

How RATSA Got Started

The Rochester Area Transportation Supervisors Association actually got started in 1956. Bill Wilson, Director of Transportation at Greece Central School District, Nelson Morton, Director of Transportation at Hilton School District, Les Fish, Director of Transportation at Rush-Henrietta Central School District and Ed Woodams, Head Bus Driver at Greece Central School District, would meet from time to time. They would discuss maintenance problems and other issues that they had mutually been confronted with in their daily operations. They often brought their head mechanics with them to these informal meetings. They set up a policy of working together on supplying each other parts for emergency repair of motor and chassis parts, etc.

These pioneers had the privilege of knowing and trusting one another very well. They had the desire to see people involved in school transportation organized, knowing it would benefit each one of them in their school district.

This group would attend New York State Education Department transportation workshops, always held in Oswego, New York at the time. When they attended these workshops conducted by State Education Department staff, they would find area transportation people together, discussing their mutual problems, also.

Since they felt so strongly about the local area transportation people being organized, in the fall of 1966, an announcement was sent to all school districts in Monroe County, plus other nearby school districts, asking them to attend a meeting to consider forming an organized group of people involved in school transportation.

On October 25, 1966, Wilbur Mauk from the American National Red Cross and Bill Wilson invited local transportation supervisors to attend an evening seminar on Red Cross First Aid training and a portion dedicated to mutual problems that local transportation supervisors were experiencing. Some of the items discussed were Transportation Supervisors' Organization, salaries, responsibilities, growth and projections of the positions, cooperative purchasing, evaluation and analysis. The last line of the agenda read: "This is an excellent opportunity for us to "get off the ground" and would hope all of you will make sure you set aside the time to attend." This meeting took place on Tuesday, November 1, 1966, at the Red Cross Chapter House, located at 276 South Clinton Avenue South in Rochester, New York.

The November 1st meeting was attended by the following people:

Bill Wilson – Greece Central School District
Les Kincaid – Spencerport Central School District
Les Fish – Gates Chili Central School District
Nelson Morton – Churchville-Chili Central School District
Robert Jackson – Rochester City School District
Al Justus – Red Cross
Richard Sheldon – Pittsford Central School District

Luther F. Schildt – Hilton Central School District
W. Edward Woodams – Rush-Henrietta Central School District
Rodney B. Maslanka – 2300 Ridge Road East, Rochester, NY 14622
Alvin Jolly – Brighton Central School District
Mary Amyot – Fairport Central School District
Wilbur M. Mauk – Red Cross Safety Services

The next meeting was held on December 8, 1966 at the Rush-Henrietta Central School District, Transportation and Maintenance Building on Erie Station Road, West Henrietta, New York at 8:00 p.m.

The December 8th meeting was attended by thirteen districts, one of which was a contractor. They included the following:

Brighton Central School District – Alvin Jolly
Churchville-Chili Central School District – Nelson Morton
Fairport Central School District – Mary Amyot and Dave Felker
Gates Chili Central School District – Les Fish and John Lombardo
Golden Arrow School Bus Contractors – Emerson “Stretch” Breth
Greece Central School District – Al Rioux and Joe Palumbo
Hilton Central School District – Luther Schildt
Penn Yan Central School District – Rusty Barnes
Rochester City School District – Robert Jackson
Rush-Henrietta Central School District – Edward Woodams and Jack Gaffney
Victor Central School District –
Webster Central School District – Curly Higley
Wheatland-Chili Central School District – Lou Doucette

These people voted to organize what was known at the time as “The Transportation Supervisors Association of the Rochester Area”. An insignia was designed and approved, officers were elected and ground rules were set. One rule enacted was that all evening meetings are to end by 10:00 p.m. Programs were planned and developed during the first four or five meetings.

The featured speaker for the very first meeting was Les Fish, Director of Transportation at Gates Chili Central School District. Les shared with the group the process that he used to route school buses using maps and pins. They also had personnel from the State Education Department come in to speak on topics such as state aid, routing data SBM-14 forms, school bus capacity, load formulas, etc. On special occasions, meetings were held at the Cartwright Inn located in Rush, New York from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

During the 1973-74 school year, the association changed its name to the Rochester Area Transportation Supervisors Association (RATSA) by a majority vote of its members.

The Rochester Area Transportation Supervisors Association (RATSA) is a chapter of the New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT). RATSA has members that

have been recognized by the NYAPT for excellence in the field of communications and dedication to our industry. In 1982, NYAPT created the “Art Schock” award for excellence in communications in honor of the late Art Schock (former NYAPT President and editor of their newsletter). Jack Gaffney (Rush-Henrietta CSD) was the first winner of the “Art Schock” award in 1983. In 1987, Linda Cary-Coleman (Monroe #1 BOCES) received the “Art Schock” award. Then in 2001, David Dwyer (Geneseo CSD) received the “Art Schock” award. Then in 2002, Jack Gaffney was inducted into the NYAPT Hall of Fame. In 2006, Mary Amyot (Fairport CSD) was inducted into the NYAPT Hall of Fame. Mary was an excellent communicator across New York State and New York State’s first female Director of Transportation in the early 1960’s. She was a founding member of RATSA and first Region 1 Director of NAPT from 1974-1977. In 2006, RATSA had its fourth member awarded the “Art Schock” award from the NYAPT membership to Peter Lawrence (Fairport CSD).

Note: Historical information provided by:

Jack Gaffney, Retired Director of Transportation Rush-Henrietta CSD,

Peter J. Morris, Retired Director of Transportation Gates Chili CSD,

Peter Lawrence, Director of Transportation Fairport CSD