

PE1223/AAA

Petitioner Letter of 21 April 2014

PETITIONS COMMITTEE

The much trumpeted school safety report mentioned by Transport Scotland. This report has been available for I think, at least the last 3 years

As far as I am aware not one local authority has changed its signage or safety requirements in any way, so that is how much notice LAs take of recommendations by Transport Scotland.

Yet Transport Scotland tell us there is no need to legislate?

Keith Brown says "That is why this guide was commissioned, to raise awareness and make recommendations for how local authorities and school transport operators can reduce journey risk and improve the safety of children travelling to and from school."

Can Keith Brown or Transport Scotland tell me which LA, apart from Aberdeenshire, that has adopted any of these safety measures. I think hardly any, if any

It is good seat belt legislation was passed, how ever the deaths & serious injuries of pupils, occur in the main on the journey home & whilst leaving the school bus.

This leaves a huge gap in school bus safety, & once again as only it appears only one LA has adopted some changes, this continues to ensure not all school pupils have the same right to safety, its post code safety & that should never happen.

Every child aboard a school bus, no matter where they live in Scotland should have the same right to safety, as seat belts will do.

Still fitted are the smallest sign to the front of bus, ensuring on coming drivers have the least time to react, why would a large one be only fitted to back.

Legislation already states any size can be use, this we discovered a few years back, no one was aware of it then. Until we raised & asked questions, not one LA bothered to ask.

The drivers approaching the bus from the front require the same safety information as those approaching from the rear of the bus.

Is this not common sense?

Aberdeenshire seems to be the only LA that has adopted changed & improved signage, although not all school buses are fitted with them, even after them agreeing this would happen two years ago now

There has been no advance at all on making the school bus safer by improving visibility, or in fact any signage change.

So it appears guidelines do not work, time maybe for a bylaw, law what ever ensuring this happens.

I travel Scotland extensively at times & still find buses on various unrelated journeys displaying the school safety sign, this simply devalues it, drivers simply become accustomed to see no pupils & act accordingly.

Akin to road signs being left once repairs are completed, they are ignored. When we question LAs & in fact bus operators, the response is, there is no law that says the safety sign must be removed, west of Scotland companies are the worst sadly.

There are coaches that have these signs stuck to vehicles that cannot be removed, yet are on business that is not transporting pupils, these can be transporting football fans, outings & private functions including weddings.

The sign was designed for one purpose, to ensure the safety of school pupils, nothing else, so why is this allowed to happen; because there is no legislation in place to stop the practice.

Guide lines have not helped one iota.

No LA listens.

The sign is also placed behind glass, which I am told by the Road Transport Research laboratory, could well affect its reflective quality.

It is also placed behind tinted glass, which lessens its reflection & refraction, surely this was not the intention when the law was framed without thought.

Sadly no government, not any LA has asked for research on this as yet, could our government not do this?

In the dark, or in winter weather, this sign being placed behind glass does not reflect as it should, because head lights are designed not to shine into bus cabs, therefore once again, pupils lives at risk

Buses can use hazard lights, dropping off or picking up, does anyone on the committee think this is a safety measure, when everyone plus Jock Thomsons

bairns use it at the local newsagents on yellow lines, it is entirely meaningless in most cases, drivers are so used to its misuse, as they are with the misuse of the safety sign on buses not carrying pupils.

Extra high lights could be fitted, this is allowed now, yet once again, very few bus operators have done so, why, because these are only guidelines.

It is a piecemeal approach, it's to suit the LA or bus companies, it's definitely not to suit pupil safety.

Transport Scotland must be fully aware their safety guidelines in the main are ignored by most bus operators, to suggest guidelines work is ridiculous.

The only way to concentrate minds of a business that really does not care to much for their duty of care is by making it illegal.

This approach needs changed; every pupil has the same right to safety, as has happened with seat belts.

We simply need a more visible school bus, a bus, coach that carries youngsters, who act on whims, as we did do be recognised as such.

So with all the safety measure in the report, written down & recommended, nothing has in fact changed.

I find this a an affront & a disgrace that this should continue, & although injuries are still happening, deaths recently have dropped, however , one death will change this.

Yes it will happen again, try dealing with the families in this situation as I have done the pain that never goes away, ever!!

This committee can help ensure regulations are enforced, can in fact save injuries & lives, imagine for one moment , two police officers at your door with the news, a loved one has been killed, or in my Grand Daughters case, left wheel chair bound, relying on mum doing everything for her because of brain damage. Erin was 8 when she was run down, by a driver speeding as she left a school bus, she is now 18 , nothing has changed in all those years I have been fighting for change , since in reality 2004, with my first petition in 2006, sadly Robyn & Alexander won't be coming home, ever. That is the story in many homes over the years.

This committee can help ensure it does not happen again.

I cannot understand why Transport Scotland cannot, or in fact will not make sensible common sense changes, replies to my suggestions are simply met with "We won't be doing that".

From 2005 to 2009 there were 270 children killed or seriously injured on Scotland's roads officially recorded as pupils on a journey to or from school. A shocking Statistic indeed, also Stats 19 is not totally correct & never has been.

Thankfully deaths have reduced, but even one death or injury is one to many.

Ron Beaty