

Larry Rigsbee, Director of Transportation - Sumner County Schools
850 Industrial Blvd
Gallatin, TN 37077

RE: aggressive bus drivers

Dear Mr. Rigsbee:

About three weeks ago around 4 pm while I was cycling south on Saundersville Road a school bus passed me with no more than a twelve inch clearance. The bus then turned into the Wynbrooke Subdivision. I was just past the Golden home and on the bit of a shoulder at that section. Several other cars had passed me and all had given me at least six feet of clearance and most moved completely into the left lane since there was no oncoming traffic. The school bus was also traveling about 10 mph faster than the rest of traffic.

This frightened me but by my arrival home the incident was forgotten. Last Friday a cyclist was killed in Chattanooga when a postal truck passed too closely and last week I learned two local school children had been killed in the past month in separate single car accidents. These have prompted this letter.

School bus drivers are the most aggressive drivers I routinely encounter on my bicycle rides in rural Sumner. They are the most likely to pass me on a blind curve, drive at an unsafe speed, and to pull out into oncoming traffic from a side road. They are no doubt under time pressure but so are the UPS and Fedex trucks who drive sanely. Not only is the school bus cargo more precious but is also watching and learning from the driver.

This is not to condemn every bus driver but the observed pattern has been consistent enough over time and geography to suggest an institutional problem. Please consider making changes to promote safer driving and specifically note the Jeff Roth and Brian Brown Bicycle Protection Act of 2007, which requires passing cyclists by at least three feet. On most Sumner county secondary roads this means pulling fully over to the oncoming lane.

Sincerely yours,
Bruce Day

Reply: March 16, 2009

Mr. Day,

Thank you for your recent email. I have given this information to the Area Coordinator for the area you have mentioned. We will take your concerns seriously and look at ways to improve service to our community.

Thank you,

Clint Barnes
Sumner County Schools
Pupil Transportation Safety Coordinator