

1 H.380

2 Introduced by Representative Townsend of South Burlington

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Motor vehicles; school buses; colored lights; eight-light system;
6 enforcement

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require when
8 a school bus with an eight-light system must have the flashing amber lights
9 engaged and establish an education and outreach program on changes to the
10 law and safe school bus loading and passing operations.

11 An act relating to school bus safety

12 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

13 * * * School Bus Operation and Passing * * *

14 Sec. 1. 23 V.S.A. § 1283 is amended to read:

15 § 1283. IDENTIFICATION AND EQUIPMENT OF SCHOOL BUSES

16 (a) Types I and II school buses shall be:

17 * * *

18 (4) Equipped with a system of signal lamps approved by the

19 Commissioner, including an ~~eight-light~~ eight-light system, as defined in

20 subdivision 4(10) of this title, on any new or used school bus ordered on and

1 after July 1, 1976. The driver of a Type I or a Type II school bus shall keep
2 ~~the alternately flashing red signal lamps lighted whenever school children are~~
3 ~~being received or discharged, and they~~ turn on the flashing amber lights at a
4 distance of not less than 330 feet from the point where the pupils are to be
5 received or discharged from the bus if the speed limit at that point is 45 miles
6 per hour or greater; or 200 feet from the point where the pupils are to be
7 received or discharged from the bus if the speed limit at that point is less than
8 45 miles per hour. At the point of receiving or discharging pupils the driver of
9 a Type I or a Type II school bus shall bring the bus to a complete stop and
10 disengage the flashing amber lights and engage the flashing red lights prior to
11 or at the same time as opening the bus door. After receiving or discharging
12 pupils the bus driver shall shut the bus door and disengage the flashing red
13 lights and if the next point where pupils are to be received or discharged is
14 close enough that it is visible to the bus driver, the bus driver shall re-engage
15 the flashing amber lights before proceeding. The eight-light system shall be
16 used only for that purpose. A the purposes described in this subdivision and a
17 school bus driver found in violation of this subdivision shall be guilty of a
18 traffic violation.

19 * * *

1 Sec. 2. 23 V.S.A. § 4(10) is amended to read:

2 (10) “Eight-light system” shall mean four alternately flashing red signal
3 lamps, two at the front and two at the rear, to operate automatically when a
4 school bus is stopped and four alternately flashing amber signal lamps, two at
5 the front and two at the rear, to be operated by the driver ~~at an appropriate~~
6 ~~distance before stopping the bus~~ in accordance with subdivision 1283(a)(4) of
7 this title.

8 Sec. 3. 23 V.S.A. § 1075 is amended to read:

9 § 1075. PASSING SCHOOL BUS

10 (a) The operator of a motor vehicle, including authorized emergency
11 vehicles under section 1015 of this title, upon meeting ~~or overtaking a vehicle~~
12 school bus marked and equipped as provided in section 1283 of this title or a
13 motor vehicle meeting the requirements of subdivision 4(34)(A)(iv) of this title
14 ~~which has stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging~~
15 ~~public or private schoolchildren, shall stop his or her vehicle immediately~~ that
16 is travelling in the same direction and has flashing amber or red lights engaged
17 shall immediately reduce the vehicle’s speed to not more than twenty miles
18 per hour, bring the vehicle to a complete stop when the red lights on the school
19 bus are first engaged, and shall keep it the vehicle stationary while the flashing
20 red signal lights are in operation and until the school bus resumes travel.
21 Under no circumstances shall the operator of a motor vehicle, including

1 authorized emergency vehicles, ever follow a school bus too closely in
2 violation of section 1039 of this title or pass a school bus that is currently
3 travelling in the same direction as the motor vehicle while the school bus has
4 its flashing amber or red lights engaged.

5 (b) The operator of a motor vehicle, including authorized emergency
6 vehicles under section 1015 of this title, upon approaching a school bus
7 marked and equipped as provided in section 1283 of this title or a motor
8 vehicle meeting the requirements of subdivision 4(34)(A)(iv) of this title that is
9 travelling in the opposite direction and has flashing amber or red lights
10 engaged shall immediately reduce the vehicle's speed to not more than twenty
11 miles per hour, bring the vehicle to a complete stop when the red lights on the
12 school bus are first engaged, and keep the vehicle stationary while the flashing
13 red signal lights are in operation and until the school bus resumes travel.

14 Under no circumstances shall the operator of a motor vehicle, including
15 authorized emergency vehicles, pass a school bus that is travelling in the
16 opposite direction as the motor vehicle while the school bus has its flashing red
17 lights engaged. Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit the operator of a
18 motor vehicle lawfully engaged in passing a school bus in a passing lane when
19 the amber lights are engaged from completing the passing of the school bus.

20 (b)(c) The driver of a vehicle need not stop upon a highway with separate
21 roadways upon meeting or overtaking a school bus ~~which~~ that is on a different

1 roadway, or upon a controlled access highway where the school bus is stopped
2 in a loading zone ~~which~~ that is a part of or adjacent to the highway at a point
3 where pedestrians are not permitted to cross the roadway.

4 * * * Following Too Closely * * *

5 Sec. 4. 23 V.S.A. § 1039(a) is amended to read:

6 (a) The driver of a vehicle shall not follow another vehicle more closely
7 than is reasonable and prudent, having due regard for the speed and type of the
8 vehicles and the traffic upon, and the conditions of, the highway. The operator
9 of a vehicle shall not, in a careless or imprudent manner, approach, pass, or
10 maintain speed unnecessarily close to a vulnerable user as defined in
11 subdivision 4(81) of this title, and an occupant of a vehicle shall not throw any
12 object or substance at a vulnerable user.

13 Sec. 5. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

14 (a) On or before August 1, 2019, the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles and
15 Secretary of Education shall update and implement a public education and
16 outreach program directed towards motor vehicle operators, children,
17 guardians, caretakers, educators, and enforcement officers regarding
18 impending changes to the mandatory operation of the eight-light system on
19 school buses and the effect on motor vehicle operators and pedestrians,
20 including children, guardians, and caretakers. The education and outreach
21 program shall be updated as needed at the discretion of the Commissioner of

1 Motor Vehicles and the Secretary of Education and shall, on an ongoing basis,
2 educate:

3 (1) school bus drivers on proper stopping procedures as well as the law;
4 and

5 (2) motorists on the law and the dangers of not obeying the law.

6 (b) There shall be targeted education and outreach during National School
7 Bus Safety Week (the third full week in October) each year.

8 (c) The Department of Motor Vehicles shall continue to participate in the
9 National Association of State Directors for Pupil Transportation Services
10 annual red light passing survey. All data collected shall be used in updating
11 the State's education and outreach program related to school buses and safe
12 passing.

13 * * * Effective Dates * * *

14 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

15 (a) This section and Secs. 4 (following too closely) and 5 (education and
16 outreach) shall take effect on passage.

17 (b) Secs. 1 (school bus equipment), 2 (definitions), and 3 (passing a school
18 bus) shall take effect on August 1, 2021.