



November 1, 2010

The Honorable David A. Paterson
Governor, State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Paterson:

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 378 of the Laws of 2010 (see Attachment 1), I am reporting on the status of pilot programs to assist school districts in the formation of regional pupil transportation systems.

Chapter 378 requires the Commissioner, beginning with the 2010-11 school year, to invite school districts, BOCES, and other entities to participate in local regional pilot programs which will estimate and analyze the extent to which savings can be achieved through the formation of regional pupil transportation systems. The State Education Department will accept applications beginning October 23, 2010 and continuing through March 31, 2012 for projects that must be completed by August 31, 2012. Each November 1st through 2012, we will submit progress reports to the Regents, Governor, Legislature and various legislative committees.

The State Education Department hopes to approve numerous pilot programs which will access the feasibility and cost savings of regional or shared pupil transportation models for a wide array of pupil transportation services including but not limited to:

- Transportation to and from school and a special education program or service;
- Transportation to a program at a board of cooperative educational services;
- Shared transportation programs with another school district to public schools;
- Shared transportation to non-public schools and charter schools;
- Transportation for field trips or to and from extracurricular activities; and
- Cooperative school bus maintenance or management.

Approved Pilot Projects will engage in regular contact with the Department and receive technical assistance on statutory and regulatory provisions, in addition to expertise in best practices for the provision of safe pupil transportation services and financial management of school operations. Projects may identify barriers to the provision of regional services which may require Department review and assistance to identify needed statutory or regulatory change. The Department will report on any barriers and potential solutions in its annual reports and consider worthy proposals that result from this review for incorporation in its legislative programs or Regents State Aid Proposal.

Projects may employ the services of transportation and other consultants to assist with the collection of data necessary to develop a transportation model, including computerized routing data and reports, which will demonstrate a cost savings and result in a reduced cost per student transported. The cost of such studies will be eligible for State Transportation Aid. Pilot programs will provide complete copies of all consultant studies and materials to the Department. The Department will post annual reports on its website as a way to share best practices and innovations. The data and reports collected will form a valuable repository of information for use by school districts across the State.

Please contact Charles Szuberla, Executive Director of the Office of School Operations and Management Services (518.474.6541) for any questions regarding this report or the Pilot Program.

Sincerely,

David M. Steiner
Commissioner

Attachment: Chapter 378 – Laws of 2010
School Transportation Facts

cc: Board of Regents
John B. King
Charles Szuberla

Chapter 378 – Laws of 2010

50 S 10. The commissioner of education shall conduct one or more pilot
51 programs to assist school districts in the formation of regional trans-
52 portation systems. Such systems may include, but shall not be limited
53 to, rendering transportation services jointly with other school
54 districts or boards of cooperative educational services; or authorizing
55 school districts and boards of cooperatives educational services to
56 enter into contracts with counties, municipalities, or the state office

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1 of children and family services for the provision of transportation
2 services. Such transportation services may include, but shall not be
3 limited to, pupil transportation between home and school; transportation
4 during the day to and from school and a special education program or
5 service or a program at a board of cooperative educational services or
6 an approved shared program at another school district; transportation
7 for field trips or to and from extracurricular activities; and cooper-
8 ative school bus maintenance. Participation in pilot projects conducted
9 pursuant to this section shall be at the option of school districts,
10 boards of cooperative educational services and pupil transportation
11 contractors.

12 The commissioner of education shall report annually to the board of
13 regents, the governor, the speaker of the assembly, the temporary presi-
14 dent of the senate, the director of the budget and the chairs of the
15 respective fiscal and education committees of the Senate and Assembly by
16 November 1 of each year on districts that are participating in the pilot
17 program or have applied to participate in the pilot program. On or
18 before November 1, 2012 the commissioner of education shall submit a
19 report to the board of regents, the governor, the speaker of the assem-
20 bly, the temporary president of the senate, the director of the budget
21 and the chairs of the respective fiscal and education committees of the
22 Senate and Assembly describing the findings of the pilot projects,
23 including details on the scope of the pilot projects that were
24 conducted. In developing the report, such commissioner shall as far as
25 practicable estimate and analyze the efficiencies and cost-effectiveness
26 that may be derived from regional transportation systems to school
27 districts, to other entities participating in such systems, including
28 boards of cooperative educational services, counties, municipalities, or
29 the state office of children and family services, and to the state.
30 In addition, the commissioner of education shall as far as practicable
31 estimate and analyze the extent to which school districts, other partic-
32 ipating entities and the state achieve savings through the formation of
33 regional transportation systems. Such analysis shall include the impact

34 of the formation of such systems on local transportation costs for
35 school districts and other participating entities, and the impact of the
36 formation of such systems on state aid for transportation services. The
37 commissioner of education shall identify barriers to implementation of
38 regional transportation systems throughout the state, strategies to
39 address such barriers, statutory and regulatory changes needed to
40 promote the implementation of such regional transportation systems,
41 mechanisms to ensure proper accountability and oversight of the adminis-
42 tration of regional transportation systems, and any other information or
43 analyses as such commissioner determines is appropriate.

44 S 11. This act shall take effect immediately; provided, however, that
45 the commissioner of education shall promulgate any rules or regulations
46 necessary to implement the provisions of this act on or before July 1,
47 2010; provided, further that if section ten of this act shall take
48 effect after July 1, 2010 it shall be deemed to have been in full force
49 and effect on and after July 1, 2010; and provided further that section
50 ten of this act shall expire and be deemed repealed on June 30, 2015.

School Transportation Facts

- In New York State, 2.5 million children ride school buses and public transport to and from school each day
- The State uses approximately 55,000 school bus drivers and 10,000 school bus monitors and attendants to transport students safely.
- 50,000 school buses drive 90 million miles annually to transport New York's children.
- Ownership of our school bus fleet is split between local school districts (50 percent) and private companies under contract with school districts (50 percent).
- State Transportation Aid for the 2008-2009 School Year was approximately \$1.5 billion, while the Total Cost for School Transportation was \$2.8 billion.
- Transportation costs grow about five percent (\$83 million currently) each year.
- Public school students are 88 percent of the total number of students transported and non-public school students are 12 percent of the total.
- New York City students are 65 percent of the total transported statewide, while rest of State students are 35 percent.
- New York State transports 41 percent of students attending non-public schools; most states do not provide this service to non-public students.
- Of the total number of students attending non-public schools, 63 percent live Upstate and 37 percent live in New York City.