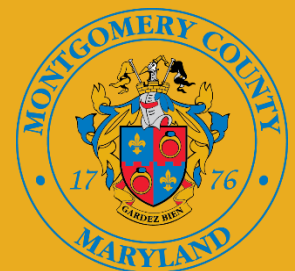


FY2022 School Bus Monitoring System and Stop Safety Review

Pursuant to State Government Transportation
Article § 8-664 and HB0813 / CH0216, 2022
MSAR #s 14213 and 14214

MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT
Final Version
Released December 30, 2022



Purpose of this report

This is the first report under [MD Code, Transportation, § 8-664](#) and [2022 HB0813 / CH0216](#) enacted during the 2022 Regular Session of the Maryland General Assembly to publicly provide information on the County’s school bus monitoring camera program and steps Montgomery County has taken to reduce violations of passing a stopped school bus through bus stop reviews and driver outreach.

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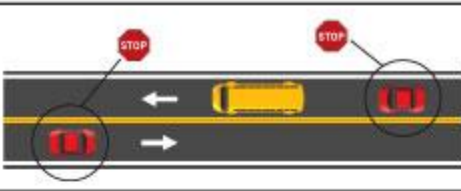
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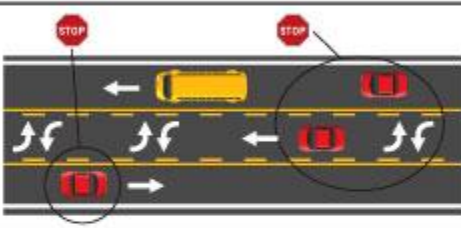
About the school bus monitoring system

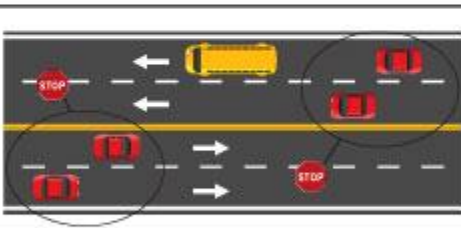
Law for stopping for stopped school buses

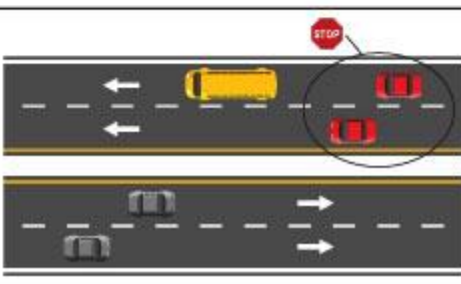
When approaching a stopped school bus with activated flashing red lights, Maryland law (MD Code, Transportation, § 21-706) requires that motorists traveling in the same direction as the bus must stop and remain stopped until the stop sign and lights are deactivated. The law also requires that motorists approaching the bus from the opposite direction must stop if there is no physical barrier, such as a grass or raised concrete median.

- 1 Two-lane roadway:**
When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop!


- 2 Two-lane roadway with a center turning lane:**
When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop!


- 3 Four-lane roadway without a median separation:**
When school bus stops for passengers, all traffic from both directions must stop!


- 4 Divided highway of four lanes or more with a median separation:**
When school bus stops for passengers, only traffic following the bus must stop.



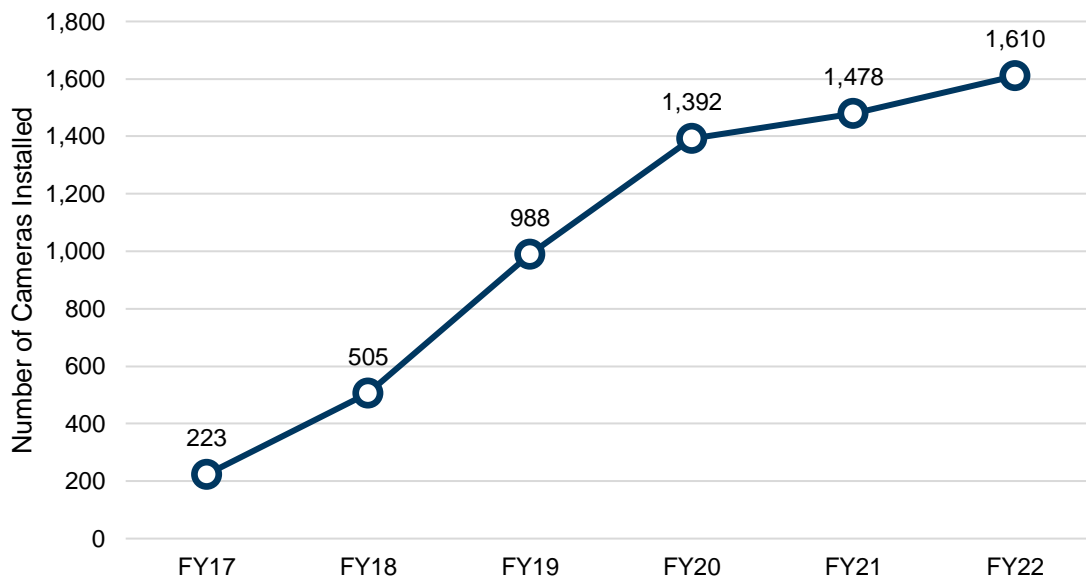
Background for automated enforcement

The State of Maryland enacted enabling legislation in 2011 that permits local jurisdictions to implement school bus safety camera programs.

