

## **Minutes of the Arizona School Bus Advisory Council**

**Meeting held on February 11, 2026**

**Arizona Peace Officer Standards Training, Board Room**

**2643 E. University, Phoenix, Arizona 85034-6914**

1. **Welcome and Call to Order** – Chairperson Franklin called the meeting to order at 10:00am MST. and welcomed the other Council members, the public in attendance and virtually.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance was performed**
3. **Roll Call** – The following Council members were present Nicholas Franklin (Chairman), Trace Tolby (Co-Chair), Denice Hall, Jason Nelson, Tom Hartman and Captain Vern Havens. Council members appearing virtually were Kela Powers, Ashley Berg, Nicholas Lloyd and Sean Ross.
4. **Members of the public-** One in attendance
5. **Attendees appearing virtually-** Aaron Charley, Aimee Manjarres, Annette Martinez, Anthony Ledesma, Bryan Slaughter, Carlos Chiquete, Chantell Waggoner, Cori Radford, Cynthia Peterson, Dale Wyman, Danny James, Debbie Hurt, Debra Murillo, Doug Holland, DUSTIN HASTINGS, Eddie Wheeler, Eric Kissel, Felicia Francis, Ilene Willie, James Barbee, Jeanne Vandemark, Jeff Kingsley, Jennifer Clark, Jerrald Goodman, Joey Begay, Jordan Tower, Justin Bonilla, Justin Glover, Karma Valenti, Kenneth Hughes, Lacey Elefant, Leticia Valenzuela, Linda Coronado, Maria Rocha, Mark Curtis, MaryJo Landreth, Mashayla Dawn, Meagan Scott, Michele Parmley, Norma Frye-George, Patricia Rivas, POST AV Service, Rebecca Mendoza, Robert Gray, Ronald Schepers, Ronald Snow Jr., Sam Gonzales, Veronica Martinez, Vivian Poulette, William Bailey, William Olivas
6. **Approval of the Meeting Minutes dated January 14, 2026** – Co-Chair Trace Tolby made the motion, and Captain Vern Havens seconded the motion to approve. All members were in favor and the motion passed.
7. **Members of the Public requested to speak-** None
8. **Updates from Each Study Group-**Trace Tolby is assigned to Driver Requirements and held his first meeting on January 29, 2026. Thirteen (13) people were present. The

discussion included Physical Performance Test (PPT) requirements and drug testing requirements. Mr. Tolby's next meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.

Chair Nick Franklin is assigned to School Bus Operations and Hours of Service. Seven (7) people were present at the first meeting. Discussion was held regarding Hours of Service. The group is leaning toward a thirty-four (34) hour reset; however, further research is required.

Tom Hartman is assigned to School Bus Chassis and Alternative Vehicles. His first meeting was held on February 6, 2026. Eight (8) people attended, including three (3) bus vendors: Bus West, Canyon State/Blue Bird, and RWC. The next study group meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2026. The group plans to use national standards (NCST) as a guide, which meet FMVSS requirements and have recently been updated. The focus will be on electric buses, as the current Minimum Standards do not contain this section.

Denise Hall is assigned to Special Needs. The group held its first meeting on January 29, 2026, and a second meeting on February 5, 2026. Approximately fifteen to seventeen (15–17) people attended each meeting. Ms. Hall stated that the group works through one section at a time and has developed a proposal for the medication section for Special Needs. This proposal will be presented at the next STAC meeting.

Jason Nelson is assigned to 15-925. His first meeting was held on February 4, 2026. Seven (7) people were invited, and four (4) were in attendance. This section did not require many changes, as the 15-925 revisions were previously approved by STAC and the Attorney General's Office. Mr. Nelson voiced concern regarding how the study group sessions will obtain clarification on comments or questions when discussing changes to the Minimum Standards. One concern involves 15-925 drivers being non-DOT drivers and therefore not required to complete a five-panel drug screen, and how to address this within the currently approved rule.

Paul Swietek addressed Mr. Nelson's concern and advised that questions may be submitted directly to the Department. He stated that submitting written questions to the Department may be in the best interest of the group to allow adequate time for a response. Mr. Switek also mentioned the possibility of having the Department attend a study group session but was unsure whether this would be permissible.

Mr. Kenneth Hughes responded by requesting that such questions be submitted to him in writing so he can research what is acceptable.

Mr. Nelson also mentioned that the group conducted a read-through of one section and identified significant work and research still needed regarding the current rules. Kela Powers, who attended virtually, agreed with Mr. Nelson. She stated that the groups need to carefully review each section and avoid moving too quickly to ensure student safety. Recommendations will not be made until multiple meetings have been completed by the study groups.

Mr. Nelson also noted that he covers Training and Driver Requirements for drivers and instructors. His first meeting on that topic is scheduled for February 17, 2026.

9. Jason Nelson requested clarification regarding the Study Group processes and how each group can track meeting dates and times to avoid overlapping with other groups. Chair Nick Franklin recommended creating a Google Calendar and sharing it with all study groups. Chair Franklin also requested that all recommendations be sent directly to him.
10. Kela Powers asked whether there was an update on the Emerging Technology study group. Mr. Franklin advised that notification to those members would be sent out this week.
11. Paul Swietek spoke regarding the creation of new sections within the current Minimum Standards. He stated that it is acceptable to create a new rule number and corresponding section header for any rule the group wishes to implement.  
Jason Nelson expressed concerns about creating new sections and how to proceed without wasting time. Mr. Swietek advised that the group should review the statutory authority to ensure the proposed section aligns appropriately. If it does not, the group may need to pursue legislative review.
12. Ashley Berg spoke virtually and asked for further clarification on when we will receive legal guidance on the recommendations. Paul Swietek from DPS spoke and provided a response that these are not required to go to the Attorney General's Office. Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Hughes also spoke and agreed with Mr. Swietek.
13. Chair Nick Franklin stated we received a recommendation from Ashely Berg and Sean Ross that any recommendation needs to go for legal review prior to being released to the public for comment. Mr. Franklin stated this would be added to the next agenda for discussion and vote.
14. Chair Nick Franklin stated the Department will need to renew their rule making waiver that expires at the end of May. Mr. Swietek agreed that the department will be seeking a renewal and will provide and update on the current Article 3, 925 with the Governor's Office and Attorney General at the next meeting.
15. Chair Nick Franklin asked for ideas for the next agenda. Captain Vern Havens made a motion that we have a formalized process and how we will proceed with legal review for the study groups. Denice Hall seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Kela Powers made a motion that each working group provide another update, Captain Vern Havens seconded. Paul Swietek will provide an update on the 925 rulemaking.

16. **Schedule future meeting-** Chairman Nicholas Franklin stated we have future meetings scheduled to ensure availability. The next scheduled meeting is set for March 11, 2026, at 10:00am.

17. **Meeting was adjourned at 12:39 MST.**

By:

Kimberly Thomas, Administrative Supervisor, DPS Student Transportation