



2025 Illegal School Bus Passing Prevention Campaign

Media Buy Summary

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1.0 Executive Summary

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) 2025 Illegal School Bus Passing Prevention campaign aims to get the motoring public to instinctively stop for a school bus when its stop-arm is out and red lights are flashing. The campaign emphasizes the life-or-death consequences of ignoring the law and the critical role drivers play in protecting children's safety.

To best engage the target audience for this campaign, NHTSA will implement an omnichannel paid media strategy outlined in the 2025 Annual Media Work Plan. This omnichannel strategy will include video, audio, out-of-home (OOH), digital display and paid social media, aligning with the consumption habits of the target audience. The three media vendors supporting this plan demonstrate proficiency in reaching the target audience across these channels and utilizing tactics that leverage their passion points. This strategy is pivotal in reaching NHTSA's target audience because it ensures consistent, cohesive messaging and increases the chance of higher reach and engagement where the audience regularly consumes media.

This year, National School Bus Safety Week runs from October 20–24. The 2025 Illegal School Bus Passing Prevention campaign runs two focused flights: one before the safety week (August 18–31) and one during and immediately after (October 20–November 1). The selected dates ensure one flight aligns with the start of the school year for many. August 18–31 captures a national median, reaching those who return to school in late July/early August and those preparing to return after Labor Day. This timing also leverages high Labor Day weekend traffic for added reach and engagement. The late October flight remains timed with National School Bus Safety Week but shifts slightly later to avoid mid-October fall breaks.

State-level campaign extension opportunities are available for reference in Section 6.0 for state departments of transportation (SDOTs) and state highway safety offices (SHSOs) who wish to develop media plans or adapt tactics and approaches for their campaigns during the national flight.

2.0 Campaign at a Glance

2.1 Planned Campaign Assets

Campaign materials are available at TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov.

Figure 1: Campaign Assets

Language	Asset Title	Types/Lengths	Additional Assets
English	For Them	Web banners (available in standard sizes) Accompanying static/animated social graphics and :06 16x9 animated videos	Live Reads Copy (:05, :10, :15, :30 and :60)
Spanish	For Them	Web banners (available in standard sizes) Accompanying static/animated social graphics and :06 16x9 animated videos	Live Reads Copy (:05, :10, :15, :30 and :60)

2.2 Advertising Period

National paid advertising will run in two flights:

- Flight 1: August 18–31, 2025
- Flight 2: October 20–November 1, 2025

Heavier weight and added value opportunities will be emphasized during National School Bus Safety Week (October 20–24, 2025).

2.3 Working Media Budget

The total budget for the 2025 Illegal School Bus Passing Prevention campaign is \$1.8 million.

2.4 Target Audience

The target audience is the motoring public, 18 years old and older, including Spanish-speaking adults of the same age demographic. A secondary focus is on novice drivers, who may be less familiar with the stop-arm laws in place across all states and the District of Columbia to protect child pedestrians.

3.0 Media Goals and Strategy

The goal of the 2025 Illegal School Bus Passing Prevention campaign is to reduce the number of vehicles illegally passing stopped school buses and decrease related injuries and fatalities, ensuring safer journeys for children traveling to and from school. To increase awareness and visibility of the dangers of speeding, the media plan must quickly build reach and frequency, ensuring the target audience is exposed to NHTSA's message three to five times over the four-week campaign. Campaign optimization will focus on delivering high-quality impressions and meaningful engagement to ensure the message resonates with the audience.

3.1 Channel Overview

NHTSA will implement an omnichannel paid media strategy that includes video, audio, out-of-home (OOH), digital display and paid social media. This approach will use media vendors tailored to the target audience's media consumption habits outlined in the 2025 NHTSA Annual Media Work Plan.

