

PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING LOCAL SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

by

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D. J. A.

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Background of the Problem

The writer first developed an interest in the principles of school bus transportation through the establishment, as the local administrator, of bus routes in two small Nebraska high schools. The first route thus established was with one rural district which contracted for instruction with the town district and insisted on having transportation furnished. The second experience was in the same school and involved the establishment of four bus routes after going through a reorganization program involving eight rural districts. The writer then moved to a larger school and initiated a consolidation program which involved thirteen rural districts and again found it necessary to establish bus routes.

Being aware of the fact that a good school is operated under written board policies, the writer made an attempt to locate a text which contained recommended policies and uniform standards for buses and their operation. An effort was also made to discover established practices as followed by neighboring schools. It was discovered within a relatively short distance that policies and standards differ widely.

The American Association of School Administrators in their book

School Board-Superintendent Relationships states: "Wise policies, well made, should be stated by the board and amplified in written rules and regulations. Rules should stipulate and clarify the duties and relationship of all personnel, budgetary procedures, school plant operation, personnel policies, and regulatory conduct of the system."¹

From all indications there will be an increase in pupil transportation as there is a corresponding reduction in school districts in Nebraska. Dr. F. B. Decker, now State Commissioner of Education, stated in a foreword to a recent pamphlet that "many school bus programs are now operating in our state and an increasing number will be established in the years to come."²

With more and more administrators being faced with the problem of establishing bus routes, the writer felt that a study which would develop some recommended policies would be a valuable aid to the neophyte bus supervisor. A good policy statement does not come about spontaneously nor is it created in a vacuum. Instead it is the result of a lot of concentrated and cooperative work, involving all who are affected. The best policy statements are developed out of past experience. The writer was forced to establish his bus routes in large part through trial and error and if this study serves to improve upon this costly method, he will feel that he has been of some service to his fellow administrators.

Definition of Terms

In order to interpret more clearly certain terms used constantly

¹School Board - Superintendent Relationships, American Association of School Administrators, 1956, p. 42.

²Your School Bus Program, prepared by Avery J. Linn and LeRoy Ortgiesen, Nebraska Department of Public Instruction, May, 1953.

in this study of pupil transportation it is necessary to define them precisely. Because transportation is a specialized field of school administration, the problem is encountered of choosing terms which can be uniformly defined. To obtain some uniformity the definitions of terms used in this study were stated to conform with those in selected books on transportation, doctoral dissertations on this subject, the dictionary of education,³ and transportation publications of the United States Office of Education.

Pupil transportation. This term refers to the movement of pupils from home or from some point nearby to school and return by means of a conveyance of whatever sort, usually a bus. This term nearly always is limited to such transportation of pupils as is undertaken at public expense. However it need not be so limited. More recently there has been considerable rethinking of the scope of the program of transportation to include the usage of such equipment to serve educational ends in ways besides the mere transportation of pupils to and from home.

Cost of transportation. The cost, both indirect and direct, of pupil transportation is interpreted as meaning the monetary value of services rendered or materials consumed during the accounting period whether such services and materials are paid for during that period or not.

Expenditures for transportation. Transportation expenditures are interpreted to mean all monies expended for transportation materials or services during the accounting period whether such materials or services are used during that period or not. In other words it includes those monies that are actually paid out during that time or year.

³Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education, p. 495. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1945.

Direct costs. All expenses of transportation which can be charged directly to the school bus are direct costs. These include: salaries, gasoline, oil, grease, repairs, tires, tubes, paint, supplies, parts, and assembly replacements, insurance, labor on the bus, etc.

Indirect costs. This term refers to all expenses of transportation which cannot be charged directly to the bus or to each of the buses. Included in this classification are: (1) salaries of bookkeepers, clerks, accountants, custodians, and others who spend time on transportation work; (2) garage expenses including gas, electricity, water, telephone, supplies, tools, and repairs; and (3) fixed charges including district contributions to retirement plans, compensation insurance premiums, garage insurance, garage rentals, etc.

Cost of transportation for contract owned and operated equipment. This includes payments to owners of school buses and small vehicles which are contracted by a school district to provide transportation service for pupils.

