

A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Key takeaways and learnings from the
National School Bus Safety Summit



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS

FACTS

Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety

FCCLA

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America

GHSA

Governors Highway Safety Association

NAPT

National Association for Pupil Transportation

NASDPTS

National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services

NSBA

National School Boards Association

NTSB

National Transportation Safety Board

SADD

Students Against Destructive Decisions

SHSO

State Highway Safety Office

THSP

Triennial Highway Safety Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



OVERVIEW

School buses are a cornerstone of the complex logistics of student transportation in the United States, with 20 million children riding 500,000 buses every school day. Children deserve to be safe at every stage of their journey to and from school. Unfortunately, students face a staggering amount of risk simply getting on and off the bus due to dangerous drivers illegally passing school buses.

Drivers in the United States illegally pass a school bus stop-arm 39 million times each year, [according to data](#) from the National Association of State Directors for Pupil Transportation. This means that on average, every school bus in the country is illegally passed once every three days. The consequences can often be fatal.

A total of 1,279 children have been killed in the “danger zone” around a school bus (defined as within 10 feet) in incidents caused by driver error over the past 55 years, [according to](#) the 2025 results of the National School Bus Loading/Unloading

Survey conducted by the Kansas State Department of Education. The majority (73%) of those fatalities were children age 9 or younger. In 2024 alone, six students were killed in separate events in Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Texas and Washington.

To put this in perspective, these 1,279 deaths are more than ten times the number of U.S. soldiers killed in combat during the first Gulf War, or the number of U.S. firefighters killed in the line of duty over the last decade.

Beyond fatalities, there are more than 13,000 injuries in school-bus related crashes each year. But the data doesn't fully capture the trauma caused by close calls and non-fatal strikes. These incidents are frequently underreported and undocumented unless captured by technology. Children who experience these traumatic events often carry the emotional burden for decades, associating the simple act of going to school with the fear of death. Fortunately, this status quo isn't etched in stone. Change is possible. Every student can be safe on or near the school bus.

The kind of systemic change we need requires a new mindset that fully leverages technology, public education and enforcement working together. The Safe System approach offers the ideal framework for this new paradigm in school bus safety. This approach to road safety planning and implementation, which is increasingly being implemented across the United States, calls for utilizing all proven strategies to create a redundant, multi-layered safety net that reduces the chances of a crash and, if one does occur, minimizes the chances of a fatality or serious injury.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the independent U.S. investigative agency responsible for civil transportation crash investigations, examined a 2018 crash that killed three children who were waiting to board a bus, caused by a driver illegally passing a school bus. The agency - which is respected around the world for its investigatory capabilities and safety-focused recommendations - was clear about the need for a comprehensive approach spanning public

education, technology and increased enforcement. Governments around the world look to the NTSB's recommendation in the wake of plane crashes. We must give the same urgency to the NTSB's expert advice on school bus safety.

Keeping kids safe on and near the bus is not a siloed advocacy group or niche safety issue. It is inexorably related to the broader discussion on road safety and dangerous driving. School bus safety stands at the intersection of many recurring safety challenges: pedestrian safety, speeding, distracted driving, impaired driving, driver education and judicial reform, among others. Bus safety should be a foundational piece of initiatives addressing those issues and other dangerous driving behaviors. Beyond that, the idea of keeping children safe - one of the most foundational elements of a civilized society - can help magnify the impact of messaging and resonate with more drivers.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY SUMMIT

BusPatrol, with support from the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) and Safe Kids Worldwide, convened the inaugural National School Bus Safety Summit in Washington, D.C., on December 8, 2025. Nearly 500 experts came together to create a strong and varied coalition that included leaders in federal and state government, roadway safety professionals, law enforcement, students, child safety organizations, research institutions and school administrators.



Five separate panel discussions, each featuring top national experts, focused on the landscape of school bus safety, the role of law enforcement and the courts, how communities can work more closely together, how to advance public-private partnerships, and the role of advocacy in improving policies. The audience was seated at tables of 10; after each session, there was dedicated time for participants to share their takeaways, trade ideas and plan how to implement the solutions discussed on stage.

The primary goals of the Summit go beyond merely discussing the problem; the objective was to identify root causes, brainstorm solutions and problem-solve creatively and collaboratively. This paper serves to provide an action plan and roadmap to guide policy changes, coalition-building and public education efforts. It outlines the key partners involved - State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs), educators and school districts, law enforcement, the private sector, advocates and others - and what steps each must take to make meaningful progress in school bus safety and ultimately end illegal passings altogether.

This Action Plan is a first-of-its-kind, 50-state blueprint for reducing stop-arm violations and protecting children on every street in America. To reach that goal, this paper proposes 69 specific, impactful and actionable recommendations that activate every relevant stakeholder, each with defined roles and responsibilities.



SCHOOL BUS SAFETY ROADMAP



WHAT STAKEHOLDERS CAN DO

This section distills what different stakeholders – either individually or at the organizational level – can do to help make the goal of eliminating school bus injuries and fatalities a reality. It outlines what these people and organizations should do, and who they can work with, to make tangible progress on safety. Read on after the recommendations for more information on the panel discussions that informed this roadmap.





SHSOs



PARTNERS



Include Bus Safety in Triennial Highway Safety Plans (THSP)

SHSOs should ensure programs and projects addressing school bus safety are included in the earliest stages of planning by integrating them into THSPs, enabling more impactful results.



Private Sector



Educators/
School Districts



Law Enforcement



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Prioritize Bus Safety Projects in Annual Funding

To the extent possible, states should support bus safety as a priority in their Annual Grant Application process and provide grants to school districts to support needed bus safety projects.



