



SOUTHEASTERN PUPIL TRANSPORTATION ACADEMY

*Professional Education for
Pupil Transportation Excellence*

CERTIFICATION GUIDE



In Partnership With





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About This Guide

This Certification Guide serves as the official reference for the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy (SPTA). It outlines the Academy's philosophy, certification pathways, curriculum framework, professional standards, and requirements for earning and maintaining SPTA professional certifications.

The information contained in this guide is subject to periodic revision as the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy continues to evolve its curriculum, professional development offerings, and certification programs.

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Welcome to the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy.

It is both an honor and a privilege to welcome you to the inaugural edition of the SPTA Professional Certification Guide. More than a collection of courses and certification requirements, this guide reflects our commitment to advancing professionalism, strengthening leadership, and fostering a culture of continuous learning among Georgia's pupil transportation professionals.

Every school day, Georgia's transportation professionals safely transport more than one million students to and from school. While that mission remains constant, today's transportation leaders must also possess technical expertise, sound judgment, regulatory knowledge, strategic vision, and an unwavering commitment to safety.

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy was created to help meet those challenges. Through a structured curriculum, meaningful professional development, and recognized certification pathways, the Academy prepares transportation professionals to grow as leaders while strengthening the future of student transportation throughout Georgia.

As the Academy has taken shape, we have been fortunate to learn from others who share our commitment to professional excellence. I extend my sincere appreciation to the Texas Association for Pupil Transportation (TAPT) for generously sharing ideas, educational concepts, and experiences that helped inspire the Academy. While SPTA was developed specifically for Georgia's transportation professionals, we are grateful for TAPT's friendship, collaboration, and shared commitment to advancing pupil transportation.

Whether you are beginning your career or have served for decades, I encourage you to embrace this opportunity. Every course completed, every certification earned, and every new skill developed is an investment in your future and in the students, school districts, and communities you proudly serve.

On behalf of the Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation, thank you for your dedication and commitment to excellence. I invite you to continue learning, continue leading, and help shape the future of pupil transportation in Georgia.

R. Sam Ham

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Sam Ham', written in a cursive style.

Executive Director
Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation

The future of pupil transportation in Georgia is bright—and we're just getting started!



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WHY SPTA?

Pupil transportation is one of the most visible, highly regulated, and operationally complex services provided by a school system. Each day, transportation professionals make decisions that affect student safety, access to education, public trust, workforce performance, and the responsible stewardship of public resources.

The work demands far more than experience alone. It requires current knowledge, sound leadership, disciplined decision-making, and a commitment to continuous improvement. The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy was established to provide a clear, structured pathway through which transportation professionals can develop those capabilities and receive meaningful recognition for their achievement.

THE ACADEMY PROVIDES

A STRUCTURED PATHWAY

A defined curriculum connects individual courses to long-term professional growth, certification, and continued advancement.

PRACTICAL LEARNING

Instruction is grounded in the real responsibilities of pupil transportation and designed for immediate application in the workplace.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The Academy strengthens the judgment, communication, technical knowledge, and strategic thinking required of today's transportation leaders.

PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

SPTA certifications acknowledge demonstrated commitment, completed study, and the pursuit of excellence within the profession.

SPTA brings professional education, certification, and recognition together within one comprehensive framework. It gives both emerging and experienced professionals the opportunity to build upon what they know, prepare for greater responsibility, and contribute to stronger transportation programs throughout Georgia.

The people entrusted with transporting students deserve a professional development system equal to the importance of their work.



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MISSION, VISION AND PURPOSE

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy was established with a clear commitment: to strengthen the people who lead, manage, maintain, and support the transportation systems that connect students with education. Its mission, vision, and purpose define the Academy's direction and guide every course, certification pathway, and professional development opportunity.

MISSION

To provide structured, practical, and high-quality professional education that develops knowledge, strengthens leadership, and advances excellence throughout pupil transportation.

