

Attorney, former bus driver disagree on need for seat belts in school buses

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NASHVILLE, TN (WSMV) -

A bus crash that hurt nearly two dozen students has rejuvenated the question, "should schools buses have seat belts?"

A Nashville attorney says yes, but a former bus driver and current transit planner in California says no.



"If it makes sense in the car shouldn't it make sense for our children who are the most precious things we have?" attorney David Raybin said.

Raybin said the same question comes up every time a school bus crashes. He said the 2014 bus crash in Knoxville that claimed the lives of two children and two adults really raised the question.

"If you save just one child a year then it is worth it," Raybin said.

The cause of the Knoxville crash was distracted driving, an issue transit planner Christopher MacKechnie said would only get worse with seat belts because enforcement of seat belts would fall on the bus driver.

"If you're going to change the dynamic so they have to pay even more attention to the people in the back and less attention to the road in front, that's probably going to make it more unsafe than if you didn't have seat belts," MacKechnie said.

MacKechnie said school buses are already designed to be 40 times safer than cars.

He says seats in school buses are placed close to each other which keeps kids from being jerked around. They also have padded backs that work like airbags.

MacKechnie said only in rollover crashes would seat belts help prevent injuries.

The crash Friday in Nashville was a rollover.

"Today's horrible event might not have occurred had these kids all been belted in," Raybin said.

Raybin believes the biggest reason school buses don't have seat belts is the cost. Schools would have to pay at least \$15,000 to put belts in each bus. But Raybin said it's a small price to pay if it could save lives.

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