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SPONSOR STATEMENT

April 23, 1991

TO: Senator Curt Menard, Chairman, Senate Transportation Committee

FROM: Representative Mike Navarre *Mike*

SUBJECT: **House Bill 85, "An Act relating to lighting equipment on a school bus and providing for an effective date."**

.....

House Bill 85 addresses a long overdue safety issue involving school buses. This legislation will mandate the installation of two flashing red lights on the stop arm and a white strobe at least six feet from the rear of the bus. The visibility afforded by these equipment additions will without question offer a greater measure of safety for the school children of Alaska.

HB 85 provides funding for the initial retrofitting of the required safety lights. The Department of Education will require proper documentation from the school districts for reimbursement. Minimum standards for safety lighting will be adopted by the Department of Education. Deadline for completion of the installation of the safety strobes/lights would be November 1, 1991. All school bus contracts after November 1, 1991 will require contractors to supply buses equipped with the proper safety lighting. In conversations with some of the larger districts this deadline appears to be workable.

The number of buses in Alaska is approximately 940. Some districts have part of the required equipment and some districts have none of the safety lights. The fiscal note is \$ 173,700.00.

The House Finance Committee amended HB 85 to remove the word **strobes** on line 9 after the word flashing. This amendment would allow either lights or strobes on the stop arm. White strobes will be the standard on the roofs of school buses.

The House of Representatives passed HB 35 37-0, on April 19, 1991.

Letters of support are available upon request. There are no known opponents to providing school students with a safer means of travel to school.

Contact person: Tom Ackerly at 3779/ Capitol 515

34824 K-Beach Road • Soldotna, Alaska 99669 • (907) 262-7842



Senate CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 85 (FINANCE) ^{TRANS}

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Offered: 4/8/91
Referred: Rules

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES NAVARRE, G.Phillips, B.Davis

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to lighting equipment required on a school bus; and providing for an
2 effective date."

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

4 * Section 1. AS 28.05.104(b) is amended to read:

5 (b) The Department of Education, in coordination with the Department of Public Safety,
6 shall

7 (1) establish equipment requirements for each type of school bus that is used to
8 transport school children to or from a public school; equipment requirements must include two
9 alternating red flashing ^{strobe} lights attached to the stop arm, a white strobe light attached to the
10 roof of the school bus and not more than six feet from the rear of the school bus, interior
11 flammability standards, number and location of emergency exits, seat-back height and padding
12 requirements, and seat belt standards;

13 (2) at least twice each calendar year, inspect each school bus for compliance with
14 this subsection; and

1 (3) maintain a record of each accident involving a school bus or other vehicle
2 transporting school children that is owned, leased, or provided under contract to a school district
3 or regional educational attendance area; the record must include the date of the accident, a list
4 of persons injured, whether the person's injury occurred within the school bus, and each type of
5 injury.

6 * Sec. 2. SCHOOL BUS RENOVATION. (a) The Department of Education shall reimburse each
7 school district for the initial cost incurred by each school district between January 1, 1991, and
8 November 1, 1991, of obtaining and installing stop arm lights and roof strobe lights required by
9 AS 28.05.104(b), as amended in sec. 1 of this Act. Reimbursement may not exceed \$150 for each stop
10 arm renovation, \$175 for each roof renovation, and shall be subject to approval by the Department of
11 Education.

12 (b) The requirement contained in AS 28.05.104(b), as amended in sec. 1 of this Act, that a white
13 strobe light attached to the roof of the school bus must be not more than six feet from the rear of the
14 school bus, does not apply to a school bus that has a white strobe light already attached to the roof of
15 the school bus on November 1, 1991.

16 * Sec. 3. This Act takes effect November 1, 1991.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
REPRESENTATIVE MIKE NAVARRE

Co-Chair
House Finance Committee
P.O. Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-3779

MEMORANDUM

April 23, 1991

TO: Senator Curt Menard, Chairman, Senate Transportation Committee

FROM: Representative Mike Navarre

Mike

Subject: **House Bill 85, "An Act relating to lighting equipment on a school bus; and providing for an effective date."**

I am requesting the Senate Transportation Committee schedule a hearing on HB 85 at their earliest convenience. The House of Representatives passed HB 85, 37-0 on April 19, 1991.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.



SPONSOR STATEMENT

April 23, 1991

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FROM: Representative Mike Navarre *Mike*

SUBJECT: House Bill 85, "An Act relating to lighting equipment on a school bus; and providing for an effective date."

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Contact person: Tom Ackerly at 3779/Aspitol 515

34824 K-Beach Road • Soldotna, Alaska 99669 • (907) 262-7842



STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

WALTER J. HICKEL, GOVERNOR

GOLDBELT PLACE
801 WEST 10TH STREET
P.O. BOX F
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0500

February 27, 1991

The Honorable Mike Navarre
Alaska State Representative
P.O. Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Representative Navarre:

Re: CSHB 85 (Transportation) "An Act relating to strobe light equipment required on a school bus; and providing for an effective date."

