



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 89th 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](#)

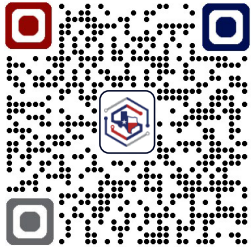
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Key Dates

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	Easily add these key dates to your calendar:  Download ICS File
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	

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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.



Need a Sample?

Check out the **Reporting Form Sample** for a preview of the survey.

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.

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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.



**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.

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.*

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.

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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
S.B. 546	Texas Capitol	Final language for S.B. No 546	SB 546
Transportation Code §547.701	Texas Capitol	Texas Transportation Code §547.701	Transportation Code §547.701
To the Administrator Addressed	Texas Education Agency	TAA released on 10/23/2025	Appendix A
Quick Start Guide	Texas Education Agency	Quick Start Guide in a single page format	Appendix B
Data Collection Form Example	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



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: Quick Start Guide

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

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



Appendix A

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]