



BOARD OF ALDERMEN
CITY OF SHELTON
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025
SHELTON CITY HALL, 54 HILL STREET, SHELTON, CT
Live Streamed at www.cityofshelton.org

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Alderman Anglace called the Special Board of Aldermen meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the auditorium at Shelton City Hall. All those present stood and pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Alderman John F. Anglace, Jr., President – Present
Alderman Eric McPherson, Vice President – Present
Alderman Cris Balamaci – Present
Alderman Lorenzo Durante – Present via Zoom
Alderman Porter McKinnon – Present via Zoom
Alderman Anthony Simonetti – Absent
Alderman Bernie Simons – Present
Alderman Benjamin Perry – Present via Zoom

Administration

Kellie Vazzano, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor via Zoom
Ray Baldwin, Administrative Assistant for Special Projects
Frank Scalzo, Director of Operations, SSTS

Speaker: Brad Macdowall from BusPatrol

INFORMATIONAL SESSION/PRESENTATION REGARDING PROPOSED ORDINANCE FOR SCHOOL BUS STOP ARM PROGRAM AND ENFORCEMENT.

Alderman Anglace: This is an informational session presentation in the hope of explaining what the School Bus Stop Arm Program is all about. I will call on Ray Baldwin.

Ray Baldwin: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Aldermen. My name is Raymond Baldwin, Jr., and I work in Mayor Lauretti's office as the Administrative Assistant for Special Projects. I would like to start by asking how many of you have personally witnessed a car passing a stopped school bus with the red lights flashing and arm extended? Probably just about everybody. In just one week alone, this past January, our school bus drivers reported 581 violations of the Stop School Bus law. 581 in just one week, an average of 116 per day and over 18,000 during the course of the

entire school year. Let that sink in for a minute. 18,000 times our children were put at risk by dangerous drivers. I personally have witnessed two different drivers blow past a clearly lit school bus twice at successive stops right here on Kneen Street. The City of Shelton has approximately 60 school bus drivers who perform 300 runs per day, 180 school days a year. That is 54,000 runs per school year and not one fatality, not one. That is pretty remarkable given the number of reported violations I just told you about and the reason we have been so fortunate is because our school bus drivers are fully aware of the dangerous situations caused by distracted drivers and flagrant violators and take extraordinary precautions to ensure the safety of our children every day at every bus stop. But for their conscientious efforts, every day, every school bus, every single stop, we might be having a more dire conversation this evening. Ladies and gentlemen, we need a plan and a tool to help them. Just so you know, Shelton isn't unique in this regard. As you will hear shortly from Brad Macdowall of BusPatrol, this is a national problem. Now we have a plan and a tool and the good part is, the City of Shelton won't have to pay a dime for it. In fact, revenue generated from the program you are going to hear about will, in fact, actually help fund this and many other public safety initiatives for the City of Shelton. In June 2024 the Connecticut State Legislature, by statute, authorized municipalities to institute a program which will help us combat this problem. At this time, I would like to introduce you to Brad Macdowall from BusPatrol who will walk you through the program. We hope you, the Board of Aldermen, will support it. Thank you.

Brad Macdowall, BusPatrol

Good evening. Thank you alder members. I very much appreciate your time this evening to spend on this very important issue. I, myself, sat on the City Council in Hamden for two terms which, much like Ray, I came into the knowledge that buses were being passed at an alarming rate. The old program that allowed us to put cameras on school buses did so in a way that folks that worked for the town manually had to go through those tapes, pull out infractions, build cases around those, build evidence packages. They also had to get affidavits from the bus drivers. It was an impossibly difficult program. In addition, when those tickets were issued, they were criminal infractions, so that meant that we had to go through the courts and in our court systems, quite frankly, these were not a priority for them. We found that these tickets were not being pursued. What we did was, over a number of years, we worked to change the law with the State legislature to allow these things to be automated with new technology. It is new technology to Connecticut, but it is not new to BusPatrol, it is not new to America. Our program is, we call her AVA, Automated Violation Analysis. AVA has been out here since 2017 learning what infractions look like and what they don't. The most important thing that AVA can do that the old programs can't, is to be able to automatically separate multiple instances that happen at once across up to eight lanes of traffic. It can see individual instances. We can differentiate between a car and another object passing the school bus. We are cutting out a lot of the noise, we are cutting out a lot of the problems, the nonsense that someone had to go through and review. Before we send it to local law enforcement, we have two humans at BusPatrol review every single infraction. So, someone at BusPatrol watches the video, decides it is a good infraction and then a second person at BusPatrol has to watch that video and decide it is a good infraction, and then it comes to your law enforcement for review. It does not have to be an officer, it can be. It can be anybody that your Police Department chooses. It can be a civilian, it can be a volunteer to go through and watch those videos. We only send tickets to folks that you say yes to. Someone in law enforcement takes between 30-90 seconds per ticket. Most departments spend less than an hour a week on this. They log in, they click in, they watch the video, they hit yes or no.

