

September 12, 2011

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Dear Ms. Vaccaro-Teich:

This letter documents my observations made on September 8 and 9, 2011 to review bus stops in the South Orangetown Central School District. I appreciated meeting with Superintendent Ken Mitchell, Director of Facilities and Transportation, Phillip Scala, and you to discuss the improved efficiency and safety of your pupil transportation program.

During my visit, we observed all AM and PM pick up and drop off bus stops on Western Highway, including the stop at Western Highway and Colony Drive, a dead end street. Every stop has sufficient line of sight for the driver, a safe place for students to stand and adequate parking for parents.

In addition, Mr. Scala and I visited bus stops at Liberty & Washington, Key Place, Cedar & Summit, Old Tappan & Stevens, Andre Hill & Old Tappan, Slocum & Washington Street, Van Wyck & Wheeler. My specific observations follow a general description of a safe and efficient bus stop.

Door-to-door transportation is not required. The courts and the Commissioner of Education have held that the location of bus stops have to be reasonable and adequate. The district's measurement is legally sufficient where distances to a school or bus stop is in dispute.

A safe bus stop is one where the bus driver has a good line of sight (both forward and back). The stop should have adequate room on the side of the road for parent parking and a safe place for pupils to stand while waiting for the bus. Wherever possible (including efficiency concerns), right-hand pickup and drop off is preferable to having pupils cross a busy highway. If crossing is necessary, the State Education Department and Pupil Transportation Safety Institute crossing procedure needs to be explained to bus drivers, pupils, and parents.

Unsafe roads are not to be used, including dead ends that would require the school bus to back up. The Commissioner of Education has consistently ruled that he will not support a bus backing up. It needs to be remembered that a bus route needs to balance both efficiency and safety.

The following paragraphs reflect my opinions as a professional school transportation consultant regarding the stops observed:

Pupil Transportation Safety Institute

224 Harrison Street, Suite 300, Syracuse, NY 13202

Phone: 315-475-1386 Toll Free: 800-836-2210 Fax: 315-475-5033

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Western Highway and Colony Drive

There is adequate line of sight for the bus driver both north and south on Western Highway. Southbound traffic on Western Highway approaches the stop in a 15-mile-per-hour school speed zone. Northbound traffic is limited to 30 miles per hour.

Colony Drive is a dead end street with no bus turnaround and it would require the bus to back up. For that reason alone, the stop for pupils living on Colony Drive needs to be on Western Highway. There is adequate room for both parent parking and a safe pupil waiting area on Colony Drive (see photographs in Appendix A).

The school district revised all routing, using the stop to avoid pupils crossing Western Highway.

I believe the location of the stop meets both the criteria of safety and efficiency.

76 Key Place

The eligibility limit for transportation for the pupil residing at 76 Key Place is greater than the district standard of a one and one half (1.5) mileage limit (which is also less than the state standard of 3 miles). The district also measures distance from door to door rather than the state standard of property line to property line.

Using software by Edulog, the district measured the door-to-door distance at 1.43 miles; however, the parent contends it is 1.51 miles. Mr. Scala and I measured the distance by automobile odometer at 1.40 miles. Therefore, the district's measurement is legally adequate and the pupil is ineligible for school bus transportation.

Liberty and Washington

The parent of a first grade pupil does not want the pupil to cross Washington. The district could move the stop to Morris and Washington. This would eliminate crossing over Washington and create a crossing on Morris, which has less traffic.

Cedar and Summit

The pupil walks about 100 yards to a bus stop for a school located in New Jersey. As stated previously, door-to-door transportation is not required. In my opinion, the location of the stop is reasonable.

Old Tappan Road and Stevens

The stop is on Old Tappan Road and the parent is requesting a house stop on Stevens. The stop, in my opinion, is reasonable, although the PM route requires the pupil to cross Old Tappan Road. The district should ensure the bus driver, pupil, and parents understand the State Education Department and Pupil Transportation Safety Institute safe crossing procedure.

Old Tappan Road and Andre Hill

The parent complained that the pupil has to cross Old Tappan Road. The bus picks up the pupil on the door side of the street and does not require pupils to cross Old Tappan Road.

The line of sight is adequate and the district considered the safety of children when designing the stop.

Van Wyck and Wheeler

Pupils have to cross in the AM. There is adequate line of sight both north and south. The district needs to review safe crossing procedures with the driver, pupils, and parents.

Slocum at Washington Street

In the PM, the pupil has to disembark the bus on a highway lacking a shoulder before crossing. In the winter, snow and ice become an issue. The district should consider rerouting the PM bus to eliminate crossing.