Private Sector



Educators/
School Districts



Conduct Public Education Campaigns

SHSOs, which have deep experience in public awareness campaigns, should conduct outreach initiatives that explain school bus safety laws and how drivers should interact with the buses in their state. School bus safety should also be integrated into existing safety awareness campaigns where applicable (speeding or distracted driving).



Private Sector



Educators/
School Districts



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Create Formal Liaisons with Pupil Transportation Agencies

Establishing dedicated liaison roles between SHSOs and pupil transportation agencies creates formal channels for coordination, resource sharing and collaborative problem-solving on student safety issues.



Educators/
School Districts



Develop Policy Blueprints and Strategies

Each SHSO can share local safety insights, best practices and policy innovations to guide future legislation in their state. SHSOs are the central nexus for state-level safety initiatives and should lead efforts to move from awareness to measurable action.



Advocates



Educators/
School Districts



Judiciary



Private Sector



Law Enforcement



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Dedicate Enforcement Revenue to Safety Programs

SHSOs should strongly urge that revenue generated from automated stop-arm enforcement is reinvested directly into traffic safety programs, as well as public awareness and education campaigns, to build public trust and promote the broadest safety benefits.



Law Enforcement



Private Sector



Judiciary



Commission Independent Evaluation of Safety Programs

SHSOs should fund independent evaluations of automated enforcement and other safety technology programs to provide objective evidence of effectiveness. This data supports program expansion and builds public trust.



Private Sector



Law Enforcement

PARTNERS

Use Data to Identify Enforcement Areas

Law enforcement agencies can harness the vast power of advanced data analytics to identify areas where illegal school bus passings happen more often - with the goal of increasing enforcement before a tragedy occurs.



Private Sector



SHSOs



Educators/
School Districts

Conduct Dedicated Enforcement and Leverage Existing Mobilizations

Agencies should implement enforcement campaigns dedicated to school bus safety, focusing on high-risk times like back-to-school season in the fall, January and May (the month the most citations are written). Pennsylvania has seen success with the one-day targeted Operation Safe Stop enforcement initiative. If dedicated patrols are not possible, agencies should integrate school bus safety into existing enforcement mobilizations like "Click it or Ticket".



SHSOs



Educators/
School Districts

Establish Communication with the Judiciary

Law enforcement agencies should sit down with judges and prosecutors to discuss statutory defenses and the quality of evidence produced by automated camera systems. Clear lines of communication ensure that the legal ecosystem is prepared to handle violations quickly and fairly.



Judiciary

Deploy Automated Technology

Since there can't be an officer following every bus, agencies should utilize technology to provide ubiquitous coverage and effectively eliminate the decision for motorists to violate the law. This allows sworn officers to focus on high-priority scenes while technology maintains constant roadway oversight.



Private Sector



SHSOs

Maintain Visibility in School Zones

Officers should conduct daily traffic safety operations and weekly compliance checkpoints near schools during arrival and dismissal times. Increased presence reminds motorists that safety is a shared responsibility and not an option.



Educators/
School Districts



SHSOs

Create Shared Data Platforms Across Jurisdictions

Regional or statewide data sharing systems can enable coordinated enforcement and identify regional violation patterns. This helps focus resources on high-risk areas and times.



Private Sector



SHSOs



Post-Crash
Care/First Responders

Use Violation Data to Inform Infrastructure Improvements

Work with transportation planners to use violation data as a guide for infrastructure changes. High-violation areas may need enhanced crosswalks, traffic signals or bus stop relocations to improve safety before tragedies occur.



SHSOs



Educators/
School Districts



Educators/School Districts

PARTNERS



Launch School Bus Stop-Arm Enforcement Programs

The NTSB recommendation is crystal clear - this action leads to safer buses and safer kids. This technology changes driver behavior and creates opportunities to address other risky elements of traffic safety. Educators and school districts must engage their elected officials at every level to advance this public safety priority. With enabling legislation, school boards should act to engage a trusted vendor to effectuate an end-to-end program in a full-fleet commitment.



SHSOs



Start Safety Education Early

Schools should implement curricula that teaches children what they should - and shouldn't - do to stay safe near or on the school bus in elementary school. This education should also teach children "passenger power" so they know they can and should speak up about unsafe behavior, empowering them as active safety advocates rather than passive passengers.



Advocates



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Participate in National School Bus Safety Week

Host an event for National School Bus Safety Week (October 19-23, 2026) to raise public awareness, engage the local community and bring together stakeholders. BusPatrol hosted events across the country in 2025 that helped breathe life into community partnerships that had a real impact on safety in local communities.



Advocates



SHSOs



Law Enforcement



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Launch Peer-to-Peer Youth Initiatives

Schools should encourage student-led initiatives that use peer-to-peer engagement to reach families and community members. Examples include the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America's (FCCLA) Families Acting for Community Traffic Safety (FACTS) program or PSA competitions hosted by Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD). Empowering youth voices helps establish safe community norms and amplifies safety messaging through new channels.



Advocates



SHSOs



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Create Local Advisory Boards

Superintendents and transportation directors should establish advisory boards or reach out to Parent Teacher Associations to involve the broader community in safety planning. These boards can help tailor safety features to a district's unique geographic and financial needs.



Law Enforcement



Private Sector



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Adopt Innovative Pedestrian-Based Models

Districts should consider implementing walking school buses or bike buses to provide adult supervision for students who do not qualify for traditional busing. These models, where adults oversee children walking or biking as a group to school, are evidence-based strategies that reduce pedestrian injuries while building a sense of community safety.



Advocates



SHSOs



Law Enforcement



Post-Crash Care/First Responders



Educators/School Districts

PARTNERS



Connect with Your SHSO

SHSO leaders and student transportation directors have historically worked in isolation, but that must change. Making the concerted effort to establish a close and collaborative relationship can lead to meaningful progress on programs and partnerships that keep students safe.