When they hit yes, and only when they hit yes, we print, we mail and handle the payment processing for you. As Ray said, a large amount of the proceeds come back to the community and in the State of Connecticut you can use that for public safety initiatives. That is a pretty broad allowance by the State of Connecticut. It does have to be used for public safety, but what that means is up to you as long as it is going towards public safety. We have seen that take on a number of different forms.

I am happy to answer any questions. I put together a little bit of an FAQ for you. I know it is a little bit thick, but we have had a lot of really important questions from community members and I wanted to make sure that if you have questions from community members, you can feel free to pass them my contact information. It is on the front page and I have cards with me as well. However, I also wanted you all to be equipped to be able to have conversation as you see fit. These are the most common questions that we received. I am happy to go through any of them that you like, but to boil down the most important point, this program is completely free. In the instance that every single driver in Shelton learns the lesson in the first few months and they never pass a school bus again and we never hand out another infraction in the town of Shelton ever again, basically the fee can only be paid out of program revenue, would roll over to the next month and that continues until the end of the contract term at which point any amount due would be absolved. So, I know it is a complicated way of saying, yes, we do get paid out of program revenue and I am happy to dive into those numbers if you would like. While we do get paid out of program revenue and only out of program revenue, it is only people who break the law and risk student safety that are paying for this program. If that does not happen, we don't get paid. We know that folks are passing the stop bar. It was estimated, actually it was counted last year and you will see on this first page here after the coversheet, "The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) counted over **45 million** illegal school bus passings in 2024" alone. This is a massive issue. In Bridgeport, where BusPatrol currently runs the only program that is compliant with the new law, we have seen so far this school year 11,000 verified infractions. We have seen 14,000, but sometimes things happen. Sometimes there is a box truck in the way. We don't send people those tickets. Sometimes it is hard to see if the sun is in the way. That is why we have a human review those tickets. We don't want to send tickets that aren't real. This is not a gotcha, this is not a money grab, the program has to go out with integrity. The tickets have to be real infractions. People are negligently or intentionally passing the school bus. We work rigorously to make sure that those are the tickets that are going out and only the tickets going out. There were 14,000 illegal school bus passings in Bridgeport this year. We have actually sent 11,000 tickets, which is massive to think about just since September when school started. We will see over the course of the first year of the program about a 40% reduction in the number of illegal school bus passings by the end of that first year. You can expect to see about a 10-20% additional reduction year over year for the following 3-4 years.

In addition to the stop arm camera and all of these services and the backend solution of the offer for you, we do all of the backend work on the Stop Arm Program for you, we would also offer, if you would like it, free internal cameras, free external cameras and free panic buttons for the bus drivers. These are the things we offer to you for free because while this may be a financial windfall in the first year, it will continue to generate revenue for the town, but what is really important long term is that this program be implemented fairly and consistently. It remains on every single bus in perpetuity. When you start pulling off cameras or when some of the buses are out there without cameras, you start to see the cracks through the system and the infractions start to come back up again. We don't want that.

This is about student safety. We want you, at the end of the contract, to say yea, we want to stay with BusPatrol. We invest really heavily on other parts of the partnership to make sure that even though this may not be a financial windfall five years from now with getting this today, that you continue to want to be able to partner with us and continue to work with us to enhance student safety in other ways. Those are just some of the free perks that we do. We also offer assemblies and student programs around school bus safety, road safety. We did assemblies in Bridgeport this past October for school bus safety. We did teach students what the dangers are and how to stay safe when crossing the street and getting on and off the school bus. I am happy to answer any questions you have about the program. I appreciate your time this evening. Thank you so much for your consideration. This is a vitally important issue. If you talk to bus drivers it is one of the, if not the most, risky parts of transporting students. I appreciate you all taking the mantle and taking this seriously. Thank you for your time.

Alderman Anglace: Thank you Brad. I will start the questioning, but first with a statement. This program is not about revenue. This program is about student safety. I think that we all agree on not wanting any of our children to get hurt in any way. I would imagine that the information about this informational meeting and about the public hearing at 7 o'clock was disseminated to the Board of Education. I am just surprised that there is nobody here in attendance from there. I would imagine they are fully supportive, I hope they are fully supportive of this program.