Pursuant to conversations yesterday between Tom Ackerly of your staff and Romyne Kareen of mine, the Department of Education offers the following comments regarding CSHB 85 (Transportation):

1. The intent of this legislation is to require that existing public school buses be retrofitted with stop arm and roof mounted strobe lights by November 1, 1991. Funds would be appropriated to cover the cost of installation of strobes on school buses that are not already required by contract to be so equipped. We agree with the intent of the bill and support accompanying funding (the fiscal note).
2. An alternative to the fiscal note would be for the department to reimburse districts at the rates specified in the bill using the current appropriation level. If this is the alternative chosen by the Legislature, the fiscal note should be zeroed out and the legislation passed.
3. We have no objection to the Legislature specifying that strobe lights be included in equipment requirements established by the department. Current equipment requirements, known as Minimum Standards for Alaska School Buses, are contained in publications referenced in 4 AAC 27.110.

The department will be revising the standards to incorporate requirements of AS 28.05.104(b)(1) and recommendations of the 11th National Conference on School Transportation. The revised standards will apply to school buses manufactured after March 1, 1992. A committee comprised of school bus contractors, school district administrators and department staff will meet during September, 1991 to recommend specific revisions to standards. Strobe lights in stop arms and on rooftops of school buses may or may not be recommended

CSHB 85 (Transportation)

Estimated Number of School Buses
Required by Contract to have Strobe Lights
2/27/91

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
(more than 15 buses)

ESTIMATED # BUSES
REQUIRED BY CONTRACT TO BE EQUIPPED

Roof-Mounted Strobe Lights

Anchorage	170	
Fairbanks	135	
Estimated Total	<u>305</u>	Buses

Stop Arm Strobe Lights

Anchorage	286	
Mat-Su	129	
Kenai	97	
Estimated Total	<u>512</u>	Buses

FY-92 FISCAL NOTE: \$173,700

Roof-Mounted Strobe Lights

Approximate # Buses in State:	935 Buses	
Less Estimated # Required by Contract to be Equipped	305	
Potential # to be Retrofitted	<u>630</u>	Buses @ \$175 = \$110,250

Stop Arm Strobe Lights

Approximate # Buses in State:	935 Buses	
Less Estimated # Required by Contract to be Equipped	512	
Potential # to be Retrofitted	<u>423</u>	Buses @ \$150 = \$ 63,450

Potential Cost to State \$173,700

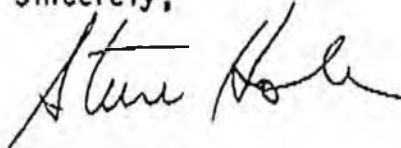
February 27, 1991

by the committee. Passage of CSIB 85 (Transportation) would require inclusion of strobe lights in the standards.

4. The department will notify school districts and bus contractors in March, 1991 that:
 - (1) legislation is in process that would require all public school buses to be retrofitted with stop arm and roof mounted strobe lights by November 1, 1991;
 - (2) the legislation includes funding to reimburse districts for contractor and district costs to install required strobe lights on buses that are not already required by contract to be so equipped; and
 - (3) if the bill is signed into law, installation of strobe lights will be included as mandatory equipment effective November 1, 1991 on all school buses used to transport school children to or from a public school. Installation of strobe lights after November 1, 1991 will not be eligible for state reimbursement.
5. Attached is a listing of school districts with more than 15 buses that have strobe lights required by either the contract between the district and bus contractor, or the reimbursement agreement between the department and the district.

If you have questions, feel free to contact Romaine Kareen at 465-2890.

Sincerely,



Steve Hole
Acting Commissioner

Attachment

cc: Jim Tozer
Romaine Kareen

Tom

KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

148 North Binkley Street • Soldotna, AK 99669 • Phone 907/262-5846 • Fax 907/262-1892

FEBRUARY 1, 1991

Representative Mike Navarre
Box V
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Representative Navarre:

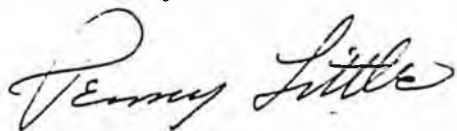
The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District supports the introduction of HB 85, making stop arm strobes and white strobes on the roof of the bus part of the standard bus equipment in our state. We feel both lights enhance the safety of student riders.

Our district has used the stop arm strobe for the past three years and because it has proven effective, it was specified as an equipment requirement in our current bus contracts. Other districts in the state are using the white roof strobe and it has proven effective.

We would request that the bill provide districts and contractors with reimbursement for the initial equipment expenses. It appears that DOE will be lacking in funds to reimburse school districts for school bus transportation next year and we would not want to see an additional expense to that fund that would reduce transportation reimbursement even further.