SHSOs



Standardize Training Programs for Crossing Guards

Crossing guards play a critical but often overlooked role in student safety. Districts should implement standardized training programs that prepare guards for their responsibilities and recognize them as essential safety professionals.



Law Enforcement



SHSOs



Create Student Safety Ambassador Programs

Empower students as active participants in building a safety culture by creating ambassador programs where students advocate for safe practices among their peers and families. Student voices can be particularly effective in reaching youth audiences; work with your local FCCLA or SADD chapter, who are well-connected to students, to expedite this.



Advocates



Host Transportation Safety Family Nights

Build community buy-in and educate families about transportation risks and solutions through dedicated family engagement events. These gatherings can demonstrate safety technology, discuss risks, and answer parent questions.



Advocates



SHSOs



Mandate Rear-Seat Cameras on All School Buses

Districts should install rear-seat cameras on all buses to improve both student behavior and driver safety. This technology provides accountability for behavior issues and documentation in the event of incidents.



Private Sector



SHSOs



Bus Drivers

PARTNERS



Conduct Defensive Driving Training

Drivers should utilize modern training tools, such as virtual reality and simulation, to prepare for driving against erratic motorist behavior. This specialized training helps drivers manage unpredictable environments more effectively.



Educators/
School
Districts



Private
Sector



Prioritize Wellness for Career Longevity

Drivers should always keep their physical and mental wellness in mind, as they often face high-stress situations including driver shortages and student behavioral issues. Focusing on wellness is critical for ensuring a long, safe career as a bus driver and helping avoid a national driver shortage.



Educators/
School
Districts



Private
Sector



Private Sector

PARTNERS



Use Data to Identify High-Risk Corridors

Companies should move beyond merely capturing violations to identifying patterns in data that reveal dangerous intersections and times of day. Predictive data allows communities to redesign roadways or relocate bus stops before tragedies occur. Sharing this data with the media and safety stakeholders can maximize its reach and impact.



Law Enforcement



SHSOs



Media



Support State-Level Legislative Advocacy

Technology providers must actively participate in lobbying efforts to help states legalize and implement automated enforcement systems. By providing data and expert testimony, the private sector can help encourage officials to make safety commitments.



Advocates



SHSOs



Build Transparent Feedback Loops

Providers should utilize accessible tools like QR codes and regular reports to communicate safety wins to the community. Transparent operations build the trust necessary for sustainable public-private partnerships.



Advocates



Educators/
School
Districts



Media



Develop Cost-Benefit Analysis Tools

Technology providers should create accessible tools that help districts and states justify investment in safety technology. Clear demonstrations of return on investment make it easier for decision-makers to secure funding and gain public support.



SHSOs



Educators/
School
Districts



Create Regional Technology Pilot Programs

Work with SHSOs and school districts to establish regional pilot programs that allow testing and refinement of safety technology before full implementation. Successful pilots provide proof of concept and help identify best practices.



SHSOs



Educators/
School
Districts



Law
Enforcement



Create a Network of Advocates Focused on School Bus Safety

The private sector should facilitate the creation of a robust network of advocates who are dedicated to improving school bus safety. Advocates should connect with these private-sector companies and advocacy networks to maximize impact. Harnessing and empowering passionate people to advocate on behalf of a safety issue can lead to real change, as is happening now with impaired driving.



Advocates



SHSOs



Media



Autonomous Vehicle (AV) Providers

PARTNERS



Rigorously, Independently Test All Technologies

As innovators at the intersection of technology and public safety, AV companies have an obligation to ensure their products model the behaviors we expect of all drivers. AV companies should commit to rigorous testing and feedback loops that ensure every vehicle on the roadway stops for every school bus, every child, every time.



SHSOs



Educators/
School
Districts



Bus Drivers



Law
Enforcement



Engage Local Communities

AV providers should conduct extensive outreach to all communities they serve to make people aware of the technologies they offer. This outreach should include direct communication to NASDPTS, NAPT, and other school district transportation leaders ahead of launching new services.



SHSOs



Educators/
School
Districts



Bus Drivers



Law
Enforcement



Advocates

PARTNERS



Humanize Data Through Storytelling

Victims, survivors and those affected by the pervasiveness of illegal school bus passings need to tell their personal stories. Putting a human face on the statistics that others share creates emotional buy-in from legislators and the public. Storytelling is the engine that transforms abstract numbers into urgent policy priorities.



SHSOs



Educators/
School
Districts



Law
Enforcement



Media



Negotiate Smart, but Don't Compromise Safety

When working with state lawmakers, advocates should start with high standards to leave room for negotiation. But never compromise on core safety requirements. Persistence is required to navigate the complex "sausage-making" of the legislative process and ensure success in your state.



SHSOs



Leverage Modern Social Media Platforms

Advocacy groups should meet lawmakers and the public where they are, including on platforms like TikTok and YouTube. Creating repetitive, impactful messaging that fits modern attention spans can help ensure key messages are internalized by the community.



Educators/
School
Districts



SHSOs



Develop Model State Legislation with Customizable Provisions

Create ready-to-use legislative templates that can be adapted to individual state contexts. Model legislation accelerates the policy process and ensures that proven safety standards are consistently included across different jurisdictions.



SHSOs



Law
Enforcement



Judiciary



Create Legislative Advocacy Training Programs

Equip advocates with the skills needed to navigate the legislative process effectively. Training should cover testimony preparation, relationship building with legislators, and strategies for overcoming political resistance to safety measures.



SHSOs



Establish Survivor Speaker Bureaus

Organize networks of victims, survivors and affected families who can share their experiences at legislative hearings, community events, and media appearances. Personal stories from those directly impacted are the most effective tools for driving policy change.



