

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. Cicio

Terry [Signature]

Joseph Bill John

Paul H [Signature]

WJR [Signature]

WJR [Signature]

J [Signature]

[Signature]

Eric Gane [Signature]

[Signature]

Benjamin [Signature]

Public Safety
5/28/24

Budget & Appropriations
5/29/24

Legislation
5/29/24

COMMITTEE ON

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

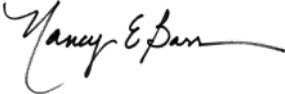


The following members attended the meeting remotely and approved this item out of Committee with an affirmative vote. Their electronic signature was authorized and is below.

Public Safety

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin J. [unclear]". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial.

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.




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

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.

BE IT ENACTED by the County Board of the County of Westchester as follows:

Section 1. Section 705.61 subdivision (b) of Chapter 705 of the Laws of Westchester County is hereby amended to read as follows:

- b. A notice of liability shall contain the name and address of the person alleged to be liable as an owner for a violation of Subdivision (a) of § 1174 of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, the registration number of the vehicle involved in such violation, the location where such violation took place, the date and time of such violation, ~~and the identification number of the camera~~ school bus photo violation monitoring system which recorded the violation or other document locator number, ~~and the registration number of the school bus on which the school bus photo violation monitoring system which recorded the violation was installed.~~

Section 2. Section 705.71 subdivision (d) of Chapter 705 of the Laws of Westchester County is hereby amended, subdivision (e) is renumbered to (f), and a new subdivision (e) is added, to read as follows:

- d. 1. A certificate shall be sworn to or affirmed by a technician employed by the County, or a facsimile thereof, and shall be based upon inspection of photographs, microphotographs, videotapes, and other recorded images produced by a school bus photo violation monitoring system, and other documents or declarations pertaining to inspections by the New York State Department of Transportation. Said certificate shall be prima facie evidence of the facts contained therein. Such certificate, or a facsimile thereof, shall include the following information:
 - i. the identification number of the school bus photo violation monitoring system which recorded the violation;
 - ii. a statement confirming that at the time such violation was recorded by such school bus photo violation monitoring system, such school bus photo violation monitoring system was installed on a school bus marked and equipped as provided in subdivisions

twenty and twenty-one-c of section three hundred seventy-five of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, as evidenced by a valid certificate of inspection issued to such school bus by the department of transportation pursuant to section one hundred forty of the New York State Transportation Law and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder; and

iii. the registration number of the school bus to which such school bus photo violation monitoring system was attached.

2. Any photographs, microphotographs, videotapes, and other recorded images evidencing such a violation shall include a recorded image of the outside of the motor vehicle involved in such violation, the registration number of such vehicle, at least one activated school bus stop-arm, and an electronic indicator or indicators showing the activation of the flashing red signal lamps of the school bus to which the school bus photo violation monitoring system producing such photographs, microphotographs, videotape or other recorded images was installed at the time such violation occurred. Any photographs, microphotographs, videotapes, and other recorded images evidencing such a violation including the required recorded image described in the first sentence of this subdivision, shall be available for inspection in any proceeding to adjudicate the liability for such violation.

e. Where recorded images from a school bus photo violation monitoring system attached to a school bus, as certified pursuant to this section, show the activation of at least one school bus stop-arm and an electronic indicator or indicators as required pursuant to this section, there shall be 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. A certificate, sworn to or affirmed by a technician employed by the county, or a facsimile thereof, stating that after reviewing evidence that on the day the charged violation occurred such school bus had a valid certificate of inspection issued by the department of transportation pursuant to section one hundred forty of the New York State Transportation Law and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. Such certificate shall be prima facie evidence that such school bus was marked and equipped as provided in subdivisions twenty and twenty-one-c of section three hundred seventy-five of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law and the flashing red signal lamp of such school bus was in operation at the time the violation occurred.

f. It shall be a defense to any prosecution for or allegation of a violation of Subdivision (a) of § 1174 of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law pursuant to this Chapter that such school bus stop-arms were malfunctioning at the time of the alleged violation.

Section 3. Chapter 705 of the Laws of Westchester County, entitled School Bus Stop-Arm Demonstration Program, as amended herein, is renumbered to Chapter 708 of the Laws of Westchester County. Any and all internal references in said Chapter are hereby renumbered in accordance with this modification.

Section 4. This Local Law shall take effect immediately and, notwithstanding any other provision of law, Chapter 705 (newly renumbered to Chapter 708) of the Laws of Westchester County shall expire on the same date that the New York State Law authorizing such demonstration program expires.