Payments to parents. This includes the payments by the district to parents for providing transportation for their children to school.

In lieu payments. This refers to payments for board and room in lieu of providing transportation for pupils between home and school.

School bus. A vehicle with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of twelve or more. In no case is seating capacity to be calculated on a basis of less than thirteen inches of seat space per pupil.

Small vehicle. A vehicle with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of less than twelve pupils. In no case is seating capacity to be figured on a basis of less than thirteen inches of seat space per pupil.

Bus route. A route means a highway or highways over and upon which a school bus regularly travels in accordance with a schedule

maintained for the transportation of pupils from their homes to school and return.

Contracted vehicle. This term refers to a bus, car or other vehicle owned by a private individual or firm and whose owner enters into agreement with a district managing a transportation program to furnish the vehicle for a stipulated sum, to transport school children.

District-owned vehicle. The transportation vehicle is owned, operated and maintained by a school district.

Daily bus route mileage. This is interpreted to mean twice the distance computed to the nearest tenth mile, traveled in a single trip by each school bus over its scheduled route or routes.

Total miles traveled by school buses during the year. For the present accounting procedures used in Nebraska this term shall be interpreted to include two mileage sources: (1) the total annual mileage of regular school bus routes, and, in addition, (2) the mileage of special trips under sponsorship of the schools.

Transportation area. This term refers to the area made accessible to the school plant by means of school transportation conveyances. In the practical sense this is the area of the zone lying beyond the zone immediately surrounding the school plant whose boundary is a line all points of which are separated from the school plant by a distance that equals the accepted maximum walking distance for pupils. Theoretically the transportation area includes the total area of the path or paths swept out by the transportation vehicles when a given maximum walking distance is extended on each side of the bus route. For any given attendance area there are a number of factors that operate to establish a maximum transportation area for a school plant. These include: the road pattern, road condition, the pattern of dispersion and clustering

of pupils, the maximum walking distance for pupils, and the time factor.

Administrative unit. This term refers to that geographic unit comprising all the area under a single system of school administration; generally constitutes a local taxing or fiscal unit for school purposes; usually is controlled by a board of education of which the superintendent of schools is the executive officer. It may be composed of more than one attendance area.

School district. This term refers to: (1) the territory that is under the supervision of a given board regardless of the number of school buildings; (2) that territory within which children may attend a given school building or center.

Sparsity of population. This term refers to the extent of scatter or dispersion of population over a given area. The term is used instead of density as a matter of convenience in studying the relationship of sparsity and the need for pupil transportation.

Scope and Procedure

The study will be based on the Class III schools in Nebraska which are at the present time providing transportation for the pupils in their district.

A Class III school as defined in Nebraska School Law Section 79-102 is "Class III shall include any school district embracing territory having a population of more than one thousand and less than fifty thousand inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single board of education."

The procedure to be followed in developing this thesis will be primarily through library research, a study of the records and reports compiled by the State Department of Education, and data will be

collected through correspondence and visitations with other administrators.

After the study has been completed, principles will be recommended that should be of assistance to administrators. However, with the widely differing geographical terrain in Nebraska, it will not be practical to expect all the principles developed to be applicable to all schools.

Sources of Data

The facilities of the University of Nebraska Library have been used extensively. Until recently, little has been done in the field of bus transportation, therefore, a great deal of the information has been found in short articles published in periodicals.

The Nebraska State Department of Education is interested in pupil transportation in the state and has been very cooperative in making available all materials and reports that would be of value.

Several of the State Departments of Education in neighboring states have furnished their transportation codes, laws, recommendations, and reports to be utilized in this study.

Some of the data collected will be through correspondence and visitations with other administrators.

CHAPTER II

PRESENT STATUS OF PUPIL TRANSPORTATION IN NEBRASKA

Purpose of the Chapter

This chapter will briefly present the background and present status of pupil transportation in Nebraska. The Statutes relative to pupil transportation in Nebraska will be presented; there will be no discussion of these statutes nor will there be any recommendations made for change in this study.