Request for Transportation to Two Different Addresses During the Week

I am unaware of any case law which provides guidance to a school district where parents are separated or divorced and desire transportation to two separate houses. However, if you limit transportation for baby sitters to one location, it seems reasonable to provide transportation to one address: either the legal residence or the residence of the other parent designated for childcare. Perhaps you could check my reasoning with your district's legal counsel.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may provide additional assistance. As requested, I am enclosing two forms of my resume (in Appendix B).

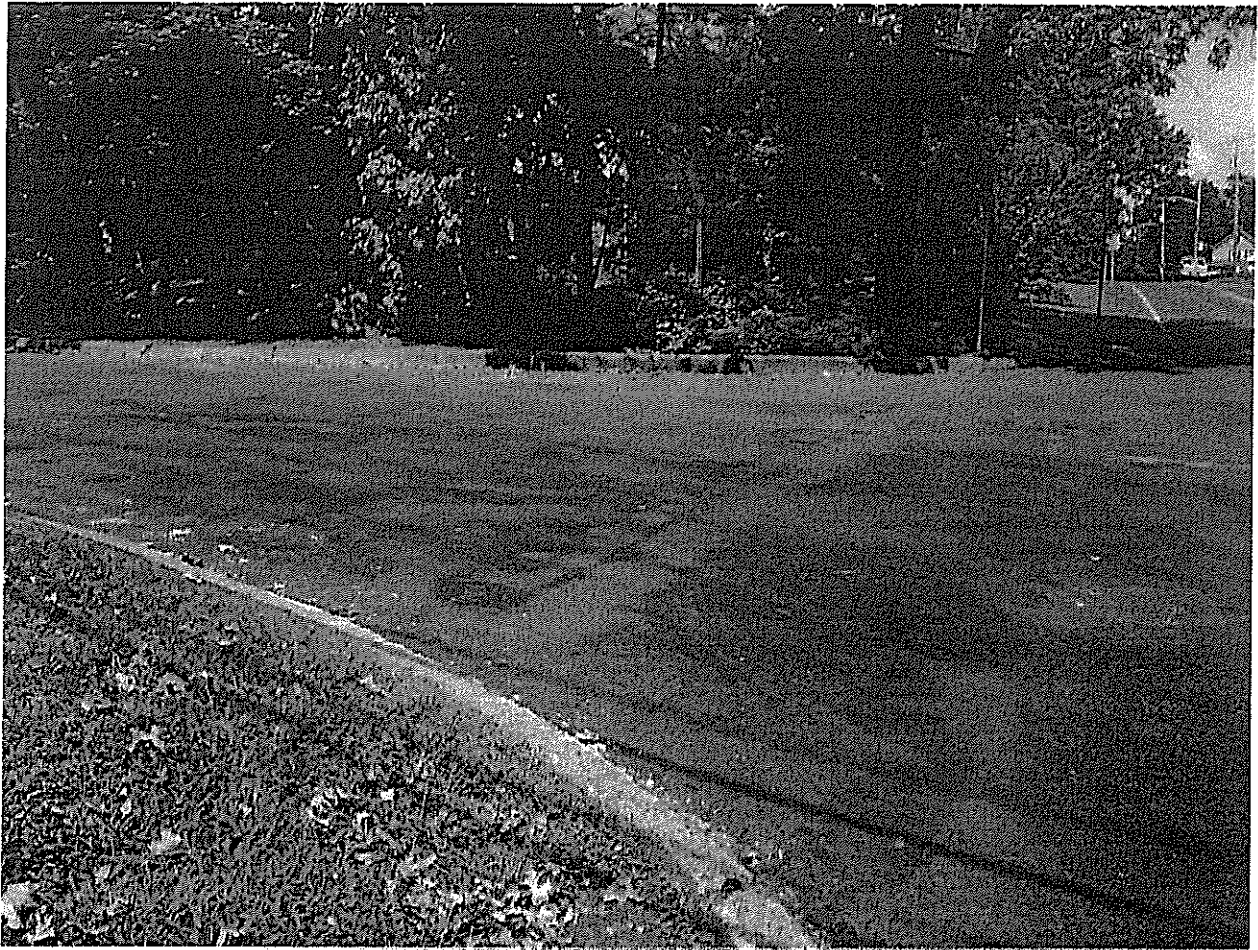
Sincerely,

Richard R. Ahola

APPENDIX A

Bus Stop at Western Highway and Colony Drive

- The stop is located in the mouth of Colony Drive – this is a 40-foot opening into the street:





- The street is over 25 foot-wide, which is ample space for parents to park while waiting for the bus. There is more than sufficient room for vehicles to pass.
- Western Highway is 30 mph except in school zones, which are then 15 mph. A school zone of 15 mph ends just before this street.