VISION

To be the leading professional development and certification resource for pupil transportation professionals, recognized for preparing capable leaders and inspiring a culture of continuous improvement.

PURPOSE

To create a clear pathway for professional growth; establish meaningful standards of achievement; recognize dedication to the profession; and help build safer, stronger, and more effective student transportation programs.

Every investment in a transportation professional is an investment in the safety, service, and future of the students we serve.



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PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy (SPTA) Professional Certification Program is designed to recognize transportation professionals who demonstrate a commitment to continuous learning, professional growth, and leadership within pupil transportation.

Unlike a single training course or workshop, professional certification represents the successful completion of a structured curriculum that builds knowledge progressively across the many disciplines required to lead a modern transportation operation.

SPTA certifications are earned through the completion of required SPTA Courses, documented experience, and adherence to Academy standards. Each certification pathway has been carefully developed to ensure participants gain both technical competence and leadership skills that can be immediately applied within their organizations.

Certification through SPTA demonstrates to school districts, colleagues, and the public that an individual has invested in professional excellence and is committed to advancing the safe, efficient, and effective transportation of students.

The Academy currently offers two professional certification pathways:

- Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO)
- Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO)

Each pathway shares a common educational foundation while providing specialized coursework aligned with the participant's professional responsibilities. The following sections describe each certification in greater detail.



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CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL TRANSPORTATION OFFICIAL (CPTO)

Leading Student Transportation Through Professional Excellence

The Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) designation is the Academy's premier professional certification for individuals responsible for the leadership, administration, and management of pupil transportation operations.

The certification recognizes transportation professionals who have demonstrated a commitment to continuous learning while developing the knowledge, judgment, and leadership skills necessary to direct safe, efficient, and effective student transportation programs.

Whether serving as a Transportation Director, Supervisor, Coordinator, Assistant Director, Operations Manager, or preparing for future leadership responsibilities, the CPTO curriculum provides a comprehensive educational foundation that reflects today's operational demands.

The CPTO Program Prepares Professionals To:

- Lead transportation departments with confidence and professionalism.
- Develop and implement safe and efficient transportation systems.
- Understand federal, state, and local transportation requirements.
- Strengthen communication and leadership skills.
- Improve operational planning and decision-making.
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement.
- Enhance public trust through professional excellence.

Certification Requirements

To earn the Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) designation, participants must successfully complete all required SPTA Courses, satisfy all Academy certification requirements, and remain in good standing with the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy.

The curriculum has been intentionally designed so that each course builds upon previous learning, creating a progressive pathway that develops both technical expertise and executive leadership.

The following pages outline the complete CPTO curriculum and certification requirements.



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Professional Certification Requirements

The Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) designation is awarded to individuals who have successfully completed the Academy's prescribed course of study and have demonstrated a commitment to professional excellence in pupil transportation leadership.

To earn the CPTO designation, candidates must satisfy all Academy requirements established by the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy.

Candidates must:

- Maintain Active Membership in the Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation (GAPT) or another participating state pupil transportation association approved by the Academy.
- Successfully complete all required SPTA Courses prescribed for the CPTO certification program.
- Satisfy all Academy requirements established for the CPTO Certification Program.
- Complete the certification curriculum within the time period established by the Academy.
- Remain in good standing with the Academy throughout the certification process.

The Academy recognizes that today's transportation professionals balance demanding careers with family and community responsibilities. Accordingly, the certification program is intentionally designed to provide flexibility while maintaining rigorous academic expectations. Participants may complete coursework through Academy-sponsored conferences, regional training opportunities, approved online instruction, and other authorized educational offerings.

The CPTO designation represents more than successful completion of coursework. It signifies a professional commitment to lifelong learning, ethical leadership, continuous improvement, and the safe and efficient transportation of students.

CPTO Curriculum Framework

The Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) Curriculum is the Academy's structured course of study for transportation leaders. Each SPTA Course has been intentionally selected to build progressively from foundational knowledge to executive leadership competencies. Together, the curriculum provides the knowledge, judgment, and practical skills necessary to lead safe, efficient, compliant, and student-focused transportation operations.