Brad Macdowall: I get two responses when I introduce this program to folks. The first is, it does not make sense, it is too good to be true. How do you do it for free and I will explain. There are always infractions that produce the revenue. The second is, this is a no-brainer. Why would anyone be opposed to this. I think the reason that a lot of folks may not be in attendance, what I have seen in other communities, is people don't feel that this is a very controversial topic. I know there are some automated traffic enforcement programs that can be more of a controversial topic. When you look at news articles, I can tell you that news articles recently that have been posted around our other programs in Providence, RI, North Providence, Salem and Peabody, Massachusetts, Bridgeport, Connecticut, the comments are massively in favor. It is hard to find an issue like this where folks are so overwhelming supportive. People want the fine higher than the \$250 that it currently is. People want to see license points or even suspensions for passing the school bus multiple times. Folks are really, really one-sided on this matter. When it comes to student safety, BusPatrol is able to do this in a way that protects the privacy of community members. We are not capturing faces; we are capturing license plates. We are doing it equitably. We are doing it at every community, every single bus and we are even going to cover a few spares for you if you ever have to pull a bus out of rotation for maintenance of some other reason, you will have a spare ready to go so that those bus stops stay covered every single day. Folks are generally supportive and don't feel the need.

Alderman Anglace: Questions will probably come up undoubtedly when somebody receives a ticket. That is when they will ask all kinds of questions. I want to point out that Ray Baldwin is going to be Shelton's Program Director for the Stop Arm Program. I just want to be sure that we agree on the procedure when somebody passes the bus and you get the information, the videos, etc., how the process will take place and how Ray will fit into that.

Brad Macdowall: We have two humans at BusPatrol that review it after AVA captures an infraction. That takes 3-5 days. I'd say within a week you will have automatically uploaded into what we call Alert Bus. Alert Bus is our online system where Ray or other folks who are appointed to review citations would log in and it would be a list of citations. You would click, watch the video and either yes or no. It is that simple. We do ask that they are reviewed in a timely manner. These tickets have to go out I believe within 90 days. It does not have to be an immediate, everyday thing. If you spend 30-45 minutes once a week doing it you are never going to fall behind.

Alderman Anglace: Walk us through the specifics of the determination process when somebody passes the bus and is alleged to have committed the violation. How it will be determined.

Brad Macdowall: It is determined by passing the stop sign or stop arm of the school bus. Theoretically, by the letter of the law, once those lights on the back of the bus turn from amber to red, you are not legally allowed to pass that bus. Passing that bus is against the law. Shelton would be within their legal rights to ticket anyone, regardless of circumstances, who pass those red lights. However, it is more nuanced. If somebody is blocked by a box truck, they shouldn't be ticketed for that. That is not reasonable. They didn't intend to and nor were they negligent in passing that school bus. What we do is we establish what is called business rules with you. Once we agree that we are going to move forward and we are going to work together, we sit down with folks like Ray and anyone else who wishes to be a stakeholder in this conversation and talk about how you want to implement the program. For some people that looks like as soon as those lights are red, we believe that that is an infraction and that should be a ticket. For some folks, they only want to see infractions once the stop arm is fully extended. Once those lights turn red, the stop arm starts extending. Theoretically by the time that stop arm is fully extended, you have had a few seconds to slow down and stop. Consider that your yellow light. It is up to you how you want to implement it.

Alderman Anglace: We are drifting from my point. What I want to do is follow this closely. Somebody passes a bus. The camera takes a picture. Then it is reviewed by you first. Then you send it to Ray next for his review. He is the determinant. He will come back and say yes, I agree the violation exists and then the citation/summons is sent. Conversely, either the person pays or they don't pay or if this thing extends out into litigation or something, Ray would be the final authority to say we are proceeding on this or dismissing it. Is that agreeable?

Brad Macdowall: When somebody receives a ticket. They have the right to a hearing if they believe that there were wrongly ticketed. We take a lot of steps to make sure that people don't get tickets that are illegitimate. People are still entitled to a hearing should they want one. We find that those hearings are less than 5%. Less than 5% of people will request hearings. However, for those 5% or less that do request hearings, it is up to you to establish and for the Mayor to appoint folks who can hear those hearings. It works very similar to a parking authority. I see you have one hour parking out here, so that would probably be a ticket that is issued at a local level by your law enforcement. That is not a criminal ticket. That sticks with the car with the registration. So, you have a parking authority that sees through how to manage that. We can plug right into that. You do need your Mayor to appoint a hearing officer, maybe two if they are more of a part-time person. It cannot be the same person for reviewing infractions. That is important. If Ray is going to be reviewing infractions and saying yes/no to tickets,

he cannot also be the person who hears those hearings. It can be anyone who the Mayor appoints. It is recommended that it is not somebody from the Police Department since that is the entity that is issuing the tickets.

