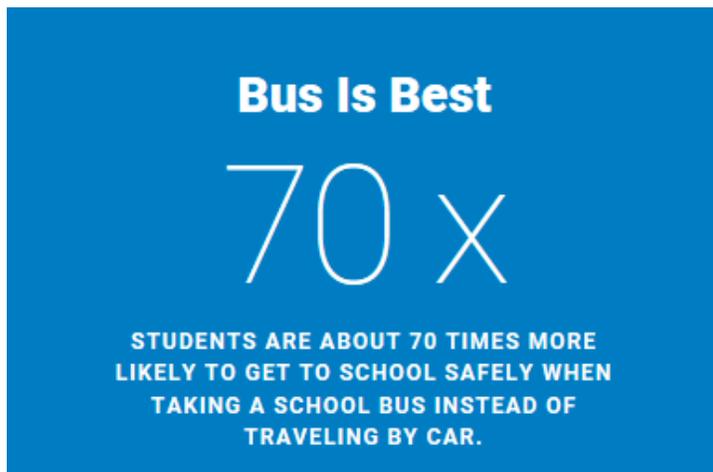


# School Buses

## Overview

The school bus is the safest vehicle on the road—your child is much safer taking a bus to and from school than traveling by car. Although four to six school-age children die each year on school transportation vehicles, that's less than one percent of all traffic fatalities nationwide. NHTSA believes school buses should be as safe as possible. That's why our safety standards for school buses are above and beyond those for regular buses.



## Bus Safety

Students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a bus instead of traveling by car. That's because school buses are the most regulated vehicles on the road; they're designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in preventing crashes and injuries; and in every State, stop-arm laws protect children from other motorists.

- **Different by Design:** School buses are designed so that they're highly visible and include safety features such as flashing red lights, cross-view mirrors and stop-sign arms. They also include protective seating, high crush standards and rollover protection features.
- **Protected by the Law:** Laws protect students who are getting off and on a school bus by making it illegal for drivers to pass a school bus while dropping off or picking up passengers, regardless of the direction of approach.

## Seat Belts on School Buses

Seat belts have been required on passenger cars since 1968; and 49 States and the District of Columbia have enacted laws requiring the use of seat belts in passenger cars and light trucks. There is no question that seat belts play an important role in keeping passengers safe in these vehicles. But school buses are different by design, including a different kind of safety restraint system that works extremely well.

Large school buses are heavier and distribute crash forces differently than passenger cars and light trucks do. Because of these differences, bus passengers experience much less crash force than those in passenger cars, light trucks and vans.

NHTSA decided the best way to provide crash protection to passengers of large school buses is through a concept called “compartmentalization.” This requires that the interior of large buses protect children without them needing to buckle up. Through compartmentalization, children are protected from crashes by strong, closely-spaced seats that have energy-absorbing seat backs.

Small school buses (with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less) must be equipped with lap and/or lap/shoulder belts at all designated seating positions. Since the sizes and weights of small school buses are closer to those of passenger cars and trucks, seat belts in those vehicles are necessary to provide occupant protection.