



# Brownsville Independent School District

Agenda Category: Conference Presentation Board of Education Meeting: 05/05/2026

Item Title: <u>Senate Bill # 546: Relating to Seat Belts on Buses that Transport Children.</u>	<u>X</u>	Action Information Discussion
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## BACKGROUND:

Senate Bill 546 Requires that by September, 1, 2029, all school buses in the State of Texas be equipped with three-point seatbelts for every passenger. This Legislation amended Transportation CODE 547.701(f) and directs the Texas Education Agency to collect data from school districts regarding the current bus fleet with seat belts and the estimated cost to replace or to retrofit buses to meet compliance. The following steps must be completed: Financial Feasibility, seat belt inventory and assessment, board presentation in a public meeting including number of buses by seatbelt type, number of buses in compliance, and not in compliance. All required data, including bus counts, cost estimated and board documentation, must be submitted to TEA through the Sentinel system by May 30, 2026.

As part of the district's proactive approach to student safety and alignment with SB 546, the district has been procuring school buses equipped with three-point seat belts since 2018 and will continue with this practice.

  
Eliud Ornelas  
Submitted by: Transportation Director

Approved for Submission to Board of Education:

Recommended by: Asst. Supt./Exec. Dir.

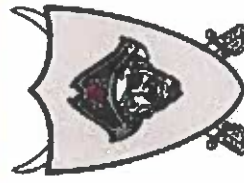
  
Dr. Alda T. Benavides, Interim Superintendent

Dr. Nellie Cantú  
Approved by: Chief Officer

*4/20/2026*



# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



# Senate Bill 546 Seat Belt Requirements

By

Mr. Eliud Ornelas



Mrs. Silvia Saldana Assistant Director	Mr. Heber Olguin Assistant Director	Mrs. Delilah Montemayor Assistant Director	Mr. Ricardo Ramirez Computer Systems Opns
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# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



**Mission:** The Transportation Department is committed to support student academic achievement through a collaborative effort by providing a safe, dependable, and efficient transportation services for all BISD students.

**Rider Eligibility:**

- Special needs students: required by law.
- Regular students: It is a privilege, must reside two or more miles from the zoned school and we provide services in hazardous areas.

**Operations and stats:**

- Transport ~12k students twice a day
- 225 Buses: 141 regular & 84 Special Needs
- Routes: 103 Regular & 64 SpEd
- Corner stops – strategically for efficiency (Regular R)
- 187 Licensed and certified Drivers of 187 Positions
- 66 Bus Monitors
- Travel ~2.5 million miles per year = ~100 times around the world
- Support extracurricular activities, 35,000+ trips/year
- Support other programs: Career Technology Education; vocational centers – cosmetology, welding, mechanics.....Many more
- We service about 100 Sq. Miles
- District is divided in 6 Geographical Clusters – Hanna, Pace, Porter, Lopez, Rivera, Veterans

**Current Automation:**

- RTA – Fleet Management
- Fuel Master – Fuel Management
- Traversa Routing and Planning Program (Tyler Co.)
- GEOTAB, AVL navigation programs
- RFID (Radio Frequency IDs program) through Traversa to track students as they scan their assigned RFID card when they board and deboard the bus using Tyler units (Tablets) on the bus.
- **My Ride K12** : app for parents (tracks buses and student location on real time providing a peace of mind to our community)





# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



# TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY SENATE BILL 546 REPORTING ON SCHOOL BUS SEAT BELT COST

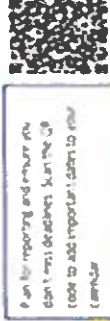
**Purpose of the Study**  
This study is being conducted in response to Senate Bill 546, which amended Transportation Code §547.701(f) and requires that all school buses transporting children be equipped with three point seat belts for every passenger. As part of this legislation, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will gather data from each school district regarding their current bus fleet and the estimated cost to retrofit those buses with three-point seat belts.