The administrative responsibilities of the transportation program will present the State Department's responsibilities, the local board of education responsibilities, but will be primarily concerned with the responsibilities of the superintendent of schools in developing and maintaining an efficient transportation program.

Historical and Current Status in Nebraska

School transportation is older than the school bus. "The need for pupil transportation facilities asserted itself as soon as the first schools were established in the United States."¹ Since the Legislature of Massachusetts passed a transportation act in this year, "1869 may be taken as the year in which pupil transportation began to be regarded as a public rather than as a private responsibility."²

¹S. K. Cooper, "Why Do We Transport Children to School?", The School Executive, April, 1950, p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 11

During 1869, Quincy, Massachusetts, spent a total of \$521.12 of public school funds to transport pupils in a horse-drawn vehicle.³ From this small beginning pupil transportation has grown to the point where \$308,704,303.00 was spent for transportation in 1954. This amount does not include capital outlay for new equipment.⁴

While the rapid growth of pupil transportation in Nebraska has been fairly recent development, we find that the first laws regarding transportation were passed before the turn of the century.

Perhaps the most important measure enacted two years ago, and one that will be more far-reaching in its effects, was that providing for instruction and transportation of pupils within or without the district of their residence.⁵

In checking the early Nebraska School Laws it was found the law provided for transportation of pupils within the district when the school building was such a distance away as to "render it impracticable for.....pupils to attend without transportation."⁶ Another section of the law provides that districts may contract with neighboring districts for instruction, transport the home district pupils to the neighboring district but still "shall be considered as maintaining a school as required by law."⁷ This means they may contract for education and transport pupils "without forfeiting their right to share in the state apportionment."⁸

³Ibid., p. 11.

⁴Statistics on Pupil Transportation, 1953-54, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, September, 1955.

⁵W. R. Jackson, Fifteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, December 1, 1898, p. 30. Lincoln, Nebraska.

⁶School Laws of Nebraska, 1896, Subdivision 5, Section 4b (4712a).

⁷Ibid., Section 4c (4712a).

⁸Sixteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1901, p. 17. Lincoln, Nebraska.

Under the provision of the preceding law it was found that among Nebraska schools in 1899:

Four furnished transportation only; four transportation and instruction. Fifty-seven pupils were transported under the provisions of Section 4b at a cost of \$560.00. One hundred fifty eight pupils attended school in adjoining districts under the provision of Section 4c, for an average of seven months at a total cost of \$1,471.40.⁹

The rapid growth of school transportation did not gain real impetus until between 1920 and 1925. This period in the history of transportation saw an increase in the number of motor vehicles from slightly under three million to well over twenty million.¹⁰ The automobile was accepted universally. This technological change pulled rural areas nearer to the town. This same period saw the size of farms become larger and fewer in number. As farms became larger, farm families became fewer and tended to live farther apart. This increased the difficulty of bringing enough children together to have a good school without furnishing transportation. School transportation continued to make rapid advancements until World War II caused the curtailment of equipment and supplies. Since 1950 there has been a steady increase in school buses in Nebraska.¹¹

TABLE I

Year	Buses	Other Vehicles	Total
1950-51	304	124	428
1951-52	382	145	527
1952-53	392	139	535
1953-54	477	158	635
1954-55	569	175	744
1955-56	636	162	798
1956-57	739	187	926

⁹Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰E. Glenn Featherstone, "Transportation of Pupils a Growing Problem," School Life, January, 1949.

¹¹Information secured from Nebraska Safety Patrol School Bus Inspection Reports.

The Legal Provisions for Transportation

Nebraska's laws dealing with school transportation are limited in number and scope. The majority of these laws are relatively new and those passed prior to 1948 were recodified in 1948. Several laws deal with specific items, such as traffic regulations which are applicable to all buses or trucks, types of licenses required and cost, and the improvement of rural roads which serve as school bus routes. The discussion will be confined to the more important acts which deal with transportation in all schools. These laws, obtained from the Nebraska School Laws, 1957-1958, are:

Section 39-721. Vehicles; length; limit; . . . (1) No vehicle shall exceed a length of thirty-five feet, extreme over-all dimensions, inclusive of front and rear bumpers including load, except a bus for the transportation of passengers when equipped with three axles, but then not in excess of forty feet, extreme over-all dimensions, inclusive of front and rear bumpers including load

