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Company touts benefits of cameras to nab motorists passing school buses

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS

Dufferin Council heard about a novel way to put eyes on school buses.

Jean Souliere suggested during council's Nov. 14 meeting that cameras installed on school buses would be an effective tool in aiding police in curbing motorists who pass school buses stopped to offload or pick up students.

Souliere is the founder of BusPatrol Inc. The company supplies stop-arm enforcement technology that includes cameras that are activated when side Stop signs are engaged on buses.

The company launched a pilot project over May and June 2016 when stop arm cameras were installed on just 10 school buses in each of four Ontario municipalities.

?We didn't just drop these buses in big urban areas,? Souliere said.

The pilot project smart buses were deployed in such centres as Kitchener/Waterloo, Brantford, Sudbury, and Mississauga.

?It really demonstrated that the problem wasn't in one spot,? he said. ?It was everywhere.?

In those two months, results indicated 172 traffic tickets could have been issued by police. And 0.8 tickets could have been issued per bus per day to a motorist who didn't accommodate the stopped school bus.

Consider that: Those are vehicles passing stopped school buses.

In Brantford where there are 450 school buses, he said, a third of a violation was recorded per bus per day.

?Could anyone here imagine that 150 violations in one day in Brantford could be captured?? he said.

A camera captures video evidence of a motorist endangering school children by passing an idling school bus. That information is analyzed and forwarded to local law enforcement that would then mail a traffic violation ticket to the motorist.

Souliere said motorists are also provided with an Internet link by which they can view the footage capture by the BusPatrol camera.

?To even think this violation occurs at the rate it does is unbelievable,? Souliere said.

He said such technology has an important place in every community.

?This problem has existed as long as school buses have had stop bars,? Souliere said. ?But nothing has effectively fixed the problem. At least until we were able to demonstrate how.?

And, he said, the stop-arm cameras could be paid for by revenue from fines levied against motorists.

There can be no question an emphasis on safety is paramount in just about every aspect of people's daily life. The cars we drive are vastly different than the ones we rode in with our parents' at the wheel. Safety features in vehicles have evolved drastically over the years and continue to be improved.

But consider the familiar school bus that ferries children to and from school daily. Souliere said today's buses are basically the same

as they were decades ago.

?Everyone I talk to talks about putting safety first,? he said. ?And we've seen in school buses the lack of resources and money has prevented technology from being deployed where it's needed most.?