

Charter Buses for Intrastate and Interstate Transportation (November 2009)

While each school system strives to provide your school buses and drivers for athletic, band and field trips, there may be times when this is not possible and either your transportation department or a school looks to use a charter bus company. An October 2009 accident of a charter bus carrying college students just south of Atlanta reminded us that it is essential that school systems know that the company they are contracting with for charter bus transportation is properly licensed, has proper insurance, is reputable and meets all requirements when it comes to the safe transportation of students. Additionally, you should be cautious that you may contract with a reputable company and they may then sub-contract with another less reputable company to do the work. You can prevent this by proper wording in the contract agreement.

In State Transportation

§ 46-1-1 exempts motor carriers and motor contract carriers "engaged solely in transporting school children and teachers to and from public schools and private schools" from Georgia Public Service Commission regulation (there is no license required if this is their sole function). For all other carriers the link below is a minimum starting point for checking the credentials of an **Intrastate** charter bus company (licensed to transport passengers **IN STATE ONLY**). You should be aware that the list contains carriers that run shuttle type buses as well as school buses and full sized motor coach (Trailways/Greyhound) type charter buses. You will want to look for a carrier who uses school buses that meet Georgia specifications or the larger motor coach type buses. Even though a company is on the list and they run Georgia spec school buses or the full sized motor coaches, there will still be some companies who you will not want to use. You are looking for companies with a "Satisfactory Record". Your school system may also want to further evaluate a company beyond just using this link. If the company is also an Interstate carrier, then more in-depth information can be found (see below). NOTE - Just because a company is a licensed Interstate (out of state) carrier, that does not mean they are a licensed Intrastate (in state) carrier. **UNLESS EXEMPTED BY 46-1-1 THEY MUST BE ON THE INTRASTATE LIST ACCESSED BY THE LINK BELOW.**

DIRECTIONS - 1.) Click on the link; 2.) Click on "List of Licensed Bus Carriers"; 3.) Click on the carrier to determine their rating; 4.) Note that you can sort by city to find carriers near you. Look to see if the charter company is on this list, and if they provide Georgia spec school buses/full sized motor coach buses and if they have a "Satisfactory Record".

<http://www.psc.state.ga.us/transportation/transportation.asp>

Out of State Transportation

The link below is a minimum starting point for checking the credentials of an **Interstate** charter bus company (licensed to transport passengers **OUT OF STATE**). You should be aware that the link contains carriers that run shuttle type buses as well as school buses and full sized motor coach (Trailways/Greyhound) type charter buses. You will want to identify a carrier who uses school buses that meet Georgia specifications or the larger motor coach type buses and check them out on this link (**this link does not provide a list, so you must either know the exact name of the carrier or the USDOT Number of the carrier to check their credentials**). Even though a company runs Georgia spec school buses or the full sized motor coaches and they are licensed, there may still be some companies who you will not want to use. You are looking for companies licensed for Interstate passenger transportation with a "Satisfactory" carrier safety rating. Additionally, this link contains extensive information to include vehicle inspection compliance, driver compliance and accident history. Your school system may also want to further evaluate a company beyond just using this link. NOTE - THE § 41-1-1 EXEMPTION **DOES NOT APPLY TO INTERSTATE CARRIERS**.

<http://www.safersys.org/CompanySnapshot.aspx>

DIRECTIONS - 1.) Identify a carrier you want to evaluate by their USDOT Number or exact name; 2.) Click on the link; 3.) Click on either "USDOT Number" or "Name", & enter the carrier information & click "Search"; 4.) Click on the carrier name to view their information. Look to see if a charter company is contained in this link, and they are licensed for Interstate passenger operation, and they provide Georgia spec school buses/full sized motor coach buses and they have a "Satisfactory" carrier safety rating. You may also want to evaluate other information provided.

Insurance -

You should always obtain a certificate of insurance when contracting a trip with a charter bus company. You should also check with the insurance company to verify authenticity. Interstate minimum requirements are \$5,000,000 and Intrastate minimum requirements are \$100,000/\$500,000/\$50,000. If your school system has higher insurance limits on your school buses then you may wish to require higher limits on the charter company as well.

Local School System Evaluation

As previously stated, a local school system may wish to evaluate carriers beyond just using the links provided above. As an example, Cherokee County does a more extensive evaluation of local charter companies each year and establishes a list of companies that their schools may use. For your information I am providing the attached list below of their approved charter bus companies for 2009 - 2010. Use this as you see fit.

It is essential that either the local school system (LSS) Transportation Department or Loss Control Department identify and communicate the charter bus companies approved for their LSS use. If left up to individual schools, there is the possibility that an undesired charter company will be transporting your students unsafely.

Hopefully this information will be helpful to you in the evaluation and selection of charter bus companies.