

DID YOU KNOW???

STOP ARM CAMERAS APPROVED IN NYS

A new law authorizing school districts to install stop arm cameras on school buses will take effect on September 5th to deter motorists who pass stopped school buses. For several years, New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) has advocated for this legislation. It is estimated that approximately 50,000 vehicles pass a stopped school bus with red lights flashing every day in New York State. Are we as drivers in such a hurry that we are willing to put our children in danger or are we so distracted that we don't even notice a large, yellow school bus with red flashing lights plus red stop arms, also with red flashing lights, and just drive past it?

This new law is not a mandate, rather an optional program. Camera systems can be installed on district owned or private contracted buses. In order for any school district to implement stop arm cameras, the Board of Education must pass a resolution to enter into an agreement with a county, city, village or town within the district, to conduct a stop arm violation program under this new law.

Although at this time there are no agreements in Franklin County that I am aware of, local school districts will likely try to work out arrangements with the county as the municipality to conduct the stop arm program under the new law.

Municipalities and school districts are authorized (but not required) to enter into agreements with third-party vendors who will handle and manage the use of the cameras and the back-end operations and communications with the local police departments.

The amendments to the education law state that the purchase, lease, installation, operation, and maintenance, or any other costs associated with such cameras shall not be considered an aidable expense. Rather, the Vehicle and Traffic Law was also amended to provide that the total cost to the district of the installation, maintenance and use of the school bus photo violation monitoring system shall be borne entirely by the municipality within the school district which is a party to an agreement with the school district for the installation, maintenance and use of school bus photo violation monitoring systems.

Annual reporting of specified data about the program is required and is the responsibility of the municipality. Images produced by these cameras cannot be used for any other purpose other than for violations of V&T law. School districts are prohibited from accessing images and data from school bus photo violation monitoring systems, nor can they use the images for disciplinary purposes.

There is a sunset clause in this law which is December 1, 2024, meaning it must be renewed by the state legislature or else it expires on this date.

Should any of our school districts utilize this enforcement tool, the registered owner of the vehicle caught by the stop arm cameras is responsible for the monetary penalties (\$250 for a first offence) associated with this vehicle and traffic violation. Penalties are only monetary – no points for a violation, normally a five-point penalty. Cameras will not identify the driver, which may not be the registered owner; thus the monetary fine is applicable to the owner of the vehicle no matter who is driving.

Hopefully this new law will significantly reduce the violations in New York State.