

PE1223/O

PETITIONS COMMITTEE RE School Bus Safety

The reply from the DOT saddens me greatly.

It seems pointless to reply to their letter, but I will try, it seems minds are already set in concrete, regardless how senseless some of the remarks are.

It is blatantly obvious there is no intention, nor in fact a will by DOT to improve any laws relating to school transport, nor in fact the Scottish Government, for some reason they assume there is no problem, nor any need to improve school bus safety.

This I find very sad, as over time everything needs to improve, & to assume this is not the case is very dangerous precedent.

When first approached in 2008 the Dept of Transport gave us the following excuses why passing a school bus should not happen

[1] Drivers seeing a school bus about to stop might take unnecessary risks in order to pass

Similarly driver waiting to pull out from a side road might feel more inclined to pull out ahead of the school bus, when under other circumstances been content to let it pass

Our answer is Drivers already do so, nothing new in this at all, no driver wants stuck behind anything that will hinder them, from buses to delivery vans & Lorries

[2] Higher speed roads, quite firm braking could itself be hazardous

What utter rubbish, with today's cars & performance braking systems ABS & EBS this is hardly an issue.

Traffic on today's roads regularly exceed speed limits, that is why we have this problem in the first place, nothing to do with braking, but much to do with speed & driver inattention

In any case the limit for most vehicles on roads used by buses is 60mph maximum, so it would be normal everyday braking.

Not all drivers in North America conform.

How ever for the amount of pupils carried their accident rate is low & in fact most accidents are caused by other vehicles running into the school bus. Buses which are far superior to the ones we use

I may add, not all drivers conform in the UK to laws either, so why trhe comparison. Possibly a similar example is in the UK not all drivers keep to the speed limit either, It's Not really a relevant point.

Most children travel to school by public service buses, according to the DOT, this does not stop accidents, they are also recorded in towns & cities, where traffic is in fact slower. It is the slower speed in these areas that keeps the accident rate down in fact.

Why not then simply include service buses in the rules & give every child the same level of safety, why should school pupils be safer in a school bus than a service bus.

The DOT States Running a trail would cause problems A problem reaching not only locals, but visitors.

So this would apply to UK residents as we holiday abroad.

Everyone who drives on holiday in the EU drives by that countries rules/laws, as visitors.

Of course drivers in Northern Ireland who cross the border have to contend with different signs & possibly different EU laws, so it already happens within the UK.

Is this not the same as running a trail, the precedent is already set
These excuses given by the DOT would cover any new law brought in, they take time to get used to, as in new speed limits, using seatbelts & mobile phones, and they all had a period of grace to allow drivers to get used to the new legislation.
Why could this not be the case in a trial?

The DOT state Ignorance on the part of children & on them relying on vehicles stopping, could lead to further tragedies/ not protected on other journeys.

I may add, it is not Ignorance on the part of children that is a crass statement, & I am stunned this was made, children cannot & never will take in knowledge an adult has, this is a scientific fact, they are not mini adults, it is not ignorance that causes accidents, it is the child's perception of danger & they make mistakes, that drivers it seems cannot react to, often due to speed passing a school bus.

It is a scientific fact that youngsters cannot judge speed as an Adult does, nothing will change that

As it is children still cross the road badly, we need other way's of teaching them.

Seat belts could be a barrier to free trade

I cannot comment on that, this would be for the EU Mps, but it sounds very far fetched to me.

The last comment is totally incorrect, **incidents involving buses or coaches are rare. It is a totally stupid off the cuff remark, without any research being done.**

I am unsure if they are referring to buses in general or school buses, but I can supply both if required.

Bus/ coach accidents for 2008/09, we have recorded 42 bus accidents in the last 2 years, yes some are school bus accidents, so it's no where near the rare event they have pointed out.

Nor are these all the bus accidents that have taken place in that period.

It saddens me to see that Road Safety Officials, the Police & other organisations questioned by the Scottish Parliament also do not agree with any no passing rule. Saddened because the Scottish Parliament could have led the way in new thinking.

I wonder what questions they were asked? how they were asked, & by whom, it is easy to get the results you want.
Would this information be available ?

Apparently Jill Mulholland of Scottish Transport tells me the Scottish Government in not minded to accept any no passing ban, the words used were "Not minded to",

that is without anyone discussing the matter within parliament, as far as I know it appears democracy is not at work here, unless she speaks for each MSP..

I can do no more regarding the no passing law, the UK Government nor the Scottish Government want to adopt this, it is a sad day for child safety, this will return in the future to haunt those who do not support this, but until they are personally involved, it won't affect them.

I just ask the petitions committee to continue with the rest of the other safety ideas that have been discussed, & I thank the committee for having the fore sight to do so.

Some are simple, all have the ability to save lives, I could not ask for more than that, and any child's life saved is worth every penny spent in doing so

We need to always remember

Children in the age group 11-14 account for about two-thirds of all accidents where a bus is involved, the majority being boys and casualties aged 12-13 years old.

The majority of casualties occur on the journey home from school as children alight from buses at the non-school end of the journey.

At least 22% of the casualties are associated with contract school bus services.

This is what keeps our group going, the simply fact that until things change, more children will be left wheel chair bound & brain injured, because that is what seriously injured really means.

Tragically there will also be more deaths, that is the sad fact of doing nothing, the UK Government & the Scottish Government seem happy to accept this fact.

School children have little in the way of rights; they are not protected under H&S, nor under any United Nations law, the only protection is under a LA having a duty of care, which appears to cease as the child leaves the bus.

The cost to the public purse, of each fatal accident in 2005 was £1.4 million, add inflation to this now.

Stats 19 records for 1999 to 2000, 11 children were killed, serious injuries accounted for 251

In percentage terms it has hardly dropped in 29 years, in 1981 % of KSI was 17.03- in 2006 % was 19.02

We are still killing school pupils & condemning others to a life of disability, inc being wheel chair bound, & having severe behavioural problems due to brain damage.

Do we allow this to go on, or do we change this once & for all, by giving all school pupils the same safety rights, whether is a service bus, or a school bus.

Regardless of where they stay, I can't change anything myself!

1981 to 2006 saw 21,826 children killed, injured & seriously injured on leaving the school bus

I also add In the USA

Every year, about 800 school-age children are killed in motor vehicle crashes during normal school travel hours — weekday mornings and afternoons during school months — accounting for about 14 percent of the 5,600 child deaths that occur on the nation's roadways.

Of these 800 deaths, only about 2 percent are school-bus related, while 74 percent occur in private passenger vehicles and 22 percent are the result of pedestrian or bicycle accidents
By the Highway Safety Research Centre University of North Carolina