Successful completion of the CPTO Curriculum requires the completion of 90 instructional hours through the required SPTA Courses listed below.

SPTA Course	Course Title	Hours	Category
SPTA 101	Introduction to Transportation	6	Foundations
SPTA 102	Student Management	6	Operations
SPTA 103	Purchasing of Transportation Services and Equipment	6	Administration
SPTA 104	Routing and Scheduling	6	Operations
SPTA 105	Personnel Management	6	Leadership
SPTA 106	Special Transportation Orientation	6	Operations
SPTA 107	Introduction to State Reporting	6	Administration
SPTA 108	Budgeting	6	Administration
SPTA 109	Documentation in Transportation	6	Administration
SPTA 201	Introduction to Leadership	6	Leadership
SPTA 202	Risk Management: Workers' Compensation	6	Risk Management
SPTA 301	Communicating with a Diverse Public	3	Leadership
SPTA 302	Leadership: Becoming a Leader	3	Leadership
SPTA 303	Communication Skills: School District Staff	3	Leadership
SPTA 304	Current Issues: Foundations for Success	3	Professional Practice
SPTA 401	Business Skills for Transportation	6	Management
SPTA 501	Transportation Compliance Assessment and Evaluation	6	Compliance

Total Required Instructional Hours: 90

Completion of this curriculum qualifies participants to earn the Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) designation upon satisfying all Academy certification requirements.



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CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL FLEET OFFICIAL (CPFO)

Leading Fleet Operations Through Technical Excellence

The Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) designation is the Academy's premier professional certification for individuals responsible for the maintenance, management, safety, and lifecycle performance of school transportation fleets. The program recognizes professionals who combine technical expertise with sound leadership to ensure that vehicles, facilities, equipment, and maintenance operations support the safe and reliable transportation of students.

Today's fleet professionals oversee far more than vehicle repairs. They manage preventive maintenance programs, regulatory compliance, shop operations, technician development, parts inventories, capital replacement planning, alternative fuel technologies, and emerging transportation systems. The CPFO curriculum is designed to prepare these professionals for the increasing complexity of modern fleet management.

Whether serving as a Fleet Manager, Shop Foreman, Maintenance Supervisor, Lead Technician, Operations Manager, or preparing for greater leadership responsibilities, participants gain the knowledge and management skills necessary to build safe, efficient, and high-performing maintenance operations.

The CPFO Program Prepares Professionals To:

- Lead fleet maintenance operations with confidence and professionalism.
- Develop and manage preventive maintenance and vehicle inspection programs.
- Strengthen technical, operational, and financial decision-making.
- Ensure compliance with federal, state, and local transportation requirements.
- Manage fleet assets, replacement planning, and maintenance resources effectively.
- Support technician development and cultivate a culture of safety, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- Enhance public confidence through dependable fleet performance and operational excellence.

Certification Requirements

To earn the Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) designation, participants must successfully complete all required SPTA Courses, satisfy all Academy certification requirements, and remain in good standing with the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy. The following pages outline the complete CPFO curriculum and certification requirements.

CPFO Curriculum Framework

The Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) Curriculum is a structured course of study designed for professionals responsible for fleet management, maintenance operations, regulatory compliance, shop leadership, and long-range asset stewardship.

To earn the Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) designation, participants must successfully complete the required SPTA Courses and the required GAPT fleet certification programs. Together, these requirements comprise the Academy's 90-hour CPFO curriculum.

