**Unit L – Activity Bus**

**Learning Objectives**

After completing this unit, the trainee will be able to:

* Compare and contrast the dimensions of a multifunction school activity bus.
* Identify the differences of the multifunction school activity bus
* Describe ways to maintain acceptable student behavior on the bus.

# Introduction

Discussion: At first glance, what are some differences between the multifunction school activity bus (MFSAB) and a conventional style bus?

Multifunction school activity bus (MFSAB) means a school bus whose purposes do not include transporting students to and from home or school bus stops as defined in 49 CFR 571.3. Under NHTSA’s regulations, a multifunction school activity bus is defined as a school bus whose purposes do not include a school bus transporting students to and from home or school bus stops. An MFSAB must meet all FMVSSs applicable to school buses except those requiring the installation of traffic control devices (flashing lights and stop arms).

***Discussion:*** *Take time to compare the differences in Type A Activity Buses and other School Buses.*

**Vehicle Inspection**

Safety is the most important reason you inspect your vehicle, safety for yourself, and for other road users. Prior to driving, you should inspect the vehicle for any defects. During a trip, watch gauges for signs of trouble. Use your senses to check for problems. Look, listen, smell and feel. Check critical items when you stop, such as, tire, wheels and rims, brakes, lights and reflectors. A post trip inspection will insure that students are not unattended on the bus. The post trip inspection may also help find problems that could ensure a safe trip the next day.

**Basic Control of Your Vehicle**

To drive a vehicle safely, you must be able to control its speed and direction. Safe operation of a vehicle requires skill in; accelerating, steering, stopping and backing safely. Remember that you are the most important part of a moving bus. Get plenty of rest before getting behind the wheel, eat well, and stay fit. Buckle up for safety and control. If you are in a crash, a seat belt will keep you in your seat and allow you to maintain control of your vehicle. Be vigilant in watching out for vehicles in the Danger Zones. Danger Zones or blind spots around the bus are where crashes are more likely to occur. Always leave enough space between you and the vehicle in front of you. If you hit someone from behind, you are typically considered "at fault," regardless of the situation. Activity buses may require more stopping distances than other vehicles.

Consider these three factors to determine stopping distance; (one) perception time, (two) reaction distance and (three) braking distance.

1. Perception time: The time it takes you to recognize a hazard.
2. Reaction distance: The distance your vehicle travels between the time, you recognize a problem and the time you apply the brakes.
3. Braking distance: The distance your bus travels after you apply the brakes.

These three factors are affected by weather, visibility and your mental and physical condition. Braking distance is also affected by how fast your vehicle is traveling, the condition of your brakes and tires, and the pavement condition. For example, wet pavement can double your braking distance.

If your vehicle has antilock brakes, be sure that you understand how they work. Check your vehicle owner’s manual and practice braking before you go out on the road. Remember, never to pump antilock brakes.

**Yielding the Right-of-Way**

* Yield also means to stop if you cannot merge safely into the flow of traffic. Examples of yielding the right-of-way: When vehicles from different directions arrive at an intersection at different times, the vehicle that arrives first goes first. When vehicles from different directions arrive at the same time at an intersection with no signs or signals, the driver on the left must allow the driver on the right to go first.
* If the traffic lights at an intersection are not working, all vehicles coming to the intersection must stop. The driver on the left must yield to the driver on the right.
* Drivers entering an interstate from an entrance ramp must yield the right-of-way to traffic already on the highway.
* Drivers entering any intersection or roundabout must yield to traffic already in it.
* When entering a roadway from a private road or driveway, you must stop and yield to all traffic and pedestrians.
* You must yield to pedestrians or bicyclists who are crossing a street within a clearly marked crosswalk or at an unmarked intersection. Remember that turns on red are especially hazardous to pedestrians. Avoid conflict with pedestrians and bicyclists; permit them to cross the street safely.
* You must yield to funeral processions. Do not cut through, join or interfere with a funeral procession. Unless led by a police escort, the lead vehicle in a funeral procession must obey all traffic signs and signals. Other drivers in the procession may follow carefully without stopping and may use hazard lights (flashers) to indicate they are in the procession.
* You must yield to all military convoys. Never cut through or join a military convoy
* Roundabouts are circular intersections with an island in the center and have one or more lanes. Entering traffic must yield the right-of-way to pedestrians, and to traffic already in the circle. Each road approaching the roundabout is marked with a yield sign and may also have yield line markings on the pavement. Drivers must pay attention and obey the signs. After entering the roundabout, drivers must travel in a counter-clockwise direction.
* When approaching a roundabout, slow down. Use your turn signals to indicate where you want to go. If you plan to turn right, stay to the right as you enter the roundabout. If you plan to go straight, you may stay in either lane (if it is a dual lane circular intersection). If you plan to turn left, stay to the left as you enter the roundabout. As you approach the roundabout, slow down; look for the street and direction signs. This will help you know which exit to take. These signs should be posted along the roadside before you reach the roundabout. When you arrive at the roundabout, yield the right-of way to pedestrians and bicyclists. You also must yield to any vehicles already in the roundabout. Sometimes your entry point will be controlled by a stop or yield sign, or traffic signal. When the way is clear, you may enter the roundabout.
* While inside the roundabout, stay in your lane until you are ready to exit. Use your vehicle’s right turn signal to let drivers around you know what you want to do. Do not change lanes or take an exit before checking for vehicles that may be continuing through the roundabout in the lane next to you or behind you. Expect vehicles to be in blind spots you cannot see in your rearview or side mirrors. Quickly glance over your shoulder and check for any vehicles that may be in your blind spot.

