The following information from the National Academy of Sciences , the U.S. Department of Transportation and the school transportation industry reflect and represent safety data at a glance regarding yellow school buses and school transportation programs within the United States.

- An estimated 440,000 to 480,000 yellow school buses provide transportation service daily nationwide.

- Approximately 26 million elementary and secondary school children ride school buses daily throughout the United States, twice a day.

- That's more than 55 million student trips daily -- before adding an estimated 5 million for daily extracurricular activity round trips

- This equals approximately 10 billion individual student rides, or 20 billion boardings and de-boardings, annually, when you include the national estimate for activity trips, Head Start transportation, summer school and child care transportation.

- School buses travel approximately 4.4 billion miles each school year across the United States. To put this in perspective, the U.S. Department of Transportation publishes figures that show Americans drive nearly 3 trillion miles on U.S. highways each year. The average school bus operates about 9,000 route miles each year.

- Approximately 53 percent of all K-12 students in the country ride yellow school buses.

- The average school bus transports 54 student passengers. An average of 1.5 students are transported per car if a school bus is not available. The number of cars needed to transport students currently riding on one school bus is 36. (Source: American School Bus Council.)

- According to the National Safety Council, the national school bus accident rate is 0.01 per 100 million miles traveled, compared to 0.04 for trains, 0.06 for commercial aviation and 0.96 for other passenger vehicles.

- Therefore, the federal government considers school buses to be about nine times safer that other passenger vehicles during the normal school commute.

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 96 percent of the

estimated 8,500 to 12,000 children injured in school bus accidents annually are considered minor (scrapes, bumps, bruises, etc.).

- NHTSA calculated that 4 percent of the school bus-related injuries to children -- about 350 to 475 annually -- are serious (i.e. broken bones or worse) based on the medical community's widely accepted AIS or Abbreviated Injury Scale.

- An average of six children are fatally injured inside school buses annually.

- About 16 children are fatally injured as pedestrians in the loading & unloading zone around school buses annually. That's better than 200 percent improvement from 75 school bus fatalities in 1975; it is still not good enough.

- During the seven years between 1989 and 1996, 9,500 school-age children were killed during school hours while riding in all kinds of motor vehicles.

- The federal government considers school buses to be about nine times safer that other passenger vehicles during the normal school commute.

- According to data gathered for NHTSA's Fatal Analysis Reporting System, about 600 school age children are killed annually riding to and from school in motor vehicles other than school buses. These fatalities occur during school transport hours (7 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 5 p.m.), on school days (Monday through Friday) only, and during the typical 180 day school year, to children riding to and from school, mostly in automobiles.

- More than $6 billion in state funding is spent each school year for all public school K-12 transportation.

- America spends an average of $520 per regular ed child for transportation annually.

- America spends an average of $2,400 per special needs child for transportation annually.

- Nearly 40,000 school buses were manufactured during the 12 months of the 2006-07 school year.

- 350 pupil transportation delegates are appointed by the chief school officer in each state meet for a week-long conference once every five years to review and rewrite minimum standards and specifications for safe operation. The next National Congress on School Transportation is scheduled for May 2010 at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Mo.

- Three-point lap/shoulder occupant restraint systems are required by federal regulation on all newly manufactured small school buses under 10,000 lbs., but only seven states mandate their use. As a matter of practice, however, all manufacturers of small school buses install lap/shoulder belt occupant restraint systems on their buses.

- Three states -- New York, New Jersey and Florida -- currently require two-point lap belts on large school buses over 10,000 lbs.

- New Jersey not only requires lap belt installation on new large school buses, students are required to use them. In New York, use is only required if the local school district adopts a policy mandating their use. At last count, about 25 of the 725 districts in the state have done so.

- A law requiring lap belts is also active in Louisiana, but there has yet to be any appropriated funding for the restraint systems.

- California is currently the only state in the nation to require three-point lap shoulder belt occupant restraint systems on large school buses. It also requires three-point lap shoulder belt occupant restraint systems on small school buses. Texas passed a law requiring the three-point restraints on all school buses by 2010, but implementation is based on final funding by the state legislature.

- Great Britain requires lap belts on minivans used in youth transport, including school transport. The European Union has begun to require that coaches and minivans in member states be equipped with occupant restraint systems. Congress was debating mandatory lap/shoulder occupant restraint systems for the U.S. motorcoach industry.

Editor's note - Unless otherwise noted, data presented here is extrapolated from the annual STN Buyer's Guide that publishes state-submitted information.