SHSOs



Educators/
School
Districts



Judiciary

PARTNERS



Take Near-Misses Seriously

Judges and prosecutors should refuse to allow a lesser plea on school bus violations, recognizing that even non-injury incidents represent dangerous antisocial behavior. Treating every violation with gravity reinforces that traffic safety is a serious legal responsibility.



Law Enforcement



Mandate Evidence-Based Behavior Curricula

Instead of relying solely on fines, which may not change behavior, the judiciary should have access to evidence-based curricula to rehabilitate offenders. Understanding the gravity of offenders' actions in conjunction with standard financial penalties is more effective at reducing recidivism.



Educators/
School Districts



SHSOs



Ensure Systemic Capacity and Due Process

The judiciary must ensure that the legal system is equipped with the clerical and judicial resources to process high-volume automated citations without compromising due process. Consistent prosecution is necessary for these programs to serve as effective deterrents.



Law Enforcement



Private Sector



Establish Specialized Traffic Courts for School Bus Violations

Courts should consider creating specialized dockets or processes for school bus violations to improve consistency in how these cases are handled. Specialized handling ensures these serious offenses receive appropriate attention and penalties.



Law Enforcement



Support Standardized Penalty Structures

Judiciary leadership should collaborate with SHSOs and advocates to establish more consistent penalty structures for school bus violations. Inconsistent penalties across jurisdictions undermine the deterrent effect of enforcement.



SHSOs



Advocates

EXPERT PANEL DISCUSSIONS



ABOARD THE BUS: THE LANDSCAPE OF SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

SUMMARY

The panel discussion focused on the state of school bus safety in the United States, outlining the extent of the problem and setting the stage for the solutions-oriented conversations that followed. Speakers agreed on the need to transform the pervasive, persistent and dangerous crisis of illegal school bus passing into a coordinated national movement.

There is a discrepancy between the statistical safety of pupils inside school buses and the external risks posed by motorists who drive dangerously. While school buses remain the safest form of student transportation, that safety is undermined by drivers who are distracted, impaired or speeding. Additional driver education is needed to understand the nuanced aspect of pupil loading and unloading, and the unique safety risks. Panelists emphasized that the problem extends far beyond just fatalities to include an “invisible endemic” of emotional trauma and non-fatal injuries that often go undocumented.

Jonathan Adkins and Molly McGee Hewitt agreed that SHSOs and student transportation directors - who have historically worked in isolation - must work closely and collaboratively to help change the tide on student transportation safety. The two leaders vowed to improve coordination, communication and information-sharing moving forward.

The discussion concluded with a call for a “culture of safety and kindness.” Because the average American’s attention span has shrunk to four seconds, the panel agreed that safety messaging must be repetitive, impactful and delivered through modern platforms like TikTok and YouTube to appeal to youth.



MODERATOR

Jonathan Adkins

CEO, Governors Highway Safety Association

Kristin Poland, Ph.D.

Acting Director, Highway Safety,
National Transportation Safety Board

Torine Creppy

President, Safe Kids Worldwide

Molly McGee Hewitt

CEO & Executive Director,
National Association for Pupil Transportation

Rick Birt

Vice President of Government Operations
& Safety, BusPatrol

ABOARD THE BUS: THE LANDSCAPE OF SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Jonathan Adkins

School bus incidents are 100% preventable if society addresses the “big three” roadway dangers of drunk, drug-impaired and distracted driving.

The current level of public and legislative support is a unique opportunity to prioritize student safety and recenter the public's focus on these persistent issues.

Breaking down silos between SHSOs and pupil transportation directors can help all involved better coordinate limited resources.

Dr. Kristin Poland

A multimodal Safe System approach to safety must prioritize crash prevention by ensuring drivers are not fatigued or impaired, and that vehicles are equipped with the latest safety technology.

Lessons can be learned from the aviation industry, where the public has zero tolerance for fatalities.

Motorists and parents must commit to a culture of safety, specifically by not calling or texting family members when they are known to be driving.

Torine Creppy

Creating a safety-first culture begins with adults modeling appropriate behavior for the next generation.

Simple behavior changes, like slowing down in school zones, can save lives.

Pedestrian safety must be a key part of the school bus safety conversation, as students are most vulnerable when they are crossing the street to reach their destination.

Molly McGee Hewitt

There is a significant gap in public knowledge regarding the advanced technology that has made school buses the safest form of travel.

Society needs a “culture of kindness” and a return to basic decency to protect the public servants who transport children every day.

Advocacy must move beyond broad statements and instead focus on taking repetitive, consistent action to educate the public about solutions.

Rick Birt

Technology can significantly amplify law enforcement capabilities, since 90% of drivers who receive a citation via automated enforcement do not repeat the offense.

Safety efforts must include redesigning roadways to accommodate the unique challenges of driving a school bus.

A Safe System approach can utilize data to proactively redesign dangerous intersections and bus stops rather than waiting for a tragedy to occur.

ABOARD THE BUS: THE LANDSCAPE OF SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

ACTION ITEMS



Break Down Silos with the Safe System Approach

Stakeholders must adopt a collaborative Safe System approach that addresses all contributing factors that can lead to a bus-related crash, injury or death. By tearing down the silos that historically separate these groups, communities can work together to address interdependent dangers such as persistent speeding, impaired driving and distracted driving.



Utilize Predictive Data

Communities should leverage data and video evidence captured by technology to identify high-risk intersections and near-misses before they result in fatalities. This information allows transportation directors and local law enforcement to proactively redesign dangerous roadway segments or relocate bus stops to safer areas to prevent future incidents.



