

Nonpublic School Transportation Fact Sheet

- Nonpublic school transportation is provided up to a statutory ceiling of \$884.00 per student. The Office of Legislative Services estimates that the ceiling for 2016-2017 would be \$1,047.00 if the CPI had been honored from the 2007-2008 school year. Public schools districts will typically use their own vehicles first for public school students, and then, if any vehicles and drivers are available will transport nonpublic school students. Thus the majority of nonpublic school transportation occurs through private contractors. Public school transportation has no per-pupil ceiling for transportation, although public school transportation costs less because students are generally located within a more concentrated geographical area. Therefore, the cost of the routes is less than those for nonpublic school students because transportation depends upon the number of miles traveled by the bus and the number of stops. *However, no eligible public school student has been denied a ride due to cost.*
- Even though transportation costs should possibly decrease because of the dramatic drop in fuel costs, bus owners contend that rising costs for insurance and salaries (many contractors are using unionized workers) are the problem.
- A significant number of public school transportation coordinators have told our administrators and parents that the ceiling **MUST** be raised, or our students will not be able to receive transportation.
- Nonpublic schools have attempted a variety of options in order to maintain transportation within the \$884.00 per pupil ceiling. These include the following:
 - Centralized stops,
 - Changes in arrival and dismissal times in our schools,
 - Having routes bid at fewer than 180 days (i.e. 176, 175) in order to have transportation for student during the majority of days the school is in session.
 - Mixing public and nonpublic schools students on busses.

We have run out of ideas in this regard. This year, we have lost a significant number of Catholic school students statewide because of transportation. The only remaining solution is to raise the per-pupil amount.

- The transportation statute authorizing the per-pupil amount calls for an annual increase, in direct proportion to the increase in the State transportation aid per pupil in the year prior to the pre-budget year compared to the amount for the pre-budget year or by CPI, whichever is greater (N.J.S.A. 18A: 39-1a). Both the Corzine Administration and the Christie Administration have frozen this amount, thus ignoring the requirement for any annual increase.
- It is important for parents to tell their own frustrating stories of what has happened in recent years in their attempts to have their children transported to a nonpublic school.
- We recognize that some of the problems have been caused by a lack of knowledge/competency on the part of district personnel and a state-wide shortage of drivers and buses. The New Jersey Catholic Conference and others have been working to deal with some of those issues in a committee within the New Jersey Department of Education. However, the contrast between transporting public school students (some of them are neighbors of our children) and nonpublic school children needs to be described in real terms and in detail to the Legislature.