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## Campaign: Buckle kids up, and not just in cars.

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Frustrated with delays in getting its-child-safety proposals adopted, the National Transportation Safety Board launches a campaign today to get babies buckled on planes, children restrained on school buses and kids of all ages seated in the back seats of cars.

NTSB Chairman James Hall also will propose that permanent checkpoints be set up around the nation to make sure child seats are properly installed in cars. Hall will make the announcements at a National Safe Kids Campaign conference in Washington.

NTSB is an independent agency that investigates transportation accidents and makes safety recommendations to government and industry. The board, best known for air crash probes, already has issued specific recommendations to improve the safety of children on buses and planes and to require that kids be seated in the back seats of cars. But Hall wants to spur faster action.

The Federal Aviation Administration asked for comments last February on possible rules requiring that children under 2, be restrained on airplanes, but the agency hasn't proposed rules. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has begun a research program on the benefits of safety belts on school buses.

"We still investigate crashes where students are tragically thrown from the bus or tossed around in the bus and are killed or seriously injured," Hall said recently. "We need to know whether properly designed lap and shoulder belts for school buses could prevent ejection's and serious injuries, infrequent as they are."

Safety experts say that, even if requiring kids to be buckled on planes and school buses did not save many lives, it would train children to buckle up in cars.

"You're trying to get kids to develop habits for life and have a glaring omission of seat belts on school buses," says Phil Haseltine, president of the American Coalition for Traffic Safety.

Under law, any Child 2 and older must be restrained in a separate seat on commercial airplanes. Parents are allowed to hold children under 2 in their arms, although FAA-approved child seats are highly recommended, Most airlines offer discounted fares so children under 2 can have their own seats.

"Everything in an airplane has to be buckled down securely but an infant," Hall said. He will push his plan in meetings with industry and government officials.

The NHTSA School Bus Research Plan was scheduled for completion in July 2000. The complexity of the issue and lack of fatalities is cited as the cause for a delay in the development of test procedures. The final evaluation and results of this comprehensive study are not expected until June 2001.