If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Penny Little
Transportation Coordinator



FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

P.O. Box 71250 Fairbanks, Alaska 99707-1250 (907) 452-2000

February 1, 1991

Representative Navarre
PO Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Representative Navarre:

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my support for your efforts, through House Bill 85, to require strobe lights on school buses.

I am currently the transportation coordinator for the FNSB School District, a position I have held for the past 10 years. I have also been a member of the Alaska delegation to the 1985 and 1990 Conferences on National Minimum Standards for school buses. In addition, I participated in the development of the Alaska School Bus Driver Training Program and the Alaska Enhanced School Bus Inspection Program.

One of the major ways to protect the school bus and its passengers is to ensure that other motorists are aware of its presence. A "safety cushion" around a school bus is created by the unique color and lighting equipment that are part of existing school bus standards. This allows the motorists on the road the opportunity to take extra precautions, knowing that school children are nearby. Strobe lights, in the stop arm and on the roof, increase the effectiveness of this "safety cushion".

We have used white strobe lights on the tops of our school buses in Fairbanks for at least 15 years. (They have been on so long that no one remembers when they were first required.) They are particularly effective in the difficult conditions of darkness, snow, and ice fog in which we operate in Fairbanks. Under adverse conditions drivers are aware of the strobe long before seeing the actual bus itself. This can be a critical safety feature when visibility is reduced to less than 50 feet.

The best measure of the usefulness of strobes that I can offer is the public awareness their presence. The strobes are so much a part of school busing in Fairbanks that monitoring for compliance is not necessary. The public is so accustomed to seeing strobes on our buses that my office receives complaints when a bus



ANCHORAGE
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Pupil Transportation

3580 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Area Code 907 — 583-3022

FAX 907-562-3957

February 4, 1991

Representative Mike Navarre
Alaska House of Representatives
Pouch V
Juneau, Alaska 99811
FAX 465-2278

Dear Representative Navarre,

The Anchorage School District believes that the addition of red strobe lights to the stop arm and white strobe lights to the roof of school buses will enhance school bus safety. All buses in our District, as well as Contracted bus fleets, have been equipped with red strobe lights on the stop arm since September 1989. The addition of these strobe lights has significantly reduced the number of motorists who pass stopped school buses. We also feel that the addition of roof mounted white strobe lights will further increase the visibility of school buses and increase the awareness of the presence of school buses with the general motoring public. Approximately 60% of the fleet have already been equipped with roof mounted strobe lights. The District made roof mounted strobe lights mandatory in our current transportation contracts. After the buses were delivered and began operating the Anchorage Police Department notified me that these lights were illegal and school bus drivers using the lights would be issued citations (see attached letter).

The Anchorage School District would support passage of House Bill 85 if the bill not only mandates installation of white roof mounted strobe lights, but also addresses use of the lights. I would also like to see an exception made on the location of the lights that are already installed. The Anchorage School District has almost fifty buses that have strobe lights mounted in the center of the roof.

Thank you for the interest that you have shown in school bus safety issues. If you need any additional information feel free to contact me at 563-3022.

Sincerely,

Steven Kalms
Director of Transportation Services

is running around without a strobe.

We have no direct experience with strobe in the stop paddles in Fairbanks. However, they were tested as part of a pilot project of the Alaska School Bus Safety Committee, and proved effective there as well. I have observed them on buses in the Kenai Peninsula area and found the strobes to be a great improvement over standard paddle lights.

Your efforts to increase the "safety cushion" around our school buses through the mandatory use of strobes is supported throughout the pupil transportation industry. The significant increase in safety certainly warrants the small additional cost to the price of an entire school bus. Your efforts to retrofit the existing buses in the state will create an immediate impact for a relatively low cost. Such an approach is far superior to a slow phase-in on new buses. In addition to the several year delay in equipping all buses in the state, the effort to raise public awareness would be diminished by the lack of standardized equipment between buses.

Thank you for your support of safe, effective pupil transportation. Do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any assistance to your efforts.

Sincerely,



Bob Shefchik
Transportation Coordinator



NEA-ALASKA

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

ANCHORAGE REGIONAL OFFICE

1411 W 33RD AVENUE
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503
(907) 274-0536

JUNEAU OFFICE

105 MUNICIPAL WAY SUITE 302
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801
(907) 586-3090

FAIRBANKS REGIONAL OFFICE

2118 CUSHMAN STREET
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99701
(907) 456-4435

February 1, 1991

Rep. Mike Navarre
Alaska State Legislature
P.O. Box V
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Rep. Navarre:

NEA-Alaska appreciates and supports your desire to improve school bus safety. It is very important that the safety of our children remain paramount and your legislation appears to meet those needs. If we can be of any assistance please let us know.