Section 39-724. Vehicles, safety devices and regulations; power of Department of Roads and Irrigation; flares; warning signs; stop signs and rules; signal stop lights. In order to promote safety, power is hereby conferred on the Department of Roads and Irrigation to erect and maintain red flares, warning signs or stop signs on hazardous roads entering or crossing state highways and the power is hereby further conferred on the department to regulate the manner in which vehicles, motor propelled or otherwise, shall be operated on bridges or approaches to bridges less than twenty feet in width. All motor vehicles entering or crossing such state highways on which stop signs are erected shall come to a full stop as near the right of way line as possible, before driving into such state highway, and regardless of directions, shall give the right of way to vehicles upon said highway. Except at street railway grade crossings within a municipality and at railway grade crossings where a flagman, police officer or a traffic control signal directs traffic to proceed, the driver of any motor vehicle carrying passengers for hire, or any school bus carrying any school child, or any vehicle carrying explosive substances or inflammable liquids as a cargo or a part of a cargo, before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop such vehicles within fifty feet but not less than ten feet from the nearest rail of such railroad and while so stopped shall listen and look in both directions along such track for any approaching train and shall not proceed until he can do so safely; provided that all such

vehicles shall be equipped with an electric signal stop lamp, red in color located on the rear of the vehicle, at a height of not less than forty-two inches nor more than sixty inches above the surface of the highway. This device shall be operated independently by a control in the driver's compartment of the vehicle and shall be illuminated for a distance of not less than five hundred feet nor more than one thousand feet in advance of the point at which said vehicle is required to stop as provided in this section. The Department of Roads and Irrigation is hereby authorized and required to adopt specifications for said lamps and all vehicles affected by the provisions of sections 39-719 to 39-725 and sections 60-239 to 335, 60-340 and 60-343 shall be equipped with the signal stop lamp complying with said specifications.

Section 39-735. Clearance lights; requirements. Every vehicle, including road rollers, road machinery, combines, farm machinery, wagons and racks, and farm tractors, (1) having a width, including load, of eighty inches or more, or (2) having any part thereof or have any load thereupon which shall extend forty inches or more to the left of the center of the chassis shall display, when driven, pulled, operated, or propelled upon any state highway, during the period from one-half hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise, and at all other times when there is not sufficient light to render such vehicle clearly discernible, two clearance lights on the left side of such vehicle. One of such lights shall be located at the front and display a green or amber light visible, under normal atmospheric conditions, from a distance of three hundred feet to the front of such vehicle. The other clearance light shall be located at the rear and display a red light visible under normal atmospheric conditions, from a distance of three hundred feet to the rear of said vehicle. The light at the rear shall be located at a sufficient distance above the tail light of such vehicle so it will not be confused with such tail light by those approaching from the rear. Such light shall be located on a line with the extreme outer point of such vehicle or the load thereon; provided, suitable reflectors or like color, equal visibility, and of a type approved by the Department of Roads and Irrigation may be substituted for such clearance lights; and provided further, the installation of all lamps shall be made in such a manner that no hazard will be created by their use on the highway.

Section 39-742. Reckless driving; over-crowding; holding persons or objects; streetcar and school bus stop rule. It shall be unlawful for any person to operate a motor vehicle upon the highways of this state when such person has in his or her lap, or in his or her embrace another person, package or other encumbrance which prevents the free and unhampered operation of such vehicle. It shall be unlawful for more than three persons over the age of twelve years to occupy the front or driver's seat of any motor vehicle while such vehicle is in motion on the highway. "Occupied" as used herein, shall include the holding of one person upon the lap

of another. It shall be unlawful for the operator of any motor vehicle to permit any person to stand on the running boards of such motor vehicle while the same is in motion. Upon approaching any place where passengers are getting on or off street cars or school buses, every person operating a motor vehicle shall bring such vehicle to a full stop and shall not again start until said streetcars or school buses have started.