A joint pilot between the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) and the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) began in January 2014 with 25 cameras placed on the outside of school buses; the cameras were strategically deployed throughout the County. The cameras have the ability to record vehicles that pass stopped school buses that have activated the flashing red lights. Violations captured by these cameras are reviewed by the police department's Automated Traffic Enforcement Unit and citations are mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle.

In October 2016, MCPD and MCPS embarked on an Automated School Bus Stop Arm Enforcement Program. After the enactment of State and Local legislation, the program went "live" on October 13, 2016, with a total 81 buses installed with cameras. By November of 2016, the number of camera-equipped buses increased to 103. By March of 2017, the number of buses with cameras increased to over 200 and it remained at that number for the duration of the 2016-2017 school year. For the duration of the 2017-2018 school year, 500 buses were equipped with enforcement cameras. By the 2019-2020 school year, 500 buses were equipped with enforcement cameras. By the 2019-2020 school year, all MCPS school buses were equipped.

School Buses with Cameras by Fiscal Year



Citation review process

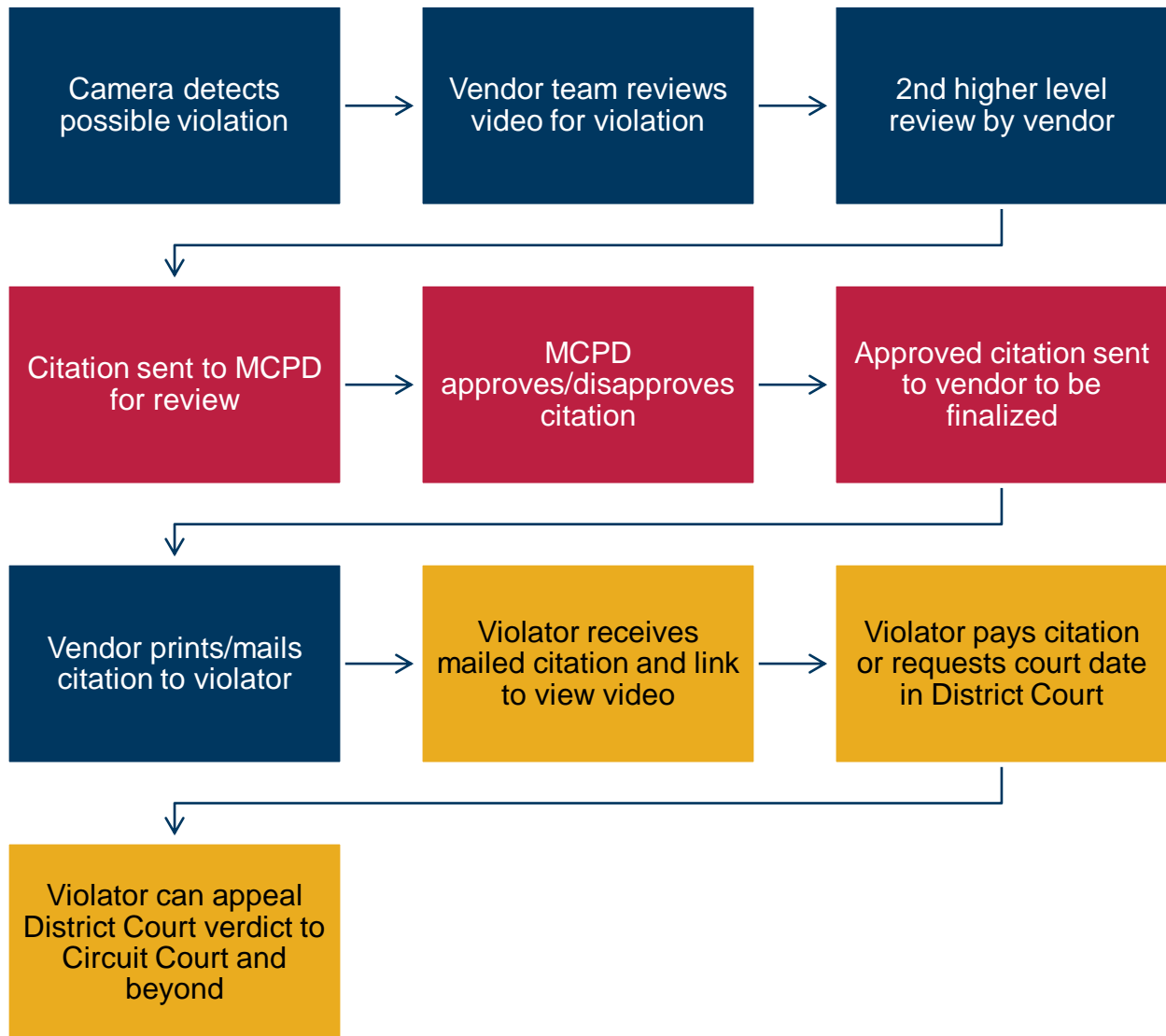
A common misperception of automated enforcement programs is that videos are not reviewed by a person prior to issuing citations. The school bus camera review process is designed to mirror the same approval process in place for speed and red-light programs. Each citation is reviewed at minimum three times prior to issuance.