**GETTING STARTED WITH SB 546 REPORTING**

**Step 1 - Board Determines Financial Feasibility**  
The board must first decide whether purchasing buses equipped with 3 point seat belts fits within the district's budget and plan for the purchase if the board determines it is financially feasible and plan to proceed. Reporting can be completed in segments at this stage. If not, continue to Step 2.

**Step 2 - Seat Belt Inventory**  
Identify the number of buses in the fleet district owned or contracted that fall into each category:

- Fully equipped with 3 point seat belts
- Equipped only with lap belts (2 point)
- 4 or 3 point and lap belts
- Some seats with 3 point, others with no seat belts



Plan for reporting and ensure you don't miss deadlines. Submit the QR code to add important dates to your calendar.

**Step 2a - Retrofit Cost Estimate (District Owned Buses)**  
Request an estimated estimate to retrofit buses that require installation of 3 point seat belts to comply with Transportation Code §547.701(f)

**Step 2b - Cost Estimate (Contracted Bus Service)**  
Confirm that the bus service contract explicitly requires all buses used for student transportation to have every seat equipped with 3 point seat belts.

**Step 3 - Present to Board**  
In a public board meeting, present:

- The number of buses owned by or contracted for use by the district that:
  - Are not equipped with seat belts
  - Are equipped only with two point seat belts
  - Are equipped with three point seat belts
- The estimated cost to equip all buses with three point seat belts.

**Step 4 - Report to Agency**  
Report counts, costs, and board documentation in sections by **May 30, 2026**.

### Quick Checklist

- Step 1 - Confirm financial feasibility**  
Determine if the budget allows for purchasing buses with 3-point seat belts and plan accordingly.
- Step 2 - Gather inventory and Cost Estimates**  
Determine seat belt types in current fleet and obtain an estimate to retrofit buses with 3 pt seat belts.
- Step 3 - Present to the Board**  
Share inventory and cost estimates in a public meeting, retain agenda and minutes for reporting.
- Step 4 - Report to Agency**  
Complete the required reporting within the Bus Reporting Module of Sunburst by May 29, 2026.

Office of School Safety and Security  
October 2025

REPORTING WINDOW DEADLINE: MAY 29, 2026.



**Link: TEA**



# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



## To the State of Texas:

Establish, distribute, and require implementation of enforceable policies and procedures for seat belt use on school buses, with routine audits to ensure compliance with Texas Education Code 34.013, for all school districts in Texas so that every student and driver on school buses equipped with passenger seat belts is properly restrained by lap/shoulder belts or five-point harnesses on every trip. The policies and procedures should at a minimum include:

- mandatory pre-departure driver instruction to students to properly belt and periodic pre-departure inspection by drivers or other staff to ensure that each student is properly belted;
- periodic review of onboard video camera footage, when equipped, to verify seat belt use; and
- increase training and education of school administrators and staff, bus drivers, parents, and students about proper seat belt use and adjustment, seat belt policies and procedures, the safety benefits of seat belt use, and the importance of being properly belted. (H-23-25)





# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



## SB 546 Seat Belt Requirements

### Summary:

Requires all school districts to be equipped with 3-point seatbelts for every passenger and driver by Sept 1, 2029.

### Implementation Timeline

- SB 546 Effective Sept 1, 2025
- Presentation data and estimated cost to School Board to determine financial feasibility
- Board sends data to TEA by May 30, 2026
- Full Compliance required by Sept 1, 2029





# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



## Total Fleet - 225 Buses

Total Number of buses			
YEAR	REGULAR	SPEED	TOTAL
2001	0	1	1
2003	1	0	1
2004	5	2	7
2006	9	3	12
2008	1	2	3
2009	3	1	4
2010	0	2	2
2011	7	6	13
2014	30	5	35
2015	24	13	37
2016	5	5	10
2018	13	12	25
2019	6	0	6
2020	14	14	28
2023	10	9	19
2024	0	2	2
2026	13	7	20
	<b>141</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>225</b>

Safety Belt Equipment on Buses				
	No belts	Lap Belt	3 Point Seat Belt	SubTotal
Regular	98	43	43	141
SpEd	4	47	33	84
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>225</b>



# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



## Total Fleet to Be Replaced or Retrofit

Total Number of buses to REPLACE or RETROFIT			
	2014 or older	2015 or newer	Total
Regular	56	42	98
SpEd	22	29	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>149</b>





# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



## Retrofit at a Glance

QUOTES RECEIVED/per bus		
	INTERNATIONAL	THOMAS
2014 or Older	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 52,500.00
2015 or Newer Reg	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 37,500.00
2014 or Newer SpEd	\$ 38,000.00	\$ 37,500.00
*Price include floor replacement		

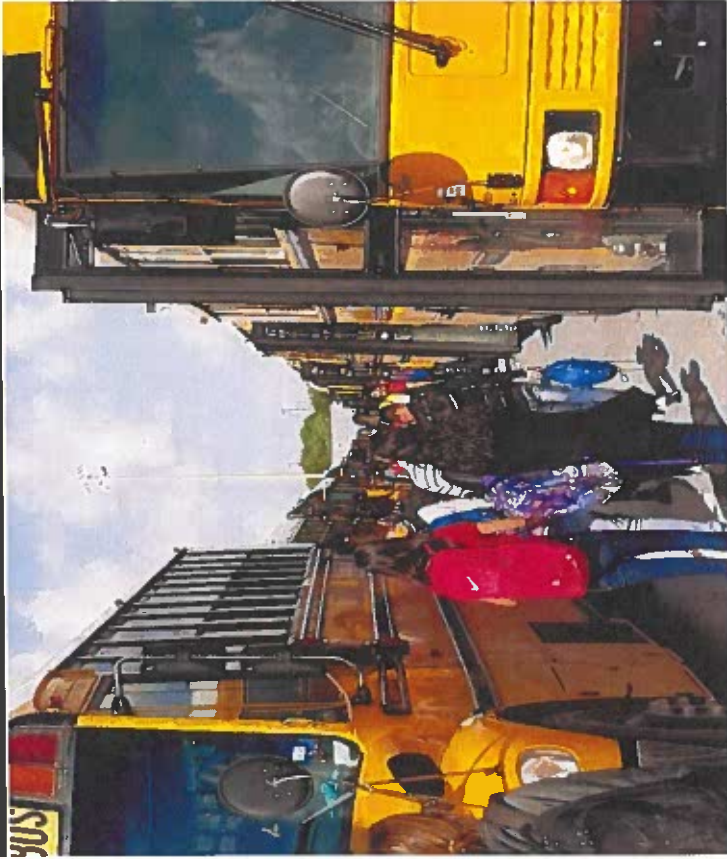
Cost to retrofit				
Cost	Regular	SpEd	Number of Buses	TOTAL
\$ 70,000.00	26	17	43	\$ 3,010,000.00
\$ 52,500.00	30	5	35	\$ 1,837,500.00
\$ 37,500.00	29	18	47	\$ 1,762,500.00
\$ 38,000.00	0	11	11	\$ 418,000.00
\$ 50,000.00	13	0	13	\$ 650,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>\$ 7,678,000.00</b>



TEA: As part of the required estimated cost reporting, school systems will be able to participate in a grant opportunity related to seat belt installation. Details pertaining to the grant will be the subject of a future TAA.



# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



## Replacement at a Glance

COST TO REPLACE 149 BUSES			
ITEM	Qty	Unit Price	TOTAL
Bus	149	\$170,000.00	\$25,330,000.00

Life of a bus is 15 years, as a spare is 20 years

### Factors to consider:

- Supply and Demand
  - Availability of parts: 8 to 10 weeks from PO
  - Many school districts retrofitting
    - Approximately 1200 school districts
    - Approximately 42000 school buses
- Scheduling of retrofits can impact operations
- Retrofitting must be executed by manufacturer or an authorized shop to meet safety standards
- (78)2014 or older buses are not worth investing \$70k
  - Old age, High Mileage, parts not available.....





