

February 17, 2010

Talking Points on Raised Bill No. 5032 and 5033

Legislative Office Building, Room 2D, 11:00am

- Thank you Chairmen DeFronzo and Guerrera and members of the committee for allowing us to testify on its behalf of bill 5032 today.
- Thomas, O'Connor, resident of Fairfield CT and father of 3 young children
- We face a safety issue that is quite different but all too real: The NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS GLOSSY YELLOW or the 8 light warning system with 2 ambers flashing on an extended stop arm don't seem to say "stop" but rather "hurry up". Commuters try to rush pass stopped school buses daily for fear that an extra 2-3 minutes will derail their busy day!
 - It is natural to feel disbelief when confronted with the issue of motorists passing school buses. You and I don't do it and we don't want to believe that anyone is capable of putting children in harms way. So why do people pass stopped school buses. There are three main issues:
 - **Awareness of the law, not obeying the law.** Thousands of new motorists get on our roads each month, some from out of state, some from out of the country some of our own very young teen drivers getting their license for the first time. Many don't know the laws
 - **Violations are underreported or not reported** our process puts the burden on the bus driver who is already tasked with several critical safety jobs.
 - **Resources to Enforce:** Enforcement cost money. Right here in Connecticut even the one day program aimed at creating awareness called Operation Safe Stop (started in 1995) was eliminated because of budget cuts. Protecting our children from this safety issue takes time and money and resources are very thin these days. As a parent I would prefer to have a police officer behind every school bus for the morning and afternoon run but it isn't practical.
 - **We need to create the "soccer ball effect"**

FACTS:

- Fact: According to NHTSA, on average 11 kids under the age of 19 die every year as pedestrians getting on and off buses and when you combine injury statistics with the death statistics that number jumps to over 22 per year.
- Fact: Over the past 38 years 1,151 deaths have occurred with 40% or 441 coming from motorists illegally passing.
- Fact: When you look at the trend in the data, the problem is getting worse with more drivers and less in the fast paced world.
- Fact is a school bus is a moving intersection creating safety hazards between 20-30 times per run in both the Am and the PM.

- A child is 3 times more likely to die getting on or off a school bus than riding it.
- Fact is there are over 600,000 kids in the state of Connecticut getting on riding and getting off approximately 6,200 buses every day. Why are we taking that chance with 600,000 kids riding our buses every day.

STUDIES:

- FL Study done by the Dept of Education with 58 of 67 school districts participating on one day in May yielded 10,590 stop arm violations. Since 11, 150 buses participated, that is an average of almost one pass per bus on that one day.
- State of Virginia conducted a one day study in 119 of 131 school districts yielding 3,394 stop arm violations, of which 187 were on the right side where students get on and off the bus.
- From 1999 to 2004 NC has had six kids die and most recently in August 2009 another 6 year old girl was struck and killed and a State Representative son was killed in January 2009, Nicholas Adkins.
- NYAPT conducted research study in 2009 indicating that 50,000 illegal passes happen a day in New York. Syracuse ran a test with one bus over 41 days and had 68 illegal passes indicating just over one and a half a day.
- Right here in our back yard
 - Child was struck in Dartmouth MA in January 2009 with head injuries but fortunately made a full recovery
 - Child was stuck in Cumberland, RI in March 2009
 - In June 2006, a 5 year was killed in NY crossing the street to get on her bus.

SmartBus Live Program

- Smart Bus lives recognizes this safety issue and went to work in late 2007 to use camera technology to capture violators combined with software to process the evidence chain for law enforcement to issue tickets. Our business is aimed at creating the soccer ball effect so when people see buses they stop and if not they will receive a ticket.
- We are deploying a public safety program for school bus transit, to deter drivers from passing school buses with the stop arm deployed so, children, in route to and from school can hopefully be a little bit safer.
- Rhode Island passed enabling legislation in July 2008 and we have loaded 25 buses in Providence RI. The Program to date has resulted in 1.2 of actual violations per bus per day, a shocking statistic.
- A live ticket issuance system using camera technology to enforce existing laws creates a possible deterrent to passing motorists while creating an

incremental revenue stream not previously seen by the state, city or school district.

How does it work?

- When stop arm is deployed a live monitor in a central monitoring station observes violations and tags the violation as it happens. The evidence file is then put together with two still photographs, 5-10 seconds of streaming video and a signed affidavit.
- Package sent to law enforcement in jurisdiction for review and ticket issuance (can utilize eticketing process or pre-printed hard copy tickets whichever the state prefers)
- Standard of evidence required follows existing statute so no changes required to existing laws.
- Violation paid, or follows current appeals process established by state currently.

Success of program to date

- In RI approximately 138 tickets were issued in 2007 (12 months) on 1400 total bus fleet as compared to 2187 tickets issued on only 25 buses for the period from January to December 2009 (that is a 1669% increase in issued violations on only 2% of the bus fleet in the state).
 - Force Multiplier equates to real dollars for State/City and increased safety all paid for by people who choose to pass school buses
 - Once the safety program is enabled through legislation in a state one job is created for every 6 buses installed with the SmartBus Live technology.
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- Thank you for your time
 - Happy to answer any and all questions
 - Always available for follow up to the committee and entire legislative body