution. This capability allows the fleet operator to place an IP

camera in a key location for clarity where it is needed most. However, IP camera channels require more storage than other types of recordings, and this can limit the number of hours that can be stored on the DVR. The solution is to capture the majority of camera views with true high-definition cameras.

## High-Capacity Storage

All five camera views are stored on the V5X3's shock-mounted 1TB platter hard drive, which is more affordable than solid-state storage, and is equipped with a built-in heater to enable faster startup in colder temperatures. For more storage, the 1TB drive can be upgraded to 2TB or 4TB capacity.

## **AngelTrax drives the market with state-of-the-art products, including Vulcan™ Series DVRs, NVRs, IP cameras, high-definition cameras, cutting-edge real-time and live-view tracking, driver-behavior management and patented Virtual Synchronized Mapping™ technology.**

### **Vulcan Hi-Definition Pro8 Central Management System (CMS) Software**

Capable of utilizing both Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity, the V5X3 is able to take full advantage of the wireless features offered by AngelTrax. Tailor-made to provide much more than video playback, the feature-full Pro8 software system allows the director to schedule or automatically download video clips, via true high speed Wi-Fi or cellular, and display all camera channels simultaneously, including true HD and IP. Using an active Internet connection, Pro8 is capable of sending DVR alerts via text or email to pre-selected authorized personnel.

### **Vulcan Series MDVRs**

AngelTrax offers additional Vulcan Series MDVRs that record multiple camera types, from five channels to 24. The V24 records 24 channels, including 16 D1 or WD1 channels and eight IP channels up to 1080P resolution. The V12 stores eight channels D1, WD1, 720P, or up to 1080P and four IP channels up to 1080P. The V5 records four channels D1, 720P up to 1080P and one IP channel up to 1080P resolution. The V5SD records four HD channels 720P and one IP channel 720P up to 1080P. The V5SD features redundant and sequential recording to dual solid-state SD cards while the V5, V5X3, V12 and V24 are each capable of redundant recording to an optional SD card instead of – or in addition to – an optional fireproof box.

### **More Than Storage**

Vulcan MDVRs are equipped with power connections for auxiliary systems including but not limited to public address systems, signage and onboard diagnostics. Each Vulcan MDVR is encased in a shock-mounted, military grade, cast aluminum housing with a vandal-resistant locking front cover, with the exception of the V5, which features a vandal-resistant locking solid-state drive. The optional dashboard-mounted remote status indicator features LEDs to show the status of the DVR without using a video monitor.

### **About**

AngelTrax is a leading designer, manufacturer and provider of high-definition in-vehicle mobile surveillance for the student transit, mass transit, waste management, fleet, law enforcement and rail industries. AngelTrax drives the market with state-of-the-art products, including Vulcan™ Series DVRs, NVRs, IP cameras, high-definition cameras, cutting-edge real-time and live-view tracking, driver-behavior management and patented Virtual Synchronized Mapping™ technology. AngelTrax develops solutions for every mobile surveillance need. For more information about the Vulcan Series, contact AngelTrax toll-free at (800) 673-1788 or online at [www.angeltrax.com](http://www.angeltrax.com) for a customer service experience that is unrivaled in the mobile video surveillance industry. 🚌



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# With expert teamwork, district brings transportation in-house



When a school bus company and Savannah-Chatham County Public School System parted ways a little more than a year ago, the school board decided that the district would take the wheel.

In the spring of 2016, the district officially launched its in-house transportation program. This followed a decision from school bus contractor Reliant Transportation, a subsidiary of MV Transportation that was in the middle of a two-year contract with the district, to no longer serve as the district's transportation service, says Vanessa Miller-Kaigler, deputy superintendent for Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools.

"The board decided that they would transition the department internally," she explains.

The decision made sense, given that the district owns a fleet of about 451

buses and has three bus parking lots. Additionally, because of the timing, the district did not look into selecting another contractor because then it would have had to go through the formal solicitation process and negotiations, and have the contract approved very close to school opening.

However, that left the district with mere months to come up with an alternate form of school transportation for summer school, which was just around the corner, and the 2016-17 school year. The tasks facing the district included interviewing, screening, hiring and training drivers, monitors, mechanics and transportation directors; completing department of transportation inspections; and purchasing new equipment such as computers, workstations, furniture and uniforms.

