

RESOLUTION NO. 108 - 2024

RESOLVED, that this Board hold a public hearing pursuant to Section 209.141(4) of the Laws of Westchester County on Local Law Intro. No. 283 - 2024, entitled "A LOCAL LAW amending Chapter 705 of the Laws of Westchester County relating to a Demonstration Program imposing vehicle owner liability for failure of an operator thereof to stop for a school bus displaying a red visual signal and stop-arm." The public hearing will be held at 7:30 p.m. on the 17 day of June, 2024 in the Chambers of the Board of Legislators, 8th Floor, Michaelian Office Building, White Plains, New York. The Clerk of the Board shall cause notice of the time and date of such hearing to be published at least once in one or more newspapers published in the County of Westchester and selected by the Clerk of the Board for that purpose in the manner and time required by law.

TO: HONORABLE BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COUNTY OF WESTCHESTER

Your Committee recommends passage of “A LOCAL LAW amending Chapter 705 of the Laws of Westchester County relating to a Demonstration Program imposing vehicle owner liability for failure of an operator thereof to stop for a school bus displaying a red visual signal and stop-arm.”

Your Committee is advised that on April 19, 2023, this Honorable Board adopted Local Law Intro. No. 91-2023, which established a demonstration program for imposing vehicle owner liability for failure of an operator thereof to comply with Section 1174 of the New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law (“VTL”) when meeting a school bus marked, equipped and operated in the County pursuant to Sections 375 and 1174-a of the VTL (the “Local Law”). The Local Law was adopted pursuant to Chapter 145 of the 2019 Laws of the State of New York (the “Stop Arm Law”). The law was enacted to prevent further deaths and injuries caused by dangerous motorists who ignore the law and illegally passed a stopped school bus. In addition, the law expanded the enforcement tools available in the County to further address this issue, with the hope of significantly lessening the numbers of violations that continue to compromise the health, safety and wellbeing of students.

Your Committee is informed that the New York State Legislature recently amended the Stop Arm Law as Part AA in S.8306-C/A.8806-C, Article VII, of the Budget bill signed by the Governor on April 20, 2024 as Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2024 (“Chapter 56”). The proposed local law, if adopted, would amend the Local Law to incorporate the same amendments to the Stop Arm Law as set forth in Chapter 56.

Your Committee is advised that the amendments enact certain statutory presumptions, which address certain evidentiary issues that have been raised in cases adjudicating Stop Arm Law violations. *See People v. Croce (Alfred)*, No. 2023-310, N.Y. App. Term LEXIS 23160 (2d Dep't Nov. 30, 2023). One such statutory presumption concerns the sufficiency of proof that the bus is properly marked and equipped as provided under VTL § 375. To address this issue, Chapter 56 added a new requirement that the certificate sworn to or affirmed by the County technician for a violation be based upon, among other things, an inspection of documents or declarations pertaining to inspections by the New York State Department of Transportation ("DOT") of the bus. The certificate must also include a statement confirming that the school bus photo violation monitoring system was installed on a school bus marked and equipped as provided by VTL § 375, at the time of the violation, as evidenced by a valid certificate of inspection issued by the DOT. Chapter 56 also provides that such a certificate from the County technician shall be prima facie evidence of compliance with VTL § 375.

Your Committee is further advised that another statutory presumption concerns the sufficiency of proof that the bus was stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging passengers or had stopped because a school bus in front of it stopped to receive or discharge any passengers. To address this issue, Chapter 56 added a new requirement that any photographs, microphotographs, videotape or other recorded images ("Recorded Images") evidencing a violation shall include an electronic indicator or indicators showing the flashing red signal lamps were active. Where the Recorded Images are in compliance with the foregoing, the law establishes a rebuttable presumption that such school bus was stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging any passengers or because a school bus in front of it had stopped to receive or discharge any passengers.

Your Committee is informed that the proposed local law would incorporate these statutory presumptions into the County demonstration program, which will assist local prosecutors and the local Courts in adjudicating the school bus stop arm violations under the demonstration program. Chapter 56 extends the provisions of the Stop Arm Law from December 1, 2024 until December 1, 2029. The proposed local law extends the Local Law until the State law expires.

Your Committee also recognizes that there are currently two Chapters 705 of the Laws of Westchester County; this Local Law rennumbers this School Bus Stop-Arm Demonstration Program chapter to 708 in order to prevent confusion.

Your Committee is further informed that the proposed project does not meet the definition of an action under New York State Environmental Quality Review Act ("SEQRA") and its implementing regulations 6 NYCRR Part 617. Please refer to the memorandum from the Department of Planning, dated January 8, 2024, which is on file with the Clerk of the Board of Legislators. Your Committee concurs in this conclusion.

Your Committee, after careful consideration, recommends adoption of this Local Law.

Dated: _____, 2024
White Plains, New York

Margaret A. Cio

Terry

Jr

James B. John

Paul H

John

John

John

James

James

Eric James

John

Benjamin

Public Safety
5/28/24

Budget & Appropriations
5/29/24

Legislation
5/29/24

COMMITTEE ON

Dated: May 28th, 2024
White Plains, New York

The following members attended the meeting remotely and approved this item out of Committee with an affirmative vote. Their electronic signature was authorized and is below.

Public Safety

Colin J. [Signature]

Dated: May 29, 2024

White Plains, New York

The following members attended the meeting remotely and approved this item out of Committee with an affirmative vote. Their electronic signature was authorized and is below.

Nancy E. Pan

Colin J. Amato

Vedat Galin

Colin J. Amato

Vedat Galin

COMMITTEES ON

Budget & Appropriations

Legislation

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SUBJECT: School Bus-Stop Arm Program

☐ NO FISCAL IMPACT PROJECTED

OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT

To Be Completed by Submitting Department and Reviewed by Budget

SECTION A - FUND

☒ GENERAL FUND

☐ AIRPORT FUND

☐ SPECIAL DISTRICTS FUND

SECTION B - EXPENSES AND REVENUES

Total Current Year Expense \$ -

Total Current Year Revenue \$ 1,326,600

Source of Funds (check one): ☒ Current Appropriations ☐ Transfer of Existing Appropriations

☐ Additional Appropriations ☐ Other (explain)

Identify Accounts: 101-52-1000-9734

Vendor is responsible for all technology related expenses.

Potential Related Operating Budget Expenses: Annual Amount \$0.00

Describe: A Local Law amending Chapter 705 of the Laws of Westchester County relating to a Demonstration Program imposing vehicle owner liability for failure of an operator thereof to stop for a school bus displaying a red visual signal and stop-arm.

Potential Related Operating Budget Revenues: Annual Amount \$1,326,600

Describe: NYS Law Vehicle Law 1174-A projected revenue (September 2024 - December 2024)

Anticipated Savings to County and/or Impact on Department Operations:

Current Year: _____

Next Four Years: _____

Prepared by: Christina Rampata

Title: Deputy Budget Director

Department: Budget

Date: May 29, 2024

Reviewed By: 
Budget Director

Date: 5/29/24