

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Reconsideration of Alternating Flashing Lights on School Buses

Motions:

1. That Council agree to reconsider the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses within the City of Fort Saskatchewan.
2. That Council direct Administration to bring forward a bylaw which prohibits the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses within the City of Fort Saskatchewan.
3. That Council direct Administration to advertise the intent to discuss the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses, prior to the matter being presented to Council.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present Council with new information relating to the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses within the City of Fort Saskatchewan.

Background:

In 1986 the Provincial Government repealed their legislation relating to school bus operations within the province. At that time the Province encouraged municipalities to enact their own legislation restricting the use of flashing lights and stop arms by school buses. Subsequently, Fort Saskatchewan enacted Bylaw C28-86. The restricted use of this equipment is also captured within Traffic Bylaw C4-09.

On October 14, 2014 Council heard information presented by City Administration (report and attachments attached), the Elk Island Public School Board and citizens relating to this topic. Both Elk Island Public Schools and City Administration supported retaining the legislation currently in place. Ultimately the decision was made to enact Bylaw C21-14, requiring school buses to use flashing lights and stop arms effective August 24, 2015.

Additional research and information on this topic is now available for Council's review. Letters have been received, and are attached, from the Elk Island Public School Board and Elk Island Catholic School Superintendent. Concerns expressed in this correspondence relate to traffic flow and congestion; provincial requirement for mid-block stops increasing traffic interruption in both directions; a requirement for the City to maintain windrow removal at bus stop locations; significant problems with vehicle "fly-bys" resulting in risk to student safety and calls for enforcement along with court appearance time; challenges to public messaging and education of drivers; and a loss of commonality within our region.

The primary concern expressed by Elk Island Public and Catholic School Boards is student safety. It is believed that the current practice of students crossing at existing crosswalks and intersections is the safest. Crossing mid-block places the responsibility on the students to be alert and aware, because we cannot depend on all traffic stopping as required. This responsibility should not rest with the students, especially at the younger ages. Elk Island Public School Board will present information supporting this at the April 14, 2015 Council meeting.

Both Elk Island Public Schools and Elk Island Catholic Schools have student transportation departments whose main responsibility is to ensure safe transportation of students on school buses. They are the subject matter experts in Fort Saskatchewan and we can rely on their analysis and advice on this subject.

Should Council wish to reconsider this matter, Administration could be directed to prepare a bylaw prohibiting the use of flashing warning lights and stop arms on school buses within the City of Fort Saskatchewan. If Council supported the motion to proceed with a bylaw, it would be left to their discretion whether to hold a non-statutory public hearing, and conduct the necessary advertising.

Plans/Standards/Legislation:

- City of Fort Saskatchewan Strategic Plan Guiding Principles: To work collaboratively with our colleagues, residents, partners and stakeholders. To use a forward thinking mindset and consider the impact of decisions on others.
- Community Sustainability Plan Update: Goal of a safe community.

Financial Implications:

Should the City require school buses to use flashing lights and stop arms, there would be a financial impact for removing windrows at newly located school bus stops. There would also be a significant number of complaints forwarded to Municipal Enforcement and/or the RCMP regarding vehicles that fail to stop for the flashing lights and stop arms. Resources would be required to receive and investigate these complaints.

Internal Impacts:

Staffing resources would have increased workloads relating to windrow clearing and traffic enforcement.

Alternatives:

1. That Council agrees to reconsider the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses within the City of Fort Saskatchewan, and:
 - a) direct Administration to bring forward a bylaw which prohibits the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses within the City of Fort Saskatchewan, and
 - b) direct Administration to advertise the intent to discuss the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses, prior to the matter being presented to Council.
2. That Council not reconsider the use of alternating flashing lights and stop arms on school buses within the City of Fort Saskatchewan, and advise how they wish to proceed.

Attachments:

1. Appendix A - Correspondence from Elk Island Public School Board
 2. Appendix B - Correspondence from Elk Island Catholic School Superintendent
 3. Appendix C - Traffic Bylaw Amendment C21-14
 4. Appendix D - October 14, 2014 Council Report and attachments
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Approved by:	Brenda Rauckman General Manager, Corporate & Protective Services	Date: April 7, 2015
Reviewed by:	Kelly Kloss City Manager	Date: April 7, 2015
Submitted to:	City Council	Date: April 14, 2015