

Debate!

Should ads be allowed on school buses?

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R.J. SANGOSTI—THE DENVER POST/GETTY IMAGES - An advertisement is displayed on a school bus for a district in Thornton, Colorado.

In 11 states across the USA, school buses are now doing more than just transporting students. They're also serving as rolling billboards. These school buses carry advertisements on the outside. Restaurants, insurance companies, banks, and other businesses pay for the ads, hoping to attract more customers. And it's a way for the schools to make money as they face deep budget cuts.

"We've seen a lot of income generated by the ads," Devra Ashby told TFK. She is the spokesperson for School District 11 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She is also the mother of a third grader. "With the budget cuts we've experienced, we look at any way that can bring money into the schools." Last year, District 11 made more than \$15,000 from school-bus ads.

In addition to Colorado, states such as Arizona, New Jersey, and Texas allow ads on the outside of their school buses. The idea appears to be catching on. In Georgia, some school-district leaders are suggesting putting ads on their buses too.

School districts need to ensure that the ads are appropriate for kids, according to Michael Beauchamp, chief executive officer of Alpha Media. This company works with businesses in several states to create ads for school buses. "The districts won't allow ads for things like beer, cigarettes, or politics," Beauchamp told TFK.

But not everyone is in favour of school buses having ads on the outside. That includes Georgia's Department of Education. Spokeswoman Dorie Nolt told TFK, "We strongly believe that advertising on the outside of school buses distracts drivers and children."

Parents are divided on the issue. "I don't think the ads are a distraction," said Glenn Herdling of River Vale, New Jersey. His son is in second grade. "And if they can bring in money for the schools and help save some programs, that's fantastic."

Cindy Tomarchio of East Windsor, New Jersey, feels differently. "I know the schools can use the money, but kids already see enough advertising every which way they turn," she said.

► **What do you think? Should ads be allowed on school buses? Motivate your answer!**