Adopt a Zero-Tolerance Standard for Safety

The student transportation sector should mirror the aviation industry by treating any fatality or injury as unacceptable and worthy of a massive, multi-pronged investigative response. This includes a focus on crash prevention, safer vehicles, ensuring drivers avoid unsafe behaviors, and maintaining occupant protection inside the bus, among other strategies.



Implement Repetitive and Modernized Safety Messaging

Education initiatives must move beyond one-time “grand gestures” toward repetitive, consistent messaging that accounts for the average American’s four-second attention span. Advocacy groups should meet the public where they are by utilizing modern platforms like TikTok and YouTube to ensure the safety messages reach a wide audience.



Foster a Culture of Personal Accountability

Adults must lead a culture shift by modeling safe behaviors, such as obeying school zone speed limits. A critical component of this accountability is the commitment to never call or text someone who is known to be driving, thereby removing the source of distraction for vulnerable motorists.

WATCH THE
FULL PANEL HERE



ENFORCEMENT CHANGING BEHAVIOR: ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT & COURTS

SUMMARY

The second expert panel focused on how judicial and enforcement systems serve as critical backstops for student safety. Moderator Mike Hanson opened with a harrowing account of a nearly fatal encounter between a grain truck and a school bus, illustrating that violations are often bad decisions rather than simple mistakes. He highlighted the unacceptable scale of the crisis, noting that Minnesota sees hundreds of stop-arm violations in a single day.

How the judiciary treats illegal school bus passings was a major theme, with Judge Kate Huffman arguing that the legal system must take “near misses” more seriously. She criticized the practice of pleading down cases where no injury occurred, stating that these violations demonstrate dangerous antisocial behaviors that require consequences. Research suggests fines alone often fail to change behavior, suggesting the importance of evidence-based practices. Developing specific educational curricula for offenders can help them understand the impact of their actions.

The panel also focused on the concept of a safety “ecosystem,” where success depends on seamless communication between schools, law enforcement and the courts. Adam Yousi highlighted that Howard County’s (Maryland) program succeeded by involving the judiciary early in the process to ensure judges understood the evidence and statutory defenses specific to school bus cameras. Justin Meyers added that this ecosystem must be supported by state regulatory schemes that fund the increased administrative burden on courts, preventing judges from dismissing cases simply due to a lack of resources.

The panel praised new legislative efforts, such as the bipartisan Brake for Kids Act of 2025 (H.R. 2348), which seeks to establish a national outreach and education campaign modeled after the successful “Click It or Ticket” program run by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



MODERATOR

Mike Hanson

Director, Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety
Chair, Governors Highway Safety Association

The Honorable Kate Huffman

National Judicial Fellow,
American Bar Association

Adam Yousi

Supervisor, Howard County Department of
Police, Automated Enforcement

Erin Inman

Director, National Traffic Law Center,
National District Attorneys Association

Justin Meyers

President & Chief Innovation Officer, BusPatrol

ENFORCEMENT CHANGING BEHAVIOR: ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT & COURTS

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Mike Hanson

Motorist violations are not mere accidents but are dangerous “bad decisions,” as it is nearly impossible to miss a large yellow bus equipped with flashing lights and stop arms.

The scale of the problem is unacceptable, with some states recording nearly 1,000 violations in a single day.

The judicial system and law enforcement must serve as critical backstops to hold drivers accountable for the trauma they inflict on students and families.

Kate Huffman

The judiciary must take violations seriously, even if they are a “so-called near miss” that did not result in a physical injury.

There should be a shift away from standard fines toward evidence-based practices.

To facilitate actual rehabilitation, researchers should develop a specific curriculum for offenders that helps them understand the gravity of their antisocial behavior on the roadway.

Adam Yousi

Success depends on open lines of communication between automated enforcement programs, sworn officers and the judiciary to ensure evidence is used effectively.

One novel solution to combat the frequent excuse that drivers “didn’t know” the law is to place educational inserts in property tax and water bills.

This proactive approach can ensure that the community is fully aware of their legal responsibilities around school buses.

Erin Inman

Community members should engage with their local prosecutors to identify the specific resources or training required to prioritize these cases on crowded dockets.

For enforcement to be a meaningful deterrent, prosecutors must avoid allowing defendants to plead a case down and judges must treat every violation with appropriate gravity.

Justin Meyers

Safety should be an ecosystem where schools, law enforcement and courts coordinate to handle the administrative and legislative challenges of high-volume enforcement.

Widespread deployment of automated enforcement will create an environment where drivers learn to follow the law “every single time,” which essentially “eliminates the decision” for a driver to commit a violation by making accountability a certainty.

ENFORCEMENT CHANGING BEHAVIOR: ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT & COURTS

ACTION ITEMS

- Develop Evidence-Based Educational Curricula**

Judges and researchers should collaborate to create specific educational programs for traffic violators that go beyond fines to facilitate actual behavior change. This provides the judiciary with a meaningful way to supplement legislative mandates with education to most effectively reduce recidivism.
- Scale Automated Enforcement**

Communities should strive for widespread, rather than selective, deployment of stop-arm cameras to create a general culture of compliance. By making enforcement omnipresent, drivers know there will be consequences for ignoring school bus signals, significantly reducing violation rates over time.
- Bridge the Prosecutor Gap**

Safety advocates and law enforcement should meet with local prosecutors to provide the evidence and training needed to treat school bus violations as high-priority cases. Understanding a prosecutor's specific jurisdictional challenges allows for more effective collaboration and ensures cases are not pled down.
- Expand Legislative Advocacy**

Traffic safety advocates must actively lobby state legislatures to legalize automated enforcement in the half of the country where it is currently prohibited. Lawmakers are often more responsive to community safety advocates than to private companies, making non-commercial voices essential for passing safety-focused laws.

