

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee

BILL: CS/SB 428

INTRODUCER: Education PreK-12 Committee and Senator Baker

SUBJECT: School Bus Stops/Safety

DATE: February 7, 2007

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	deMarsh-Mathues	Matthews	ED	Fav/CS
2.			EA	
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

The bill requires each school district to have a school bus stop safety plan for the district.

This bill creates an undesignated section of Florida law.

II. Present Situation:

National statistics have consistently demonstrated that school buses constitute one of the safest forms of transportation. The National Research Council concluded that children are at far more risk traveling to and from school by bike, walking, or in private passenger vehicles -- especially if a teen-age driver is involved -- than in school buses.¹ Public health and traffic safety officials have examined the risks associated with school bus stops and noted the importance of carefully selecting bus stop locations.²

Current law requires district school boards to establish school bus stops, or provide by district school board rule for establishing school bus stops, as needed at the most reasonably safe locations available.³ Where unusual traffic hazards exist at school bus stops on roads maintained by the state outside of municipalities, the Department of Transportation (DOT) must place signs at the bus stops warning drivers of the location of the stops. The DOT must place these signs in concurrence and cooperation with and upon request of the district school board. According to

¹ "The Relative Risks of School Travel: A National Perspective and Guidance for Local Community Risk Assessment." Transportation Research Board, 2002. <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10409.html>

² Schieber RA, Vegega ME Reducing childhood pedestrian injuries: summary of a multidisciplinary conference. *Injury Prevention*, 2002; 8:13-110. http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/childhood_pedestrian/child_pedestrian.htm

³ Section 1006.22(12)(c), F.S.

the DOT, there are federal guidelines rather than requirements for states to use in placing “school bus ahead” signs.⁴

There are no criteria in law or rule for a “safe school bus stop,” although school districts in Florida and other states have developed their own. Volusia County School District developed a bus stop safety checklist for establishing a school bus stop that includes criteria related to obstructions that lessen student and driver visibility, sufficient space for students to wait safely off the road, and the ability of the school bus driver to activate student warning lights.⁵ New Hampshire’s Department of Education established school bus stop criteria and advises school districts to site stops according to written guidelines and regularly evaluate the safety of the stops.⁶

According to the DOE, documentation of stop locations and the specific procedures for ensuring stop safety are determined by the school district. Districts have safety professionals who review new stop locations or existing locations when there is an indication of a hazard. Some districts routinely review all stop locations. The DOE also notes that all school bus operators are trained and instructed to report hazards at stops. The DOE conducts transportation audits every 4 years for a sample of school districts; however, these audits generally focus on bus driver qualifications and school buses.

The DOE estimates that there are 350,000 public school bus stops in Florida.⁷ There were 15,636 public school buses in daily service in 2004-05, equating to an average of 44 stops per day per bus (22 physical locations, morning and afternoon).⁸

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill requires each school district to have a school bus stop safety plan for the district.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2007.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

⁴ *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, <http://www.mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/HTM/2003r1/part7/part7b.htm#section7B10>

⁵ Student Transportation Services, Volusia County Schools, October 4, 2006.

⁶ New Hampshire Department of Education and Department of Safety, See <http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/dmv/forms/dsmv487.pdf>

⁷ Department of Education, as of January 19, 2007, based on 53 school districts.

⁸ *Ibid.*

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to the DOE, many school districts currently have information that can be used to develop a plan. To the extent that a district does not have this information, there may be some costs for the district to meet the requirements in the bill.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

VIII. Summary of Amendments:

None.

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