

School Transportation

Coalition

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June 1, 2008

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RE: Governor's May Revision (May 29) Cut of 65% To Regular and Special Education Transportation 65% cut or \$403 million

Testimony to the Conference Committee on the Budget


To Assemblymember Evans,
Chair of the Conference Committee

The school transportation community was socked to learn on Friday that the Governor is proposing to cut school transportation by 65% or \$403 million. School transportation is already one of the most underfunded state programs in the state. The state's share of approved home-to-school transportation is less than 45%.

A cut of 65% is hard to imagine. The result will be massive layoffs, shutting down programs, with more cuts to the regular classroom program. It will be especially hard on both rural and urban school districts that have 1) a larger number of needy students or 2) longer distances for children to get to and from school. The attached computer run shows the impact on the school districts in California.

We are the last in the nation in the percentage of children that ride school buses. We have opportunities in California to reduce pollution and congestion by upgrading our school bus fleet. School buses are the safest way to transport out children to and from school. This unfair cut will simply destroy the program.

In these hard difficult times, the Legislature has tried to be as fair as possible in the reductions with as much flexibility as possible. This proposal would target a group of school districts for inordinate reductions. We would urge you to:

 **Reject the propose transfer of \$315 million of school transportation funds to pay for additional debt service for transit bonds.**

Finally, it now appears that perhaps the goal of funding school transportation with PTA funds was done solely to reduce the Proposition 98 guarantee by \$618 million. One has to wonder about the appropriateness and legality of that action.

The following table shows the school districts with the largest dollar impact. The attached computer run shows the impact to all the school districts. There will be many school districts, especially rural school districts that will have huge negative percentage decreases to their budgets because of this proposal. It is simply not fair and will be a disaster for many school districts.

Table 1 - Districts with the Largest Impact Governor's Proposed Cut to Regular and Special Education Transportation The Total Proposed Cut for 2009-10 is 65% or \$409 million	
School District	Proposed 2009-10 Cut
Los Angeles Unified	\$62,811,511
San Diego Unified	\$7,670,701
Long Beach Unified	\$5,902,521
Oakland Unified	\$4,593,825
San Juan Unified	\$4,337,327
San Francisco Co. Off. of Ed.	\$3,631,421
Stockton City Unified	\$3,584,924
Fresno Unified	\$3,531,899
Lodi Unified	\$3,388,171
Sacramento City Unified	\$3,372,904
San Mateo Co. Off. of Ed.	\$3,116,959
Pasadena Unified	\$2,994,999
San Bernardino City Unified	\$2,932,049
Antelope Valley Schools	\$2,743,458
Garden Grove Unified	\$2,672,721
Elk Grove Unified	\$2,534,199
Coachella Valley Joint Unified	\$2,426,424
Ventura Co. Off. of Ed.	\$2,331,835
Compton Unified	\$2,325,839
West County Transp JPA	\$2,245,734
Madera Unified	\$2,239,107
Los Angeles Co. Off. of Ed.	\$2,235,100
San Francisco Unified	\$2,219,087
Pajaro Valley	\$2,144,958
Oceanside Unified	\$2,113,715
San Jose Unified	\$2,048,154