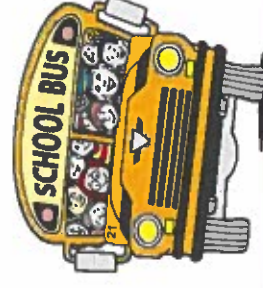
# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



## Recommendation:

Administration is requesting approval from the Board to submit this data to TEA and in light of the current budget situation, the replacement of 149 buses at **\$25,330,000.00** is not financially realistic for Brownsville ISD at this time.

As part of the district's proactive approach to student safety and alignment with SB 546, the district has been procuring school buses equipped with three point seat belts since 2018 and will continue with this practice.





# TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT



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Note:  
links for additional readings:

<https://www.nts.gov/investigations/Pages/HWY25MH014.aspx>

<https://www.nts.gov/investigations/AccidentReports/Reports/HIR2507.pdf>

Thank you



SCHOOL SAFETY  
AND SECURITY



# Guidebook for SB 546 Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Costs

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## Background

Senate Bill 546, passed during the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, strengthens standards for school buses transporting students in Texas. The bill amends Texas Transportation Code §547.701, with the addition of subsection (f), requiring that all school buses operated by or contracted for use by a school district be equipped with three-point seat belts for every passenger, including the driver.

If a school board determines that the district's budget does not allow for the purchase of buses equipped with three-point seat belts, the district must present a report in a public board meeting that includes:

1. The number of buses operated by or contracted for use by the district that:
  - a. are not equipped with seat belts;
  - b. are equipped with two-point seat belts;
  - c. are equipped with three-point seat belts; and
2. The estimated cost to the district to equip all buses with three-point seat belts.

The same information must be provided to the Texas Education Agency.

Additional information can be found at:



[Senate Bill 546 89th Legislature](#)  
[Transportation Code §547.701](#)

# Guidebook for SB 546 Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Costs




## Key Dates

### Plan Ahead with These Important Dates

The reporting window opens on November 11, 2025, and all submissions must be finalized by May 29, 2026. Please note that your submission may require uploading board agendas and meeting minutes. This means the information must be presented in a public board meeting, so be sure to allow enough time for that step in your planning.

Date	Event
10/30/2025	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
11/6/2025	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
11/11/2025	Study Opens
11/13/2025	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
11/20/2025	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
2/5/2026	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
2/26/2026	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
3/2/2026	3 Months Remaining to Return the Report
4/9/2026	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
4/16/2026	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
4/23/2026	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
4/30/2026	Office Hours – 10:00 A.M. CST
5/1/2026	Last Month to Hold Board Meeting for 5/29 Deadline
5/29/2026	Study Closes

Easily add these key dates to your calendar:



[Download ICS File](#)

# Guidebook for SB 546 Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Costs

## Pathway to Reporting



### 1. Ensure Proper Access to Reporting Tools in Sentinel

Required reporting will take place in Sentinel, within the new Bus Reporting Module. Superintendents and their designees will have access to this module without further action. To grant access to additional users, superintendents or designees can navigate to Tools → Security within Sentinel and assign the Bus Reporting Module as needed.

### 2. Acknowledge SB 546 Reporting Requirements

To ensure all schools systems are aware of the required reporting and have adequate time to complete the required actions, all districts are required to access the Bus Reporting Module in Sentinel, acknowledge the SB 546 Seat Belt Reporting information, and indicate whether they provide any form of student transportation, district-owned or contracted. If the district does not provide busing, the reporting requirement is considered complete, and the study will automatically close.

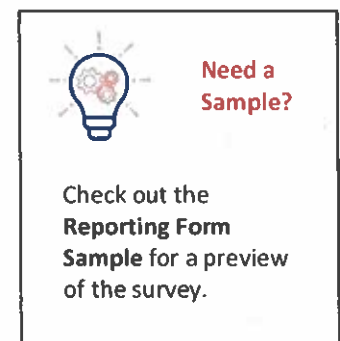
### 3. Determine Your Reporting Obligation

If busing is provided for students, determine the following:

- Are all LEA-owned buses equipped with 3-point seat belts for both the driver and every passenger seat?
- Does the bus transportation contract explicitly state that all buses used to transport students are to be equipped with 3-point seat belts the driver and all passenger seats?

