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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Report CLE-08-2021 Automated School Bus Camera System Program For Consideration by Council in Committee on December 7, 2021

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### OBJECTIVE:

To provide an overview of BusPatrol's Automated School Bus Camera System program for buses operated by Student Transportation Services Brant Haldimand Norfolk.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Report CLE-08-2021 Automated School Bus Camera System Program be received.
2. AND THAT the Police Services Board be advised that Haldimand County does not recommend proceeding with the installation of an Automated School Bus Camera System Program at this time, for the reasons outlined in Report CLE-08-2021.

**Prepared by:** Tracey Cassidy, Council Services Coordinator

**Reviewed by:** Evelyn Eichenbaum, Manager, Clerks Division / Municipal Clerk

**Approved:** Craig Manley, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides an overview of the Automated School Bus Camera System program offered through BusPatrol, a third-party company based in the United States. Automated stop-arm enforcement technology is relatively new, and data indicating whether this type of program would be successful in Haldimand County is not yet available. Due to financial implications and other noted resource factors, staff are not recommending proceeding with implementation of the program at this time.

### BACKGROUND:

On March 24, 2021, representatives from both the Student Transportation Services Brant Haldimand Norfolk (STSBHN) and BusPatrol made a delegation to the Haldimand County Police Services Board (PSB) proposing the Automated School Bus Camera System (ASBCS) program. BusPatrol has implemented the ASBCS program in some areas of the United States and have recently introduced the program to Ontario.

At the PSB meeting, the following motion was passed:

1. THAT the correspondence and presentation material from Philip Kuckyt, Manager of Transportation Services, Student Transportation Services Brant Haldimand Norfolk Re: BusPatrol Safety Program, dated February 18, 2021, be received;
2. AND THAT this resolution be sent to Haldimand County Council recommending their consideration of the proposed BusPatrol Safety Program.

Similar presentations were made to Norfolk County Police Services Board (February 24<sup>th</sup>), Norfolk County Council (May 11<sup>th</sup>), County of Brant Police Services Board (March 16<sup>th</sup>), and County of Brant

Administration and Operations Committee (May 18<sup>th</sup>). Norfolk and Brant County Councils directed their staff to explore the program further. Prior to forwarding the PSB motion to Council, Haldimand County staff determined that it was best to gather background information in order to provide context to Council, in considering the motion.

Automated stop-arm enforcement technology is a cloud-based Artificial Intelligence (AI) solution that captures infractions where vehicles have passed red flashing lights and stop arms on school buses. The program outfits buses with exterior stop-arm cameras next to the driver's seat. When the flashing lights and stop sign are engaged, the cameras collect high-resolution footage of vehicles that pass in contravention of the Highway Traffic Act. Typically, the cameras provide the licence plate number, a detailed description of the vehicle, a clear image of the person behind the wheel and may also include images that document events inside a bus. Images are time and location stamped with GPS coordinates and then provided to law enforcement in order to issue offence notices.

As school bus cameras are now regulated through Ontario Regulation 424/20, administration of the offences would occur at the municipal level as with all other Provincial Offences Act (POA) matters.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Staff have given careful consideration to how this program would enhance the safety of children and encourage behaviour modification for drivers and students across the County.

In consultation with Haldimand County OPP Detachment, staff have reviewed the number of school bus infractions across the County over the last five years. Since 2017, only five charges have been laid, and OPP officers have confirmed that they receive very few complaints, indicating that this is not a significant issue in Haldimand County.

Staff have been working in collaboration with area municipalities who have drawn similar conclusions as to the prevalence of this issue.

Failure to stop for a school bus infractions are driver-related offences. The penalty for failing to stop for a school bus is a minimum fine of \$490 for the first offence. In order for the charge to be convicted, the essential elements must be proven such as:

- was the stop sign activated
- was the bus stopped properly
- is a school purposes bus involved
- were the red lights activated and visible
- was there a clear and unobstructed view
- were the occupants children

Charges can be disputed, conviction is not guaranteed and implementing the program would have a significant impact on OPP, POA and court resources. (Please refer to similar discussion re: POA resources in Report ECW-12-2021 Automated Speed Enforcement (Photo Radar) Program Overview, also considered at the December 7, 2021 Council in Committee meeting.) Although the implementation of the ASBCS program may increase the number of school bus infraction tickets issued, the increased volume, corresponding conviction rate and fine collection rate would need to be high in order to cover the financial costs noted in the section below.

As the program is new to Ontario, data related to offence rates, potential revenues, and the impact on POA, OPP and other staff resources, is not currently available at this time.

Based on financial implications and lack of data indicating potential success of this program, staff feel the disadvantages outweigh the potential benefits of proceeding with this program at this time:

- Significant staff time and resources required to maintain the program
- Significant annual financial cost
- Very limited municipal implementations at this time
- No data to indicate success of the program in Ontario municipalities at this time

For the above noted reasons, staff do not recommend proceeding with the program at this time. Should Council wish to pursue implementation of the ASBCS program in the future, the proposal should be considered during review of the draft operating budget.

## **FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Although BusPatrol will incur a financial burden to install and maintain the cameras on buses operated by STSBHN, the County is responsible for paying a technology fee. The technology fee assessed by BusPatrol for each equipped bus is \$300 every month. There are currently 73 buses operating in Haldimand County and if all 73 buses were outfitted with the units, the cost would be \$21,900 per month resulting in an expenditure of \$262,800 per year. Ticket revenue sharing is a requirement of the agreement with BusPatrol, and requires that 60% be paid to BusPatrol leaving 40% for the municipality. The municipality would also be responsible for all POA administration and court costs. In order for this program to be revenue neutral, OPP would need to lay 112 charges per month (assuming none would be disputed) and processed at the County's expense by the POA Office just to cover overhead costs (112 charges x \$490 per charge is \$54,880 – 40% of that equals just over the \$21,900 we would need to remit each and every month to BusPatrol for technology fees).

Based on staff's analysis and considering discussions with Brant and Norfolk Counties, the City of Brantford, Haldimand County OPP Detachment, review of data and information provided to other municipalities from BusPatrol, the ASBCS program is not a revenue neutral program and has an unknown financial and resource impact to the County.

## **STAKEHOLDER IMPACTS:**

As noted above, implementation of the ASBCS program would have significant impact on OPP and POA resources.

## **REPORT IMPACTS:**

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: No

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

None.