

Regular Meeting #1

Maine Transportation Safety Commission Meeting

February 27, 2026; 9am-11am

45 Commerce Drive, Augusta, ME; and virtual

Chairs: Megan Welter, DOE; Bruce Scott, DPS

Participants: Megan Welter, Bruce Scott, Chris Pasciuto, Cheryl Brackett, Rob Susi, Christopher Ireland, Robert Skehan, Mitzii Smith, Stephen Marquis

Virtual Participants: Wayne St. Pierre

Staff Support: Deb MacMaster, Jason King, Jennifer Belanger

Agenda

Call to Order

Remote Meeting Policy

- Motion: Marquis
- Second: Ireland
- Vote: unanimous of those present

Approval of Minutes: N/A

Reports of Officers and Standing Committees: N/A

Unfinished Business: N/A

New Business

- Review of Commission Purpose
 - Review of recent student deaths
 - Ongoing commitment that every child gets to and from school safely
 - Review of Executive Order that created the Commission
- Review of Statutes and Rules
 - DOE Rule Chapter 81: School Transportation Safety
 - Presentation from Cheryl Brackett
 - Student Training Requirements

- School Bus Driver Training
 - Daily Inspection Requirements
 - Section 7 needs revision
- DOE Rule Chapter 86: Maine Uniform School Bus Specifications
 - Presentation from Cheryl Brackett
 - Authority and Scope
 - Exceptions
 - Purchase Requirements
 - School Bus Standards
 - National Congress of School Transportation
 - Best Practices vs. Statutory Requirements
 - Useful life of a bus; to get a subsidy, bus must be at least 10 years old AND has at least 125,000 miles on it.
 - Newer buses have all of the safety technology; older buses may not
 - \$140,000+ for new conventional bus; \$400,000+ for new electric bus
 - Subsidies are based on the state/local share defined in the state school funding formula (“Essential Programs and Services”)
 - Emergency funding available
 - Inspection and Maintenance
 - Driver Qualifications and Training
 - Operations and Compliance
 - Multifunction School Activity Bus vs. School Bus
- Title 29-A, Chapter 19: Operation:-Subchapter 4: School Buses
 - Follow all traffic laws
 - Bus operating requirements
 - Bus seating, doors, seat belts
 - Overtaking and passing school buses
- Title 20-A, Chapter 215: Transportation
- LD 2159, An Act to Require School Buses to be Equipped with and to Use School Bus Crossing Arms (Emergency)
 - Amendment – added requirement for anti-pinch sensor
 - Only about 100 buses already have this tech – the rest would need retrofitting, which can be very costly and has an uneven track record of reliability

- Transportation Committee requests a report-back before statutory adjournment on April 15. Goal to get some recommendations and information to them by April 10.
 - Driving behaviors in statute
 - Vehicle equipment and technology (crossing arms, anti-pinch)
 - Suggestion: Add Title 29-A, section 2312 – any bus operator violation of statute or rule is a traffic violation, not criminal violation; does not take away the ability for law enforcement to bring criminal charges in situations when appropriate
 - Homework: Look at Title 29-A sections we reviewed; should we add enforcement protocols in addition to procedure? Where and how?
 - Are there other areas in Title 29-A that we need to address?

Public Comment

- Anti-pinch sensors; ability to provide expertise regarding their use, retrofitting
- Bureau of Highway Safety; hopeful for discussions on seat belts in buses, training opportunities to provide for SAUs
- Written comment: school district capacity, timeframe for retrofitting
- Presentation on anti-pinch sensors would be useful; concern regarding student behaviors on the bus as a distraction for the drivers, consideration of having another adult on the bus with the driver
- Family representative: anti-pinch sensor is a huge component that needs to be considered; crime to disable the safety features; help assist on the emergency bill

Announcements

- Website will hold all documents
- Next meeting: Friday March 13, 9-11a: technology and bus specifications for safety
- Third meeting: Thursday March 19, 9-11a: identify best practices, training, etc
- Fourth meeting: Friday March 27, 9-11a: develop recommendations
- Homework: share with group ahead of meeting
 - Chapter 81 and 86: reviewed and propose rule changes
 - Title 29-A

Adjournment

- Motion: Scott

- Second: Marquis
- Vote: unanimous