If both questions can be answered “yes” for the applicable transportation type(s), no cost estimate reporting is required. Proceed to Sentinel, respond to the verification questions, affirm the information as true and correct, and the reporting requirement will be considered complete.

*If unable to answer “yes” for the applicable transportation type(s), proceed to Step 1.*



### 4. Engage the Board to Determine Financial Feasibility

The board is responsible for determining whether the district’s budget can support purchasing buses equipped with three-point seat belts, as required by Texas Transportation Code §547.701(e)(1). If the board confirms that funds are available for new buses with three-point seat belts, the district should retain a copy of that decision for reporting purposes.

# Guidebook for SB 546 Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Costs

## 5. Gather the Required Information

If you have LEA-owned buses, assess your fleet and determine how many of each bus you own:

- fully equipped with driver and passenger 3-point seat belts
- fully equipped with passenger 2-point (lap) seat belts
- no passenger seat belts
- mix of 3-point and 2-point seat belts
- mix of 3-point and no passenger belts
- mix of lap belts and no passenger belts

## 6. Review Warranty Impact

Determine whether any buses remain covered by a manufacturer or other warranty. Contact the manufacturer to confirm if installing 3-point seat belts would void that warranty. If so, record the number of affected buses, as this figure will need to be reported later.

## 7. Obtain Cost Estimates

Based on the collected seat belt data, contact vendors to obtain cost estimates for retrofitting buses so that all seats are equipped with 3-point seat belts. *Make sure to keep a written copy of each estimate, as this information will be needed later in the study.*



Don't know  
where to begin?

Reach out to your Education Service Center for help locating vendors who offer this service or to connect with districts that have already completed similar work.

## 8. Presentation to the Board

If the board determines the budget does not allow for the purchase of buses with 3-point seat belts, the district should prepare a report to be presented to the board during a public meeting. The report will need to include:

1. The number of buses operated by or contracted for use by the district that:
  - a. are not equipped with seat belts;
  - b. are equipped with two-point seat belts;
  - c. are equipped with three-point seat belts; and
2. The estimated cost to the district to equip all buses with three-point seat belts.

*You must retain a copy of the board agenda and minutes to upload when completing the study.*

## 9. Complete the Report in Sentinel

Log in to Sentinel and navigate to the Bus Reporting Module. From there, follow the steps to submit your report and upload both the cost estimate and the required board documents.

# Guidebook for SB 546 Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Costs



## Tools and Guidance

A collection of tools and guidance materials has been prepared to support the board and district in answering questions, gathering information, and completing the study. Office Hours are also available for additional questions. To register, log in to Sentinel and check the Events section.

TOOL OR GUIDANCE DOCUMENT	SOURCE	SUMMARY	LINK
<b>S.B. 546</b>	Texas Capitol	Final language for S.B. No 546	<a href="#">SB 546</a>
<b>Transportation Code §547.701</b>	Texas Capitol	Texas Transportation Code §547.701	<a href="#">Transportation Code §547.701</a>
<b>To the Administrator Addressed</b>	Texas Education Agency	TAA released on 10/23/2025	Appendix A
<b>Quick Start Guide</b>	Texas Education Agency	Quick Start Guide in a single page format	Appendix B
<b>Data Collection Form Example</b>	Texas Education Agency	Preview of Report	Appendix C

Additional questions can be emailed to the Office of School Safety and Security at [SafeSchools@tea.texas.gov](mailto:SafeSchools@tea.texas.gov)



## Grant Opportunity

A grant opportunity will be made available to eligible school systems after reporting closes. Notifications will be sent by email and through Sentinel.



## Appendices

**Appendix A:** To the Administrator Addressed

**Appendix B:** Quick Start Guide

**Appendix C:** SB 546 Seat Belt Study Reporting Form (SAMPLE)

Insert TAA Here when Finalized

**Appendix A**

# SB 546 Reporting on School Bus Seat Belt Costs Quick Start Guide



## Appendix B

### Office of School Safety and Security

## Purpose of the Study

This study is being conducted in response to Senate Bill 546, which amended Transportation Code §547.701(f) and requires that all school buses transporting children be equipped with three-point seat belts for every passenger. As part of this legislation, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will gather data from each school district regarding their current bus fleet and the estimated cost to retrofit those buses with three-point seat belts.