Dr. Richard R. Ahola
Senior Management Consultant
Pupil Transportation Safety Institute
224 Harrison Street, Suite 300, Syracuse, NY 13202
800-836-2210

In 1995, Dr. Richard Ahola joined the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute in Syracuse, New York as Senior Management Consultant. As a consultant to PTSI, Dr. Ahola has assisted several New York State school districts in recovering approximately \$500,000 in prior aid adjustments and has held regional workshops for the New York State Association of School Business Officials on State Aid for Transportation. During the New York State Association for Pupil Transportation Conference held in July 1995, Dr. Ahola taught a successful workshop entitled, "Understanding Your State Aid Application."

Also as Senior Management Consultant for PTSI, Dr. Ahola served as lead state delegate to the 1995 Pupil Transportation Standards Conference in Warrensburg, Missouri. He has provided technical assistance to the State Legislature, lobbyists, school bus contractors, and school bus manufacturers that has already led to changes in state law simplifying statutes governing state pupil transportation and permitting the use of requests for proposals in addition to competitive bidding for school transportation services.

In addition, Dr. Ahola has performed pupil transportation management and efficiency studies for the Georgia School Boards Association, The state of North Carolina and many New York State school districts.

Richard Ahola retired in 1995 from the position of Executive Liaison for Central Services at the State Education Department. In addition to coordinating management activities between Central Service and Field Teams, Dr. Ahola served as Team Leader for Educational Management activities for school districts and BOCES throughout the State of New York. He also served as New York State's Director of Pupil Transportation. A 25-year member of Phi Delta Kappa, Dr. Ahola is a Past President of the SUNY Albany Chapter. Dr. Ahola is a Director of Think First of New York, a chapter of the National THINK FIRST head and spinal cord injury prevention program founded by America's neurosurgeons. He represented New York State as a member of the delegation to the 1990 National Standards Conference.

Prior to 1993, Dr. Ahola was the Chief of the Bureau of Educational Management Services of the State Education Department. As Bureau Chief, Richard Ahola was responsible for the planning and direction of the Bureau of Educational Management Services, which provides assistance in a variety of areas essential to sound school business management, including school district budgeting, elections, board meetings, transportation, bonding, insurance, Native American funding, and other related activities. Dr. Ahola planned and developed Department school business management programs and policies; he established Bureau priorities and assigned areas

of responsibility to subordinates; provided in-service training to school business officials and other interested parties through preparation of resource materials and field workshops; planned and directed transportation reviews; conducted staff meetings; advised school administrators and other interested parties on school business management; implemented recommendations resulting from staff projects and assignments; participated in national, statewide and local conferences; and provided general managerial assistance in related areas as determined by the Commissioner of Education and the Board of Regents.

Prior to 1987, Richard Ahola was the Supervisor of School Business Management in the Health and Safety Unit of the Bureau of Facilities Planning of the State Education Department. In that capacity, Dr. Ahola was responsible for the risk management activities of the State Education Department and assisted school districts with abatement of asbestos hazard, compliance with occupational and health requirements, compliance with the Right to Know Law, disaster preparedness planning, energy conservation, and conformance to the State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code.

Between the years of 1970-82, Dr. Ahola served as Assistant, Associate, and Supervisor in the Bureau of Educational Management Services. He is recognized nationally as an authority in pupil transportation, particularly as it relates to safety and economy. He has been recognized by the New York State Department of Transportation and school bus manufacturers for his leadership in developing school bus construction standards which provide maximum safety for children. He organized many summer workshops for pupil transportation supervisors and is a lifetime member of the New York Association for Pupil Transportation. His desire to develop the skills and knowledge of school bus drivers is reflected in New York State's extensive training program.

Among the innovations Dr. Ahola brought to the administration of New York State's highly successful pupil transportation program. Foremost was his use of the media including radio, television, newspapers, and the production of a school bus safety movie. As Supervisor of the Pupil Transportation Unit, he advocated economy measures, including cooperative purchase of supplies and equipment and regional school bus maintenance and repair. Dr. Ahola is widely credited with promoting transportation aid reform, emphasizing economy, efficiency of service, and parity between private contract and district-owned school transportation systems.