- **Video**—Video encompasses media placements that use video creative and can run on linear (traditional) TV or online video (OLV) tactics, including mobile video. Since the target audience watches videos across multiple platforms, these tactics are planned holistically to consider the viewer's journey with the messaging across platforms. The success of linear TV will be measured by reach and frequency.
- **Audio**—Audio encompasses media placements that include audio creative across digital audio (streaming) and podcasts. Since the target audience listens on digital audio platforms, these tactics are also planned holistically to consider the listener's journey with the messaging across platforms. The success of podcasts will be measured by reach and frequency. Digital audio success will be evaluated by listen-through rate (LTR) and click-through rate (CTR) on audio companion banners.
- **Out-of-Home**—Out-of-home advertising (OOH) is a form of advertising that people see as they go about their day outside their homes. Traditionally, this includes billboards, bus shelters, benches, restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, stadiums and everything in between. The success of these placements is measured by reach and impressions.
- **Digital Display**—Digital display media consists of image ads rendered on websites and apps to reach users across the web. These ads can appear in standard sizes or larger formats with rich media features. Display ad engagement is measured by CTR and, in the case of rich media, by the engagement rate (ER).
- **Paid Social Media**—Paid social media is comprised of visual and video ads on key social networks as users scroll through their feeds and other content. The success of paid social media will be measured by video completion rate (VCR), view-through rate (VTR) and ER for video creative and CTR for display.

3.2 Media Vendor Selection Strategy

Activating upon the target audience's passion points is crucial to building a meaningful connection with them. As referenced in the 2025 NHTSA Annual Media Work Plan, four areas emerge for the target audience as key passion points for campaign engagement: sports, fashion, online experiences and gaming, and music and film.

Media vendors are selected based on the ability to activate nationally across one or more of the identified channels and effectively and efficiently reach the entirety of the campaign's target audience. Media vendors must also demonstrate expertise in implementing tactics that engage with the target audience within the key passion point areas.

4.0 Selected Media Vendors

The 2025 Illegal School Bus Passing Prevention campaign national media plan includes the media vendors listed below. Given NHTSA's omnichannel paid media strategy, some vendors are utilized across multiple channels to maximize reach and ensure effective message delivery.

Figure 2: Media Vendor Channel Mix and Measurement Benchmarks

Channel	KPI Goals	Vendors
Video	Linear TV—Reach and Frequency OLV—VTR: 35%+/30% for social VCR: 80%+	Sinclair
Audio	Digital Audio—LTR: 85%+ CTR: .05%+	banMe Sinclair
OOH	Reach and Frequency	banMe
Digital Display	CTR: .14%+	banMe Sinclair
Paid Social Media	CTR: .10%+ VTR: 30%–40% ER: .50–15%	Sinclair XOMAD

Additional tactical details for each media vendor are provided in alphabetical order.

In the details below:

** Denotes custom content*

^ Denotes custom assets created from existing brand assets

banMe—General and Spanish-Language Markets[^]

banMe is a programmatic digital advertiser that uses dynamic ad campaigns to seamlessly connect audiences across various channels and digital platforms. banMe specializes in creating data-driven campaigns tailored to a brand's identity through an omnichannel approach to ensure a consistent brand experience across devices and platforms. Insight-driven approaches are leveraged to refine strategies and optimize campaigns to ensure high performance and success.

To maximize visibility and impact, banMe will use a mix of targeting strategies across all channels, such as audience, contextual, keyword, retargeting, preferred publisher and location-based targeting, to ensure the message reaches the audience in the most relevant settings.

Audio

banMe will create a digital audio spot derived from NHTSA's live-read copy to help add broad reach across the campaign audience. Reminders of school bus zone safety and campaign messaging will be incorporated. The audio spot will run

alongside a companion banner, driving home these safety messages while the audience is in their vehicle.

The audio portion of banMe’s plan is programmatic digital audio running across several audio partners to ensure efficiency and effective reach across English and Spanish-language audiences. “Second screen” retargeting will be included as an added element to target users when listening to digital audio and simultaneously using another device or app. This tactic allows banMe to retarget listeners who engage with other apps or websites while streaming audio or to re-engage them on those platforms after they have heard the ad. Reaching users across multiple screens and touchpoints will reinforce the campaign message and increase the likelihood of driving engagement.