SPTA Course	Course Title	Hours
SPTA 101	Introduction to Transportation	6
SPTA 103	Purchasing of Transportation Services and Equipment	6
SPTA 104	Accident Investigation	6
SPTA 105	Personnel Management	6
SPTA 106	Special Transportation Orientation	6
SPTA 107	Introduction to State Reporting	6
SPTA 108	Budgeting	6
SPTA 109	Documentation in Transportation	6
SPTA 201	Introduction to Leadership	6
SPTA 202	Risk Management: Workers' Compensation	6
SPTA 303	Communication Skills: School District Staff	3
SPTA 304	Leadership: Change and Transition	3
SPTA 305	Leadership: Board Relations	3
SPTA 401	Project Management	3
SPTA 501	Transportation Compliance Assessment and Evaluation	6

Required GAPT Fleet Certifications

Certification	Hours
GAPT Inspector Certification	6
GAPT Inspection Program Manager Certification	6

Total Curriculum Hours: 90 Hours

The CPFO curriculum consists of SPTA coursework complemented by two required GAPT fleet certification programs. Completion of all requirements qualifies participants for the Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) designation.

Academy Curriculum Framework

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy (SPTA) curriculum is built upon a structured framework that develops transportation professionals through progressive learning experiences. Each SPTA Course is intentionally sequenced to strengthen knowledge, leadership, operational effectiveness, and professional judgment while supporting the Academy's mission of advancing excellence in pupil transportation. The curriculum emphasizes practical application rather than theory alone. Participants are encouraged to immediately apply concepts learned in the classroom to improve safety, efficiency, regulatory compliance, personnel development, fleet performance, and customer service within their own transportation organizations.

Core Areas of Professional Development

Curriculum Area	Purpose
Foundations	Introduces the principles, responsibilities, and structure of pupil transportation.
Operations	Focuses on routing, scheduling, student management, special transportation, and daily operations.
Leadership	Develops communication, decision-making, ethics, board relations, and organizational leadership.
Administration	Strengthens budgeting, purchasing, documentation, state reporting, and resource management.
Compliance & Risk	Addresses regulatory requirements, safety, risk management, and operational accountability.
Fleet Excellence	Enhances maintenance management, inspection practices, asset stewardship, and transportation technology through SPTA coursework and required GAPT fleet certifications.

Together, these curriculum areas provide a comprehensive educational pathway that prepares participants for increasing leadership responsibilities while supporting the Academy's Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) and Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) certification programs.



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Who Should Enroll?

Professional certification begins with a commitment to personal growth. The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy welcomes transportation professionals at every stage of their careers who are committed to expanding their knowledge, strengthening their leadership abilities, and advancing the safe and efficient transportation of students.

Whether you are preparing for your first supervisory position or currently leading a large transportation operation, the Academy provides a structured educational pathway designed to support continuous professional development. Every SPTA Course is intended to provide practical knowledge that can be applied immediately within your organization.

The Academy is Designed For:

- Transportation Directors and Executive Directors
- Assistant Directors and Operations Managers
- Fleet Managers, Shop Foremen, and Maintenance Supervisors
- Routing and Scheduling Coordinators
- Safety, Training, and Compliance Coordinators
- Special Transportation Coordinators
- Current supervisors preparing for expanded leadership responsibilities
- Future transportation leaders seeking professional certification and recognition

Regardless of job title or district size, participants share a common goal: to become more knowledgeable, more effective, and better prepared to serve students, employees, school systems, and their communities. The Academy exists to help them achieve that goal through structured education, professional certification, and lifelong learning.



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Professional Recognition

Professional certification represents more than the successful completion of coursework. It demonstrates a commitment to excellence, continuous learning, and the highest standards of professionalism within the pupil transportation industry.

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy recognizes individuals who have invested in their professional growth and successfully completed the requirements for certification. Earning an Academy certification signifies that the recipient has completed a rigorous program of study designed to strengthen leadership, operational knowledge, technical competence, and ethical decision-making. Academy certification also reflects a commitment to serving students, supporting school districts, and advancing the profession of pupil transportation through lifelong learning and continuous improvement.

Recognition of Achievement

- Official SPTA Professional Certificate recognizing successful completion of certification requirements.
- Recognition during GAPT conferences and Academy events.
- Authorization to use the applicable SPTA professional designation (CPTO or CPFO).
- Inclusion among an expanding network of Academy-certified transportation professionals.
- Eligibility for future advanced professional development opportunities offered through the Academy.

