

Testimony to House K-12 Education Budget Committee  
Regarding HB2697 transportation bill.

Representative Patton and distinguished members of the committee:

My name is Dr. Martin Stessman. I am the superintendent of Shawnee Heights USD 450 and I am writing in support of HB 2697.

Shawnee Heights is in a unique position in that none of our students are able to safely walk to school. As a predominantly county district, city codes do not apply to our subdivisions and none of our schools are accessible by foot traffic on a sidewalk. Our parents count on us to pick up and deliver their students no matter where they live. We have students who live as close as a block to school whom we pick up because they cannot safely walk because they would be required to walk on the road during times when traffic is too busy to be considered safe by any reasonable standard. During times of inclement weather, rain or snow, a grade school student within walking distance would literally be forced to walk in the middle of a traffic lane to get to school. As a result, we transport over 2400 students a day.

We run 28 secondary school routes, then those buses turn around and run 26 early start elementary routes followed by 19 late start elementary routes. As you can see, most of our drivers drive three routes back to back to back. Last year we logged over 530,000 miles delivering students to school and returning them home. We believe we are as efficient as we can be in scheduling and routing in order to get our students to school and home safely. Still, the funding we receive from state transportation weighting does not begin to cover the cost of our transportation.

If HB 2697 is not enacted Shawnee Heights USD 450 will lose approximately \$100,000 in state transportation aid. This would require us to supplement our transportation budget even more with money from our general fund and place us at a disadvantage in trying to compete with our neighbors on teacher salaries.

I urge you do support HB 2697 and help us to get our youngsters to school safely.

Sincerely,

Dr. Martin Stessman  
Superintendent  
Shawnee Heights USD 450