The equipment on the buses capture video of vehicles approaching and passing a slowing and stopping school bus. Within the panes of the video there are yellow and red-light indicators which show the activation of the yellow lights and the subsequent activation of the red lights. The video tracks the approach of the bus as well as the vehicle activity around the bus and records this activity. The video is then uploaded to the vendor and their team of reviewers watch the video and identify potential vehicles that have committed a violation of the law. These potential violations, or events, are then used to create the framework of a citation. The vendor then sends an inquiry to the NIC USA to get the registered vehicle owner information. Once that information is received it is placed in the citation framework and it is reviewed a second time, by the vendor, at a higher level. If the event passes both levels of review it is sent to the Police Department to be reviewed by Automated Traffic Enforcement Unit (ATEU) staff. ATEU reviewers then verify the license data through nationwide motor vehicle records, ensure that the information received matches the vehicle in the video, and review the video to affirm or reject that a violation has taken place. The staff have been trained in the law, its meaning, and practical application.

If MCPD reviewers approve the event as a violation, they turn the event into a citation and it gets sent back to the vendor for final creation of the citation. Once approved by MCPD, the final version is sent back to the vendor to be printed and mailed to the violator. This process is legislatively required to be completed within 14 days of the date of the event.

Once the violator receives the citation, they can enter their citation number on the website to view the same video used to make a determination as to the validity of the violation. At that point violators have option to either pay the citation or request a court date to contest the citation. Violators can also enroll in a payment plan for paying the \$250 fine if necessary. If violators choose to go to court, they mail that request back in and a court date is scheduled. The violators can address the court with their concerns and all parties review the video in court in front of the Judge. The Judge then makes a ruling on the citation based on the evidence and testimony provided. Additionally, if a violator is not satisfied with the verdict rendered in District Court they can appeal the decision to the Circuit Court and possibly beyond.

Process for reviewing, issuing, paying, and contesting an automated enforcement citation



Color legend: Blue = vendor role, Red = MCPD role, Gold = Violator role

Bus stop safety programs

The County and State Governments partner on a range of in-person and online promotion of bus stop safety and raising awareness of driver’s responsibility to stop for school buses. Beginning in fiscal year 2023, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation began a safety audit of the school bus stops with the highest number of violations with the first reviews to be finalized during winter 2023.

Public outreach and information

Outreach: One of the annual safety programs with the highest engagement and reach is our back-to-school safety campaign. During this campaign running from mid-August through October Montgomery County Departments of Transportation, Police, and Public Information along with the Maryland Highway Safety Office provide information on when to stop for a school bus with red lights flashing along with other social norming messaging to encourage drivers to look out for our children getting on and off the bus. The campaigns are largely in English and Spanish. Next year’s back-to-school campaign will expand to include the county’s top six spoken languages.

The tweet with the most engagements from the @VisionZeroMC Twitter account in 2021 and 2022 was about stopping for a stopped school bus in Maryland. This message was also shared by County and State agencies.

Mont Co Vision Zero
@VisionZeroMC

All @MCPS school buses are outfitted with cameras and can fine drivers \$250 for passing a bus with flashing red lights. Know the law and keep our kids safe!

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY
What is the law in Maryland?

TWO-LANE: Vehicles traveling in both directions MUST STOP.

TWO-LANE with center turn lane: Vehicles traveling in both directions MUST STOP.

MULTI-LANE: Vehicles traveling in both directions MUST STOP.

DIVIDED HIGHWAY: With div, grass, or barrier median - Vehicles behind bus MUST STOP. Vehicles traveling in opposite direction USE CAUTION.

7:14 AM · Aug 22, 2022

Citation language assistance: Citations from officers and automated programs are considered Maryland Court documents and currently provided in English. Persons needing assistance in their preferred language can call the phone number listed on the citation. County Police have a Spanish language representative with language line service for additional languages.

