



Ankin Law Office LLC

Protecting the Rights of Injured Workers

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Should seat belts on school buses be required?

August 30th, 2011 by Admin - BN



The United States National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) doesn't think so. In fact, the NHTSA recently denied a petition from safety groups, consumer advocates and doctors that sought to make the use of seat belts on school buses a requirement nationwide. The reason? The projected cost of adding lap belts to buses, which was predicted to be \$5,485 to \$7,346 per bus, would outweigh expected "benefits".

As explained in this LA Times [article](#), the NHSTA is basically saying, in a very clinical and detached manner, that a few dead children aren't worth the added costs:

School buses are one of the safest forms of transportation in the U.S., NHTSA said, with an overall fatality rate almost six times lower than for passenger cars. Fewer than 1% of school transportation-related fatalities occur in school buses, versus 12% walking and 79% in cars, the agency said.

Whether to install belts as an added safety measure should be left to state and local governments, NHTSA said. The cost for each fatality prevented would be \$23 million to \$36 million, the agency said. Some school districts may be able to afford the more expensive buses, while others would be forced to pare service, it said.

Fortunately, a number of individual school districts place more value on the the lives of children than the NHSTA. For example, a handful of school districts in Massachusetts have now installed lap belts on school buses and at least one offers courses which teach children how to use the seat belts, as described in this Boston.com article:

The School Committee voted unanimously in March to support the seat belt initiative, which a local group, Waltham4Seatbelts, had been promoting for about two years.

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The new safety system will add about \$105,000 to the cost of leasing the buses this school year, officials said...

Waltham appears to be the first public school district in the state to adopt the safety measure for all its buses, although several districts, including Newton, already use lap belts.

These school districts are on the right track and are taking proactive steps to prevent unnecessary school bus fatalities. Childrens' lives are more than a statistic and installing lap belts in an effort to prevent injuries from [school bus accidents](#) is an admirable step.

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