



WISCONSIN SCHOOL BUS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of the Wisconsin School Bus Association

In opposition of Proposed Substitute, Version 3 of File #150648, A Substitute Ordinance
Relating to the Display of Warning Lights by School Buses in the City of Milwaukee
Before the City of Milwaukee Common Council Public Safety Committee

January 7, 2016

Good morning my name is Cherie Houser, Executive Director for the Wisconsin School Bus Association. WSBA represents more than 200 members including commercial bus operators, school districts, and suppliers to the industry. I am here today to speak in opposition of the proposed ordinance changes for the City of Milwaukee that relate to the display of warning lights by school buses, **as written**.

The Association believes that the proposed changes to the city ordinance have not been given due diligence through necessary research in regards to statutory language in the proposal.

Wisconsin Statute 349.21(1) allows the governing body of any town, city, village or county, by ordinance, to provide for the use of flashing red or amber warning lights by school bus operators in a residence or business district when pupils or other authorized passenger are to be loaded or unloaded at a location at which there are no traffic signals and such persons must cross the street or highway before being loaded or after being unloaded. In this proposed ordinance change, the language addresses the absence of traffic signals, yet to be defined, but does not address crossing persons on a street or highway after being loaded or unloaded, which is the secondary requirement for adopting an ordinance as a local governing body.

In effect, the state statute was created for urban situations where pupils have to cross a street or highway. This is the only situation where the red lights are allowed to be used, even by city ordinance. The red light stop procedure is specifically designed to give the option of crossing students in a rural environment that may lack traffic controls. This was not the desired action communicated to the association and its members by the sponsor.

WSBA is not opposed to any city changing an ordinance that would increase safety in school bus transportation, however as written, this proposal does not correctly apply Wisconsin statute 349.21(1) in an urban environment.

The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services has conducted a survey for the past five years in regards to illegal passing of school buses. With 26 participating states, results showed that over 78,500 vehicles illegally passed school buses using a stop arm and flashing red lights in a **single day**. That amounts to over 14 million illegal passes during a school year. The concern is that a bus' flashing red lights and stop arms give a false sense of security to students who believe that every car stops for a school bus when in fact they do not.

The Kansas State Department of Education recently released their annual Loading and Unloading Survey for the 2014-2015 school year. This survey collects fatality accident records provided by the state agencies responsible for school transportation safety and/or accident records. Only those fatalities involving school children in or around the loading or unloading areas of a school bus or transit bus are included. Of the 50 states surveyed, 49 reported. There was a decrease by almost 50% from the previous year. It was, in fact, the lowest figure ever reported in the 45 years of such data being reported. There were (4) fatalities at bus stops across the nation that year. Three children were killed from cars passing a stopped school bus and one was killed from the back of the bus. The report is attached.

WSBA supports safe school bus transportation and encourages this council to work with local school districts, police, and bus contractors who transport children daily in the City of Milwaukee. As written, this proposed change cannot be supported by the school bus industry.

Thank you for your time today.

Cherie A Houser

Cherie A. Houser
Executive Director