September 8, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: City and County Superintendents of Education
    City and County Transportation Supervisors

FROM: Joseph B. Morton
    State Superintendent of Education

SUBJECT: Illegal School Bus Passing Law Information Packet

Enclosed is an informational flyer, an illegal passing report form, and a CD, that provide information about Alabama’s new School Bus Illegal Passing Law (Act 2006-311). This law was passed by the Alabama Legislature in the 2006 session and signed into law by Governor Bob Riley on April 5, 2006. This amended law makes several significant changes with regard to motorists stopping for school buses that are loading or unloading students. The biggest change contained in the Act is that traffic traveling in the opposite direction of a school bus on a divided four-lane highway will no longer be required to stop while buses load or unload. The law also contains several other significant requirements, penalties, and changes to the old law, which should be reviewed.

To help ensure the safety of students, school bus drivers, and motorists, it is important that information about the new law be communicated as widely as possible. The Alabama State Department of Education (SDE) is therefore distributing this information to all local school systems, other state agencies, the media, law enforcement agencies, professional organizations, and others prior to the October 1, 2006, effective date of the law.

School systems can be of great assistance in the implementation of this new law in their local communities. At a minimum, school system personnel should do the following:

1. Review the enclosed documents, including the CD. These documents can be used to inform students, teachers, transportation personnel and others in the community regarding the new law. None of the information is copyrighted and is therefore reproducible. The flyer, brochure, AEN (Alabama Education News) article, and the new law may be copied as necessary, and sent home to parents/guardians. This information may also be posted in local businesses and public buildings, shared with local media, and distributed to community groups. The Power Point presentation may be used to educate school personnel, students, school groups, and civic organizations. Most of the information contained on the CD can also be found on the SDE website.

2. Transportation supervisors should meet with local law enforcement agencies to determine the best process for reporting violations, especially, violations where bus drivers are able to get the vehicle tag number of the violator. The enclosed Illegal Passing Violation Form was developed to assist local school bus drivers and transportation supervisors in reporting violations. Accordingly, this form should be shared with local police agencies for any additional input. Local transportation supervisors should also train drivers about the requirements of the law and the use of the reporting form.

3. All school bus stop locations should be reviewed in order to eliminate situations where students are required to cross divided, four-lane highways to load or unload. As an additional safety measure, it is strongly recommended that students not be required to cross any four-lane highway to load or unload.

The purpose of the new School Bus Illegal Passing Law (Act 2006-311) is to help keep school children and motorists safer. Alabama has a great tradition of ensuring the safety of students riding our school buses; however, we must strive to make this process even safer. Please help continue this tradition by educating as many people in your area as possible.

For additional information, contact Mr. Joe Lightsey, Director of Pupil Transportation, or Mr. Brad Holley, State Field Specialist, at (334) 242-9730.

WCP/JL/JL

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Joe Lightsey
    Mr. Brad Holley
    Mr. Mitch Edwards
    Senator Ted Little
    Representative Randy Davis