

SCHOOL BUSES: FLASHING ADVISORY LIGHTS

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House Bill 4054 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Holly Hughes
Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure
Complete to 5-26-17

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4054 would amend the Pupil Transportation Act by adding Section 12 to require a school bus to be equipped with a *flashing advisory sign* for the purpose of warning other vehicles of the presence of a traffic hazard requiring the use of unusual care in approaching, overtaking, or passing. (This would be in addition to any other warning signals required in the act.)

The section would apply to school buses manufactured after the effective date of the bill. A detailed description of the "flashing advisory sign" and other specifications are described below.

Flashing Advisory Sign. A flashing advisory sign would need to be mounted on the rear of the school bus in an area that does not interfere with the compliance of red and amber signal lights (Section 19) or paint (Section 33) requirements specified in the act. It would also have to display warning messages to motorists as follows:

- In a sealed and weathertight sign measuring 23.5 by 8.75 by 1.5 inches in size.
- Connected to the school bus safety lights.
- Alternatively flash the word messages "caution" and "stopping" *when the amber school bus safety lights are activated*; flash the word message "stop" or "do not pass" when *red school bus safety lights are activated*; flash the word message "caution" or "caution stopping" *when the hazard lights are activated*; flash the word message "caution" when the *back-up lights are activated*. The letters in the word messages "caution" and "stopping" would have to be amber and the word messages for "stop" or "do not pass" would have to be red. All signs would need to be at least 1.5 inches tall and could be controlled by the hazard lights or school bus safety light flashers.

Word Messages Requirements

Word messages would need to be clearly visible in direct sunlight from a distance of 500 feet along the axis of the school bus and have a minimum viewing angle of 15 degrees on each side of the perpendicular axis. Regardless of the light used for illumination, each warning message displayed should include a complete light quality arrangement to fully and clearly convey the intended warning message to approaching motorists.

Electronic Sign

An electronic sign that displays warning messages to motorists could be placed on the front of a school bus if a flashing advisory sign has been mounted on the rear of the school bus as specified in the bill; the sign is wired only to the amber and red school bus safety lights; and the sign is mounted below the windshield, vertically, centered, and does not create a vision obstruction for the driver of the bus.

Sign Compliances:

A flashing advisory sign and an electronic sign that displays warning messages to motorist would have to comply with all of the following:

- Be uniform in design and in operation and each sign placed on a school bus as specified would display the same advisory warnings.
- Automatically energize when the school bus's hazard lights are activated, comply with Section 19(3) of the act on amber and red lights, and automatically de-energize when the school bus service door is closed.
- Be properly maintained and operated as designed by the manufacturer.

This section could be referred to as the "Privacky Law."

Proposed MCL 257.1812

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would have no fiscal impact on the state, but could increase costs to local school districts and intermediate districts to the extent that the additional requirements increase the average cost of a school bus. The current average cost for a new school bus is approximately \$80,000 but varies depending on the size and style of the bus. According to the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT), the costs for enhanced lighting devices could range from \$300 to \$500 per bus, depending on the quantity purchased. MAPT estimates that public and private school transportation providers purchase approximately 1,000 new school buses annually, meaning the statewide cost could range from \$300,000 to \$500,000 annually. The replacement cycle for a school bus is about 12 to 15 years.

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