



The Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations

June 23, 2008

Good Evening, Ms. Navarro, Ms. Brandman, members of the board and Dr. Weast, I am Kay Romero, president of MCCPTA.

Fuel costswill they put in play "exigent circumstances" sooner rather than later? (Exigent-"requiring immediate action or aid; urgent; pressing")

Is the rising cost of fuel enough to justify the removal of the public comment period? Do rising fuel prices warrant moving into an emergency reactive mode for a decision made without parent input?

No.

Fuel prices have been rising for quite some time. That was true during the formulation of this budget. What is unknown is just how high the price of fuel may be in the future.

What would be the harm in waiting the full comment period at least as prescribed under this policy? The board should allow parents to weigh in to guide this board should discussion turn to increased walking distances for students. Decisions involving students should not be done in a knee jerk way and never should they be done without parental feedback.

What would impede this board from going to the County Council and asking for supplemental funding since you know there will be a budget shortfall? Should the county council turn you down then you could take further action.

Should we assume that all possible increased walking distances will be safe? How would you know if you do not hear from parents? School buses are the safest form of transporting our children to school. If bus service is cut, whether or not these affected children walk or ride, our children will be put at greater risk.

Traffic would increase on our roads. There would be increased safety issues and traffic flow patterns that schools would now have to address.

We ask that parents be heard on decisions involving their children. We also ask for fuel costs to not be labeled "exigent circumstances," which blocks parents from giving their feedback in a public forum.

Subject: Final Action, Policy EEA, Student Transportation

i)(Starts Line 142)

In exigent circumstances, the superintendent may apply to the Board of Education for a waiver to temporarily adjust transported distances. Board action on the waiver request can be taken after allowing at least 21 days for public comment following publication of the waiver request. **If the Board deems an emergency exists, this notification provision may be waived without notice if all Board members are present and there is unanimous agreement.**

Kay Romero

Attachments:

americanschoolbuscouncil.org (Q&A section)

Q: Why does it matter how kids get to school?

A: School bus ridership addresses a variety of major concerns. **Safety:** School buses are the safest form of transportation for students – and many times safer than riding in the family car. **Traffic:** Every child riding a school bus represents one fewer car on the road, especially in the congested area in and around schools, where children are at highest risk. **Environment:** Students riding in the school bus instead of the family car means fewer car trips and less pollution.

School buses are school readiness vehicles, providing free access to an education for millions of children in America through healthy, safe and secure transportation to schools. Every day, more than 470,000 school buses deliver 25 million students to

school safely and reliably, so they arrive at school ready to learn. All told, school buses provide over 10 billion passenger trips each year.

Q: Why does the school bus industry need my help?

A: Every day, 25 million children safely ride the school bus. Unfortunately, many school districts are facing financial strains, and in some areas, local officials are being forced to choose between school bus service and other educational priorities. When a school bus route is eliminated or the number of school buses is reduced, children have to turn to other, less safe ways to get to school. The school bus is not simply a matter of convenience for parents. By cutting back on school bus service, school districts unwittingly put more children at risk.

In some areas, when school bus service is eliminated, children have to walk to school through dangerous areas or cross intersections with heavy traffic. The school bus is specially designed to get your children to and from school safely.

When the BOE passed the budget with gas price assumed under \$2.50/gal in late December, prices were at \$3/gal. Prices were over \$3.50/gal in April, and over \$3.75/gal when the County Council passed the budget in late May.