Alderman Anglace: Ray will outline the administrative procedures that we will be following, who is doing what, who the hearing officers are that the Mayor appoints and feed that back to us.

Brad Macdowall: We are here to work with you. When you decide who your hearing people are going to be, when you have a program in place, if you have a scheduling system that you want us to work with, we will field the phone calls, we will take the letters, we will schedule these things for you if you'd like. Some folks like to do it in-house, some folks like to have BusPatrol just handle it, schedule it, etc. That is up to you, but we are here to help and be a partner in this.

Alderman Balamaci: I applaud this program. I think it is a vital program for safety and I am glad we are doing this. One question I did have is what is the error rate? I have heard some things in the news, a man in Missouri who says he was never in New York. How do you defend that? Is it a high probability that that happens? Is it due to license plate blocking? What is it due to?

Brad Macdowall: There are a couple of things that that could be. I haven't heard about that specific scenario, but I have heard of other stories like that. One example might be a situation where you are not the one driving your car. You've lent your car to someone else. Let's say or son or daughter is driving your car and they pass a bus and you want them to be responsible for the ticket, there is a transfer of liability that you can work with to transfer that ticket to the person who was driving the car. It is hard with our technology. There are legacy programs out there, Lidar and Radar programs that cannot differentiate between a car and other objects. If a bird flies by the stop arm camera while the stop arm is extended, it is going to take a video and say hey something passed the stop arm. It is up to somebody else, a human, to go in there and pull any violations from that footage which that old legacy system said the car passed the arm. My assumption was there was either a misreading of a license plate, which we don't see with AVA. AVA reads the license plate and tells us. We have to humans verify – I see the picture here, I see AVA here, yes, these two license plates match. We have two humans do that on BusPatrol before your law enforcement officer does it as well. I think we have largely worked those out. That is not to say that things don't happen. That's not to say that somebody does not have a fake license plate on their car. In an instance where we find a vehicle to be stolen or a license plate to be stolen or if somebody has created a Florida license plate with ABC123 and then a man with Florida license plate 123ABC gets that ticket, that is something we would be able to establish. We would obviously not enforce that ticket. There are avenues and ways to go about it. If somebody was to say hey my vehicle was in Florida at that time, there is no way, somebody must've stolen my license plate number, that does happen.

Alderman Balamaci: Another question I have is, I quickly read your brochure as far as the cameras. If someone does not have a front plate and they speed on by, it also will capture the rear?

Brad Macdowall: It will. It is a 360 camera. The camera is on page 4 and page 7. You will see that there are multiple cameras on that device. That device right there is installed just behind the stop sign on the

school bus and it is a 180-degree camera. When tickets go out, they go out with three photos of the infraction. The car approaching the bus, next to the bus and past the bus. You can see the evidence in the ticket with these three photos and in addition to that the ticket also includes a link to the video. That is part of how we keep those appeal/hearing rates so low. It is a 180-degree camera and will capture either the front, rear or both license plates, whatever is available.

Alderman Balamaci: One last question. I would think automobile insurance companies would love this program. Some people say implement the point system. Has any state done that?

Brad Macdowall: Because this is an automated program, because it is attached to the license plate and not to the individual, it is a civil ticket. Unfortunately, this comes with no points, it comes at a \$250 cost as opposed to a \$450 cost that would come if a police officer were to witness somebody doing it and it would be a criminal infraction. It would go through a local hearing process, like a parking authority as opposed to State motor vehicle court. Because of the civil nature of the ticket, there won't be any insurance consequence. The insurance company won't know about it because, again, it is attached to the car, not the driver. They can't show you were in the car, so it does not impact the insurance. While we would like to see drivers being held accountable for them, it is the balance of being able to ticket every time someone passes a school bus. If it is our goal to reduce infractions, if our goal is to reduce the number of school buses that are illegally passed, we want to make sure that people know if I pass that yellow school bus, I'm going to get a ticket, no exceptions. The only way to do that is to automate and make it a civil infraction and follow the license plate.

Alderman Simons: I'm not sure if this is the right venue or not for the question, but what is the cost to equip a bus?