"We literally started the department from ground zero," Miller-Kaigler notes. "The only thing that was in place was the school buses."

In the face of these challenges, staff members pulled together and combined their skills to help make the new program a success.

## Fleet facts

- In-house start: Spring 2016
- Headquarters: Savannah, Georgia
- Total buses: 451
- Bus types: Blue Bird, IC Bus, Thomas Built
- Service area: 426 square miles
- Routes serviced daily: 336
- Drivers: 334
- Other staff: 100
- Students transported daily: 26,858

## Teamwork

Multiple departments in the district teamed up for the transition, including operations, academic affairs, human resources, technology and the public safety department. Additionally, the board allocated the necessary resources – both human and capital – to make the move successful.

“We all worked together as a team,” Miller-Kaigler says. “As the superintendent said, we all work for transportation as part of the transition.”

To help streamline the process, team members from multiple district departments developed what they called a “management action plan” that listed every task to be completed by each department involved, in categories ranging from technology to human resources to academics.

Another team player of sorts was software solutions supplier Transfinder, which was instrumental in helping the district develop its routes. Staff members trained extensively with a representative from the supplier.

“We worked very closely with them that very first year,” Miller-Kaigler says.

Meanwhile, the technology department integrated software systems for the district and the new transportation department. The transportation department wanted to use Zonar not just for bus pre-trips and post-trips, but also as its timekeeping system, and to interface with Kronos, the district’s timekeeping system. The technology department also worked with the management team and with Transfinder to ensure that student data could transfer from PowerSchool, the district’s student record-keeping system, into Transfinder. Then, once bus routes were developed, the public safety department made sure they were all safe.

In another collaborative effort, the district used Transfinder software to adjust bell schedules (start times) for



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students on Tybee Island during Hurricane Matthew in October 2016.

The Transfinder system was different from what the school bus contractor had used for routing for many years, so getting the bus routers accustomed to new software also presented a challenge, according to Annette “Kecia” Ling, director of operations for Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools. Transfinder presented its third annual Ambassador of the Year award to Ling during its Annual Client Summit in May.

However, Transfinder did much of the routing work, which allowed the district to downsize from 376 routes to 336 routes, according to Ling.

“All of the departments in the district played a role in the transition, with specific roles, responsibilities and deadlines,” Miller-Kaigler says.

She advises other school districts who may be transitioning from contracted to in-house transportation to develop a comprehensive management action plan to streamline the process.

“Buy-in and ownership from the top down is critical to the success of the transition,” Miller-Kaigler says, including among board members and all applicable district departments: finance, human resources, public safety and facilities.

## Hurdles

Even with everyone doing their part, Ling pointed out when accepting the award from Transfinder that her team still worked 13-hour days for two months to be ready for summer school and the start of school in the fall. The first year of the new program also presented significant staffing challenges.

The staffing process included making sure all background checks and physicals were completed, that the department had the number of drivers and monitors to accommodate the number of routes needed and that enough uniforms were purchased. The department also needed to focus on completing department of transportation inspections, Miller-Kaigler says.

Meanwhile, a new interim transportation director, Rosalind Nathaniel, was hired in April 2017. For her, the biggest challenge as she stepped into the new program was gaining acceptance from the team and buy-in to the purpose of getting children to school and home safely.

“As long as we keep our purpose in front of us, and I keep reminding [staff members] of it, we will meet each challenge as an opportunity to continue to improve and succeed,” Nathaniel says.

The transportation department is still working to fully



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staff its ranks with mechanics, with 15 on board now, and is aiming for about 25, Miller-Kaigler says.

The department also wasn't initially able to staff every route with drivers, she points out. Some of the field supervisors and trainers, dispatchers and routers who were CDL-licensed stepped in to augment the driving staff.

However, this year on the first day of school, Aug. 3, the transportation department was only short three drivers.

"All but one of our routes were covered on the first day of school, and we had a field supervisor to cover that route," Miller-Kaigler says.

