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CITY OF AMESBURY, MA

CITY OF AMESBURY
IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SIX

SPONSORED BY: Kassandra Gove **BILL No.** 2026- 169

Kassandra Gove, Mayor

Steven Stanganelli, Councilor-at-Large

Maryann Welch, Councilor, District 4

Michael Hogg, Councilor, District 6

An Order to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 71, authorizing the use of school bus violation detection monitoring systems.

Summary: This order would authorize the City of Amesbury to establish a school bus stop-arm camera enforcement program pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 71, and Chapter 90, Sections 14C through 14E.

The program would allow cameras to be installed on school buses to identify and document motorists who illegally pass stopped school buses. The goal is to improve student safety, deter violations, and provide additional enforcement tools. Following acceptance of the legislation, the City would work with Amesbury Public Schools and the Amesbury Police Department to develop and implement the program in accordance with state law.

WHEREAS, the adoption of a school bus violation detection monitoring system is consistent with and furthers the goals of Amesbury's Complete Streets Policy, as both initiatives reflect the City's sustained commitment to the safety and well-being of its most vulnerable road users, including schoolchildren; and is in the best interests of the public health, safety, and welfare of the City of Amesbury and its residents with legislative reasoning detailed in the attached Addendum;

Be it Ordered by the City Council of the City of Amesbury assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

That the City of Amesbury hereby accepts the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 71, authorizing the establishment and operation of school bus violation detection monitoring systems, in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 90, Sections 14C through 14E.

ADDENDUM – Legislative Reasoning

1. The safety of schoolchildren traveling to and from school is a paramount concern of the City of Amesbury, its elected officials and parents; and

2. A school bus violation detection monitoring system is defined under state law as a camera system that detects a motor vehicle overtaking or passing a school bus when the bus is stopped and displaying front and rear alternating flashing red signal lamps while picking up or dropping off students; and

3. Such violation detection monitoring systems are unlike other Automated License Plate Reader mass surveillance technology since the systems used for buses only capture information when a violation occurs, data is not retained long term nor shared with other jurisdictions; and

4. Current laws prohibiting the passing of a stopped school bus go underenforced, creating a persistent and ongoing risk to the safety of schoolchildren boarding and alighting from school buses throughout the City of Amesbury; and

5. Schoolchildren are among the most vulnerable members of the public, and the City of Amesbury has a compelling interest in deploying all lawful tools to protect them from harm caused by motorists who fail to comply with existing stop-arm laws; and

6. Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey signed legislation that allows cities and towns in Massachusetts to install automated traffic enforcement cameras on school buses to document drivers who unlawfully pass a bus while it is stopped and its stop sign is displayed; and

7. This legislation was approved by the Legislature on December 30, 2024, and having received Governor Healey's signature on January 10, 2025, is now law, codified at Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 90, Sections 14C through 14E, with the acceptance mechanism provided by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 71; and

8. Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 71 provides the formal acceptance mechanism by which a city or town may opt into the school bus violation detection monitoring system program, and acceptance of that section is the required predicate for the installation and operation of systems authorized by Chapter 90, Sections 14C through 14E; and

9. Chapter 90, Section 14C governs system requirements, signage, evidence file production, privacy protections, data retention, municipal data ownership, and annual state reporting; Section 14D governs law enforcement review of evidence files and the issuance of citations; and Section 14E governs registered owner and corporate owner liability, the civil — non-criminal — nature of penalties, and the payment of fines to the city treasury; and

10. The law is intended to improve compliance with school bus safety laws and better protect students who ride buses; and

11. The law includes meaningful privacy protections, requiring implementation of measures to avoid capturing identifiable images of vehicle occupants, mandating destruction of non-violation

recordings within 30 days of capture, requiring deletion of violation-related data within one year after final case resolution, and establishing that all data — including images and videos — shall be owned by the municipality and cannot be used for any other purpose by vendors; and

12. Any penalty imposed under the program shall not be considered a criminal conviction and shall not be considered a moving violation of the motor vehicle laws for purposes of determining surcharges on motor vehicle insurance premiums; and

13. The City of Amesbury adopted a Complete Streets Policy pursuant to City Council Resolution No. 2018-085, establishing the City's commitment to designing and operating roadways to provide safe and accessible accommodations for all users of Amesbury's transportation network, including pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable road users; and

14. The adoption of a school bus violation detection monitoring system is consistent with and furthers the goals of Amesbury's Complete Streets Policy, as both initiatives reflect the City's sustained commitment to the safety and well-being of its most vulnerable road users, including schoolchildren; and

15. The Amesbury School Committee, at its duly noticed public meeting on October 20, 2026, unanimously voted to recommend that the Amesbury City Council accept the law authorizing school bus stop-arm camera enforcement, reflecting the School Committee's judgment that such technology will promote the safety and well-being of Amesbury's students; and

16. Adoption of this provision will further the City of Amesbury's commitment to the safety of all vulnerable road users, including children, and will provide law enforcement with an effective, evidence-based tool to deter dangerous driving behaviors near school buses; and

17. The Amesbury City Council finds that acceptance of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 71, for the purpose of establishing a school bus violation detection monitoring system program pursuant to Chapter 90, Sections 14C through 14E, is in the best interests of the public health, safety, and welfare of the City of Amesbury and its residents.