

Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change  
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Frank McAveety MSP  
Convener  
Public Petitions Committee  
TG.01  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

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Dear Frank,

#### **CONSIDERATION OF PETITIONS PE1098 AND PE1223**

Thank you for your letter of 16 December 2009 seeking further information concerning Petitions PE1098 and PE1223. On behalf of the Committee, you asked for responses to two points, which are reproduced below, followed by my responses.

**The Committee asked whether any progress had been made by the Department for Transport with the Scottish Government in introducing a pilot scheme in Scotland for a 'school bus overtaking ban'.**

You will recall that at the debate in September on Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2020, I recognised that there are still some significant questions on that subject. However, I also said I said at that time that we should continue to discuss the idea to ensure that we do not miss the opportunity to pursue something that is thought to deliver some benefits in other jurisdictions.

In November, I asked my officials to contact the Department for Transport (DfT) to seek an indication of any potential barriers or issues to setting up a pilot or trial in Scotland for a ban on the passing of stationary school buses. DfT have confirmed that they are in the process of preparing a response, which I will happily share with the Committee in due course. However, I have noted that the Committee has chosen to raise this question directly with DfT.

**The Committee also asked whether the Scottish Government has taken, or is looking to take action in regard to making provision for every school bus to be installed with three point seatbelts for every school child passenger; requiring the installation of further safety signage and lights on school buses; and what action is proposed in terms of local authorities inserting requirements into the contracts they place with school bus operators that each bus used for transporting school pupils should have these features.**

The Scottish Government's position on seatbelts, signage and contracts has been set out fully in previous responses to the Committee.

The Committee is aware of the School Transport Circular 7/2003, which sets out what the Scottish Government expects of local authorities with regard to safe school transport while making clear that it is quite rightly for individual local authorities to consider. Local circumstances not only across Scotland but also across individual authorities will dictate the best and safest way of getting children to and from school.

As the Committee is also aware, from information provided to it for previous meetings, school transport contracts are a matter for individual local authorities. Local authorities are themselves best placed to determine what school transport provision is suited to the circumstances in their area. The Scottish Government has no reason to believe that local authorities are failing in this respect and there are no plans to require local authorities to insert particular provisions into their contracts with school bus providers.



**STEWART STEVENSON**