



On January 21, 2021, President Biden signed [Executive Order No. 13998](#), “Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel.” It orders “Immediate Action to Require Mask-wearing on Certain Domestic Modes of Transportation.” The order took effect nationwide at 11:59 p.m. on February 1, 2021.

School buses are not mentioned specifically in EO 13998, and they appear to be legally exempted under [Section 5302 of title 49, United States Code](#) (see Section 14 – Public Transportation, Subsection B, item 4) which is referenced in the EO as “all forms of transportation as defined.” However, to assist school districts, charter schools, private schools, and contracted service providers in determining the proper course of action, the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) and the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) are providing the following considerations and recommendations:

- Consistent with our longstanding safety culture, school transportation operations and school bus providers should continue to participate, voluntarily or under federal, state, and local orders, in the national effort to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Wearing of masks by all school-related personnel and students, except when contradictory medical or special needs of individuals apply, is part of the prevention protocols that provide school bus drivers and other school personnel with protection they need and expect in doing their jobs. The protocols also protect students and provide parents confidence in the health and safety of the school bus ride. This is the premise of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 safety guidelines.
- Last week, in issuing its [recommendations for re-opening schools](#), a blueprint for action that we strongly support, the CDC outlined school-related safety stipulations for doing so, including use of masks by students and school personnel.
- On January 30, 2021, the CDC issued an [order](#) to implement EO 13998, “Requirement for Persons to Wear Masks While on Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs.” Within that order, CDC noted that essential transportation conveyances include, “Buses (which) bring America’s teachers and children to school.” Jason McDonald, CDC spokesperson, added: “School buses are included because the order applies to state and local conveyance operators (public schools), and passengers onboard such conveyances. The order also applies to private school buses because these are conveyances operated for a non-personal, commercial use.”
- The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) clarified this week that its Security Directive implementing EO 13998 does not apply to school buses.

NAPT and NASDPTS strongly urge all school systems to mandate the wearing of face masks by all students riding in yellow school buses to further ensure the health and safety of school bus

drivers, who must also wear masks. We recognize that nearly all school bus operations that have resumed service transporting students have already been requiring mask wearing and other health protocols. We are aware of and applaud these practices and the shared sacrifice of the nation's dedicated student transportation professionals before, during, and after the pandemic.

“School bus drivers are in direct line of exposure to children when they board and depart the school buses and sometimes to parents who come to the door of the school bus with their children. Requiring all student riders to wear face masks is critical to driver safety and the safety of the children,” said NAPT President-elect Rick Grisham.

Added Patrick McManamon, NASDPTS President, “Millions of children ride the yellow bus to school and back home every day. We need every school bus driver to be healthy and able to drive their school bus to ensure that can happen. Our associations and our members urge our nation's leaders to remember these essential workers in their decision-making about resource allocation.