

**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 15 JUNE 2010**

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON "SEE ME" SCHOOL BUS STOP SIGNING TRIAL**

**BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 This report is intended to update the Committee on the results of the trial of "See Me" school bus stop signing
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the functions of the Council as Roads Authority.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 That the Committee:-**

- (a) **note the contents of this report and;**
- (b) **instruct the Transportation manager to monitor the progress of the further trials being undertaken in Aberdeenshire.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Reference is made to the meeting of this Committee of 26 May 2009 (Item 10) when, during discussion of the Road Safety Programme, members discussed the recently introduced trial of the See me system and asked for an update when the trial had been evaluated.
- 3.2 The See Me system is a Swedish invention which was supplied to The Moray Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen City Council free of charge for 3 months to allow us to trial the system in the UK.
- 3.3 Aberdeenshire intend to extend their trial of the system.
- 3.4 The See Me system consists of solar powered flashing amber lights mounted on a pole above a school bus stop sign. The sign is non-standard and was given experimental approval by the Scottish Government in order to allow the trial to go ahead.
- 3.5 The lights are triggered by a small transponder device carried by the pupils so that when they are in the vicinity of the sign waiting for the bus, the lights will be flashing. Also, when they alight from the bus in the afternoon the lights will flash until they have dispersed.

- 3.6 The system was trialled at two locations in Moray at Newton Cottages on the B9013 and at Hillside Cottages on the B9014.
- 3.7 Speed surveys were undertaken, before the system was installed to provide a base line and during the trial to assess the effect.
- 3.8 Over a 24 hour period, a speed reduction of 4.8% was observed which may be due to the presence of the sign alone.
- 3.9 For the time 30 minutes covering before and after the school bus arrival, there was a 4.0% average reduction in speed and at the specific time when the bus was stopped at the site, the average reduction was 6.6% and the reduction in the direction of travel of the school bus was 9.8%. This higher reduction may have been in part due to the bus being stopped in the road and traffic would have to slow down to pass it although there was a higher reduction in this direction at all other times.
- 3.10 Questionnaires were produced for pupils, parents and drivers. Pupil's comments were generally extremely favourable with all agreeing that they had observed a drop in vehicle speeds while the lights were activated. The equipment worked well and they generally felt more secure and safe using the school transport.
- 3.11 The drivers' questionnaire was an online survey and only had 37 responses of which only 1 was from Moray with 36 from Aberdeenshire and none from Aberdeen City. The main points from the driver survey are:
- 76% had seen the signage but only 36% had seen the lights activated.
  - the most memorable aspect was the sign for 61% with the flashing lights next at 18%.
  - 92% correctly understood the purpose of the system.
  - 32% of drivers slowed down every time they passed the sign, 25 % only slowed when the lights were flashing and 29% did not alter their speed.
  - 86% agreed that the system made them more alert to the possibility of children waiting in the vicinity.
- 3.12 Only three parent questionnaires were returned and all were extremely favourable.
- 3.13 The Swedish manufacturers do not sell the units but operate a leasing system which includes replacement of units in the event of a fault. Actual costs would vary depending on the number of units ordered and the length of the contract period but an approximate cost would be £1400 for one unit and 6 transponders. Signs and poles would have to be supplied by the Council.
- 3.14 The flashing lights do not comply with UK traffic Signs regulations and would have to be redesigned by the manufacturers. No discussions have been held with the manufacturer to determine the feasibility of this.
- 3.15 The black and yellow sign is not an approved road sign and early indications are that the Scottish Government are not disposed to authorise it on a permanent basis.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) There are no implications arising from this report.

(b) Consultations:

Inspector Scott Mann of Grampian Police has been consulted on this report and is in agreement.

Lorraine Paisey, Principal Accountant has been consulted on this report and is in agreement.

Alasdair McEachan, Principal Solicitor (Commercial and Conveyancing) has been consulted and is in agreement.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 There is not a road safety concern either collectively or at any individual school bus pick up/drop off point in Moray.

5.2 Although feedback on the trial of the SeeMe sign has been positive it would appear that the sign has had as much, if not more, effect than the flashing lights. Coupled with the potential technical difficulties in obtaining the necessary approvals for this system it is not considered to be a cost effective use of limited Council funds.

5.3 It is therefore not recommended that the Council pursue this system further.

Author of Report: Andy Duff, Senior Engineer (Traffic)

Background Papers: None

Ref: GRH/ARD/

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