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NEW SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Soaked in a fair bit of history, school buses in the US have come to embody a distinct identity.



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APOLLO TYRES



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In North America, the school bus is itself a specific type of bus distinct from other buses. They are commonly painted a "yellow-orange" color (officially known as "National School Bus Chrome Yellow") for purposes of visibility and safety and equipped with specialized traffic warning devices. Full-size school buses can seat 50 to 90 passengers, but in many districts smaller vehicles are used as well. Such smaller vehicles are commonly known as "short buses", and are often used for low-density routes. Engine manufacturers include International, Genesis, Ford, Mack, and others; whereas bus bodies are manufactured by Blue Bird, Thomas and IC Corp.

Most U.S. school districts purchase the buses and hire their own drivers, while others engage the service of school bus contractors such as Laidlaw to perform this function. The average cost of a new school



bus is between \$60,000 and \$100,000 although used school buses can be bought for as little as \$3,000. School bus services in Europe are contracted out to local bus companies.

ECLECTIC EVOLUTION

The first school bus was horse-drawn, introduced in 1827 by George Shillibeer for a Quaker school at Abney Park in Stoke Newington, London, United Kingdom and was designed to carry 25 children. This proved to be the forerunner of the buses that we are so familiar with. Wayne Works, predecessor of Wayne Corporation, was founded in the United States of America in 1837. By 1886, and possibly earlier, it is known that the company was making horse-drawn school carriages which many people referred to as 'school hacks,' 'school cars,' 'school trucks,' or 'kid hacks.'

In 1914, Wayne Works dropped a wooden kid hack onto an automobile chassis, creating a predecessor to the modern motor school bus. In the bodies for school transportation the company produced through this era, passengers sat on perimeter seating, facing the center rather than the front of the bus. Entry and egress was through a door at the rear, a design begun in non-motorised days so as not to startle the horses. This was possibly a precursor to the rear emergency door commonly found on modern school buses.

In 1927, Blue Bird Body Company and Wayne Works began building all steel bus bodies. And then, in 1932, Gillig Bros. built their first school bus, which was an all-steel unit and by the mid 1930s, nearly every school bus manufacturer was using steel over wood or other materials for body construction. In the 1930s, many school bus manufacturers also began installing additional exterior 'rails' along the length of their buses to add structural rigidity and to aid in passenger protection. Known as crash, rub or guard rails.

In the 1930s, Wayne Works, Crown Coach, Gillig Bros., and other school bus body companies manufactured some transit-style school buses, that is, types with a more or less flat front-end design (known in modern times as 'type D' school buses). Crown Coach built the first heavy duty, high capacity, transit style school coach in 1932 and



named it the 'Supercoach'. In the 1950s, especially on the West Coast, on account of the 'Baby Boom', school districts were forced to consolidate, buy larger school buses, or both. As a result, the use of the transit style school bus skyrocketed during the mid 1950s. In 1959, Gillig Bros. introduced the very first rear-engine diesel-powered school bus. The C-180 Transit Coach soon afterwards became the most popular rear-engine transit-style school bus on the west coast.

SAFETY STANDARDS

Most school buses turned the now-familiar yellow color beginning in 1939. In April of that year, Dr. Frank W. Cyr, a professor at Teachers College at Columbia University in New York organized a conference that established national school bus construction standards, including the standard color of yellow for the school bus. The colour, which has come to be frequently called simply 'school bus yellow', was selected because black lettering on that hue was easiest to see in the semi-darkness of early morning and late afternoon.

Since then, the U.S. Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses which became applicable for school buses on April 1, 1977 has been the guiding force behind bus safety. It covers areas like bus emergency exits, rollover protection, joint strength, seating and crash protection and fuel system integrity.