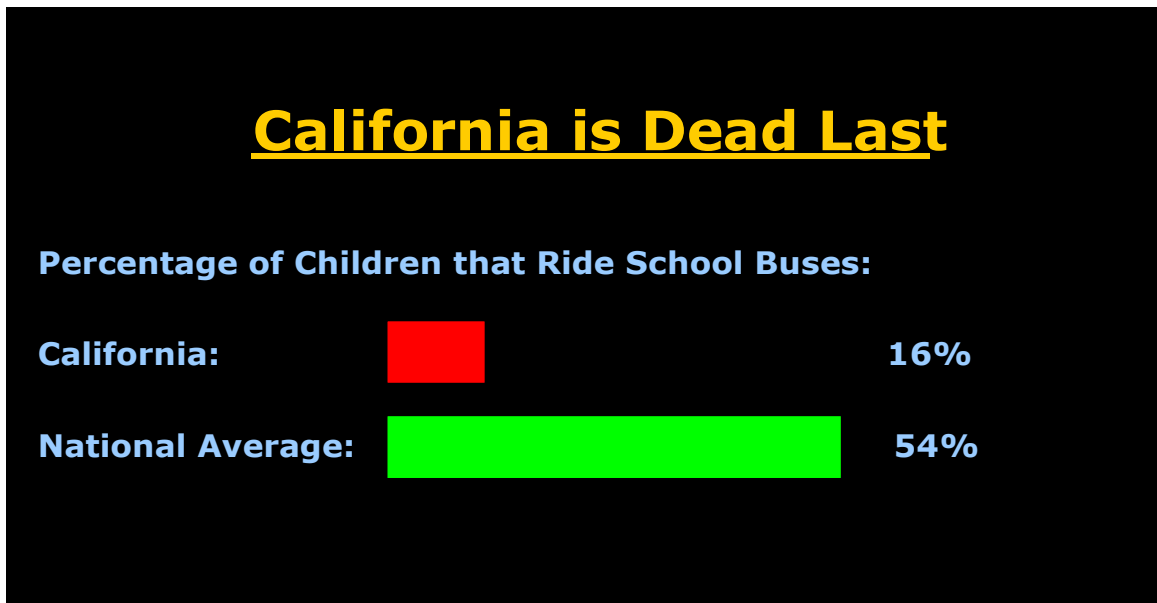
Aside from the attached computer run, we have also attached a few transportation facts

Attachment A

“State Auditor Report” and Other Studies

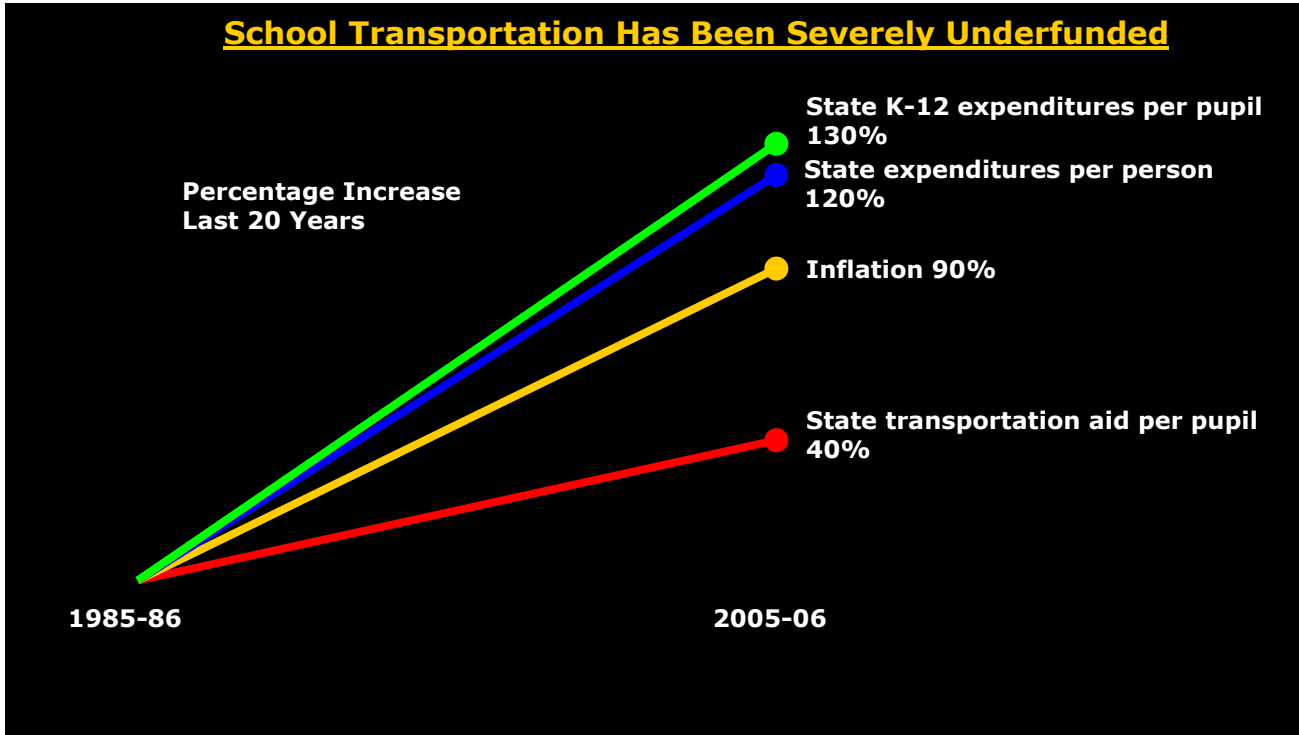
School Transportation Facts

- 🚌 California is dead last in the percentage of children that ride school buses – 16%. The national average is 54%. In 1985, 23% of our children rode school buses. In 20 years, we have had 40% decline in the percentage of children that ride school buses.