Professional recognition through the Academy is intended to acknowledge both achievement and responsibility. Certified professionals serve as examples of leadership, integrity, and dedication while helping strengthen the future of pupil transportation throughout Georgia and the Southeast.



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The SPTA Advantage

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy was created to provide a comprehensive, structured approach to professional development for pupil transportation professionals. Unlike isolated training opportunities, the Academy offers a progressive curriculum that builds knowledge, leadership, and practical skills throughout a participant's career.

Every course is designed to address the real-world challenges faced by transportation departments while encouraging innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Participants gain immediately applicable knowledge that benefits not only their own professional growth but also their school districts, employees, students, and communities.

Why Professionals Choose SPTA

- Structured curriculum leading to nationally distinctive professional certification.
- Instruction developed by experienced pupil transportation professionals.
- Practical coursework focused on real-world operations and leadership.
- Networking and collaboration with transportation professionals from across Georgia and the Southeast.
- Recognition for professional achievement through the Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) and Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) designations.
- A commitment to lifelong learning and continuous professional growth.

The Academy's greatest advantage is its commitment to preparing transportation leaders who can confidently meet today's challenges while shaping the future of student transportation. Through education, collaboration, and professional recognition, SPTA is investing in the people who make safe and reliable student transportation possible every day.



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Investing in Transportation Professionals

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy represents an investment in people - the transportation professionals whose leadership, knowledge, and commitment directly influence the safety and success of student transportation programs. Every course completed strengthens the individual while creating lasting value for the school district and the communities it serves.

SPTA was established with the belief that professional development should be both meaningful and accessible. Through the partnership between the Academy, GAPT, and the GAPT Foundation, participants can pursue professional certification at a fraction of the actual cost of delivering high-quality instruction.

A Commitment to Affordability

The GAPT Foundation provides financial support to help offset instructional costs, making Academy coursework affordable for transportation professionals throughout Georgia. This investment reflects the Foundation's commitment to developing current and future leaders within the pupil transportation profession.

The Return on Investment

- Develops stronger transportation leaders and supervisors.
- Improves operational efficiency and organizational effectiveness.
- Strengthens regulatory compliance and risk management practices.
- Encourages employee retention through professional growth opportunities.
- Builds a culture of continuous improvement and lifelong learning.
- Enhances the overall quality and safety of student transportation services.

An investment in professional education is an investment in safer transportation systems, stronger organizations, and better outcomes for students. Through the Academy, GAPT and the GAPT Foundation are committed to ensuring that transportation professionals have access to the education and resources needed to lead with confidence and excellence.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Who may enroll in SPTA courses?

SPTA courses are open to transportation professionals who are committed to expanding their knowledge and advancing professionally. Membership requirements and certification eligibility are outlined by GAPT and the Academy.

Do I have to complete the courses in a specific order?

Participants should follow the recommended curriculum framework established by the Academy. This sequence builds knowledge progressively and prepares participants for professional certification.

How long do I have to complete a certification program?

Participants have up to seven years to complete all required coursework and certification requirements for the CPTO or CPFO designation.

Where are SPTA courses offered?

Courses are offered in conjunction with GAPT conferences, regional training opportunities, and other Academy-approved educational events. Additional instructional opportunities may be added as the Academy continues to grow.

What certifications are available?

The Academy currently offers two professional certifications: Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) and Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO).

Who administers the Academy?

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy operates through its partnership with the Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation (GAPT), with support from the GAPT Foundation. Additional information regarding Academy courses, certification requirements, registration, and upcoming educational opportunities is available through GAPT and the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy.



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About GAPT

The Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation (GAPT) is the leading professional organization dedicated to advancing safe, reliable, and effective student transportation throughout the State of Georgia. Since its founding in 1964, GAPT has worked in partnership with transportation professionals, school districts, industry leaders, and the Georgia Department of Education to promote excellence in pupil transportation.