**Changing Lanes**

* Before changing lanes, check your side and rearview mirrors for traffic approaching you from behind. Then, use your turn signal to let other drivers know you plan to change lanes. Check for other drivers who also may be moving into the same lane. Just before you begin moving into the other lane, quickly glance over your shoulder and check for any vehicles that may be in your blind spot. Whether you are changing lanes, passing, entering or exiting a highway, always use your turn signals and check traffic to the rear and sides. When driving on a multi-lane highway, stay in the right lane if you are driving slower than the traffic around you. The left lane is for passing only

**Passenger Safety**

* Explaining the rules at the start will help to avoid trouble later on. While driving, scan the interior of your bus as well as the road ahead, to the sides, and to the rear. You may have to remind riders about rules, or to keep arms and heads inside the bus. At stops, riders can stumble when getting on or off, and when the bus starts or stops. Caution riders to watch their step when leaving the bus. Wait for them to sit down or brace themselves before starting. Starting and stopping should be as smooth as possible to avoid rider injury. You must ensure this rider's safety as well as that of others. Don't discharge such riders where it would be unsafe for them. Always respond to unsafe behavior immediately.

**Steps for Safe Student Management**

* Informing the students of the rules and regulations and reasons they exist.
* Applying the rules and regulations fairly and consistently.
* Developing a friendly and helpful attitude.
* The driver should present his/herself as one who also follows rules and regulations.
* Patience and timing are also important tools, but do not expect to solve all problems the first time they arise.
* Good conduct equals safety.
* Follow School Board Policies.

**Rules for Safe Student Behavior**

An informal atmosphere which encourages pupils to relax and enjoy the ride is desirable. The following instructions should be given;

* Students should load and unload the bus in a reasonable manner.
* Students should proceed quickly and quietly.
* Students should not crowd or push.
* Students should show regard for safety.
* Students should be quiet and should not distract the driver.
* Students should not shout or become involved in other boisterous activities.
* Students should not talk with the driver while the bus is in motion except in an emergency.
* Students should show consideration for others. The bus driver should always concentrate on driving and not be distracted by disruptive activity on the bus.
* Students may be assigned seats – Follow local policy.
* Students should stay seated while the bus is in motion. They should go directly to their seats after boarding the bus and remain seated until the bus reaches its destination and has stopped.
* Students should not destroy or damage the school bus.
* No part of the student’s body should be outside the windows.
* Students should not throw litter or other objects while riding the bus.

School bus drivers should try to prevent behavior problems before they develop by doing the following:

* Students who behave in an unsafe manner, should be addressed immediately.
* When disciplinary action is required, the bus should be stopped in a safe place and secured, the ignition turned off, and the key removed.
* The driver should respond calmly and firmly.
* Students must not be discharged at locations other than their designated stops.

**Adjustment/Use of Mirrors**

Drivers must adjust the mirror prior to beginning any trip.

* Inside flat rearview mirror (located over the windshield). Adjust so the driver can view the top of the rear window in the top of the mirror. The driver should be able to see students, including the top of the students directly behind the driver’s seat. The driver should be able to see somewhat outside of the passenger side windows, but will not be able to see below the window level.
* Outside flat rearview mirrors (rectangular mirror on both sides of the bus). Adjust so the driver can see 200 feet or 4 bus lengths behind the bus, see the side of the bus, and see the rear tires touching the ground.
* Convex Mirrors (located below the flat mirror on both sides of the bus). Adjust so that the driver can see the entire area to the rear of the mirror along the side of the bus. The driver should be able to see at least one traffic lane on either side of the bus. If adjusted properly, all blind spots in front of and along both sides of the bus will be eliminated. There are still blind spots behind the bus.
* Crossover Mirrors. Adjust to see the entire area in front of the vehicle as well as the front bumper.

