



## **SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

**[Docket No. MCF 21148]**

### **Jane Stiles and Thomas Stiles—Acquisition of Control—Safe-Way Bus Co. and Safe-Way Wisconsin, Inc.**

**AGENCY:** Surface Transportation Board.

**ACTION:** Notice Tentatively Approving and Authorizing Finance Transaction.

**SUMMARY:** On March 28, 2022, Jane Stiles and Thomas Stiles (each an Applicant and, collectively, Applicants), both noncarriers, each acquired a 50% ownership interest in both Safe-Way Bus Co. (Safe-Way Bus) and Safe-Way Wisconsin, Inc. (Safe-Way Wisconsin), each an interstate motor carrier of passengers, without Board authority (the Transaction). On April 6, 2026, Applicants filed an application for after-the-fact Board authority for the Transaction, to rectify what they describe as an inadvertent oversight. The Board is tentatively approving and authorizing the Transaction after the fact, and, if no opposing comments are timely filed, this notice will be the final Board action.

**DATES:** Comments may be filed by June 22, 2026. If any comments are filed, Applicants may file a reply by July 6, 2026. If no opposing comments are filed by June 22, 2026, this notice shall be effective on June 23, 2026.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments may be filed with the Board either via e-filing or in writing addressed to: Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, send one copy of comments to Applicants' representative: Edward Fishman, Hogan Lovells US LLP, Columbia Square, 555 Thirteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20004-1109.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jonathon Binet at (202) 915-4348. If you require an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please call (202) 245-0245.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** According to the application, Jane Stiles (Jane) is an individual resident of Minnesota and U.S. citizen. Jane is not a motor carrier and does not hold individual operating authority. Jane owns 50% of the shares of Safe-Way Bus and serves as its Co-President and Secretary. Jane also owns 50% of the shares of Safe-Way Wisconsin and serves as its Co-President and Secretary. (Appl. 3.) Thomas Stiles (Thomas) is an individual resident of Wisconsin, a U.S. citizen, and a brother of Jane. Thomas is not a motor carrier and does not hold individual operating authority. Thomas owns 50% of the shares of Safe-Way Bus and serves as its Co-President and Treasurer. Thomas also owns 50% of the shares of Safe-Way Wisconsin and serves as its Co-President and Treasurer. (Id. at 4.)

Prior to the Transaction, each Applicant owned 33% of the shares in Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin. On March 28, 2022, each Applicant acquired additional shares in Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin through the settlement of the estate of their late brother, Daniel Stiles. As a result, each Applicant holds 50% of the shares in Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin. (Id.)

The Application describes Safe-Way Bus as a Minnesota corporation that was incorporated on February 25, 1970, in Inver Grove Heights, Minn. Safe-Way Bus was formed by Jane and Thomas's parents, who owned and operated the company as a school bus provider in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. Ownership was transferred after their deaths to their three children (Jane, Thomas, and Daniel Stiles). (Id.)

The Application states that Safe-Way Bus provides service out of its Inver Grove Heights terminal in the Twin Cities region of Minnesota and its terminal in Hudson, Wis. (Id. at 11.) Safe-Way Bus is authorized to operate as an interstate motor carrier of passengers subject to the jurisdiction of the FMCSA pursuant to authority issued in Docket No. MC-362288; U.S. DOT No. 813377. Safe-Way Bus also has intrastate

operating authority as a motor carrier of passengers from the Minnesota DOT pursuant to Minnesota DOT # 142460.

Safe-Way Bus provides school transportation service under contract to two school districts in the Twin Cities, Minn. area (Inver Grove Heights Public Schools district ISD 199 and South St. Paul Public Schools district / SSD 6) as well as to the Hudson, Wis. public school district. (Id. at 5-6.) The Application states that, until June 2023, Safe-Way Bus also provided school transportation service under contract to the St. Paul Public Schools district ISD 625. (Id. at 5.)

According to the Application, the Inver Grove Heights Public Schools district consists of approximately five public schools. The district has approximately 3,500 students and the service area encompasses approximately 30 square miles. The contract service that Safe-Way Bus provides for the Inver Grove Heights Public Schools district involves approximately 23 full-sized school buses that are used for transporting regular education students to and from school and conducting extracurricular trips. (Id.)

According to the Application, the South St. Paul Public Schools district consists of approximately five public schools. The district has approximately 3,100 students and the service area encompasses approximately six square miles. The contract service that Safe-Way Bus provides for the South St. Paul Public Schools district involves approximately seven full-sized school buses that are used for transporting regular education students to and from school and conducting extracurricular trips. Safe-Way Bus also utilizes approximately seven smaller buses to transport preschool and special-needs students. (Id. at 5-6.)