Coordination of efforts: Over the coming year, County and State Government agencies will utilize the results of MCDOT's bus stop safety review to enact any recommended changes at the bus stops where feasible.

Alternative penalties for first offenses: The County Government does not recommend changing the penalties for first time offenders as the current structure provides an educational and deterrent effect. Overall, 91% of vehicles cited by this program between 2016 and 2020 received a single violation.

Infrastructure review

The Montgomery County Government added \$300,000 to the Department of Transportation's (MCDOT) fiscal year 2023 budget to examine and develop recommendations for student safety at the locations with the highest school bus monitoring program citations. Based on the bus stops with the most citations in calendar year 2019, the last pre-COVID-19 year with available data, MCDOT examined the following locations:

- 8800 Colesville Rd., 20910
- 1400 East-West Hwy, 20910
- 400 North Frederick Ave., 20877
- 5100 River Rd., 20816
- 8800 Piney Branch Rd., 20903
- 8900 Piney Branch Rd., 20903
- 2200 Bel Pre Rd., 20906
- 8400 16th St., 20910
- 13500 Georgia Ave., 20906
- 1000 Clopper Rd., 20878

MCDOT is reviewing the above locations to determine if safety treatments are necessary or appropriate. These safety treatments could include additional or modified signing and pavement markings, geometric modifications such as curb realignments and median installations, or the need to add traffic signals or pedestrian hybrid beacons. MCDOT anticipates completion of the final report in January 2023.

Citations issued

For fiscal year 2022 (FY22), 59,151 citations were issued under the school bus monitoring program resulting in \$14.8 million in fines. Based on the direction of the passing vehicle, 41,799 (71%) of drivers passed in the opposite direction and 17,352 (29%) were traveling the same direction as the stopped bus.

FY22 represented the most citations issued since the program began in 2016. The increase in violations from the prior two years was the result of all Montgomery County School buses having monitoring systems installed during the 2019-2020 school year and a restart of school bus and commuting patterns coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the low level of repeat offenders for the school bus monitoring program and experience from the red-light and speed automated enforcement program, the County expects the number of citations issued to decrease over the next five years.

	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20*	FY21*	FY22
Citations	16,388	34,033	54,492	50,106	6,910	59,151
<i>Citations per active camera</i>	73.5	67.4	55.2	36.0	4.7	36.7
<i>Citations from opposite direction</i>	0	20,626	34,184	31,217	4,741	41,799
<i>Citations from same direction</i>	0	12,858	20,299	18,889	2,169	17,352
<i>Citations with direction not captured</i>	16,388	549	9	0	0	0
Total fines	\$2,048,500	\$8,508,250	\$13,621,875	\$12,526,500	\$1,727,500	\$14,787,750

*School closures during COVID-19 pandemic resulting in fewer bus trips.

For FY22, the following blocks had the highest number of recorded violations. Eight of the top 10 blocks were along multi-lane State roads with the remaining two belonging to the County. These ten blocks accounted for 18% of all citations issued.

Comparing FY22 top violation blocks to the blocks under review by MCDOT, seven out of the ten blocks were the same. Three stops in the FY22 top ten were not in the prior top ten:

- 800 block of University Blvd E
- 7100 block of Arlington Rd
- 5400 block of Tuckerman Ln

Block	Roadway Owner	Violations Same Direction	Violations from Opposite Direction	Total Violations
5100 River Rd	State	185	1,798	1,983
8800 Colesville Rd	State	203	1,388	1,591
1400 East West Hwy	State	299	1,195	1,494
800 University Blvd E	State	138	1,022	1,160
400 N Frederick Ave	State	85	894	979
7100 Arlington Rd	County	48	798	846
5400 Tuckerman Ln	County	50	642	692
1000 Clopper Rd	State	129	553	682
8900 Piney Branch Rd	State	145	399	544
8800 Piney Branch Rd	State	99	418	517

To see data on citations issued under the school bus monitoring program for all school bus stops, use the link below or visit the Montgomery County Vision Zero website. The reporting unit for school bus stops is the block level.

Link: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/visionzero/Resources/Files/FY17-22_Bus_Camera_Tickets_by_Stop_and_Fiscal_Year_PUBLISHED.csv

NOTE ON BLOCK ADDRESSES: When the school bus monitoring system captures a violation, the bus's latitude and longitude are captured. The latitude and longitude are then matched to the nearest address. When the bus stop is near an intersection, the matched address may be along the intersecting road. Therefore, some of the block information presented in the block summary may reflect a violation that occurred on an intersecting road.



Office of the Montgomery County Executive

101 Monroe Street

Rockville, MD 20850

www.montgomerycountymd.gov

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