

Response from City of Edinburgh Council, 6 March 2009**TEXT OF PETITION PE1223**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take all appropriate action, whether through amending guidance, contracts, agreements or legislation, to require local authorities to install proper safety signage and lights on school buses, to be used only when school children are on the bus when necessary, and make overtaking a stationary school bus a criminal offence

Whether it would be possible to introduce by-laws in relation to the transport of school children, and how would these be enforced?

- *relevant action your organisation is taking to address these (the Committee*
- *interested in specifics e.g. what is the action, how is it relevant, why is it being taken, when).*

Council Response:

The Council's response is noted below and Appendix One shows an excerpt from the Home to School transport contract which details some of the safety aspects of the service designed to optimise child safety.

Traffic Measures:

At present the City of Edinburgh Council only prohibits parking on the "zig-zag" lines outside the schools and no loading/unloading is permitted during the stated times, including school buses. If legislation was to be introduced to prohibit overtaking when a school bus was stopped adjacent to a school an area of carriageway would require to be set aside. The bay or parking area would require to be covered by a Traffic Regulation Order to allow the Council parking attendants to enforce it. The bay would need to be marked on-street and the signing would have to state the times and days when the prohibitions were in operation.

The present legislation governing all prohibitions states that the Council must hold a Public Hearing if objections are received (and not removed by negotiation) to an Order that prohibits loading/unloading for more than 8 hours in any 24 hours or outwith the times of 07.00 to 10.00 and 16.00 to 19.00 in any day. An Order which prohibited loading outwith the above times would require a hearing, unless new legislation removed it.

Child Safety:

The provision of safety signage, road markings, traffic lights and the making of overtaking a stationary school bus a criminal offence is an issue for the Council's City Development Transport function. From a Children & Families Department perspective, any measures which could be taken to improve child safety would be welcomed.

APPENDIX ONE**The City of Edinburgh Council - Home to School Transport****Background Information**

Home to school transport provided by City of Edinburgh Council can be stated as follows: - mainstream pupils 2,357, and assisted special needs pupils 845. This equates to 332 routes (vehicles) to transport 2,044 pupils and 1,158 pupils transported by public operators Lothian Transport and First Bus.

The Council fleet of accessible vehicles carry 93 passengers on 17 routes, these are all assisted special needs pupils and all of these routes have an Escort on board.

30 routes are using vehicles with more than 13 passengers and 22 of our routes have 18 passengers or more. As a general rule Assisted special needs pupils are picked up, and dropped off from their home address, whereas the larger mainstream routes are picked up from normal bus stops, or to a lesser extent pickup points.

School times vary across the Council; however, start times are between 08:30 and 09:00, with finish times of around 15:30 and an early closure of 12:30 to 13:00 on a Friday.

17 routes have more than 40 passengers, and one of these routes uses a double-decker bus. These 17 routes account for 852 passengers. The 1,158 pupils transported by public service vehicles are on a number of different routes and travel to 30 different schools. This total of transported pupils does not include pupils that have passes purchased by for them by their parents, or pupils who may use the service buses on an ad-hoc basis.

Within the Conditions of contract there are the following instructions to Contractors:-**2. DRIVERS**

2.1.3 When picking up pupils from school, unless instructed otherwise, the driver and vehicle should arrive before school finishing time so that the vehicle is parked in position and stationary when pupils are ready to board. Departure at the end of the school day will be 10 minutes after the official dismissal time, or as agreed with the school staff.

2.2 Picking Up and Setting Down Passengers

2.2.1 Approach each stop with care - do not brake sharply.

2.2.2 When picking up and setting down passengers only use the agreed points. Do not drop off pupils other than at an agreed place.

- 2.2.3 Keep all doors closed until you have brought the vehicle to a complete standstill.
- 2.2.4 Wherever possible, the vehicle must draw up close to the pavement on the near side of the road. Hazard warning lights should be activated during loading and unloading.
- 2.2.5 Drivers should ensure that only they open or close the doors. Do not allow pupils to do this.
- 2.2.6 If reversing is required, complete the manoeuvre whilst children are on the vehicle.
- 2.2.7 Passengers should board or alight from the vehicle only from a side-facing door on the near side of the vehicle except when they are using lift equipment at the rear of the vehicle. Drivers should be knowledgeable in the safe use of equipment both under normal and emergency situations. Such equipment should be supervised at all times when in use.
- 2.2.8 Before moving off make sure; that pupils on board are seated, wearing seat belts or (if appropriate) occupant restraints, that doors are properly closed, that no bags, coats etc. are caught in the doors, that the number of passengers does not exceed the permitted number and that pupils who have alighted, and any other pedestrians are well clear of the vehicle.