WATCH THE
FULL PANEL HERE



COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER: ON & OFF THE BUS

SUMMARY

A truly comprehensive Safe System approach requires not just enforcement and the courts, but also deep community engagement and impactful education.

Sutton Sherrard described education as the “engine” that drives behavior change rather than merely an accessory to safety protocols. FCCLA operates FACTS, which empowers students to lead peer-to-peer traffic safety initiatives that reach over half a million people annually. This youth-led advocacy highlights that safety is a shared community responsibility.

A holistic, systemwide approach is necessary for safe student mobility. Emily Davidson explained that safety is a shared responsibility that must involve diverse sectors, including emergency response, law enforcement and insurance providers. Marisa Jones further bridged the gap between safety disciplines by noting that school bus safety is inherently pedestrian safety, as every child becomes a pedestrian the moment they transition to or from any bus or vehicle.

The panelists fully agreed on the importance of maintaining public trust, particularly regarding automated enforcement technologies like stop-arm cameras. Russ Rader cautioned that automated enforcement programs often lose critical political and public support if they are perceived as tools for plugging budget holes rather than legitimate safety measures. To prevent this, the speakers agreed that revenue generated from automated enforcement should be reinvested directly into traffic safety programs rather than being funneled into general budgets.

Speakers also urged collective advocacy at the legislative level to ensure that safety mandates are supported by robust state regulatory schemes and sufficient funding to manage the administrative burdens of enforcement.



MODERATOR

Sutton Sherrard

National Student Vice President of Programs,
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America

Russ Rader

Chief Communications Officer, Insurance
Institute for Highway Safety

Emily Davidson

Director, Ohio Traffic Safety Office

Marisa Jones

Managing Director,
Safe Routes to School Partnership

Ryan Monell

Executive Vice President,
Government Operations, BusPatrol

COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER: ON & OFF THE BUS

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Sutton Sherrard

Education is not merely an accessory to safety but is the “engine that changes behavior” by empowering individuals to address real community issues.

Youth-led programs enable students to lead peer-to-peer initiatives; FACTS alone serves 500,000 individuals annually with traffic safety messaging.

Empowering youth voices is essential for establishing safer community norms both on and off the school bus.

Russ Rader

The success and longevity of automated enforcement programs depend on planning, transparency and engagement to maintain public and political support.

Programs often fail when they are perceived as tools for “plugging budget holes” rather than legitimate safety measures.

All revenue generated from citations should be poured back into traffic safety rather than the general fund.

Emily Davidson

Student safety requires a “holistic systemwide approach” that prioritizes investing in the people behind the wheel of the school bus just as much as technology.

Since 90% of school districts nationwide are facing driver shortages, there must be a focus on driver wellness, recruitment and retention.

Individual school districts should have the flexibility to implement programs and procedures that best suit their unique geographic and financial needs.

Marisa Jones

All school bus safety discussions should occur with the understanding that “school bus safety is pedestrian safety,” as every student is a pedestrian during the transition to and from the bus.

The Safe Routes to School model has reduced traffic injuries and fatalities by more than 40%.

Communities should adopt innovative transit models like walking school buses and bike buses to provide adult-supervised safety in areas without traditional busing.

Ryan Monell

A “bottom-up approach” to community engagement should focus on engaging those who can communicate safety goals in a way the community understands.

Using video evidence and violation data to create tailored education campaigns that target high-risk areas can change motorist behaviors.

Focusing on the fundamentals of traffic law, such as the meaning of yellow versus red bus lights, can help programs eliminate driver excuses and change behavior.

COMMUNITIES WORKING TOGETHER: ON & OFF THE BUS

ACTION ITEMS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>Prioritize a Holistic Safe System Approach</p> | <p>Communities should involve a wide variety of stakeholders, including law enforcement, emergency responders, insurance providers and bus driver trainers, to understand the entire ecosystem of transit safety. By treating student safety as a shared responsibility, stakeholders can move beyond silos to implement more effective, coordinated changes.</p> |
| <p>Reinvest Automated Enforcement Revenue in Safety</p> | <p>To maintain public trust and political support, all revenue generated from automated stop-arm or speed cameras should be dedicated strictly to traffic safety initiatives. This helps prevent the program from being viewed as a “revenue generator” and ensures that funds are used to further protect students and improve roadway conditions.</p> |
| <p>Adopt the Safe Routes to School Model</p> | <p>Communities should utilize the Safe Routes to School framework, which uses infrastructure and education to reduce pediatric injuries. This includes implementing techniques like safety audits, walking school buses and bike buses, amongst other strategies.</p> |
| <p>Prioritize Bus Driver Wellness and Advanced Training</p> | <p>Stakeholders must address the national school bus driver shortage by investing in recruitment, wellness and retention strategies that support the longevity of a driver’s career. This should include the use of innovative technologies like virtual reality and simulation to provide drivers with advanced defensive training against erratic motorist behavior.</p> |
| <p>Modernize Education with Data and Video</p> | <p>Programs should harness video and violation data to identify specific safety gaps and create tailored messaging that will resonate with residents. Education must focus on fundamental traffic laws, such as the proper response to school bus signals, to ensure that every member of the community understands their shared responsibility in preventing tragedies.</p> |

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PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: FUELING A MISSION, CHANGING A CULTURE

SUMMARY

This conversation focused on how to move from theory to measurable impact by leveraging technology, storytelling and cross-sector collaboration to eliminate the “blind spot” surrounding school bus safety.

Dr. Kelly Browning and Sharon Bryson shared devastating accounts of roadway tragedies, arguing that the “invisible weight” of preventable deaths and injuries should drive urgent action. Bryson pointed out that many states lack the budgets to build high-tech infrastructure independently, making private partnerships not just beneficial but essential.