OOH

Programmatic digital OOH (DOOH) will strategically place ads in high-traffic areas identified by FARS data as top markets with a higher propensity of school bus violations and/or fatalities, including near schools, neighborhoods and rural highways. Placements in areas that resonate with the target audience and are popular destinations before and after school hours, such as shopping areas and gas stations, will also be included.

Digital Display

banMe will promote road safety by serving high-impact ads to generate awareness around school bus protocols through a cross-device high-impact floater unit for both general and Spanish-language markets. This expandable-option unit has :06 video capability and will be paired with a standard display unit for higher reach and recall. Cross-device display ensures NHTSA’s campaign message reaches the target audience consistently across their phones, tablets and computers.

Sinclair—General Market*^

Sinclair operates more than 190 television stations across the United States, with a presence in over 100 markets. Its content is delivered via various platforms, including over-the-air, multi-channel video program distributors and digital streaming. One of Sinclair’s most relevant assets is its sports programming, which provides extensive coverage of professional sports leagues, including the NBA, MLB, NHL and college sports, all of which are major passion points for members of the target audience.

Sinclair’s media plan centers around the custom partnership, “Friday Night Rivals x NHTSA.” Partnering with Friday Night Rivals (FNR), the No. 1 broadcaster of live high school football nationwide, gives NHTSA a culturally relevant and fitting platform to deliver its school bus safety message directly to younger drivers and their influencers at the heart of where driving habits, community norms and peer behavior are formed: high school football games.

Video

Sinclair will deploy a custom segment titled “The NHTSA School Bus Stop of the Game” that turns a defensive highlight into a moment of public safety education. A live, in-game highlight segment featured during every FNR broadcast across the

country will run each week, with the FNR team selecting and spotlighting the best defensive play, or “stop,” in the game, branded as the “NHTSA School Bus Stop of the Game.”

Each segment will include on-screen graphics, audio mentions and custom announcer reads that reinforce NHTSA’s message.

Figure 3: Prototype of Sinclair’s “NHTSA School Bus Stop of The Game” Segment



NHTSA will receive two :30 commercials in each Thursday Night Lights and FNR regular-season game, both on-air and streaming platforms. The video will run across linear TV and OLV game live streams.

Audio

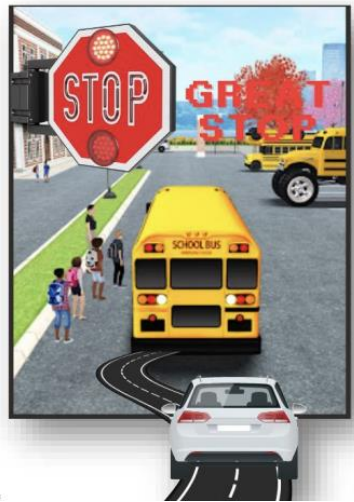
Campaign live reads will run across all high-profile Sinclair podcasts, including “The Triple Option” with Rob Stone, Urban Meyer and Mark Ingram III; “Throwbacks” with Jerry Ferrar and Matt Leinart; “Unfiltered Soccer” with Landon Donovan and Tim Howard; and “BFFR” with Sydney Leroux and Ali Riley.

Podcast hosts will also highlight the custom segment, “Stop of the Game,” and the upcoming FNR broadcast.

Digital Display

To further engage audiences and reinforce school bus safety, Sinclair will launch an interactive display unit titled “Follow the Team Bus.” Players are prompted to follow the team bus to the FNR game by navigating the route on-screen. They encounter key moments along the way, including several school bus stops with flashing red lights and an extended stop-arm. To be successful, players must stop and wait until the bus signals and get the team to the game. If they proceed without stopping, the game ends with a campaign safety message.