To keep driver-staffing levels up, the transportation department has established an intern program for drivers who are in training. Once they complete the program, they officially join the staff as drivers. Now, the department is close to having a "bench" or a group of backup drivers, Miller-Kaigler says. Additionally, drivers who had previously worked for the district through the contractor and left are choosing to return to the district.

"I think a lot of it was the unknown for some of the drivers, because they had worked for a third-party provider for a number of years and were transitioning over to the district," Miller-Kaigler says.

The department must have done something right, because they lost very few drivers at the end of the first year, she adds.

"It's up and running masterfully right now."

## Success

Miller-Kaigler's strong contracting, negotiating and finance experience also contributed to the success of the transition.

Miller-Kaigler had been with the district for 25 years before becoming deputy superintendent of the district. She joined Savannah-Chatham County as a senior buyer and, about five years ago, was moved to the facilities department. There, she managed operations, construction and facilities, and when the partnership between the district and contractor ended, the task of managing pupil transportation fell to her as the operations chief.

"I did not have any previous transportation experience," she says. "So, it was a challenge, but it was a challenge that I was willing to take on."

School board members who weighed in have seen changes for the better as a result of the transition to in-house student transportation.

Before returning student transportation to the district, the board of education and school board representatives often received complaints from parents about school bus

transportation, says Irene Hines, a school board member for the district.

"There were many challenges before us as we prepared for the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, but with competent leaders, a strong, supportive school board, superintendent and staff, we were successful in safely transporting over 20,000 students to and from school," Hines says.

Moving into the second year of transporting students, the school board has received very few complaints, if any, from parents.

"I am happy that we are now transporting our students and no longer need or desire to have third-party transport," Hines adds. "The transportation team worked tirelessly in getting the job done. To Mrs. Kaigler and staff, thanks for all that you do in transporting our students to and from school."

Board member Shawn Kachmar's concerns about bringing transportation service in-house were appeased because Miller-Kaigler's leadership team laid out a thoughtful, detailed, and comprehensive plan and executed it well, he says.

"We had some bumps the first year," Kachmar says, "but those bumps were quickly and efficiently addressed through the new customer-oriented approach, implemented by district staff. 🚌"

*Reprinted with permission of School Bus Fleet magazine.*



## Attention School Bus Drivers!

Please visit the national **Operation Lifesaver** website at [www.oli.org](http://www.oli.org) for information on highway-rail crossing safety, including a special Challenge Program for School Bus Drivers.

**In Georgia,**  
contact Jennie Glasgow, State Coordinator,  
for additional information and assistance at  
**770-393-2711** or email [gaol@mindspring.com](mailto:gaol@mindspring.com).

# How safe is safe?

By Mark Lindstrom



This past October, there were several high-profile lawsuits that affected every single pupil transportation department across the country bar none.

Steven Sweat, the principal founding attorney of Steven M. Sweat, APC, a Los Angeles personal injury lawyer, breaks down a California case where the plaintiff won a \$32 million judgment against the transportation provider. Please read the case and evaluate how your drivers and policies could be putting you at risk in the accompanying article.

How safe are your bus stops? It is indeed a loaded question, as we all know that buses have to travel the roads that are built within and sometimes outside our districts without any input on design, signage, speed limits, sight distances or landscape from us. We're obligated to set school bus stops within our means and oftentimes have to play catch-up on getting support to lower speed limits, install signs, install cross walks, seek funding for crossing guards, trim back vegetation, install lighting and get easements for setbacks, all while ensuring students have a safe bus stop where they can stand at least 12 feet away from traffic flow. Then it's looking at sight distances, whether sidewalks exist, traffic patterns at stop times, lighting and, in many situations, judge whether parents can park safely at the stop while waiting for the bus or to pick up their child.

That's all for one stop. We haven't considered the safe walk path to the stop, cul-de-sacs, bike lanes, turn lanes, acceleration lanes and driveways, all of which affect the safety of students as they walk

to and from the bus stop. Many times, when you do a great job of selecting a stop, we then have to think about the sex offender registry and how that may affect a student's safety. There are a myriad of challenges but, as school bus professionals, we have to be up to the task.

