



MEDIA RELEASE

Department of Public Safety

Ohio Department of Public Safety • Cathy Collins-Taylor, Director
www.publicsafety.ohio.gov



EDUCATION • SERVICE • PROTECTION

Ted Strickland, Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 3, 2010

Contact: Tom Hunter, Ohio Department of Public Safety, (614) 466-6178
Glenda Lamont, First Group/First Student Inc., (513) 684-8731

FIRST STUDENT INC., ODPS REACH SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT ON MIAMI VALLEY VIOLATIONS

Probation, financial penalties imposed against Cincinnati-based pupil transportation provider

COLUMBUS – Cincinnati-based First Student, Inc. has agreed to pay a \$50,000 fine and to remain under a probationary period through Sept. 30, 2010 under the terms of a settlement agreement resulting from violations discovered at the pupil transportation carrier's Miami Valley location in southwest Ohio, Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) Director Cathy Collins-Taylor announced today.

First Student acknowledged that it had violated Ohio Administrative Code provisions because an August 2009 audit of school bus driver records at its Miami Valley location near Dayton indicated that certain drivers did not have current Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI&I) background record checks on file. Subsequently produced information from ODPS revealed that the majority of violations related to Ohio School Bus Driver Certificate of Training (T-9) records, and not to BCI&I records checks as initially reported.

At the time this violation was discovered, First Student was working under a probationary period with state officials as a result of a settlement agreement signed with ODPS in late 2007 for similar violations in First Student's Central Ohio service area. The 2007 settlement agreement expired Nov. 14, 2009.

Under the terms of its latest settlement agreement with ODPS, First Student Inc. has agreed to the following:

- A period of probation to run through Sept. 30, 2010. During the probationary period, First Student shall comply with all laws, statutes and rules governing pupil transportation and school bus driver records;
- Retention of an independent third party auditor to perform monthly audits at random First Student locations for a period of one year, from April 1, 2010 to March 30, 2011. The third party auditor shall promptly report the results of any audit and any corrections/remedies implemented in response to the audit findings to ODPS, which may take revocation action or any other appropriate action permitted by law if subsequent violations are discovered;

- more -

- Payment of a fine of \$50,000 to the State of Ohio Highway Safety Fund; and,
- Violations of the agreement can result in further penalties and fines, including revocation of First Student's pupil transportation license. In addition, First Student has agreed to pay a \$250,000 penalty if it fails to comply with the auditing requirements in the agreement.

"The Ohio Department of Public Safety takes very seriously any violation of state administrative code or law. We believed this matter could be resolved without any further hearings or proceedings, and First Student has been responsive and cooperative throughout this disciplinary process," said Director Collins-Taylor. "This settlement agreement effectively establishes a clear benchmark for compliance, ensuring safe pupil transportation without creating an unnecessary hardship for Ohio school districts currently served by First Student."

###