

## Questions on School Bus Stop Arm Cameras

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### Issue

This report answers several questions about school bus stop arm cameras related to legal authority, ticket issuance, fine collection, and revenue use.

Stop arm cameras, referred to in Connecticut law as “school bus violation detection monitoring systems,” detect and record drivers who fail to stop for school buses. OLR Report [2018-R-0289](#) summarizes Connecticut’s stop arm camera law.

### Legal Authority

***Does state law allow municipalities or boards of education to contract with private companies to operate stop arm cameras? If so, does it set conditions or restrictions for contractor use?***

Yes, state law allows municipalities and local and regional boards of education to install, operate, and maintain stop arm cameras, or to enter into contracts with private vendors to do so ([CGS § 14-279a](#)). It requires that contracts with stop arm vendors (1) compensate the vendor for equipment costs and monitoring expenses; (2) reimburse the vendor for system installation, operation, and maintenance costs; and (3) require the vendor to report annually to the municipality or school board on the number of tickets issued and the amount of money collected as a result of the cameras.

***Does state law require municipalities to pass an ordinance before using stop arm cameras?***

State law does not require municipalities to enact an ordinance before using stop arm cameras. Rather, it explicitly authorizes municipalities and school boards to install, operate, and maintain

stop arm cameras, either on their own or, as previously stated, through a contractor. However, approval by a municipality's legislative body may be required in some circumstances (e.g., budget approval or contract approval).

## **Ticket Issuance**

### ***Who has the authority to issue a ticket for a violation captured by a stop arm camera?***

State and municipal police issue tickets for violations captured by stop arm cameras. When a stop arm camera records a car that fails to stop for a school bus, an officer must review the evidence file. The 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). The officer must issue a ticket if he or she determines, based on the evidence file, that there are reasonable grounds to believe the driver failed to stop for the school bus ([CGS § 14-279b](#)).

### ***May police issue a ticket to a vehicle's owner based on a photo of the license plate?***

Yes, police may issue a ticket to a vehicle's owner based on a photo of the license plate, provided certain conditions are met.

By law, proof of registration number is considered prima facie evidence that a vehicle's owner was the driver when a violation of a school bus stop arm law or other specified law occurred. For leased vehicles, proof of registration number is prima facie evidence that the lessee was the driver ([CGS § 14-107](#)). The law specifies that, in the case of stop arm cameras, a video image or still photo that clearly shows the license plate of a vehicle failing to stop for a school bus constitutes proof of registration number ([CGS § 14-279b\(b\)](#)).

## **Fine Collection**

### ***Who collects the fines for tickets issued for violations captured by stop arm cameras?***

Tickets issued for violations captured by stop arm cameras are no different than those for violations witnessed by police officers in terms of how the fines are processed. The Centralized Infractions Bureau processes the tickets and collects and distributes the fines ([CGS §§ 14-279](#) and [51-164n](#)).

## ***What are the consequences for violators who do not pay fines?***

A person who receives a ticket for failing to stop for a school bus (whether recorded by a stop arm camera or witnessed by a police officer) and who does not pay the fine faces license suspension and an additional misdemeanor charge.

*License Suspension.* According to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) [website](#), if a person receives a ticket for a motor vehicle violation and fails to answer it by the due date, misses a scheduled court date or deadline, or fails to pay the fine or associated surcharges, the court will request that DMV suspend the person's license. To have his or her license reinstated, a person must (1) reopen the case and either pay the fine or set a new court date and (2) pay DMV a \$175 license restoration fee.

*Misdemeanor.* A person charged with specified motor vehicle violations (including failing to stop for a school bus) who fails to pay the fine and associated fees or surcharges, fails to send in a plea of not guilty by the answer date, or willfully fails to appear for a court date is guilty of a class A misdemeanor ([CGS § 51-164r](#)). Class A misdemeanors are punishable by a maximum \$2,000 fine, up to one year in prison, or both.

## ***Must the court notify DMV if a violator does not pay the fine?***

Yes. State law requires the court with jurisdiction to notify DMV if a person does not pay a motor vehicle ticket fine or associated fees or surcharges ([CGS § 14-140\(b\)](#)).

## **Revenue Use**

### ***May municipalities or school boards use revenue from tickets for violations captured by stop arm cameras to pay a stop arm camera contractor?***

Yes, and they must do so if they hire a stop arm contractor. State law requires municipalities and school boards that contract with a stop arm camera vendor to pay the vendor using funds that they receive from all tickets for failing to stop for a school bus ([CGS § 14-279a\(b\)](#)).

By law, the state must remit 80% of fines collected from these tickets to the municipalities in which the violations occur. This applies to violations captured by stop arm cameras or otherwise ([CGS § 51-56a\(d\)](#)). The fines for failing to stop for a school bus are (1) \$450 for a first offense and (2) \$500 to \$1,000 for a subsequent offense ([CGS § 14-279\(b\)](#)). (In addition to a fine, violators may also face up to 30 days in prison for a subsequent offense.)

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