Today, GAPT serves transportation professionals representing school districts, private schools, contractors, state agencies, and business partners from across Georgia. Together, its members are responsible for safely transporting more than one million students each school day aboard approximately 20,000 school buses operating in every region of the state.

Mission

GAPT builds capacity in pupil transportation professionals by providing information, promoting innovation, and serving as an advocate as members partner with their communities to meet the needs of students.

Vision

To serve as the leading resource for pupil transportation professionals in Georgia and to inspire a culture of continuous improvement.

The SPTA Partnership

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy is a professional development initiative created through GAPT to provide a structured pathway for education, leadership development, and professional certification. Together, GAPT, the GAPT Foundation, and the Academy are committed to preparing current and future leaders who will continue advancing the pupil transportation profession throughout Georgia and the Southeast.



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Acknowledgments

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy is the result of the vision, dedication, and collaborative efforts of countless transportation professionals who believe that continuous learning and professional development are essential to advancing pupil transportation.

The Academy gratefully acknowledges the many individuals and organizations whose leadership, experience, and commitment helped transform this vision into a comprehensive professional certification program serving transportation professionals throughout Georgia and the Southeast.

The Academy Extends Its Appreciation To:

- The Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation (GAPT) for its leadership, vision, and unwavering commitment to professional excellence.
- The GAPT Foundation for its financial support and continued investment in transportation professionals.
- The Georgia Department of Education Pupil Transportation Division for its longstanding partnership and commitment to safe student transportation.
- Transportation directors, fleet professionals, instructors, and subject matter experts who contributed their knowledge and experience to the Academy curriculum.
- School districts, business partners, and industry leaders whose collaboration continues to strengthen the profession.
- Every Academy participant whose dedication to lifelong learning inspires the future of pupil transportation.

The Academy recognizes that its greatest strength is the people it serves. Together, through education, collaboration, and professional leadership, we are building a stronger future for student transportation—one professional at a time.



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Begin Your Journey

Every profession is strengthened by individuals who choose to learn, lead, and serve. The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy invites you to take the next step in your professional journey by investing in your knowledge, your leadership, and your future.

Whether your goal is to enhance your technical expertise, strengthen your leadership skills, or earn the Certified Professional Transportation Official (CPTO) or Certified Professional Fleet Official (CPFO) designation, the Academy provides a clear pathway for professional growth.

As you complete each course, you will gain practical knowledge, build lasting professional relationships, and contribute to a stronger, safer, and more effective pupil transportation profession. Your commitment to lifelong learning benefits not only your own career but also the students, employees, school districts, and communities you proudly serve.

Take the Next Step

- Explore upcoming SPTA course offerings.
- Register for your first Academy course.
- Begin working toward the CPTO or CPFO professional certification.
- Continue building your knowledge through lifelong professional development.
- Join a growing community of transportation professionals committed to excellence.

**Your journey begins with a single course.
Your future begins with a commitment to excellence.**

Welcome to the Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy.



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Educating Today's Professionals. Leading Tomorrow's Transportation Leaders.

Excellence is not achieved in a single course. It is built through continuous learning, professional growth, and an unwavering commitment to safely transporting our nation's most precious cargo.

The Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy exists to prepare transportation professionals with the knowledge, leadership skills, and confidence needed to meet today's challenges while shaping the future of pupil transportation.

Whether you are beginning your professional journey or strengthening years of experience, your commitment to lifelong learning strengthens your organization, your profession, and the students you proudly serve.

For Course Information and Registration

Southeastern Pupil Transportation Academy
Through the
Georgia Association for Pupil Transportation (GAPT)
www.gaptonline.org

Building Professional Excellence Through Education, Leadership and Service.

**The Journey Never Ends.
Excellence Is a Destination Never Fully Reached.
Keep Learning. Keep Leading. Keep Moving Forward.**