News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUTNAM COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM HELPS IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BY EQUIPPING SCHOOL BUSES WITH BENDIX® INTELLIPARK® ELECTRONIC PARKING BRAKE CONTROL SYSTEM

Tennessee District Also Adds Bendix® Fusion™ Collision Mitigation System to Further Boost Safety Profile

AVON, Ohio – Nov. 24, 2026 – Ron Chaffin calls himself a true believer in the Bendix® Intellipark® Electronic Parking Brake (EPB) Control System. But the director of transportation at Putnam County School System (PCSS) in Cookeville, Tennessee, admits he had doubts at first. What if his drivers didn't take to the new safety technology? He needn't have worried.

"It's been outstanding," Chaffin said. "My thinking has totally gone the other way, and I feel like Intellipark is one of the best things introduced to the school bus industry. We're able to teach our drivers how safe the vehicle can be just by the push of a button."

The Intellipark technology, from Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC (Bendix), potentially helps mitigate rollaways by automatically setting the parking brakes if the system determines that the driver did not by using information from predetermined interlocks.

At the same time, the technology makes it easier for drivers to set or release the parking brakes by replacing the traditional pneumatic yellow push-pull parking brake knob with an easy-to-flip, illuminated electronic switch.

For Chaffin and PCSS, it's all about safety. They believe the thoughtful use of technology is a road to safer transportation, along with rigorous driver training and pre-trip inspection requirements.

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"The more technology that's available for these buses, as far as safety goes, the more it helps the whole industry," Chaffin said. "We want our drivers to feel safe and confident about the vehicle they're operating. Our end goal is making sure that every student is safe."

Safety Technology Goes to School

Putnam County School System is located in the heart of middle Tennessee. It's the 13th largest public school district in the state with 22 schools. Chaffin served PCSS as a CDL-holding driver for 20 years before becoming transportation director in 2022. He oversees a department of approximately 80 drivers who hold CDLs and cover 58 routes. Nearly half of the district's 12,000 students use school transportation.

Two years ago, Chaffin began introducing the Bendix® Intellipark® system to the PCSS school bus fleet. Among the district's 80 buses, eight are IC Bus Intellipark-equipped now, with four more on order. Chaffin said PCSS plans to continue purchasing IC buses with Intellipark as older buses are replaced. The fleet, now about 85% IC buses, will eventually be all IC Bus brand, purchased from Cumberland International Trucks of Nashville.

Bendix's Intellipark system is designed to set the parking brakes electronically if it detects that the driver did not by using information from predetermined interlocks to indicate whether all safety conditions are being met. Interlocks can involve the accelerator pedal, brake pedal, ignition switch, lift door, and other areas of the bus, as well.

"Intellipark has automatically set the brakes a couple of times for our drivers," Chaffin said. "Having the system is a really good thing to help keep accidents from happening."

The technology also operates at vehicle startup, aka Smart Unpark™: Once the interlock conditions are met, the system enables the driver to unpark by pushing the parking brake switch.

The new switch requires less effort and doesn't deliver the potential "sting" that comes with manually activating a 120-psi pneumatic brake valve. It maintains the familiar yellow symbols and text, along with integrated LEDs that clearly indicate the status of the parking brakes. The switch also offers increased durability and additional cycles over the pneumatic system.

"We have problems with drivers not being able to push the traditional air brake in and having trouble pulling it out," Chaffin said. "The Bendix system has caused the driver to feel confident about what they're doing – making sure it's pushed in all the way and knowing when it's set or not set."

Along with school buses, commercial vehicle manufacturers can integrate Intellipark® into almost any air-braked vehicle, including tractor-trailers, single-unit trucks, motorcoaches, and transit buses.

Additional Technologies

PCSS is also equipping its buses with Bendix® Fusion™, Bendix's flagship advanced driver assistance system (ADAS); and Bendix® ADB22X® air disc brakes. Fusion is now on two of the district's buses and the ADB22X on 12. Both technologies are included on the four other buses the school district has ordered and are planned for all future orders.

Fusion can potentially help mitigate collisions while offering other features, including alerts when speeding.

"Having this technology available to us is a breath of fresh air," Chaffin said. "I especially like its ability to read speed signs and alert drivers who may be going over the limit, often without being aware of it. That's a huge help to drivers."

Air disc brakes bring their own advantages. Drum brakes can fade during heavy stop-and-go traffic situations – which school buses typically encounter – or during long, steep descents, and can extend stopping distances as they heat up. Air disc brakes virtually eliminate this brake fade, delivering greater reliability with more consistent stops and shorter stopping distances.

For comfort with the technologies it deploys, PCSS prioritizes driver training led by Cumberland International. "We want to be sure the drivers understand every aspect of that bus – what it will do and what it won't do," Chaffin said.

"Data show that school buses are one of the safest modes of transportation in the United States," said Nicole Oreskovic, Bendix vice president, sales and marketing. "What a testament that is to the invaluable professionals behind the wheel of North America's school buses. Bendix is proud to develop technologies to help make student transportation even safer for school bus passengers and drivers at PCSS and everywhere else."

For his part, Ron Chaffin appreciates all Bendix does to develop safety technologies. He shared one final thought about Bendix® Intellipark®: "I wish it would have come along sooner."

Bendix emphasizes that Intellipark and other advanced technologies are designed to complement safe driving practices. No commercial vehicle safety technology, including Bendix safety technologies, replaces a skilled, alert driver exercising safe driving techniques and proactive, comprehensive driver training. Responsibility for the safe operation of the vehicle remains with the driver at all times. Never wait for the system to intervene.

Intellipark® sends control signals to other components in the parking brake system. For proper operation of the parking brake system, all components must be functioning as designed.

Every driver should carefully review the operator's manual to know the system features, benefits, and limitations, as well as be trained by the fleet or vehicle owner on its proper operation.

About Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC

Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems, a member of Knorr-Bremse, develops and supplies leading-edge active safety technologies, energy management solutions, and air brake charging and control systems and components under the Bendix® brand name for medium- and heavy-duty trucks, tractors, trailers, buses, and other commercial vehicles throughout North America. An industry pioneer, Bendix is driven to deliver the best solutions for improved vehicle safety, performance, and overall operating cost. Contact us at 1-800-AIR-BRAKE (1-800-247-2725) in the U.S. or 1-800-461-1019 in Mexico, or visit bendix.com. Log on and learn from the Bendix experts at brake-school.com. And to learn more about career opportunities at Bendix, visit careers.knorr-bremse.com/.

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