Figure 4: Prototype of Sinclair’s Digital Display Imagery



This unit will run across high-traffic digital placements and custom integrations on FNR websites and social channels.

In addition to the display unit, Sinclair will implement national high-impact homepage takeovers of its websites, including sports and weather pages, with FNR and “Stop of the Game.” Site and homepage takeovers will run as added value.

Paid Social Media

As part of the paid social media portion of the plan, Sinclair will distribute weekly “Stop of the Week” organic and targeted social content, along with added value :15 and :30 video feature posts titled “The Missed Game.” This video highlights a high school football stadium under the Friday night lights. A young player’s photo on a sports locker is shown, indicating that making the mistake of not stopping for a school bus can have severe consequences.

Each segment will also be posted across official FNR Instagram, Facebook and X channels, ensuring consistent national visibility throughout the football season.

During FNR broadcasts, NHTSA campaign logos, in-game inclusions and features will highlight NHTSA’s message.

Finally, dark social postings will be implemented to target drivers. Dark social is a targeted ad on social media that does not appear on the brand’s profile or timeline; it represents a significant but often overlooked source of influence and word-of-mouth marketing. This strategy involves publishing the ad directly through partner accounts rather than on FNR’s primary organic social media profile. This allows Sinclair to leverage these third-party pages’ existing audience and perceived authenticity for enhanced visibility and engagement.

XOMAD—General and Spanish-Language Markets*

XOMAD is an influencer marketing agency that empowers brands, advocacy groups, government agencies and public-sector organizations to reach communities through large-scale networks of trusted local creators and influencer-led campaigns. The agency specializes in building massive influencer communities—particularly nano- and micro-influencers—and uses a proprietary tool to analyze over 65 million creator profiles. The tool filters for quality, engagement, follower authenticity, demographic targeting and audience overlap. This enables them to identify effective matchups with core audiences, maximize audience overlap and ensure campaigns meet key frequency thresholds for real impact.

For the 2025 Illegal School Bus Passing campaign, XOMAD will vet creators’ audio and video; flag any unsafe keywords, fake followers and brand conflicts; and assess overall sentiment scores based on the target audience.

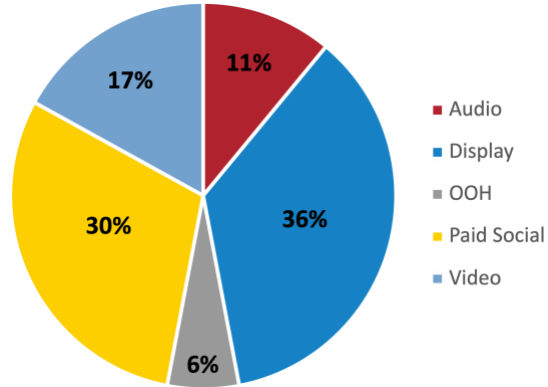
Paid Social Media

XOMAD will activate a broad mix of 15 influencers to create 45 pieces of content to be posted across Instagram and YouTube. Influencers will help drive national awareness of school bus stopping laws and child-safety risks during the back-to-school season. Social content will drive accurate comprehension of when and where motorists must stop for a school bus by utilizing plain-language content that corrects common misconceptions while sparking online conversation about safe driving norms.

XOMAD’s strategy will encompass general umbrella messaging, posts aimed at the general population and younger drivers.

Additionally, paid boosting over the two flights will increase the amplification of influencer posts and extended messaging. A minimum of 7.5 million impressions is guaranteed over the course of the two flights.