Sincerely,

Don Oberg
President



ALASKA SCHOOL BUS SAFETY COMMITTEE

February 5, 1991

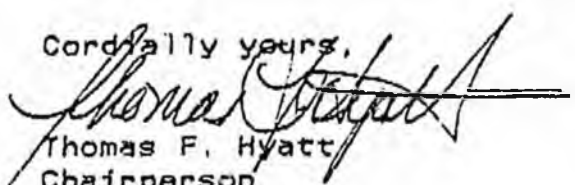
Representative Mike Navarre
P.O. Box V, Room 515
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Sir:

The Alaska School Bus Safety Committee strongly supports House Bill 85, an act requiring school bus stop arms with alternating red strobe lights and a roof mounted white strobe light. The Safety Committee has researched and evaluated aspects of both strobe light systems and found them very effective in the visibility enhancement of school buses during Alaska's inclement weather. Alaska's unique and varied weather conditions severely limit visibility of school buses during their most vulnerable period, the loading and unloading of students.

It is also imperative that the Legislature supply the funding for these projects. Currently, school districts throughout the State are having their pupil transportation reimbursement funds prorated by the Department of Education due to funding short falls. The proposed budget by the Governor suggests further reductions in pupil transportation reimbursement funds. Additionally, school bus operators throughout the State are suffering the effects of extraordinary high fuel costs with no relief from these expenses. It would be unfair to ask either the Districts or Bus Operators to shoulder the expense for these items.

Cordially yours,


Thomas F. Hyatt
Chairperson

TFH/ec



ASTA

Alaska School Transportation
Association

Box 952

Delta Junction, Alaska

99737

February 7, 1991

Representative Mike Navarre
Pouch V (MS 3100)
Juneau, Alaska 99811

RE: HB 85

Dear Representative Navarre:

I regret that I was unable to participate in this morning's scheduled teleconference regarding House Bill 85: "An Act relating to equipment required on a school bus...".

The matter of a statewide requirement for red strobe lights on stop arms and white strobe lights on the roof of buses has not been brought before the membership of this organization. While most would agree that these items provide increased visibility in some areas (such as Fairbanks), one wonders if the requirement is necessary in all areas? Not all areas of the state experience ice fog conditions.

Other vehicles (such as DOT road maintenance equipment and fuel tankers) use the white strobe lights, so their use will not automatically tell motorists there's a school bus in the vicinity.

Retrofitting all buses will certainly be a challenge -- school buses are already electrical and wiring "nightmares". This is not to say it would be impossible.

At any rate, if the requirements added to AS 28.05.124(b) (1) are to become law, then most definitely the fiscal appropriation in Sec. 2 is imperative!

If the Legislature adds these requirements, the state must be prepared to pay for same. School districts and school transportation contractors are already working with severe budget constraints due to reductions in funding and fuel costs which have sky-rocketed since the onset of the Persian Gulf crisis last fall.

It would be unreasonable to expect districts and contractors to bear the costs of retrofitting without reimbursement by the state. And I doubt that even the amounts noted in Sec. 2 will be adequate to cover all the costs of parts and installation labor. (There will also be additional maintenance expenses for these items.)

We will appreciate you keeping our association informed of developments as HB 85 proceeds through committees. If we can provide further suggestions or input, please let us know.

Cordially,

Loretta Nistler
Loretta Nistler
Vice-president

cc: House Committees on Transportation; Health, Education and Social Services;
Finance

Sen. Dick Shultz; Rep. Johnny Gonzales
Romaine Kareen, Pupil Trans., DOE

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
1991 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB85

Revision Date: 2/21/91 Department Affected: Education
 Title: Equipment required on a school bus BRU: K-12 Support
 Component: Pupil Transportation
 Sponsor: Navarre
 Requestor: House Transportation COMPONENT SERIAL NO.

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Expenditures/Revenues: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97
PERSONAL SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND & STRUCTURES						
GRANTS, CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL OPERATING	173.7	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

CAPITAL						
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REVENUE						
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FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

GENERAL FUND	173.7	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL						

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

Estimate of current year impact: None

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary.)
 See attached

Prepared By: Romayne Kareen Phone: 465-2865
 Division: Education Finance & Support Date: 2/21/91
 Approved by Commissioner: Steve Hota, Acting Commissioner
 Agency: Education Date: 2/21/91

Distribution (by preparer): Legislative Finance, Legislative Sponsor, Requestor, CMB, & Impacted Agency(ies).

This fiscal note is updated to reflect revised estimates provided to the department by school districts for the number of Stop Arm Strobes needed under HB85.

Roof Mount Strobes:

630 buses X \$175 = \$110,250

Stop Arm Strobes:

423 buses X \$150 = \$63,450

Total estimated FY92 cost: \$173,700