



Budget-Cutting Math That Does Not Add Up

(NAPSA)—School districts across the country are doing the math in an effort to cut costs, but their equations may not always adequately factor in student safety.

One way school districts have cut costs is by reducing or eliminating school transportation services—cutting routes and increasing the distance standards by which students qualify for transportation. These measures can have disastrous results, say worried parents, with students forced to walk on winding roads with no shoulders or sidewalks, cross busy highways and navigate dangerous city commutes.

Cutting school bus transportation service also means more teens will drive to school, which statistics show is not the safest mode of transportation. According to the Department of Transportation, school-age children are about 50 times more likely to die traveling to school when they drive or ride with friends than if they take the bus. The more teens in the car, the better the odds of a crash, says a recent survey by the Allstate Foundation. Almost half of the teens polled admit to being distracted by their passengers.

And other teenage passengers are not the only distraction. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 46 percent of teens admit to texting while driving, which involves taking their eyes off the road and at least one hand off the steering wheel. Few teens travel—or



Without school buses, millions of children could be left with no way to safely and reliably arrive at school each day.

drive—without their cell phone. Talking on a cell phone can significantly slow the reaction time of even an experienced driver.

School buses are manufactured to meet special federal safety standards, which include reinforced sides, flashing red lights, cross-view mirrors, a crossbar and stop-arms. Bus drivers are professional drivers who carry a commercial driver's license and who, in order to carry a School Bus Endorsement, undergo background checks prior to employment, receive specialized education and training, are subject to frequent driving record checks and are monitored by periodic medical exams.

Every day, 475,000 school buses safely carry 25 million children—more than half of America's schoolchildren—to school. The National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Department of Transportation say that school buses are the safest form of transportation for getting children to and from school.