

Legislative Analysis



SCHOOL BUS DISPLAYING YELLOW FLASHING LIGHTS

Phone: (517) 373-8080
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House Bill 4214 (H-1) as reported from committee
Sponsor: Rep. Brad Paquette
Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure
Complete to 6-11-25

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

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4214 would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to add requirements for a driver that approaches a school bus with yellow (amber) alternately flashing lights.

Currently, the driver of a motor vehicle that comes upon a school bus displaying two alternately flashing *red* lights while stopped or stopping must bring their vehicle to a full stop at least 20 feet away and not proceed until either the school bus starts moving or the flashing lights are turned off. The bill would retain this provision.

The bill would newly require that the driver of a motor vehicle that comes upon a school bus displaying two alternately flashing *yellow* lights while stopped or stopping must prepare to stop by immediately reducing speed, bring their vehicle to a full stop at least 20 feet away, and not proceed until either the school bus starts moving again or the flashing lights are turned off.

The above provisions apply (red lights), and under the bill would apply (red lights and yellow lights), to vehicles traveling in either direction on the applicable roadway, unless there is a median or other physical road division with no crosswalk or pedestrian crossway. The bill would add language to further clarify this scope of application.

MCL 257.601b and 257.682

BRIEF DISCUSSION:

While Michigan law is clear that drivers must stop for a school bus displaying its flashing red lights, it does not provide any direction regarding what drivers should do when those lights are flashing yellow.

School bus drivers must activate their yellow lights at least 200 feet before a stop, which is meant to warn other drivers that the bus is soon stopping and activating its red lights, and that they should therefore also be preparing to stop.

However, instead of slowing, some drivers charge toward the yellow lights, sometimes at highway speeds, apparently hoping to get past the bus before the red lights come on, and in doing so present a grave danger to the children waiting to board, boarding, or exiting the bus.

The bill would require drivers approaching a bus with yellow flashing lights to reduce their speed and prepare to stop—and then to actually stop at least 20 feet away from the bus, which is where they have to be stopped when the bus's lights are flashing red.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the state and on local units of government. The extent to which provisions of the bill would increase the number of individuals responsible for a civil infraction is not known.

Under section 909(1) of the Michigan Vehicle Code, civil fine revenue would be applied to the support of public and county law libraries. In addition, under section 907(13) of the Michigan Vehicle Code, for any civil fines ordered to be paid, the judge or district court magistrate is required to order the defendant to pay a justice system assessment of \$40 for each civil infraction determination, except for parking violations. Revenue deposited into the state's Justice System Fund supports various justice-related endeavors in the judicial branch, the Departments of State Police, Corrections, Health and Human Services, and Treasury, and the Legislative Retirement System.

There is not a practical way to determine the number of violations that will occur under provisions of the bill, so there is not a way to estimate the amount of additional revenue that would be collected.

The fiscal impact on local court systems would depend on how provisions of the bill affected court caseloads and related administrative costs. It is difficult to project the actual fiscal impact to courts due to variables such as law enforcement practices, prosecutorial practices, judicial discretion, case types, and complexity of cases.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Berrien County Sheriff's Department testified in support of the bill. (5-13-25)

The following entities indicated support for the bill:

- Michigan Association of Pupil Transportation (5-13-25)
- Bus Patrol America (5-20-25)

Legislative Analyst: E. Best
Fiscal Analyst: Robin Risko

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