

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

In April 2003, a school bus crash in Florida where the roof of the bus collapsed resulted in an investigation of certain school buses manufactured by Carpenter Manufacturing Company. The results of that investigation led the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to publish recommendations limiting the uses of these buses.

After the release of the NHTSA recommendations, the Minnesota State Patrol, the state agency responsible for inspecting Minnesota's school buses, issued an order requiring all Carpenter school buses with defective roof welds to be taken out of service (not all Carpenter buses were affected by the defective welds). A school district could put the affected bus back in service by: (1) having a certified welder repair the roof welds; (2) limiting the use of the buses to routes where the bus speed would not exceed 45 miles per hour; (3) refraining from using the bus for student activity trips; and (4) if possible, limiting the use of the bus to a back-up bus.

According to preliminary information, there are approximately 40 school districts that have a total of about 115 Carpenter school buses with potential roof defects.

This bill creates a process for school districts with Carpenter school buses to receive a loan to pay for part of the cost of replacement buses. The loan is then repaid in the subsequent four years through a local levy.

Section

- 1** **School bus loan.** Authorizes a school district to receive a loan from the state in FY 2006 of up to \$30,000 times the number of Carpenter school buses in its bus fleet that may have potentially defective welds. Requires the district's school board to adopt a resolution seeking the loan. Authorizes a school district to levy 25 percent of the amount of the loan in each of four years beginning with taxes payable in 2006. Requires the Department of Education to withhold general education aid in fiscal years 2007 to 2010 in the amount of the district's levy for that year to repay the loan.
- 2** **Appropriation; school bus loan revenue.** Appropriates \$3,630,000 from the general fund in fiscal year 2006 to the commissioner of education for loans to school districts with qualifying school buses.