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Department of Transportation  
and Public Facilities

Juneau, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Alaska DOT&PF Launches School Bus Audio Alert Pilot Program**

***New safety feature alerts drivers of school buses via 511 app.***

**(FAIRBANKS, Alaska)** – In a continued effort to enhance safety for school children, the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) has partnered with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District to launch a school bus audio alert system. Through this innovative pilot project, drivers can now receive audio alerts on their smart phones when approaching a school bus, thanks to the 511 Alaska mobile app.

This pilot program, currently available only in the Fairbanks North Star Borough, alerts drivers of buses operated by Durham School Services. The audio notifications are designed to remind drivers to exercise caution, helping protect children as they board and depart from school buses.

To start receiving audio alerts about nearby school buses, drivers need to:

1. Download the 511 Alaska mobile app from their smart phone's app store.
2. Activate Drive Mode by pressing the steering wheel icon at the bottom left corner of the app's map screen or through the app menu by selecting the three white lines in the upper left corner.

- 3. Ensure Auto Drive, Audio Alert, and Auto Dim are all toggled on, and that Location Services are enabled on the phone.

Once Drive Mode is active and the app remains open while driving, audio alerts will notify drivers when they approach school buses, as well as about construction, road conditions, and maintenance work. The screen can dim or sleep while the alerts remain active.

The program uses GPS data from school buses, linked with the 511 Alaska traffic alert system. Alerts are designed to trigger based on the driver’s speed, providing notifications at a greater distance for faster-moving vehicles. Drivers will hear the audio prompt: *“School bus. Caution. School bus ahead.”*

To avoid unnecessary alerts, alerts have been turned off in lower-speed areas within the city, and steps have been taken to help prevent multiple notifications from being triggered for school buses that are within each other’s geofence.

The pilot will continue in the Fairbanks North Star Borough throughout the year. DOT&PF will make adjustments based on feedback from the public, school district staff, and bus drivers. After a successful testing phase, the department plans to explore expanding the program to other school districts across Alaska.

For more information about school bus alerts visit: [Bus Alert Website](#)

To sign up for 511, visit: [Alaska 511](#)

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The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities oversees 237 airports, 9 ferries serving 35 communities along 3,500 marine miles, over 5,600 miles of highway and 839 public facilities throughout the state of Alaska. The mission of the department is to **“Keep Alaska Moving** through service and infrastructure.”

[Main Newsroom Page](#)

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