Stakeholder Attitudes: 
Survey Results Overview

A Portion of the
ALABAMA SCHOOL BUS SEAT BELT PILOT PROJECT
conducted for the
Alabama State Department of Education and
the Governor’s Study Group on School Bus Seat Belts

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### Abstract

This portion of the Alabama School Bus Seat Belt Pilot Project seeks to determine the attitudes of parents, children, principals, transportation supervisors, and drivers/aides involved in the project two years after the initiation of seat belt use. The data were compared to the data for the pre-survey to determine attitude changes. Parents, drivers/aides, principals, and transportation supervisors expressed more positive views toward school bus seat belts after two years of using them. However, transportation supervisors continued to express more skepticism about installing seat belts than the other groups.

### Key Words

- School bus
- Lap/shoulder belt
- Discipline
- Survey
- Stakeholder attitudes
- Safety

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Section 1
Introduction

The objective of the school bus seat belt project is to assess the impact of the installation of lap/shoulder seat belts on a sample of Alabama school buses.

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) purchased 12 school buses equipped with various types of three-point seat belts. Each bus was equipped with four ceiling-mounted video cameras that were used to gather data on level of restraint use, effect on student behavior, extra time devoted to buckling up at each stop, and other activities that affect safety, time in transit, and cost effectiveness.

This portion of the project has been conducted to determine the attitudes of stakeholders involved in the project before and after the installation of seat belts. It shows the attitudes of parents, children, drivers, aides, principals, and transportation supervisors over the life of the pilot project.

There were two surveys:

- The pre-survey was administered in April 2008 before any students rode in buses equipped with the seat belts.
- The post-survey was administered in April 2010 after two years with the seat belts.

This abbreviated report includes some of the most important facts learned from the surveys.

In addition to this brief report, an analysis of all survey results may be found in the “Post-Project Survey of Stakeholder Attitudes,” University Transportation Center for Alabama (UTCA) report number 07407-8, which documents the complete survey results.

Unless otherwise indicated, all results in this report are from post-project surveys conducted in April 2010.
Section 2
Parent/Child Results

The post-survey received 306 parent responses in April 2010 compared to 401 for the pre-survey in April 2008. There were 121 parents who completed both the pre-survey and the post-survey.

2.1 Quick Facts

- Parents have an overall more positive view of school bus seat belts in the post-surveys.
- The number of parents participating in the survey who have a more positive or much more positive view of school bus seat belts outnumber the number of parents who have a more negative or much more negative view 10 to 1. See Figure 2-1.

![Figure 2-1. Parents’ change in view of school bus seat belts](image)
2.2 Safety with Respect to Traffic Accidents

- A large majority of parents and children believe school buses are safe with respect to traffic accidents before seat belts are added, with 91.3% of parents and 85.7% of children agreeing. See Figure 2-2 and Figure 2-3.
- A large majority of parents also believe school seat belts will make the ride to and from school safer for their children with respect to traffic accidents. Figure 3-4 shows 86.7% of parents agree or strongly agree in the post-survey, a small jump from 83.3% in the pre-survey.
2.3 Safety with Respect to Bullying

- Figure 2-5 shows a majority of parents (66.2%) believe the bus is acceptable with respect to student behavior and bullying before seat belts are added, and Figure 2-6 shows a majority of parents (67.5%) think seat belts will improve student behavior and bullying.
- However, a portion of parents are concerned the level of bullying on the buses will not decrease, with 21.5% who disagree or strongly disagree it will decrease bullying. That compares to 13.3% of parents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed two years ago.

2.4 Summary Question

- A post-project survey summary question asked parents whether school bus seat belts are a “good idea.” 84.8% of parents agreed or strongly agreed.

2.5 Comments

- Parents had the opportunity on the survey to write comments. Seven parents commented that the seat belts are too uncomfortable for the children and that some children may not wear them.
- Five parents said they believe the seat belts will help students stay in their seats.
Figure 2-5. Parents' view on bullying/fighting on the school bus

Figure 2-6. Parents' view on seat belt effects on bullying/fighting
The post-survey received 23 responses from principals in April 2010 compared to 40 for the pre-survey in April 2008. There were 12 who completed the pre-survey and the post-survey.

### 3.1 Quick Facts

- Figure 3-1 shows 12 of the 23 (47.8%) principals surveyed have a more positive or much more positive view of school bus seat belts than two years ago. Only 2 of the 23 (8.7%) have a more negative view.

![Figure 3-1. Principals’ change in view of school bus seat belts](image-url)
3.2 Overall Bus Safety

- An overwhelming majority of principals believe the bus ride to and from school before seat belts were installed was safe with respect to traffic accidents for the students, with 95.8% who agree or strongly agree.
- Figure 3-2 shows a majority of principals believe installing the seat belts will improve the safety of the children with respect to traffic accidents, with 75.0% who agree or strongly agree.
- Figure 3-3 shows a strong majority of principals believe seat belts will improve student behavior with respect to bullying and fighting, with 75.0% who agree or strongly agree and only 8.3% of principals who disagree.
Figures 3-4 and 3-5 show a strong majority of principals believe seat belts in school buses is generally a good idea (79.2%) and will improve the transportation of children (79.1%).