Section 39-7,100. Safety glass; requirements; vehicles built after January 1, 1934. It shall be unlawful to operate on any public highway or street in this State, a motor vehicle manufactured or assembled after January 1, 1934, designed or used for the purpose of carrying passengers for hire, or designed or used for the purpose of carrying school children, unless such vehicle be equipped in all doors, windows, and windshields with safety glass as defined in section 39-7,102.

Section 39-7,102. "Safety glass" defined. The term "safety glass" shall be construed to mean any product composed of glass or such other similar products as will successfully withstand discoloration due to exposure to sunlight or abnormal temperatures over an extended period of time and is so manufactured, fabricated, or treated as substantially to prevent or reduce in comparison with ordinary sheet glass or plate glass, when struck or broken, the likelihood of injury to persons.

Section 39-7,105. Violation; penalty. The owner or operator of any motor vehicle operated in violation of the provisions of sections 39-7,100 to 39-7,104 shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction thereof, shall for each offense be fined twenty-five dollars or imprisoned in the county jail for ten days, or both.

Section 39-7,116. Stop signals; turn signals; hand and arm; devices; when required. The signals required by sections 39-7,111 and 39-7,115 shall be given either by means of the hand and arm or by a signal lamp or signal device of a type approved by the Department of Roads and Irrigation. When a vehicle is so constructed or loaded that a hand and arm signal would not be visible both to the front and rear of such vehicle the signal must be given by such a lamp or device. It shall be unlawful to operate on any public street or highway in this state, any motor vehicle having four or more wheels manufactured or assembled after January 1, 1954, designed or used for the purpose of carrying passengers or freight, unless such vehicle is equipped with automatic turn signals in workable order.

Section 39-7,118. Motor buses, trucks, and passenger cars; flares, reflectors, when required as equipment. Motor buses, cars for hire having a capacity of over seven passengers, cars or trucks used as wreckers or for towing purposes, and motor trucks and combinations thereof, operating on the highways during the period of one-half

hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise shall at all times be equipped with at least three portable flares, or red emergency reflectors referred to in section 39-7,118.01, which may be plainly visible for a distance of five hundred feet.

Section 39-7,119. Motor buses, trucks, passenger cars; red flags; when required as equipment; how and when displayed. Between one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset, all vehicles described in section 39-7,118 shall be equipped with two red flags, one to be placed one hundred feet behind and the other one hundred feet ahead of said parked vehicles and in such position as to be visible to all approaching traffic during the daylight hours.

Section 60-329. Registration fee - passenger cars, buses. For each passenger car having a seating capacity of seven persons or less and used for hire, the registration fee shall be six dollars plus additional four dollars for every person such car is equipped to carry in addition to the driver. . . . (6) if said vehicle weighs less than sixteen thousand pounds, it shall be licensed as a five ton truck as provided in section 69-330 and pay the same fee as therein provided; provided, that upon registration of motor vehicles equipped to carry seven passengers or more and engaged entirely in the transportation of passengers for hire within municipalities or in and within a radius of five miles thereof, or engaged in the transportation for hire of school children and school teachers to school activities and school functions away from the school, and for passenger cars owned and used exclusively by schools, colleges, or charitable institutions, the conditions and fees for such registration shall be fixed by the Department of Roads and Irrigation and such fees shall be determined by the same rate as paid by commercial trucks; and the carrying capacity of such motor vehicles or bus shall be computed by multiplying the maximum number of passengers the bus is equipped to carry by one hundred fifty pounds. For passenger cars leased for hire where not driver or chauffeur is furnished by the lessor as part of the consideration paid for by the lessee, incident to the operation of the leased motor vehicle, the fee shall be ten dollars.

Section 60-505. Report of accident; when; contents; records; destruction. (1) The operator of every motor vehicle which is in any manner involved in an accident within this state, in which any person is killed or injured or in which damage to an apparent extent in excess of one hundred dollars is sustained to the property of any one person, including such operator, shall within ten days report the matter in writing to the department, except when a report is made as provided in sections 39-764 or 60-505.01 to the local police or police headquarters of a city or village. If such operator be physically incapable of making such report the owner of the motor vehicle involved in such accident, report the matter in writing to the department. The operator or

the owner shall make such other and additional reports relating to such accident as the department shall require.