Having attended GAPT and several conferences across the country, I can state this emphatically – we as an industry do care and strive to make students as safe as possible with the cards we're dealt. It goes for rural bus routes in southeast Georgia to the urban sprawl of metro Atlanta. Across our state, we care but we're put in a very precarious position. The courts will hold us accountable for every single stop we make, designated or not. If our driver stops, we own it. If our driver doesn't stop and a student walks elsewhere, we own it. The picture couldn't be clearer – we're responsible.

How safe is safe? Are you evaluating all of your bus stops annually, at morning, mid-day, afternoon, in the dark? I cringed every time a principal received a multi-year grant for a wonderful idea for a program enhancing a child's American dream and education, but also required our district to drop students off at night, especially when they were elementary students. For many Georgia districts on the west side of the state, it's dark in the evenings, especially in the winter. There's a fine line between enhancing a child's education when balanced against a child's safety. If you've ever been asked the question by Jeff Cassell of the School Bus Safety Company, "What is definition of safety?", you know it's the reduction of

risk. Sometimes, to support education, we're actually increasing risk.

Let's look at one recent case. As reported in *School Transportation News*, a \$40 million lawsuit was filed over "dangerous" school bus stops in Battle Ground, Wash. A driver drove their car off the road, hitting a student so severely that his right leg had to be amputated at the knee. The school district's liability arose from the fact that students were not properly trained nor reminded to stay 12 feet away from the stop outside of the danger zone. The distance used in that district was the previous 10-foot danger zone criteria, but that's been since changed and reflective in the National School Bus Specifications and Procedures manual. Do you have a copy of the latest NSBSP?

The other issue with the bus stop was that it was deemed a "dangerous" bus stop and should have been known by the bus contractor and the district. However, no action was ever taken to correct it. It was dangerous due to traffic that often exceeded the speed limit, there were no lights or stops signs at the stop and the stop was located on a slope of a blind hill. This made the sight distance poor and, when combined with the previous factors, lead to a dangerous situation resulting in the student's severe injury. Yes, the driver of the car was at fault, but in court cases, judgments can be deemed proportionally and the driver, contractor and the district can all be found liable. In some cases, the parent and student can also be found at fault with an appropriate reduction in the judgment.

This case hasn't proceeded through

the jury process yet, but how would you side? Would you hold the district responsible? It falls under vicarious liability, which is defined by legal dictionary as a “legal doctrine that assigns liability for an injury to a person who did not cause the injury but who has a particular legal relationship to the person who did act negligently”. Did we know or should we have known of the risk to the students? Did we provide a safe stop and did we provide the required training to all bus riders?

There is a great reason the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) provides training to all bus drivers throughout the state – the same training that reinforces the basics to each and every driver annually and tasks districts with ensuring our children and young adults that ride our buses are also instructed on safe riding practices annually. It helps form the foundation of school bus safety throughout the state, and not all states provide this support. As Peggy Burns has stated

in her *Legal Routes* newsletter on pupil transportation law and compliance, “Be sure that drivers understand that mistakes they make in connection with bus stops can be the ‘kiss of death’ in student injury cases.” Ensure you follow up on GaDOE training with your policies, procedures and safeguards with your drivers. Help set them up for success.

How safe are your bus stops? It may be a good idea to take a look this spring or even summer to review your bus stops, especially any that have raised concerns from students, parents or bus drivers in the past. Start with the low-hanging fruit and review those stops that you’re not 100-percent confident are safe at all times.

Are you providing training to your students? The GaDOE has some great resources available to you on school bus safety. The National Center for Safe Routes to School published the guide, “Selecting School Bus Stop Locations: A Guide for School Transportation Profes-

sionals”, that can be found online. The information and evaluation checklists can be easily used and adapted by any district. Also, Garry Puetz at Forsyth County and Kim Ellis at Marietta City Schools have strong SOAR (Safe, Orderly and Respectful) student training programs. At the National Association Leadership Conference, *School Transportation News* awarded its Leadership Award to Rick Grisham of Cobb County, who mentioned that he adapted the SOAR program from a neighboring district for Cobb County. I believe he got help from both Forsyth and Marietta, and if Rick, who is one of the state’s innovators, can ask for help, so can everyone else. I know Garry, Kim or Rick would share what they have (videos, books and coloring books) and, if they can, also assist in training. You can even get the video and books customized for your district. It’s there for the asking. How will you make your students safer this year? 🚌



The TransPar Group of Companies would like to congratulate **John Franklin**, Executive Director of Transportation of Atlanta Public Schools, for being named School Bus Fleet’s 2017 Administrator of the Year.



