



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: S

Date: July 25, 2024

Title: First Review of Proposed Revisions to the *Virginia Public School Bus Specifications*

Presenter: Mr. Kent Dickey, Deputy Superintendent of Operations

Purpose of Presentation

Action required by Board of Education regulation

Executive Summary

The proposed changes to the *Virginia Public School Bus Specifications* were developed in consultation with the Department's Specifications Committee, which is comprised of pupil transportation directors from school divisions representing each of the eight superintendent's regions, the Virginia State Police, school bus manufacturers, and Virginia school bus dealers. An additional meeting was held July 1, 2024, to receive input and feedback from a broader group of stakeholders on the proposed revisions to the Specifications that included superintendents, school board members, and parents. Attachment 1 is a summary listing of key changes proposed to the Specifications. The complete specifications document (Attachment 2) has been updated and revised to increase the safety and efficiency of various bus components and equipment, to incorporate various recommendations from the latest national specifications document, and to aid in the procurement of alternative fuel school buses. Additional notations have been made in the specifications document in alignment with [HB937](#), encouraging local school divisions to implement innovative low-cost or no-cost alternatives to transporting students to and from school on buses.

None of the proposed changes to the specifications represent significant deviations from standard industry practices. All the recommended specifications comply with the safety requirements of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Other changes are made for consistency with requirements in the *Regulations Governing Pupil Transportation* and the *Code of Virginia*.

Action Requested

First review: No action requested.

Superintendent's Recommendation

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends the Board of Education receive for first review the proposed revisions to the *Virginia Public School Bus Specifications* as presented in Attachments 1 and 2.

Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action.

Background Information and Statutory Authority

The Board of Education is authorized in Sections [22.1-176](#) and [22.1-177](#), *Code of Virginia*, to promulgate regulations regarding pupil transportation, including regulations relating to the construction, design, operation, equipment, and color of public school buses. The *Regulations Governing Pupil Transportation*, as approved in January 2004, deleted the sections that detailed the technical specifications for school buses and made them a separate document (*Virginia Public School Bus Specifications*) that requires periodic review and approval by the Board of Education. This permits the Virginia Department of Education to revise and update the bus specifications more efficiently than would be permitted under the process for revising regulations. It also permits the specifications to be updated more frequently to recognize new or emerging practices and technology. The *Virginia Public School Bus Specifications* are presented to the Board of Education for approval as necessary. The last revisions to the specifications were approved by the Board on January 24, 2019.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Department's Specifications Committee documented specification revision requests from pupil transportation stakeholders since the Board's last *Specifications* approval in January 2019. A proposed school bus specification revision summary was sent to all committee members in March 2024 for review and comment. The committee approved the proposed revisions on May 1, 2024. An additional meeting was held July 1, 2024, to receive input and feedback from a broader group of stakeholders on the proposed revisions to the Specifications. Attendees included representatives from Virginia parent-teacher association, local school boards, school division superintendents, school division staff, and the Specifications Committee. The proposed revisions to the *Virginia Public School Bus Specifications* are shown in Attachment 2.

Implementation and Communication

The revised specifications will be presented to the Board of Education for final review on September 26, 2024. Upon approval by the Board, the revised *Virginia Public School Bus Specifications* will become effective and listed on the VDOE website. School divisions will be informed of the approved specifications through VDOE's weekly newsletter update.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources

No significant fiscal or human resources impact is anticipated in developing and implementing the proposed changes to the *Virginia Public School Bus Specifications*. It is anticipated that any impact can be met by current VDOE and school division staff.