Section 60-506. Report of accident; failure to give; misdemeanor; suspension or revocation of license. The failure to report an accident, as provided in section 60-505, or correctly give the information required of him by the department in connection with such report shall be a misdemeanor and, in the event of injury or damage to the person or property of another in such accident, shall also constitute a ground for suspension or revocation of (1) the license or registration for any motor vehicle, or of all such licenses and registrations of the person failing to make such report as herein required, and (2) the non-resident's operating privilege of such person.

Section 77-1605.01. County tax levy; construction and improvement of roads, limit, transfer of funds. The county boards of the several counties are authorized to levy a tax of not to exceed one mill on the dollar upon the assessed value of all the taxable property in such county, except intangible property, in addition to all other levies authorized by law, for the purpose of raising funds to cooperate with the government of the United States in projects for the construction and improvement of the principal and secondary feeder roads within the county, including farm-to-market roads, rural free delivery mail and public school bus routes, either outside of municipalities or inside of municipalities having a population of less than five thousand inhabitants. The funds raised by such special levy may, at the discretion of the county board when suitable projects involving the use of funds from the United States government are not available or deemed feasible by the county boards, be used for general road purposes.

Section 79-328-12. The State Board of Education shall have the power and it shall be its duty with the advice of the Department of Roads and Irrigation, to adopt reasonable standards, not inconsistent with existing statutes, governing: (a) The general design, equipment, color, operation, and maintenance of any vehicle with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of twelve or more passengers used for the transportation of school children; and (b) the equipment, operation, and maintenance of any vehicle with a capacity of seven to and including eleven passengers used for the transportation of school children, when such vehicles are either owned or operated under contract with any school district in this state. Similar standards are to be adopted for operators of such vehicles as to physical and mental qualities, driving skills and practices, and knowledge of traffic laws and regulations which relate to school bus transportation. Such rules and regulations shall by reference be made a part of any such contract with a school district. Any officer or employee of any school district who violates any of the regulations or fails to include

obligations to comply with the regulations in any contract executed by him on behalf of a school district shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall, upon conviction thereof, be subject to removal from office or employment. Any person operating a school bus under contract with a school district who fails to comply with any of such regulations shall be guilty of breach of contract and such contract shall be canceled after notice and hearing by the responsible officers of such school district.

None of the duties prescribed in this section shall prevent the board from exercising such other duties as in its judgment may be necessary for the proper and legal exercises of its obligations.

Section 79-487. The school board or board of education of any public school district may purchase out of the general fund of the district, school bus or buses for the purpose of providing transportation facilities when authorized by a majority vote of the members of the school board or board of education of any such district.

Section 79-488. All school boards and boards of education in this state that provide for transportation of pupils by school bus shall cause all such buses to be inspected at least twice during each calendar year by the Nebraska Safety Patrol. Such inspection shall be made at the county seat in each county at a time and place to be fixed by the Nebraska Safety Patrol. Notice thereof shall be given in the same manner as such patrol gives of time and place of examination for operator's license. The Nebraska Safety Patrol shall thoroughly inspect every bus as to brakes, lights, windshield wipers, window glass, tires, doors, heaters, defrosting equipment, steering gear, and the mechanical condition of such bus bearing upon the safety thereof as a means of transportation. Within five days after such inspection, the Nebraska Safety Patrol shall make a report of its inspection in writing, and file one copy of such report with the school board or board of education, as the case may be, using such bus to transport pupils, and also file one copy with the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Section 79-489. When a school board or board of education employs a driver to transport the pupils from their homes to the school and return by any means, the driver so employed shall be employed as and shall be an independent contractor for the purpose of transportation and shall assume all liability arising from, out of, or because of his negligence in performance of the contract for transportation, to the exclusion of such school district and the school board of any member thereof. He shall furnish a liability policy in a limit of not less than fifty thousand dollars to cover the bodily injuries to more than one person in the same accident, and ten thousand dollars to cover property damage, the premium on which shall be paid out of the school district treasury, conditioned for the payment by such driver, or his substitute of any and all damages on account of bodily injury or death,