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# A growing market for fuel and air components



Fuel and air components are big and getting bigger at JASPER®Engines and Transmissions.

In addition to remanufacturing domestic and import diesel engines including Caterpillar, Cummins, Detroit, Ford, General Motors, International, Isuzu and Mercedes, JASPER®, which is a 100-percent associated-owned company, offers diesel engine fuel and air system components that include fuel pumps, injectors and turbo chargers for a variety of applications.

“We have remanufactured fuel and air components for years, and we would typically supply them with a running complete format diesel engine,” Mike Pfau, a marketing coordinator for JASPER®, says. “Over the last few years, we have seen a growing market for both components, and so we have expanded those into their own product line.”

JASPER®offers the following diesel engine fuel system components, among others:

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- 444 and 466 HEUI injectors;
- Six-liter injectors;
- V-style pump for Caterpillar 3208;
- Pump/governor for Caterpillar 3116; and
- Turbochargers for various makes and models.

At JASPER®, fuel components are remanufactured in a climate-controlled, electronically filtered environment. And pumps and injectors are tested and precisely calibrated with computer-aided equipment for consistently high quality and performance.

The high-pressure oil pumps have custom-sized O-rings installed to prevent leaks from the rear-end sealing plate and 100 percent of the O-rings within the pump are replaced, along with all of the discharge fittings. The DS pump contains new transfer pump blades and a low-drag armature, as well as a new PMD. The six-liter injector comes with a new nozzle, new updated spool valve, new improved coil assembly end caps and a new wiring harness.

With regard to the company’s air components, all JASPER® turbochargers are precision-balanced, and all new bearings, rings and thrust collars are installed. Plus, all qualified parts are thoroughly inspected to ensure the proper tolerances.

In 2016, the JASPER® headquarters in Jasper, Ind. underwent an expansion that added another 12,000 square feet specifically for the diesel fuel and air components.

“The latest expansion has provided us not only with space to grow as we continue to expand this product line, but it has also helped us improve the flow of our remanufacturing processes as we continue to drive change for higher quality and greater efficiencies,” Pfau says.

*For more information, visit [jasperengines.com](http://jasperengines.com) or call 1 (800) 827-7455. 📞*

# Atlanta Commercial Tire: 'School bus fleets are very important to us'

Atlanta Commercial Tire has been a family-owned and operated business for nearly 47 years. It started in downtown Atlanta off of Northside Drive, eventually growing into nine service locations and three retread facilities. These locations include Forest Park, Doraville, Cartersville, Dalton, Marietta, Athens, Griffin, Macon, Atlanta and Albany. The branches carry a large selection of Bridgestone, Firestone, Continental, General, Michelin and Hankook products. They are also a Bandag retreader.

The company's mission statement emphasizes its commitment to each and every customer: "We strive to be the premier commercial tire service provider in the state of Georgia by offering premier products and the proper application while keeping in mind the best interests of each individual customer. Our ultimate goal is not being the lowest price dealer, but instead lowest cost dealer for any size fleet."

"I think our value-added services are what really help us make the most impact for our fleet customers," says Adam Brown, manager of the Marietta Commercial Tire branch. Some of these services include barcoding, fleet inspections, wheel refinishing and scrap tire analysis. By barcoding the tires, the fleets can track their tires through the entire retread process. Fleet inspections

and scrap tire analysis are a great way for fleets to track where they are currently and also to forecast for future costs.

"It's a relationship business. It's determining what's going to work best for your customer's bottom line and helping them cut costs of their operations. That could be anything from running a better tire to doing more fleet inspections. The goal is to be ready to help customers as their needs change," says Brown.

Safety is always important, especially when dealing with a school bus fleet. Ernie Brown of the Cherokee County School District has worked closely with Atlanta Commercial Tire to continue safety practices already in place by Cherokee County School District. A mounted tire program, wheel refinishing and lug nut indicators are a great way to improve safety in your shop and on the buses. Atlanta Commercial Tire also works closely with its customers on casing inspection before retreading. It is paramount to make sure casings are within date and overall condition specifications are met.

