

SCHOOL BUSES: FLASHING ADVISORY LIGHTS

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House Bill 4054 as enacted
Public Act 233 of 2017
Sponsor: Rep. Holly Hughes
House Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure
Senate Committee: Transportation
Complete to 7-26-18

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

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4054 amends the Pupil Transportation Act by adding Section 12 to allow 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.)

A detailed description of the “flashing advisory sign” and other specifications is provided 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 red and amber signal light (Section 19) or paint (Section 33) requirements specified in the Act. The sign must be sealed and weathertight and measure 23.5 by 8.75 by 1.5 inches in size. The sign must be connected to the school bus safety lights, and the messages it displays may be controlled by the hazard lights or school bus safety light flashers. The letters in the sign’s messages must be at least 1.5 inches tall. The sign would have to display warning messages to motorists in accordance with the following:

- When the amber school bus safety lights are activated, the sign must alternately flash the messages “caution” and “stopping” using amber letters.
- When the red school bus safety lights are activated, the sign must flash the message “stop” or “do not pass” using red letters.
- When the hazard lights are activated, the sign must flash the message “caution” or “caution stopping” using amber letters.
- When the back-up lights are activated, the sign must flash the message “caution” using amber letters.

Message Requirements

Messages must 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.

Front-Mounted Electronic Sign

An electronic sign that displays warning messages to motorists may be placed on the front of a school bus if a flashing advisory sign has already been mounted on the rear of the school bus

as specified above; if the sign is wired only to the amber and red school bus safety lights; and if the sign is mounted below the windshield, vertically centered, and does not create a vision obstruction for the bus driver.

General Sign Requirements

Rear-mounted flashing advisory signs and front-mounted electronic signs must comply with all of the following:

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

Section 12 may be referred to and cited as the "Privacky Law."

MCL 257.1812

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would have no fiscal impact on the state, but could increase costs to local school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), and public school academies (PSAs) to the extent that adopting the Driver Alert System (DAS)—flashing advisory sign—increases the cost of a school bus. Since the bill does not require districts and PSAs to include DAS, it is likely that only a portion of all buses in the state will adopt DAS.

The Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) estimates that a majority of the system integration of DAS would occur over a 5-year period, with approximately 500 to 1,200 school buses adopting DAS, out of the current total stock of school buses of 16,122.¹ The cost for DAS could range from \$200 to \$500, with the price decreasing as larger quantities of the product are purchased. To put this into perspective, the current average cost for a new school bus is approximately \$90,000 to \$110,000, with the variation in price depending on the size and style of the bus. Including DAS would increase the total cost by approximately 0.2% to 0.5%.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

¹ Michigan School Bus Inspection Report. School Year 2017 is the latest with year-end totals available.
http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,4643,7-123-72297_59877-267859--,00.html