According to the Application, the Hudson Public Schools district consists of approximately eight public schools and one private school. The district has approximately 5,300 students and the service area encompasses approximately 77 square miles. The contract service that Safe-Way Bus provides for the Hudson Public Schools

District involves approximately 42 full-sized school buses that are used for transporting regular education students to and from school and conducting extra-curricular trips. Safe-Way also utilizes approximately 12 smaller buses and four vans/SUVs to transport pre-K and special-needs students. (Id. at 6.)

According to the Application, Safe-Way Bus provides after-school trips as part of its contracts with the relevant school districts in the Twin Cities area. On limited occasions, these services involve transportation across state lines into neighboring states including Wisconsin. (Id.) Safe-Way Bus also provides charter bus service for university and youth groups, transporting them to sporting events and similar activities within the state of Minnesota and across state lines, primarily into Wisconsin. (Id.)

The Application states that, in the past 12 months, Safe-Way Bus has conducted approximately 334 interstate trips and approximately 2.11% of its overall revenue is derived from these interstate trips. Safe-Way Bus does not conduct regularly scheduled motorcoach service in interstate commerce. The Safe-Way Bus terminal in Inver Grove Heights has a fleet of approximately 51 school buses. Safe-Way Bus operates its student transportation services out of its terminal in Inver Grove Heights. That terminal has approximately 50 employees, including 45 drivers and five other employees. The terminal in Hudson has approximately 64 employees, including 58 drivers and six other employees. (Id. at 6-7.)

The Application describes Safe-Way Wisconsin as a Wisconsin corporation that was incorporated on May 30, 2006, and that has its principal business address in Somerset, Wis. Safe-Way Wisconsin is authorized to operate as an interstate motor carrier of passengers subject to the jurisdiction of the FMCSA pursuant to authority issued in Docket No. MC-1471781; U.S. DOT No. 3923185. Safe-Way Wisconsin also has intrastate operating authority from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to operate as a common carrier of passengers pursuant to PC221. (Id. at 7.)

According to the Application, Safe-Way Wisconsin provides service out of its terminal in Somerset, Wis., and from a terminal in Balsam Lake, Wis. (Id. at 10.) Safe-Way Wisconsin is a school transportation operator, providing general and special education transportation to and from school on regular routes under contract to the Somerset Public Schools district in Somerset, and the Unity School District in Balsam Lake. The Somerset Public Schools district consists of three public schools and one non-public school. The district has approximately 1,500 students and encompasses a service area of approximately 95 square miles. The contract service that Safe-Way Wisconsin provides for the Somerset Public Schools district involves running approximately 19 full sized school buses that are used for transporting regular education students to and from school and for extracurricular trips. (Id. at 7-8.)

According to the Application, the Unity School District consists of three public schools in the towns of Balsam Lake, Milltown, and Centuria, Wis. The district has approximately 945 students and encompasses a service area of approximately 140 square miles. The contract service that Safe-Way Wisconsin provides for the Unity Public Schools district involves running approximately 15 full-sized school buses that are used for transporting regular education students to and from school and for extracurricular trips. Safe-Way Wisconsin also utilizes approximately one smaller bus and three vans that transport preschool and special-needs students within the Unity Public School district. (Id. at 8.)

The Application states that Safe-Way Wisconsin employs approximately 19 school bus drivers and has 22 total employees at the Somerset terminal. In addition, Safe-Way Wisconsin employs approximately 18 school bus drivers and has 21 total employees at the Balsam Lake terminal. Safe-Way Wisconsin has serviced the Somerset Public Schools district continually since 2006, and the Unity School District since 2023. (Id.)

According to the Application, Safe-Way Wisconsin provides after-school trips as part of its contract with Somerset Public Schools and the Unity School District for extracurricular activities and other special events within Wisconsin. On limited occasions, these services involve transportation across state lines into neighboring states including Minnesota. Safe-Way Wisconsin provides charter bus service for university and youth groups, transporting them to sporting events and similar activities within the state of Wisconsin and across state lines, primarily into Minnesota. (Id. at 8-9.)

According to the Application, Safe-Way Wisconsin does not conduct regularly scheduled motorcoach service in interstate commerce. It operates from its terminals in Somerset and Balsam Lake. It conducts approximately 111 interstate trips per year between those terminals, a number that, according to the Application, is minimal in comparison to Safe-Way Wisconsin's overall intrastate school transportation operations. According to the Application, approximately 2.01% of Safe-Way Wisconsin's overall revenue is from interstate operations. (Id. at 9.)

The Application states that, since the Transaction in 2022, both Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin have continued to operate under their same names. (Id.) In addition, both Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin have provided substantially the same services under the co-ownership and control of the Applicants as they did before the Transaction. (Id.) The territories that are primarily served by Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin do not overlap, as those territories are located approximately 30 miles apart from one another in different states. (Id. at 10.)