"School bus fleets are very important to us. We live in these communities and our kids ride on these buses. We want to make sure we are doing our best to help support our local school bus shops," says Brown. 🚌



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# The future of alternative fueled buses in Georgia



Diesel technology has advanced in regards to emissions reductions over the years. So much, in fact, that newer diesel buses do not produce nearly the number of harmful particulate matter that they used to. However, that is only because of the large amount of parts added that help the bus produce fewer harmful emissions. Some have even touted diesel as “the next alternative fuel”. While the final emissions product may be cleaner, getting there is very expensive. Over time, these maintenance costs will be seen by those who manage these fleets.

Alternative fuels sound like a viable option, but the first thing that comes to mind is the cost. Many buses powered by alternative fuels tend to have a higher sticker price than a traditionally fueled bus may have. However, it’s the cost over time that makes the difference. Your total cost of ownership, or TCO, is a factor that cannot be ignored, especially when talking about school buses with a lifespan of 10 to 15 years.

So, let’s talk about an alternative fuel that is gaining fast popularity: propane. For those in the student transportation industry, the use of propane technology to power school buses may not be unfamiliar. During the past decade, the industry has seen a noticeable increase in propane bus adoption in North

America. As a domestically sourced fuel, propane offers many advantages to other fuel types – with lower prices and affordable infrastructure, it shows its value right away.

Georgia has embraced the power of propane. Since 2012, 349 propane buses have been bought around the state. This has shown a noticeable decrease in particulate matter, a major contributor to air pollution and asthma symptoms in children and adults. In fact, these buses are responsible for taking roughly one ton of particulate matter and 105 tons of NOx out of the atmosphere per year. The fourth generation of propane buses produced by Blue Bird are currently the cleanest engine available in the bus industry, producing nearly zero particulate matter and with a NOx certification of 0.05. NOx is a big deal too, as it negatively effects the ozone layer, contributing to climate change.

And where do the savings come in? The obvious answer is the cost per gallon of propane auto-gas fuel. It can cost nearly 50 percent less than diesel, and even with the fuel economy that propane buses achieve being less than diesel, the cost savings are still noticeable. Additionally, there are over 20 parts that the propane bus doesn’t need to meet EPA emission standards that diesel buses require to run clean.

Over time, that’s over 20 parts that never need replacing or maintenance.

The fourth-generation propane buses produced by Blue Bird are also a great choice for school districts looking to apply for federal grants that are targeting the reduction of greenhouse gases. With the cleanest engine currently in the industry, these buses make great qualifiers for federal aid, allowing districts to make the switch to a greener, domestically produced fuel.

For districts that want to help reduce greenhouse gases as well as maintenance costs but have limited funding sources, gasoline is a great fuel to consider for school buses. Yes, you read that correctly. The new gasoline buses that are currently produced by bus manufacturer Blue Bird use the same powertrain as the propane buses they produce, and don’t require a magnitude of additional parts to keep them running clean. When comparing fuel types, they are a fantastic choice for those who want to make a positive impact on air quality without diving deep into their wallets.

Alternative fuels not only help the environment, but also the bottom line for school districts who wish to put more money back into the classroom.

*For more information on alternatively fueled buses, visit [www.blue-bird.com](http://www.blue-bird.com) today. 🚌*

# Safeguard your fuel budget with today's fuel control technology

By Bobby Hayes

All fleets that manage their own fuel supplies – including school bus fleets – are vulnerable to fuel losses. These losses, which result from theft, fuel system leaks, shrinkage, short deliveries, gray loads, meter drift and other causes, can erode a school bus fleet's bottom line.

OPW Fuel Management Systems has helped school districts – both large and small – take control of their bus fuel. With several generations of fuel control systems installed at hundreds of school districts and school transportation companies across the United States, OPW has developed a portfolio of fuel control equipment that helps school districts protect and track their fuel assets.