- 🚌 Our National Ranking is a Disgrace. Every other state has a greater percentage of children that ride school buses. School buses are the safest form of transportation for all children – safer than walking, cars or transit buses. All new school buses will have seat belts.
- 🚌 Using school buses means less congestion, improved air quality, and less dependency on foreign oil. This is especially true with alternative fueled buses.

- 🚌 School transportation has been severely underfunded. In the last 20 years, transportation aid has grown by 40%, inflation by 90%, and K-12 expenditures per pupil by 130%.



- 🚌 **The state pays less than 50% of the cost of transportation.**
- 🚌 The state pays 0% for any increase in transportation service or cost due to 1) increase in the cost of fuel, 2) school bus replacement, 3) increase in the number of students served, or 4) providing transportation services for those students who are at risk of failing or not passing the exit exam and who are taking supplemental instructional services after school or in the summer months.
- 🚌 **The current formula is extremely inequitable.**
- 🚌 Disproportionately high percentages of students in rural and urban California live in low-wealth communities.

-  Inadequate funding and poverty is a major problem for districts that want to offer quality remediation and summer school programs for students in need.
-  Unfortunately, a large number of eligible needy students cannot attend after school programs because of lack of transportation.
-  School transportation is both a rural and urban school district problem. Attachment C contains a list of just a few school districts that are underfunded and are having to take funds from their classrooms in order to fund school transportation.
-  Rural counties must bus more students for longer distances. The following are a few examples: Kern County (32% of their students) Nevada (49%), Inyo (54%), Trinity (57%), Mariposa (74%), and Amador (77%).
-  It is an unequal burden especially for rural counties. In Kern County, schools in 2005 spent \$34 million for transportation but only received \$14 million from the state. The deficit was \$124 per student. The state only funds 41% of the cost of transportation. The deficit in Kern was \$154 per child. These districts must transport 50% of their children.
-  Because of the new seat belt requirement, districts will have to buy 3 new buses in order to replace 2 old buses.
-  Fuel and labor cost will increase by 33%.
-  Total cost may increase by as much as 50%!
-  As far back as 1988, the LAO recommended that the formula needed revision because:
 -  It resulted in an inequitable distribution of state aid.
 -  It does not relate reimbursement to actual cost.
 -  It does not provide an incentive for schools to be efficient and use economies of scale.

- There is no mechanism for new LEAs or LEAs that want to start up a transportation program to receive reimbursements.



 The State Auditor conducted a major evaluation of the school transportation system. The following are their key findings:





1. Funding Inequities – The current system prevents some school districts from receiving funds.
2. Funding Inequities – The increases are not consistent with population growth
3. Urban school districts receive lower state aid per student for regular home-to-school transportation than rural school districts (\$559 versus \$609). Urban districts incur higher overall cost (\$1,387 versus \$907)
4. Rural school districts incur higher cost to transport a special education child (\$5,315 versus \$4,728)
5. The funding formula should be modified to be more equitable.

 The State Auditor made the following two recommendations for the California Department of Education:

- ★ Allow funding for all school districts that provide transportation services!
- ★ Ensure that the funding is flexible to account for changes that affect transportation programs such as increases in enrollment!

 The State PTA supports increased transportation funding (April 2005):

-  One of the purposes of the PTA is to “secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth”.
-  A new pupil transportation funding formula needs to be developed and implemented that will provide equitable transportation funding throughout California.

-  The California State PTA has been advocating for seat belts in school buses since the 1980s, yet most school districts are not prepared to handle this added fee for safety without state funding.
-  The Coalition for Clean Air, the Union for Concerned Scientists, and the American Lung Association all agree that:
 -  California needs a major increase in funding to upgrade its aging bus fleet in order to protect the health and safety of its school children
 -  California schools should not have to choose between books and buses.