

State Laws on School Bus Violation Video Monitoring Systems

By: Heather Poole, Associate Analyst
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Issue

Summarize Connecticut's law authorizing the use of video monitoring systems to detect drivers who fail to stop for school buses and briefly describe similar laws in other states.

Summary

According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#), every state has a law generally prohibiting drivers from passing a school bus that has its red lights flashing and stop arm extended (often called "stop arm laws"). But NHTSA notes that stop arm laws are particularly challenging to enforce because violations occur randomly, as opposed to at certain times or locations, and typically must be witnessed by a law enforcement officer in order for a ticket to be issued.

In an effort to improve the enforcement of stop arm laws, many states have turned to video monitoring systems. Using cameras installed on the outside of the bus, these systems automatically detect, and capture video and images of, vehicles illegally passing a school bus. At least 15 states, including Connecticut, have passed laws regarding the use of video monitoring systems or other electronic devices to record stop arm violations. With the exception of Wyoming, these states make these systems optional, either by (1) directly authorizing schools to use them or (2) allowing local governing bodies to authorize local schools to use them. In Wyoming, all school buses must be equipped with an external video system.

Connecticut Law

State law allows municipalities or local or regional boards of education to install “live digital video school bus violation detection monitoring systems,” or contract with a private vendor to do so. A “live digital video school bus violation detection monitoring system” is a system with one or more cameras and computers that produce live and recorded images of vehicles that fail to stop for a school bus as the law requires ([CGS § 14-279a](#)).

The law sets the following conditions for using such a system:

1. the system must produce (a) a live visual image, viewable remotely, and (b) a recorded image of the violating vehicle’s license plate that indicates the violation’s date, time, and location;
2. it must be installed in such a way that only a vehicle’s license plate number is recorded;
3. it must not record images of vehicle occupants or other people or vehicles in the vicinity at the time of recording; and
4. all school buses with an operational monitoring system must display a warning sign to that effect.

Evidence Review

When a monitoring system detects and records a violation, a state or municipal police officer must review the “evidence file.” An evidence file must contain (1) at least two digital photos, recorded video, or other recorded images and (2) an affidavit signed by someone who witnessed the violation as it occurred (e.g., a school bus driver).

If, after reviewing the evidence, the officer finds reasonable grounds to believe a violation has occurred, he or she must authorize the issuance of a summons. The law enforcement agency must mail the summons to the vehicle owner within 10 days of the alleged violation. The summons must include copies of at least two digital photos or other recorded images and the signed affidavit from the witness ([CGS § 14-279b](#)).

By law, a recorded image produced by a monitoring system is sufficient evidence of a violation and must be admitted without further authentication. A recorded image produced by a monitoring system cannot be introduced as evidence in any other civil or criminal proceeding. All recorded images of alleged violations must be destroyed (1) 90 days after an alleged violation that did not result in a summons or (2) upon the final disposition of a case where a summons was issued.

Use of Vendors

If a municipality or school board contracts with a private vendor to install, operate, and maintain a monitoring system, the contract must compensate the vendor for equipment costs and monitoring expenses and reimburse it for system installation, operation, and maintenance costs. Municipalities or their school boards must use the money they receive from stop arm fines to pay the vendors for installing, operating, and maintaining the monitoring systems ([CGS § 14-279a\(b\)](#)).

The contract must also require the vendor to report annually to the town or school board on the number of tickets issued as a result of the monitoring system and the amount of money collected. The town or school board must submit this information to the Transportation Committee within 30 days ([CGS § 14-279a\(b\)](#)).

Disposition of Fines

Violators of Connecticut’s stop arm law face a penalty of (1) a \$450 fine for a first offense and (2) for a subsequent offense, a fine of \$500 to \$1,000, 30 days in prison, or both ([CGS § 14-279\(b\)](#)). The law requires the state to remit 80% of the fines collected from violators to the municipalities in which the violations occur. The state must distribute the remaining fine revenue into the Special Transportation Fund (12% of the total) and the General Fund (8% of the total) ([CGS § 51-56a\(d\)](#)).

Other State Laws

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), at least 15 states, including Connecticut, have passed laws regarding the use of video monitoring systems or other electronic devices to record stop arm violations. Table 1 lists and briefly describes these laws. For more information on these laws, including device requirements and privacy safeguards, see NCSL’s report, [“State School Bus Stop-Arm Camera Laws.”](#)

Table 1: State Laws on Stop Arm Violation Video Monitoring Systems

State	Summary
Alabama Ala. Code § 16-27A-3, et seq.	Allows any board of education or governing body of a school system to approve the use of electronic devices to detect school bus violations
Arkansas Ark. Code Ann. § 6-19-131	Allows a public school district or open-enrollment public charter school to operate a camera that records school bus passing violations
Connecticut CGS §§ 14-279 to 14-279b	Allows local boards of education to install, operate and maintain live digital video school bus violation detection monitoring systems

Table 1 (continued)

State	Summary
Georgia Ga. Code Ann. § 40-6-163(d)	Allows school districts to operate video recording devices mounted on a school bus and sets conditions for camera placement and image recording
Illinois Ill. Ann. Stat. ch. 5, § 11-208(i)	Allows municipalities or counties to enact ordinances providing for an automated traffic law enforcement system to identify violators of traffic laws related to approaching and passing school buses
Maryland Md. Transportation Code Ann. § 21-706.1 (effective July 1, 2019)	Allows local governing bodies to authorize law enforcement agencies to place school bus monitoring cameras on school buses and sets conditions regarding image recording and violation notification and processing
Mississippi Miss. Code. Ann. § 37-41-59	Authorizes school districts to mount cameras on retractable, hand-operated stop signs on school buses
North Carolina N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-217	Authorizes the use of automated camera and video recording systems to detect and prosecute school bus passing violations.
Rhode Island R.I. Gen. Laws § 31-51-2	Authorizes school departments to install digital video school bus violation detection monitoring systems and sets standards for the devices
South Carolina S.C. Code Ann. § 56-5-2770(D)(2)	Allows school buses to be equipped with video cameras that record passing traffic and sets conditions for device placement and capability
Utah Utah Code Ann. § 41-6a-1310	Authorizes school districts and private schools to install automated traffic enforcement safety devices on school buses to detect vehicles unlawfully passing school buses and sets conditions for image recording
Virginia Va. Code Ann. § 46.2-844	Allows localities to authorize school districts to operate video monitoring systems on school buses and sets requirements for image recording and violation notification and processing
Washington Rev. Code Wash. § 46.61.370	Allows school districts to operate school bus safety cameras to detect school bus passing violations and sets conditions for image recording and violation processing
West Virginia W. Va. Code § 17C-12-7	Authorizes county boards of education to mount cameras on school buses for the purpose of enforcing school bus passing laws or for any other lawful purpose
Wyoming Wyo. Stat. § 21-3-131(b)(x)	Requires all school buses transporting students to and from school or school activities to be equipped with an external video system

Source: ["State School Bus Stop-Arm Camera Laws."](#) NCSL. Last updated August 25, 2017.

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