The speakers agreed that a successful partnership is defined by shared objectives rather than a specific product, suggesting that stakeholders must lead with the goal of child safety rather than the technology itself. This ensures that innovation serves the specific local needs of a district rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution.

There was a strong consensus that the future of school bus safety lies in predictive data. By analyzing near-misses and identifying high-risk corridors through automated monitoring, communities can interrupt dangerous patterns before a crash occurs.

The session identified the need to break down layers of bureaucracy and create a “shared consciousness” between government agencies, private-sector companies, schools, law enforcement and judicial systems. The discussion concluded with a call for persistence and intentionality – leaders should start projects early, communicate wins frequently and empower youth voices.

By combining the agility of the private sector with the mission-driven focus of public safety offices, it is possible to make tangible progress in combatting the persistent problem of school bus safety.



MODERATOR

Kelly Browning, Ph.D.

Executive Director, Impact Teen Drivers

Sharon Bryson

Director, Delaware Highway Safety Office

Karoon Monfared

CEO, BusPatrol

Anthony Baldoni

Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Axon

Fred Humphries

Vice President of US Government Affairs,
Microsoft

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: FUELING A MISSION, CHANGING A CULTURE

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Karoon Monfared

Technology must serve as a “lantern” to illuminate the millions of anonymous risks taken around school buses each year, transforming the stop arm from a suggestion into an undeniable command.

Although technology provides the data, ultimately, success is only possible if it is deployed with a deep commitment to community trust, privacy and fairness.

By capturing patterns rather than just violations, we can identify high-risk corridors and unpredictable intersections.

Sharon Bryson

The aviation industry’s success in eliminating fatalities should be the model for school bus safety, including the use of predictive data to interrupt problems before they occur.

State budgets are often too limited to build necessary technology infrastructure independently, making public-private partnerships the only viable way to modernize safety.

SHSOs are “gems” that can bridge the gap between innovation and skeptical state legislators.

Fred Humphries

Trust in new technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), must be earned over time through consistent transparency, accountability and authenticity.

A model that allows technology companies to act as nimble problem-solvers that prioritize the specific needs of the customer over standard sales pitches is a “win-win.”

Government entities should speed up their operations by embracing AI to make meaningful, rewarding contributions to public safety.

Anthony Baldoni

Leaders must prioritize the objective of child safety over a certain technology itself, ensuring that adoption is driven by clear community goals.

Establishing robust “feedback loops” to communicate wins early and often can build momentum and public trust.

Advocates should seek out the most vocal critics in a room, as these individuals often become the strongest early adopters once their concerns about community impact are addressed.

Dr. Kelly Browning

Traffic safety education must move beyond “scare tactics” and data dumps to focus on real stories that empower students to be active decision-makers in the vehicle.

Waiting until age 15 to start driver’s education is “15 years too late” – instead, that effort should begin when children are first in forward-facing car seats.

When youth voices are amplified and given a role in the solution, they become lifelong champions for roadway safety.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS: FUELING A MISSION, CHANGING A CULTURE

ACTION ITEMS

- Embrace Predictive Data**

Stakeholders should utilize the video and sensor data from automated enforcement to analyze near-misses and high-risk traffic patterns before crashes happen. This proactive approach allows law enforcement and school districts to redesign dangerous routes or focus resources on specific hot spots where data shows a high likelihood of future harm.
- Foster Multi-Agency Safety Ecosystems**

Policymakers must create formal coordination between schools, law enforcement and the court system to ensure that safety initiatives are not stalled by bureaucratic silos. By building a shared infrastructure for communication and data sharing, communities can move at the speed necessary to implement and sustain innovation.
- Prioritize Results-Driven Technology Deployments**

When launching new safety programs, partnerships or technologies, school districts should focus on clear safety goals (such as reducing stop-arm violations) rather than the technical specifications of the equipment. This can help ensure the community remains engaged and understands how a particular technology directly serves the objective of protecting children.
- Reinvest Enforcement Revenue into Safety**

To maintain public trust and avoid the perception of a “cash grab,” funds generated from automated school bus stop-arm citations should be poured back into community safety initiatives. This ensures the program remains mission-driven and provides the necessary funding for states that otherwise lack the budget for advanced safety infrastructure.
- Launch Early-Childhood Safety Education**

School districts should integrate traffic safety curriculum starting at the elementary level, focusing on “passenger power” that teaches children to be active safety advocates. By reaching students well before they begin formal driver education (and many behaviors are already cemented), communities can foster a generational culture of safety that addresses distracted and negligent driving habits early.

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ADVOCACY IN ACTION: POLICIES THAT SAVE LIVES

SUMMARY

The day's final panel framed the complex process of advocacy as a persistent, "full-contact sport" rather than a simple awareness campaign. Moving the needle on safety requires a blend of effectively navigating the legislative process, utilizing data-driven storytelling and ensuring that the judicial system is prepared to handle the results of new laws.

There was a strong consensus on the troubling persistence of a "one-size-fits-all" approach to legislative victory. Steve Randazzo noted that what works in Michigan may not work in Florida, requiring custom strategic paths for every jurisdiction. While data provides the essential anchor for any policy, humanizing the issue by putting a face to the numbers is what truly secures public and political buy-in. Cathy Chase highlighted how sharing the stories of victims of distracted driving or unbuckled crashes creates a level of engagement that statistics alone cannot achieve.

The intersection of lawmaking and judicial interpretation is critical. The Honorable Michael J. Cassidy argued that for laws to be effective, they must be written with "quantitative terms" rather than qualitative ones, as specific metrics are easier for judges to interpret consistently than subjective concepts like what is "reasonable." The success of safety initiatives, particularly automated enforcement, depends on the capacity of the entire judicial system to process violations. For example, a small county's docket could be overwhelmed by tens of thousands of automated tickets, potentially undermining the deterrent effect if cases are not successfully prosecuted.