Figure 3-4. Principals’ general view on installing lap/shoulder belts

Figure 3-5. Principals’ view on whether seat belts will improve student transportation
Section 4  
Transportation Supervisor Results

The post-survey received 9 responses from transportation supervisors in April 2010 compared to 12 for the pre-survey in April 2008. Six completed both the pre-survey and the post-survey.

4.1 Quick Facts

- Figure 4-1 shows three of the nine (33.3%) transportation supervisors surveyed have a more positive view of school bus seat belts than two years ago. None have a much more positive view. Five (55.6%) supervisors had no opinion change, and one (11.1%) has a more negative view.

4.2 Bus Safety and Discipline

- Every transportation supervisor who responded to the post-project survey either agrees or strongly agrees that the children’s bus rides to and from school is already safe with respect to traffic accidents.
- Eight of the nine respondents believe that student behavior on the bus is acceptable with respect to bullying/fighting.
Figures 4-2 and 4-3 show a majority of transportation supervisors agree that seat belts will improve child safety with respect to traffic accidents and that seat belts will improve student behavior. However, three (33.3%) are neutral on the subject and one (11.1%) strongly disagrees (see Figure 4-2).

Three supervisors gave written comments that the school buses are already safe enough and that it would be too difficult to force kids to wear the belts.

**Figure 4-2. Transportation supervisors' view on potential traffic-accident safety improvement**

**Figure 4-3. Transportation supervisors' view on seat belt effects on bullying/fighting**
4.3 Resources and Maintenance

- Figure 4-4 shows seven of the nine (77.8%) responding transportation supervisors believe the installation of school bus seat belts will cause a serious loss of capacity for the existing fleet of buses and increase the time it takes for the buses to run their routes.
- Figure 4-5 shows every transportation supervisor surveyed either agrees or strongly agrees school bus seat belts will increase expenses and require substantially more resources.
- Figure 4-6 shows five of the nine (55.6%) believe the time required for constant training of students could be a problem.
- Figure 4-7 shows seven of the nine (77.8%) transportation supervisors believe seat belts will require frequent inspection, repair, and replacement by the bus mechanics.

![Figure 4-6. Transportation supervisors’ view on child training](image)

![Figure 4-7. Transportation supervisors’ view on inspection, repair, and replacement](image)
Section 5
Driver/Aide Results

The post-survey received 16 driver/aide responses in April 2010 compared to 11 for the pre-survey in April 2008. Seven completed both the pre-survey and the post-survey.

5.1 Quick Facts

- 93.8% of drivers/aides believe higher seatbacks make it more difficult to monitor student behavior and to tell whether they are buckled.
- Figure 5-1 shows that, overall, drivers/aides have a more positive view of school bus seat belts than they did two years ago. Only 2 of the 16 (12.5%) drivers/aides surveyed have a more negative view and none have a much more negative view. Seven (43.8%) had no change in opinion, while three (18.8%) have a more positive view and four (25.0%) have a much more positive view.

![Figure 5-1. Drivers’/aides’ change in view of school bus seat belts](image_url)
5.2 Bus Safety and Discipline

- Figure 5-2 shows 87.5% of drivers/aides believe the installation of seat belts will improve student safety with respect to traffic accidents.
- Figure 5-3 shows 68.8% of drivers/aides believe that the installation of seat belts will improve student safety with respect to bullying and fighting.

![Figure 5-2. Drivers’/aides’ view on potential traffic-accident safety improvement](image1)

![Figure 5-3. Drivers’/aides’ view on current traffic accident safety](image2)
- Figure 5-4 shows 93.8% of drivers/aides believe higher seatbacks make it more difficult to monitor student behavior and to tell whether they are buckled.
- A majority of drivers/aides believe seat belts are generally a good idea. Figure 5-5 shows 62.5% of respondents either agree or strongly agree school bus seat belts are a good idea, while only 18.8% disagree or strongly disagree.
5.3 Estimation of Seat Belt Use

- In both the pre-survey and the post-survey, the drivers/aides were asked to estimate the percent of students that would wear the seat belts if seat belts were installed. Figure 5-6 shows estimates declined for elementary- and high-school students but increased for middle-school students.

![Bar chart showing estimated seat belt use by school type and project phase.](chart)

**Figure 5-6. Drivers’ aides’ estimated percentage of riders who will wear belts**
Appendix A
Acknowledgments

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Appendix B
Publications Produced during the
Alabama School Bus Seat Belt Pilot Project