Brad Macdowall: I would have to go back, it fluctuates. I don't know the internal cost. We have a finance team that works to make sure that we are within our bounds there. I mean that in terms of do we do a five-year contract or can we offer something shorter because of the investment that we have made? I don't know the number per bus and what it costs to install. It is largely going to depend on do you want all the internals and externals and panic button? Do you have internal that you like and you'd only like us to install on new buses as you refresh? I'm sorry, I wish I had an answer to that question. I can tell you what our fees are that we take out of the violators from the program.

Alderman Simons: With regards then, you have x year investment, with regards to the fines, how does that work?

Brad Macdowall: It is \$250 per fine that is collected. Every time somebody pays \$250, what BusPatrol charges out of that program is \$250 per bus per month and then \$65 per ticket paid. So you don't pay every time, we are not docking the program every time a ticket has failed. We only take the fee whenever we are successful in collecting that payment. Essentially, to put it in simpler terms, we keep the first ticket, so once a bus tickets one person, that bus is paid for for the month. After that we keep about \$65 of every ticket paid and you get the remaining \$185 if I am doing my math right. \$185/65 after that first ticket. That's everyone.

Alderman Simons: There is no penalty to us if all of a sudden everybody says oh no, no more passing the buses.

Brad Macdowall: Exactly. There is no fee there. Let's say in the month of August there is no camp, no nothing, your buses aren't on the road. It is very unlikely. Let's say for the entire month of August your buses aren't on the road. That \$250 per bus per month would roll over to September, but let's say that the contract ended in August and we were renewing in September, at the end of the contract the balance is wiped clean. You never owe anything. It will roll over until the end of the contract, at which point it is gone. If it is not violator funded, it is not paid.

By the way, to hold me to it, it is written in a couple of places. If somebody were to ask you for it, it is on page 4. "How much does it cost? Nothing."

Alderman McKinnon: You kind of alluded to the question I had. There is a contract. How long is the term of the contract typically?

Brad Macdowall: Five years.

Alderman McKinnon: As we retire buses and replace them, would you come out and fit the new buses and take the cameras off the old buses? How does that work?

Brad Macdowall: That's a good question. Shelton owns their own buses and you are unique in Connecticut in that way. We will. As you refresh your buses, I believe the Transportation Director said it is about 10% a year. We will move cameras from the retired buses onto the new buses or, more often, we just install the newest, latest camera. We bring old ones back and if we can refurbish them, we will and if not, we just retire them. Your new buses will probably come along with brand new cameras as well. We will do that completely for free and all of our techs that work for BusPatrol will never subcontract out. We have BusPatrol employees that are trained rigorously on over 20 different kinds of buses down in Virginia. They have to certify on every single bus before they can go and work on installations or maintenance. When you are getting somebody who knows the bus, if you guys decide you want to go to propane, electric or what have you, we are going to have folks who are certified on those buses, on those models who know exactly where every little wire, every little knob is and they are going to be able to do that in a way that respects whatever equipment you have on the bus and then we clean and leave the bus in pristine condition.

Ray Baldwin: A couple of things – as part of the program, once this is approved by the Board of Aldermen and we are set to go forward, while we are in the midst of installing the cameras and so forth, they will help us through the publicity campaign in the community so that people will be made aware that this program will be going into effect. Once it is put into effect, the first 30 days all we do is issue warnings. The first 30 days people get kind of a wake-up call with this program being in effect. Then after that period of time BusPatrol begins issuing tickets. Frank Scalzo is the Director of Operations for our school buses. He is the one who collected the data that I told you about earlier and we have been down to the City of Bridgeport to observe their operation and how they review their cameras, what the process is that they follow and Frank and I have agreed that he would have one of his bus drivers sit

with me, at least in the beginning so we both can clearly see what is going on and make sure that there are two sets of eyes on any violators and there are no mistakes made.

Alderman Anglace: Ray, how many children are we serving with this program?

Ray Baldwin: The whole City of Shelton which I think is somewhere around 4000-5000 students. As I said earlier, you have been very fortunate that there haven't been any incidents. Anecdotally, as I said before, I witnessed two or three incidents of flagrant violations, but for the diligence of the bus drivers who are very safety conscious and looking out for the kids rather than getting the license plate number of the violating vehicles, we have avoided any serious accidents.

Alderman Anglace: With no further information, we will adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

Alderman McPherson MOVED to adjourn the Board of Aldermen Meeting.

Seconded by Alderman Balamaci.

A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously (7-0). Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Donna Fonda

Donna Fonda
Acting Clerk, Board of Aldermen

DATE APPROVED _____ BY: _____
Mayor Mark A. Laretti