

# SafeGuard Case Study

## SafeGuard School Bus Seating Case Study Tippecanoe County Schools Lafayette, Indiana

Tippecanoe County Schools will be running 10 to 12 school buses (in a fleet of 143) equipped with FlexSeat starting in the fall of 2009. The decision to move to belted seating was made as a result of the availability of flexible seating through SafeGuard.

Transportation Director Chris Daughtry said he originally became convinced to add seat belts to the fleet after a presentation done by a NASDPTS representative at an Indianapolis STAI conference three years ago.



**Chris Daughtry**  
Tippecanoe Transportation Director

“The speaker made the case for belts and broke down some of the misconceptions,” Daughtry explained. “He presented some of the studies of crash testing that show belted seats are the safest way to transport students. That got my wheels turning, but I realized that budget-wise, there was no way we could add 25 to 30 more buses to our fleet to account for the fact that we only could put two passengers in each seat.”

The integration of belted seating moved to the back burner for a while, until Daughtry saw trade magazine coverage of FlexSeat following the 2007 NAPT conference. A recent accident in the district had heightened his concern about unbelted seating, especially in rural areas where accident potential is higher.

“We had been wanting to move to seat belts, and when I saw the capacity issue had been resolved, I got in touch with the Midwest Transit sales rep,” Daughtry recounted. “He estimated the additional cost to be in the \$10,000 range. Over the life of the bus, that seems like a pretty inexpensive insurance policy for a kid’s life.”

Daughtry did more research and brought the issue to the school board, whom he describes as immediately supportive of the expenditure. “The school board here has a very trusting relationship with administration,” he said. “We used the information from the SafeGuard website to back up our reasons for moving to belted seating. We’ve been very pleased with our decision.”

For the last two weeks of school, the first two FlexSeat-equipped buses were used on elementary routes. “With the elementary kids, it was funny how excited they were. That first day, you would have thought it was Christmas.”

Throughout the district overall, Daughtry says there has been very little reaction. “Most of the people we talked to in the community thought the buses already had belts, since there’s a seat belt law in Indiana.”