For instance, OPW's Petro Vend 200 Fuel Island Terminal, FSC3000™ Fuel Site Controller and Phoenix® software work together to provide authorization, accountability and visibility of fueling. By tracking every gallon of fuel that goes into every school bus, OPW systems help fleet administrators identify unauthorized fueling, prevent fuel theft and document fuel usage. In addition, fuel control solutions such as these enable transportation managers to optimize the timing and pricing of fuel deliveries through instant visibility into existing fuel inventory levels volumes. With these tools, school bus fleet administrators have instant insight into their fuel budget.

Unfortunately, many school fleets still reconcile their fuel inventory manually – that is to say they depend on operators to manually collect the data



OPW's Petro Vend 200 Fuel Island Terminal helps school fleets take control of their fuel assets. Image courtesy of OPW Fuel Management Systems.

needed to complete statistical inventory reconciliation (SIR). This is inefficient and often leads to incorrect data. A fuel control system that supports a software-driven reconciliation program eliminates these challenges by automating data collection. Compliance reporting and bookkeeping also become streamlined and accurate. To learn more about how an automated reconciliation program can improve a school fleet's bottom line, download the white paper at [www.opw-global.com/school-fleet-reconciliation](http://www.opw-global.com/school-fleet-reconciliation).

Potential operational improvements go well beyond what's inside the fuel storage tank though. Preventative

maintenance programs may also be enhanced. Fuel management software such as OPW's Phoenix® software can export data to many fleet management programs, enabling bus fleets to leverage vehicle mileage data in their maintenance programs.

Amid economic uncertainties, rigorous oversight of operating costs in school districts is more important than ever. Partnering with a fuel management equipment provider to leverage the many benefits of a fuel control system, not only helps a school bus fleet protect its fuel assets, it can result in efficiencies across many aspects of the fleet. 🚗

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## 2017 VENDORS

### **247 Security Inc.**

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Alpharetta, GA 30022  
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admin@247securityinc.com

### **247 Security Inc.**

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### **247 Security Inc.**

4400 North Point Parkway  
Alpharetta, GA 30022  
Contact: Ed Crook  
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ecrook@247securityinc.com

### **ACC Climate Control, a Valeo brand**

22150 Challenger Drive  
Elkhart, IN 46514  
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Regional Sales Manager  
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gary.lovin@valeo.com

### **Actsoft, Inc.**

10006 North Dale Mabry Highway  
Tampa, FL 33618  
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### **Alpha Communications, Inc.**

3463 Diversified Drive  
Loganville, GA 30052  
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Owner  
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### **American Traffic Solutions, Inc.**

1330 West Southern Avenue  
Tempe, AZ 85282  
Contact: Kelsey Phillips  
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### **AngelTrax**

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### **AngelTrax**

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### **App-Garden**

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### **AT&T**

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### **Atlanta Commercial Tire**

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Forest Park, GA 30265  
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### **BESI, Inc.**

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### **Blue Bird Corporation**

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### **Blue Bird Corporation**

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### **Bus Air Manufacturing**

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### **Bus Safety Solutions**

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### **BusPlanner**

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**Heavy Duty Bus Parts**

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**Jasper Engines/Jasper Innovative Solutions**

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## MultiLube

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## NAPA Atlanta

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## OPW Fuel Management Systems

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## Peach State Freightliner

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## Peach State Freightliner

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## PRO-VISION Video Systems

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## Q'Straint/Sure-Lok

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## Radio One

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## Redflex Traffic Systems

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## Reflective Image

74605 Main Road  
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## REI

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## REI

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## Reliable Hydraulics

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## Reliable Transmission Service

P.O. Box 377  
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## REV Group/Collins

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## Rosco Vision Systems

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## Rostra Precision Controls

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## Rush Bus Center, Atlanta

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**Safe Stop**

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**Secure Transportation**

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**Southern Tire Mart, LLC**

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**SouthernLINC Wireless**

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**TimeClock Plus**

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### Webb Wheel Products

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**Rush Truck Center – Gainesville**  
470-248-7050

**Rush Truck Center – Macon**  
478-845-5800

**Rush Truck Center – Smyrna**  
678-718-3000

**Rush Truck Center – Tifton**  
229-472-5200

**Rush Truck Center – Valdosta**  
229-474-6100