Panelists advocated for a "progress over perfection" approach, while cautioning against compromising on core safety objectives. Leah Walton noted that advocacy must remain an evolving process and that NTSB continuously revises its recommendations as new technology and crash data sources emerge. Speakers agreed that the focus should be on successful models like stop-arm camera legislation and programs, which the NTSB actively supports through testimony and briefings.



MODERATOR

Daniel Zimmerman

Senior Director of Government Relations and Policy, Governors Highway Safety Association

Cathy Chase

President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Leah Walton

Transportation Specialist, National Transportation Safety Board

Steve Randazzo

Chief Growth Officer, BusPatrol

The Honorable Michael J. Cassidy (Ret.)

Virginia Judicial Outreach Liaison

ADVOCACY IN ACTION: POLICIES THAT SAVE LIVES

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Daniel Zimmerman

Successful advocacy relies on being an effective storyteller who can boil down complex policy into its real-world impact on people.

A legislative win is only the beginning, as advocates must ensure that new laws are followed by consistent enforcement and that the judicial branch is well-informed and willing to hold violators accountable.

Partnerships with impartial entities like the NTSB can provide data and the necessary foundation for organizations to educate their memberships and push for systemic change.

Cathy Chase

Effective advocacy must be anchored in data but also humanize the story by putting a face on the problem.

Reports that rate states on safety laws can be a digestible tool for legislators to understand complex safety gaps.

Advocates should start with a “perfect bill” to leave room for negotiation but must identify non-negotiable safety standards that should never be compromised.

Leah Walton

The NTSB relies heavily on advocacy because it is an investigative body rather than a regulator, meaning its safety recommendations require public and legislative pressure to be implemented.

Stakeholders should broaden their view of student mobility to include broader roadway issues like speeding and impaired driving, which directly affect children’s safety.

The NTSB can support any state considering legislation that aligns with their recommendations, such as the 28 states currently advised to enact stop-arm camera laws.

Steve Randazzo

Polling and video evidence are powerful tools for neutralizing critics, as data consistently shows that over 90% of the public support stop-arm enforcement.

There is no substitute for a custom strategic path to legislative victory, and persistence is the most critical factor in convincing officials to commit to safety laws.

Learning from the specific linguistic mistakes of other states helps ensure new laws are functional and stand up to legal challenges.

Michael Cassidy

For the judiciary to effectively uphold safety laws, legislation should be drafted using quantitative metrics rather than qualitative terms to ensure consistent interpretation across the bench.

The entire legal ecosystem must be prepared for the high volume of automated enforcement cases to ensure due process and successful prosecution.

Even secondary enforcement laws can serve as a vital step toward more comprehensive safety requirements.

ADVOCACY IN ACTION: POLICIES THAT SAVE LIVES

ACTION ITEMS

- Push for Quantitative Metrics in Legislation**

To ensure consistent judicial enforcement, advocates and lawmakers should prioritize specific, measurable standards in safety bills rather than subjective language. This reduces the ambiguity that lawyers and judges often struggle with, making it easier to hold violators accountable for specific infractions like stop-arm violations or speed limits.
- Utilize Humanized Data**

Advocacy groups should pair high-level crash data with personal narratives from victims and families to create an emotional connection for legislators. This strategy can put a face on the problem, making it harder for officials to ignore the human cost of delaying safety improvements.
- Adopt a “Student Mobility” Legislative Agenda**

When launching new safety programs, partnerships or technologies, school districts should focus on clear safety goals (such as reducing stop-arm violations) rather than the technical specifications of the equipment. This can help ensure the community remains engaged and understands how a particular technology directly serves the objective of protecting children.
- Request Federal Investigative Support for State Briefings**

State legislators and SHSOs should actively invite independent federal agencies like the NTSB to testify or provide briefings on open safety recommendations. This provides an impartial, data-backed foundation for new laws, which can help overcome political resistance among local officials.

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CONCLUSION



School bus safety is not a niche transportation issue or a regional concern – it is a national moral obligation. The data are unambiguous, and the human toll is unacceptable. Illegal school bus passings are not isolated mistakes; they are a systemic failure of awareness, enforcement and accountability. One child killed or traumatized is one too many.

The National School Bus Safety Summit demonstrated that the tools to change this reality already exist. Technology can deter dangerous behavior and document violations. Strong laws and consistent enforcement can change driver behavior. Education and public awareness can reshape norms. Most importantly, collaboration across government, schools, law enforcement, advocates and the private sector can turn isolated efforts into a coordinated national strategy. We must assemble these disparate tools into a unified system that protects every child every time they get on or off the bus.

Ending illegal school bus passings is not an aspirational goal – it is an achievable one. By acting decisively, aligning our efforts and holding ourselves accountable, we can ensure that every child’s journey to and from school is defined by safety, not fear. The time to act is now.

This action plan calls on each stakeholder to move with urgency and purpose. State Highway Safety Offices must prioritize school bus safety as a core roadway safety issue. School districts and educators must elevate safety at loading and unloading zones. Law enforcement and the courts must ensure that stop-arm violations are taken seriously and penalized appropriately. Private-sector partners must continue to innovate and scale proven solutions. Advocates must keep children’s voices at the center of every policy decision.

Thanks for joining us on this critical mission. Let’s get to work.

TAKE ACTION



Learn more about how you can make a difference by helping your community implement the recommendations outlined in this report through the following organizations and resources:

BusPatrol - Community Advocates

<https://buspatrol.com/community-advocates/>

Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)

<https://www.ghsa.org/>

Safe Kids Worldwide

<https://www.safekids.org/>

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

<https://www.nts.gov/>