According to the Application, Safe-Way Wisconsin's main competitors for student transportation services include Kobussen Buses LTD and Go-Riteway Transportation Group. Safe-Way Bus's main competitors for student transportation services in the greater Twin Cities area and in the Hudson area include First Student Transportation, Schmitt & Sons Transportation, Transit Team, Voigt's School Service

Inc., Billie Bus Transportation, and American Student Transportation. There are approximately five other direct competitors in each of the service areas, and the competitive landscape has not materially changed since the Transaction in 2022. Both Safe-Way Wisconsin and Safe-Way Bus generally face competition from national, regional and local bus providers operating within their respective service areas. In addition, both companies face considerable competition for transportation services from other modes of transportation including ride sharing services and local bus service operated by transit agencies. (Id.) Other than Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin, there are no other affiliated carriers with Board-regulated interstate passenger operations within Applicants' control. (Id. at 11.)

Applicants state that they now understand that a control application should have been filed with the Board prior to their 2022 acquisition of control of the Carriers. Applicants thus seek after-the-fact authority for the Transaction. (Id. at 10-11). See 49 U.S.C. 14303(a)(5).

Under 49 U.S.C. 14303(b), the Board must approve and authorize a transaction that it finds consistent with the public interest, taking into consideration at least (1) the effect of the proposed transaction on the adequacy of transportation to the public, (2) the total fixed charges that result from the proposed transaction, and (3) the interest of affected carrier employees. Applicants have submitted the information required by 49 CFR 1182.2, including information to demonstrate that the transaction is consistent with the public interest under 49 U.S.C. 14303(b), see 49 CFR 1182.2(a)(7), and a jurisdictional statement under 49 U.S.C. 14303(g) that the aggregate gross operating revenues of the involved carriers exceeded \$2 million during the 12-month period immediately preceding the filing of the application, see 49 CFR 1182.2(a)(5). (See Appl. 11.)

Applicants state that the Transaction has not resulted in any significant changes to the nature or scope of the general operations conducted by Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin. (Id. at 12.) Applicants assert that the Transaction has not produced adverse competitive effects in any relevant geographic market and has not impaired the adequacy of transportation to the public. (Id. at 13-14.) According to the Applicants, the school transportation services that Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin provide are under contract to different school districts in different service areas that are 30 miles apart, and there is no overlap in the school district service areas or routes served by Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin. (Id. at 12.) Furthermore, both carriers face substantial competition for student transportation services from other bus providers, including national, local and regional, and from numerous other modes of transportation. (Id.)

Applicants state that the Transaction did not result in fixed charges that adversely affected the ability of the Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin to continue to provide safe and quality transportation service and that Applicants did not use debt funding or incur fixed charges in their acquisition of control of Safe-Way Bus and Safe-Way Wisconsin. (Id. at 13.) Applicants assert that the Transaction has not had any material adverse effect on employee or labor conditions. (Id.) Applicants state that there have been no substantial layoffs at Safe-Way Bus or Safe-Way Wisconsin since the Transaction, and Applicants are not aware of adverse changes to wages, benefits, or working conditions as a result of the Transaction. In fact, according to Applicants, Safe-Way Wisconsin has hired additional drivers and employees to serve the Unity School District contract. (Id.)

The Board finds that the Transaction as described in the application is consistent with the public interest and should be tentatively approved and authorized after the fact. If any opposing comments are timely filed, these findings will be deemed vacated, and, unless a final decision can be made on the record as developed, a procedural schedule

will be adopted to reconsider the application. See 49 CFR 1182.6. If no opposing comments are filed by the expiration of the comment period, this notice will take effect automatically and will be the final Board action in this proceeding.

This action is categorically excluded from environmental review under 49 CFR 1105.6(c).

Board decisions and notices are available at [www.stb.gov](http://www.stb.gov).

It is ordered:

1. The Transaction is approved and authorized after-the-fact, subject to the filing of opposing comments.

2. If opposing comments are timely filed, the findings made in this notice will be deemed vacated.

3. This notice will be effective June 23, 2026, unless opposing comments are filed by June 22, 2026. If any comments are filed, Applicants may file a reply by July 6, 2026.

4. A copy of this notice will be served on: (1) the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, DC 20590; (2) the U.S. Department of Justice, Antitrust Division, 10th Street & Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20530; and (3) the U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of General Counsel, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington, DC 20590.

5. This notice will be published in the Federal Register.

Decided: April 27, 2026.

By the Board, Board Members Fuchs, Hedlund, and Schultz.

**Eden Besera,**

*Clearance Clerk.*