5.0 Campaign Summary



**Inventory is not guaranteed until insertion orders have been issued; therefore, all impressions are estimates only.*

Channel	Tactic	Vendor	2025 Budget	Estimated Paid Impressions	Estimated AV Impressions	Estimated Total Impressions
Audio			\$200,000.00	9,547,170	0	9,547,170
	Podcast	Sinclair	\$100,000.00	2,000,000	0	2,000,000
	Digital Audio	banMe	\$100,000.00	7,547,170	0	7,547,170
Display			\$653,000.00	59,768,089	33,447,620	93,215,709
	Display	Sinclair	\$275,000.00	8,800,000	0	8,800,000
	Display	Sinclair	\$32,000.00	4,000,000	7,000,000	11,000,000
	Display	Sinclair	\$19,800.00	1,650,000	4,400,000	6,050,000
	Display	Sinclair	\$26,200.00	1,746,660	3,000,000	4,746,660
	Display	banMe	\$150,000.00	15,000,000	0	15,000,000
	Display	banMe	\$150,000.00	28,571,429	19,047,620	47,619,049
OOH			\$100,000.00	4,444,444	0	4,444,444
	OOH	banMe	\$100,000.00	4,444,444	0	4,444,444

Paid Social			\$539,063.00	13,750,000	1,400,000	15,150,000
	Paid Social	Sinclair	\$239,063.00	7,650,000	0	7,650,000
	Paid Social	XOMAD	\$300,000.00	6,100,000	1,400,000	7,500,000
Video			\$307,937.00	10,150,000	1,000,000	11,150,000
	Linear TV	Sinclair	\$212,709.00	6,806,693	0	6,806,693
	CTV	Sinclair	\$73,228.00	2,343,307	0	2,343,307
	OLV	Sinclair	\$22,000.00	1,000,000	1,000,000	2,000,000
Grand Totals			\$1,800,000.00	97,659,703	35,847,620	133,507,323

6.0 State-Level Campaign Extensions

The state-level plans can execute several strategies to build upon the base paid media reach provided in the national plan.

Video

The plan will use linear TV and online video to reach the target audience with entertainment, gaming and sports programming. This will run on appropriate network apps via full episode players, OTT services and across the web. The state-level plans can build off this base by including broadcast TV programming that efficiently reaches the target audience and increasing local community amplification on local programming.

Audio

The audio plan includes digital audio (streaming and podcasts) nationally and will be used for its efficiency and, due to its in-vehicle strength, its ability to build frequency. States can consider local radio buys that allow local on-air talent to lend their voices and social networks to enhance the message further or add to the programmatic digital audio on a hyper-local amplification level.

Digital Display

The target audience uses digital media heavily, and a digital display effort should be a significant part of state-level plans. This can include using publisher-direct efforts outside of those sites on the national plan or programmatic partnerships. States can consider utilizing rich media units for added display extensions.

Paid Social Media

Social media also plays a significant role in the lives of target audiences and is recommended for state-level plans. Social media plans can include video and/or display creative and are a good complement to enhance reach and engagement for the campaign. Additionally, incorporating state-level paid and non-paid influencers and leveraging their social media presence can further amplify campaign impact. These influencers may include local radio personalities, community advocates, first responders, educators or even popular regional content creators on platforms like Instagram Reels and YouTube. Their trusted voices and community presence can help deliver NHTSA messaging in a relatable and authentic way, especially when tailored to local audiences.

Out-of-Home

One of the main benefits of OOH advertising is its ability to reach a large audience, which can be seen by anyone who passes by an ad. This includes traditional formats as well as DOOH, such as gas station TV, which is especially impactful during high-travel periods like the holidays. Together, OOH and DOOH offer the ability to reach people with NHTSA messaging throughout their day and perhaps in critical moments while actively driving or fueling up. As such, they should be considered to extend the reach and amplify awareness of NHTSA messaging on state-level plans.

Rural Markets

If state-specific data indicates that the campaign should include rural areas, then attention should be paid to broadband penetration to ensure adequate reach into those areas for digital tactics. States and regions with areas of low broadband penetration should consider supplementing the audio and OOH buys. This should only be considered applicable for states with rural market issues to factor into plans.

7.0 Glossary

Video

Advertising-Based Video on Demand (AVOD): Ad-supported video streaming.

Audience Targeting: Using data points to target specific population segments based on demographics, interests and behaviors.