***Discussion: Discuss Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 111, mirror adjustment.***

**Blind Spots**

Blind spots are danger areas where vehicles around you cannot be easily seen. Before driving, always adjust the vehicle’s mirrors.

**Steering Position**

Hand positions on the wheel should be at the “8 and 4 o’clock” or “9 and 3 o’clock” position with the thumbs up and hands placed on the outside of the wheel. Many drivers use a “9 and 3” position due to the flat angle of the wheel. In addition, many drivers use the “push/pull” hand position technique when driving transit buses.

**Stopping**

The driver should place the entire foot gently on the brake pedal and then push softly with the toe or ball of the foot on the top of the pedal.

The driver should not push pedal at the bottom because it is hinged at the bottom and pressure there will not stop the bus. Before coming to a complete stop, the driver must release pressure to the brake slightly then reapply pressure to come to a smooth stop.

***Discussion: Pedal misapplication occurs when the bus operator applies the accelerator instead of the brake discuss the risk.***

**Turns**

* Right Turns

Utilize the four-foot rule (distance from the bus to the side of the road). Most right turns will begin when the driver can see down the curb line (looking out the entrance doorway) of the street onto which the driver will be turning. A sharp right turn may require more distance from the bus to the curb than the usual four feet. If there is a parked car on the street on which you are turning, less than 40 feet from the intersection, use the left side of that car as your “curb line.”

* Left turns

Left turns begin when the front of the bus is in the middle of the intersection. Check for tail-swing, clearance, and execute your turn.

**Backing**

Backing a bus should be avoided unless necessary. Backing is especially dangerous, and drivers must be particularly cautious if the need for backing becomes a necessity.

***Discussion: Discuss the dangers of backing, give some examples.***

**Lane positioning**

It is extremely important to effectively use mirrors. The driver should use the left and right mirrors to assure that the bus is not drifting to the right. Avoid staring straight down in front of the bus. The driver must keep vision aimed high. The driver must be observant of conditions down the road.

**Space Cushion**

**When Stopped**

When stopped, the driver should maintain a “space cushion” that will allow him/her to pull out and go around a disabled vehicle in front of the bus using only one lane to the right or left. The driver should adjust spacing for visibility, road and traffic conditions. Allowing for additional space may prevent the bus from striking a vehicle in front of it if the bus is hit from behind, prevent the bus from being hit if the vehicle in front rolls back and afford enough room to proceed around a disabled vehicle to the front using the only lane next to you.

**When Moving**

The driver should leave a clear space to the left, right, or front of the bus. Leave two 45-degree angle escape routes to the sides whenever possible. The driver needs at least two escape route choices. Continuously check the mirrors for vehicles that stay within your space cushion. Slightly decreasing speed will allow vehicles to pass and move out of the space cushion.

**Following Distance**

Use the two, three, and four, second rule to determine if you are following far enough behind the vehicle ahead of you.

At these posted speeds and on dry surfaces, this distance, in seconds, allows the driver to steer and brake out of a problem area.

2 seconds Under 35 MPH

3 seconds 35-45 MPH

4 seconds 46-70 MPH

You must change following distance when speed or road conditions change. Increase following distance when driving behind large vehicles that may block your vision, in bad weather or heavy traffic, when exiting an expressway, behind a motorcycle or bicycle or when being tailgated.

**Share the Road** It is our responsibility to adjust our driving to avoid others’ mistakes.

Remember to share the road and drive defensively.

**Unit Review**

1. To drive any vehicle safely, you must be able to control \_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. What are three factors that will affect stopping distance? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. The type A School Bus is much \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in size, than the type C Conventional School Bus.
4. Steps for safe student management are necessary for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ student transportation.
5. Always respond to \_\_\_\_\_ behavior immediately.
6. Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of conditions down the road.
7. When stopped, maintain a \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_that will allow you to pull out and go around a disabled vehicle in front of you using only one lane to the right or left.
8. Drivers should always adjust the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ before beginning any trip.
9. Avoid driving in someone else’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ spot.
10. It is our responsibility to be the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_driver.

**Answers**

1. Speed and direction
2. Perception time, reaction time, and braking distance
3. Smaller
4. Safe
5. Unsafe
6. Aware
7. Space cushion
8. Mirrors
9. Blind
10. Defensive