## GETTING STARTED WITH SB 546 REPORTING

### Step 1: Board Determines Financial Feasibility

The board must first decide whether purchasing buses equipped with 3-point seat belts fits within the district's budget and plan for the purchase. If the board determines it is financially feasible and plans to proceed, reporting can be completed in Sentinel at this stage. *If not, continue to Step 2.*

### Step 2: Seat Belt Inventory

Identify the number of buses in the fleet (district-owned or contracted) that fall into each category:

- Fully equipped with 3-point seat belts
- Equipped only with lap belts (2-point)
- Mix of 3-point and lap belts
- Some seats with 3-point, others with no seat belts

Plan for reporting and ensure you don't miss deadlines. Scan the QR code to add important dates to your calendar.



### Step 2a: Retrofit Cost Estimate (District-Owned Buses)

Request an itemized estimate to retrofit buses that require installation of 3-point seat belts to comply with Transportation Code §547.701(f).

### Step 2b: Cost Estimate (Contracted Bus Services)

Confirm that the bus service contract explicitly requires all buses used for student transportation to have every seat equipped with 3-point seat belts.

### Step 3: Present to Board

In a public board meeting, present:

- The number of buses operated by or contracted for use by the district that:
  - Are not equipped with seat belts
  - Are equipped only with two-point seat belts
  - Are equipped with three-point seat belts
- The estimated cost to equip all buses with three-point seat belts

### Step 4: Report to Agency

Report counts, costs, and board documentation in Sentinel by **May 30, 2026**.

## Quick Checklist

- Step 1: Confirm Financial Feasibility**  
Determine if the budget allows for purchasing buses with 3-point seat belts and plan accordingly.
- Step 2: Gather Inventory and Cost Estimates**  
Determine seat belt types in current fleet and obtain an estimate to retrofit buses with 3-pt seat belts.
- Step 3: Present to the Board**  
Share inventory and cost estimates in a public meeting; retain agenda and minutes for reporting.
- Step 4: Report to Agency**  
Complete the required reporting within the Bus Reporting Module of Sentinel by May 29, 2026.

Office of School Safety and Security  
October 2025

## SB 546 Seat Belt Costs Reporting Form (SAMPLE)

### Step 1: Initial Determination

Does your Local Education Agency provide buses for students (owned or contracted)?

Yes     No

*(If No, stop here and close the study.)*

### Step 2: Bus Compliance

Are all buses used to transport students, whether contracted or owned, fully equipped with 3-point seat belts as required Texas Transportation Code, §547.701?

Yes     No (If Yes, confirm on pop-up and close study)

### Step 3: Board Determination

Has the district’s board determined that purchasing buses equipped with 3-point seat belts fits within the district’s budget and plans to proceed with purchasing buses to come into alignment with Transportation Code §547.701(f)??

Yes     No *(If Yes, upload agenda/minutes from board meeting. Close survey)*

Upload agenda/minutes: [Attach File]

### Step 4: Bus Ownership

Select ownership type:

Owned     Contracted     Both

### Step 5: Bus Type and Seat Belt Status

Enter the number of buses in each category:

- Fully equipped with 3-point seat belts: \_\_\_\_\_
- Equipped only with lap belts (2-point): \_\_\_\_\_
- No passenger seat belts: \_\_\_\_\_
- Mix of 3-point and lap belts: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some seats with 3-point, others with no seat belts: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some seats with lap belts, others with no seat belts: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 6a: Cost Estimates – Owned Buses

- Total retrofit cost (whole dollars): \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of buses affected if warranty voided: \_\_\_\_\_
- Upload retrofit cost estimate (PDF): [Attach File]

### Step 6b: Cost Estimates – Contracted Buses

- Annual cost difference for revised contract: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Upload cost documentation: [Attach File]

### Step 7: Board Presentation Documentation Upload

- Upload agenda and minutes from public board meeting: [Attach File]