Automatic Content Recognition (ACR): ACR is a technology that leverages a content database to recognize and identify video and audio content with which a user is actively engaging.

Brand Safety: Keeping a brand's reputation safe when they advertise by ensuring that ads do not run adjacent to content that goes against brand guidelines.

Connected TV (CTV): Another term for Smart TV, CTV refers to any TV that can be connected to the internet and access content beyond what is available via the standard offering from a cable provider. CTVs are designed to provide a more immersive experience for TV viewers by delivering interactive features, such as web browsing, social networking, video-on-demand, video streaming and regular TV content.

Linear TV: TV service where the scheduled program must be watched at a specific time and on a particular TV channel.

Over-the-Top (OTT): A device connected to a TV that directly provides streaming media as a stand-alone product to viewers over the internet, bypassing telecommunications, multichannel TV and broadcast TV platforms that traditionally act as a controller or distributor of such content. Popular examples are Roku, Chromecast, Amazon Fire Stick, Apple TV and other major gaming consoles.

TV Everywhere: TV Everywhere refers to a type of subscription business model wherein access to streaming video content from a television channel requires users to "authenticate" themselves as current subscribers to the channel.

Programmatic TV: A TV ad buy that uses data and automation to target specific consumer audiences precisely.

Subscription Video on Demand (SVOD): Similar to traditional pay-tv packages, SVOD allows consumers to access an entire content catalog for a flat rate, typically paid monthly. Examples of SVOD include Netflix, HBO Max, Disney+ and Amazon Prime. Typically, they do not offer advertising opportunities.

Synched: Uses a technology platform to automatically trigger a digital ad campaign based on what was viewed on TV. This could extend to video ads on laptops, mobile devices, tablets, display ads, ads seen on social media or search marketing.

Second Screen: A mobile device used while watching TV, especially to access supplementary content or applications.

ThruPlay: The number of times a video is played to completion or for at least 15 seconds.

TrueView: A YouTube video ad format that gives the viewer options, the most common of which is the ability to skip the advertisement after five seconds. Sponsors pay only for ads viewed in their entirety or until 30 seconds have elapsed.

Audio

Audio Streaming: Delivering real-time audio through a network connection.

Average Quarter-Hour (AQH): The average number of persons listening to a particular station for at least five minutes during a 15-minute period.

Terrestrial: Any radio signal that travels along the land, is broadcast from a land-based station and is received by land-based receivers (AM/FM radio).

Digital

Esports: A multiplayer video game competition played for spectators, often team-based and played for prize money. Esports are live-streamed and involve commentators and analyses like “traditional” sports.

Free-To-Play Games: Free-to-play (F2P) is a business model for online games in which the game designers do not charge the user or player to join the game. Instead, they generate revenue from advertisements or in-game sales, such as payment for upgrades, special abilities, unique items and expansion packs.

Live-Streaming: A gamer shares their gaming experience with fans/followers by live broadcasting their game. Some streamers consistently play the same games, and others try different games or follow trends.

Metaverse: A universal and immersive virtual world.

Native Advertising: A form of paid media that matches the look, feel and function of where the ad appears. Native ads are often found in social media feeds or as recommended content on a webpage.

Programmatic Digital: Automated bidding on advertising inventory in real-time for the opportunity to show an ad to a specific customer within a particular context.

User-Generated Content (UGC): This refers to any form of content, videos, text, testimonials and audio, that has been posted by users on online platforms.

General

Cost Per Thousand (CPM): The cost of delivering 1,000 gross impressions.

Flight: Advertising timing strategy where ads or commercials are run during a period (called a flight). The higher the weight of the advertising, the more often it is seen.

Frequency: The number of times you touch each person with your message.

Quintile: Viewers, listeners, readers or consumers of a particular medium are ranked according to their usage and then divided into five equal groups, or quintiles, ranging from the heaviest to the lightest in media consumption.

Reach: The number of people you touch with your marketing message or the number of people exposed to your message during a given time.