

# Board Information Item

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	<div>Information Packet <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Board Agenda Information <input type="checkbox"/></div> <div>Board Agenda Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 01/22/2026</div> <div>Board Agenda Consent <input type="checkbox"/></div>
<b>Subject:</b>	Senate Bill 546 Required Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Costs
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Paula Barbaroux, Chief Operations Officer
<b>Policy/Code:</b>	Senate Bill 546 of the 89 <sup>th</sup> Legislative Session
<b>Priority and Performance Objective:</b>	Priority 4: Strong Financial Stewardship and Internal System Efficiency Objective 4.1: Transparent Financial Stewardship Objective 4.2: Effective and Efficient District Operations Objective 4.3: Long Range Facility and Capital Management Plan
<b>Summary:</b>	<p>Senate Bill 546 requires all school buses regardless of model year to be equipped with three-point seat belts for every passenger by September 1, 2029. Senate Bill 546 seeks to enhance student transportation safety by amending Section 547.701 of the Texas Transportation Code. The bill focuses on expanding and reinforcing requirements for three-point seat belts in school buses used to transport children. Specifically, the bill mandates that all school buses—whether owned or contracted by a district—be equipped with three-point seat belts for each passenger, including the operator. If a school board determines it cannot comply due to budget limitations, it must publicly vote on that determination and submit a detailed report to the Texas Education Agency (TEA). This report must include the number and types of buses with or without compliant seat belts and provide cost estimates for achieving compliance.</p> <p>The TEA advised school districts to make this determination before the end of 2025-2026 school year. School districts must report the above information in the TEAs Sentinel System where</p>

the agency is collecting information and costs. The TEA has indicated that potential grant opportunities may be coming in the future, which is speculated to be in 2027 or 2028.

GCISD has reviewed its bus fleet. That information is outlined below. GCISD does not currently have an allocation of general operating funds or bond funds to retrofit or replace the below-listed buses. Therefore, the District cannot comply with the mandate at this time and does not currently have the ability to commit to do so before September 1, 2029.

The school district must present the following information in a public meeting:

- The number of buses operated by the school district that are not equipped with seat belts, the number that are equipped with two-point seat belts (lap belt), and the number that are equipped with three-point seat belts; and
- The estimated cost to equip each bus operated by the school system with three-point seat belts.

GCISD owns and operates 48 school buses with three-point seat belts. These are used on daily routes and field trips. GCISD also owns and operates 16 school buses with two-point seat belts and 12 school buses that do not have seat belts. These buses are used on local field trips and the oldest model buses are used as spares when other school buses are under repair or are in service for preventative inspection and maintenance. The buses with two-point belts or without seat belts were purchased between 2007 and 2017.

The estimated cost from vendors to retrofit 28 existing buses is \$1,120,000 at an estimated \$40,000 per bus. These buses are not covered by any warranty due to their age. This work would have to be placed for bidding for a final and actual cost. No seating capacity would be lost through the retrofit. Due to age, the administration does not recommend retrofitting all buses. The recommendation is to plan in the future to retrofit eight of the buses that have lap belts (four transit buses and four special education buses model years 2017 and 2019) and plan to replace 12 buses before September 1, 2029, through a future bond.

**Attachments:**

**Recommendation:**

The recommendation is for the Board of Trustees to determine that it cannot currently comply with the Senate Bill mandate to

retrofit or replace school buses with three-point seat belts and will submit a detailed report to the Texas Education Agency reporting on the District's fleet and costs.