

Good Morning. I am honored to be here today on behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Association for Pupil Transportation and I want to start by thanking H.E. Mattar Al Tayer, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of RTA, for the opportunity to speak to you.

I am very pleased to introduce you to the National Association for Pupil Transportation, which we call simply N-A-P-T, and discuss the new relationship between NAPT and the Roads and Transport Authority of the Emirate of Dubai.

NAPT is headquartered in Albany, NY, the capitol of New York State, which is about 270 kilometers north of New York City. I am Executive Director of Office of Pupil Transportation for the New York City Department of Education, which is the largest school system in the United States; I am responsible for the safe transportation to and home from school of more than 1.1 million students each day.

I am also President of NAPT.

NAPT is a not-for-profit organization created in accordance with US government rules and regulations; we provide a variety of education and information services to the \$15+ billion industry of more than 500,000 people who transport some 24 million children at least twice a day every school day in America. Over the course of our 38-year history, we have become the school transportation industry's largest and most diverse membership organization, with members around the world.

I am particularly pleased to acknowledge publicly today our members here in Dubai, who since the mid-1990s have been active and valued participants in NAPT. Thank you, very much, for your support and the important perspective you provide to our organization. Simply put, I would not be standing here today were it not for your commitment to our mutual goals and objectives.

NAPT's VISION is to be first and foremost in leading, supporting and developing world-class professionals who provide safe and efficient pupil transportation for our children, regardless of where they live.

We say that our MISSION is CLEAR - C-L-E-A-R - which is an acronym representing Communication; Leadership; Education; Advocacy; and Resources.

NAPT members receive timely information through the latest in professional educational programs, unique research, and thought-provoking communications in a variety of electronic and hard-copy formats. This enables them to develop practical solutions to today's school transportation, educational administration and other business-related challenges.

NAPT and its members are widely recognized as the most dynamic community of leaders in the pupil transportation field. We are known for being forward-looking and keenly interested in improving student safety. Indeed, our professional collaboration with you is emblematic of that passion and commitment to excellence.

In America, we have made the American school bus the safest form of transportation in the nation – safer than any other form of motorized transportation and safer even than walking.

Although the big yellow school bus is a standout success story in terms of service, safety and contribution to our public education system, its iconic status does not provide immunity from the forces of change. We continuously evaluate and reassess all assumptions and customary practices. We shift direction when needed to make sure our goals and objectives are met.

Indeed, there is now a major effort underway in America to examine still again, and then enhance school safety and security in the wake of a horrible incident two months ago where children were killed in a small town in Connecticut. We are participating in this process because nothing can be taken ever be taken for granted, and a good safety and security record is only as good as it is today. Tomorrow always looms with uncertainty, and a single event involving any school or any school bus on any day can fundamentally alter public confidence in what we do.

This active engagement, both in the routine aspects of what we do, and forward thinking to make sure all possible scenarios are considered, likely sounds very familiar to you. Leaders in the UAE, Dubai in particular, are also forward-thinking and action-oriented. Mr. Essa Al Dosseri, CEO of the Public Transport Agency at RTA, for example, is recognized world-wide for his leadership, particularly for work with the International Association of Public Transport. Abdul Aziz Abdulla Malik is perhaps equally well known, another highly regarded leader. Mohammad Al Janahi is a trusted and well respected colleague. These men, in fact, the entire team at RTA, are consummate, compassionate professionals dedicated to the well-being and success of your nation, your emirate and your citizenry.

Parents in Dubai should be proud to have them leading your nation's efforts to make sure the safe transport of children is a fundamental of your education system.

That's why we are so pleased to be here today, acknowledging the leadership and celebrating our professional collaboration.

Our intent in this endeavor is straightforward: we want to help you amplify the institutional culture of intelligent risk-taking and innovation coupled with the analysis of best practices that has been cultivated by your leaders at every level. This will position school bus transportation more competitively in the new marketplace of ideas and solutions to improve education and transportation in general and school transportation in particular, here in Dubai.

We are going to bring to Dubai annually a select group of individuals drawn from the worldwide school bus industry, including state and federal government officials, school transportation service providers, community leaders, manufacturers, suppliers and others, who stand out in their thinking about safe, effective and efficient pupil transportation. We intend to highlight best practices and creative ideas that will help you continue to lead the way for widespread improvement in school transportation throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Our first event together, which will be held here from April 21 to 23, will be about “Shaping Sustainable School Transportation with Policy, Attitude and Action”. It will be an inclusive yet select forum for policy makers, policy shapers and providers of relevant products and services to discuss and explore best practices in school transportation, particularly in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Regardless of where children go to school, or what language they speak, our primary objective as their caregivers is to ensure that every child arrives at school and returns home safely every day. Attaining that objective takes the effective and successful execution of many elements including selection of school bus equipment, retention of qualified school bus drivers and support staff, and planning of efficient and safety-sensitive routes and schedules. Attaining that objective also requires constant attention to traffic, weather, individual child needs, security, student behavior and more.

But more broadly it takes a commitment from the top down and the bottom up to work as a team with shared goals and keep lines of communications open.

In short, there can never be complacency in our business. We keep a sharp focus by never losing our sharp focus.

All of these elements must be addressed by every school system and reflected in its delivery of school transportation services---whether those services are delivered in North America, the European Union, Asia or MENA.

To this end, we collaboratively identified the following topics of discussion at our conference:

1. Regulation and Legislation
2. Planning and Operation
3. Safety in School Transportation
4. Technology & Security in School Transportation
5. Student Management
6. Managing the Challenges of Students with Special Needs
7. Marketing and Awareness

In addition to these educational sessions, the conference will include an exhibition area where everyone can come together and share information in an active, hands-on format. And, as always, there will be the many invaluable if informal conversations that occur as well.

Ultimately, the responsibility for the safety of our children lies with the leadership of our school systems and the sound management and diligence of the school transportation team from supervisors to drivers and mechanics. It's a team effort and every component is critical to the whole.

The transportation of children to and from school each day is a daunting task that is carried out with diligence and dignity by hundreds of thousands of dedicated women and men every day around the world.

In closing, I want to underscore that safe school transportation is a promise we make to parents and children. But it must never be viewed either in isolation or as an adjunct service. School transportation is fundamental to a quality education. The school bus

itself is a critical connection between a child's home and school. More broadly, the synergy between safe, reliable transportation and education is the hallmark of cultures and nations that value learning and achievement.

Your commitment to working with us to create this conference, and your commitment particularly to doing it right, reflects a passion for success. It's a noble endeavor because it signifies that children in the Middle East and Northern Africa will be given every opportunity to succeed on the complex world stage where more and more they will interact internationally like never before.

So, I strongly applaud the leaders of Dubai for their impressive leadership and investment in the future of your nation. Flying in to Dubai and seeing it up close, I want to tell you how spectacular it is. Your planning, architecture, and sense of community are nothing short of impressive.

The term "world class" comes instantly to mind.

Again, NAPPT is honored to be here and we thank you for the privilege of working together professionally. But more important, we are inspired by your dedication to learning and your passion for making your pupil transportation a world class standout.

I believe it was former United States President Harry S. Truman who said, "Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better." You are doing that here already and we look forward to helping you continue to do it for years to come.

Thank you.