

SCHOOL BUS STOP AHEAD SIGN

The SCHOOL BUS STOP AHEAD sign (S3-1) is a warning sign used to alert motorists of an upcoming school bus stop that may be unexpected or obscured by roadway geometry, such as a curve or hill. As with all warning signs, the use of this sign is based upon the results of a traffic study or upon engineering judgment (MUTCD 2C.02).

The *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD), Section 2C.01 (Function of Warning Signs), states that warning signs are to “call attention to unexpected conditions on or adjacent to a highway, street, or private roads open to public travel and to situations that might not be readily apparent to road users.” Warning signs should be used to alert road users to conditions that might call for lower speeds or an action in the interest of safety and efficient traffic operations.

“The School Bus Stop Ahead (S3-1) sign should be installed in advance of locations where a school bus, when stopped to pick up or discharge passengers, is not visible to road users for an adequate distance and where there is no opportunity to relocate the school bus stop to provide adequate sight distance,” according to Section 7B.13 of Part 7 of the MUTCD (Traffic Control For School Areas).

PennDOT Publication 236, *Handbook of Approved Signs*, however, makes this recommendation mandatory when a

school bus stop is not visible by a motorist for a distance of 500 feet.

The following conditions warrant installing a SCHOOL BUS STOP AHEAD sign:

- Lack of visibility from a distance of 500 feet away to the position where the school bus is stopped.
- The school bus stop cannot be relocated.

Placement: If these two conditions are met, the SCHOOL BUS STOP AHEAD sign must be installed. Publication 236 states that placement of the sign is normally at 500 feet prior to the school bus stop. The standard size of this sign is 30 x 30 inches. However, a 48-x-48-inch sign is recommended on roads with four or more lanes with posted speeds of 40 miles per hour or greater. In accordance with MUTCD and Publication 236 standards, the background color of the sign is fluorescent yellow green.

Responsibility: A municipality is responsible for posting the SCHOOL BUS STOP AHEAD sign along a local road. If the sign is to be posted along a state road, the municipality must coordinate with PennDOT and receive approval to install the sign.

Over time, the need for a SCHOOL BUS STOP AHEAD sign may alter as school bus stop locations change. Therefore, the municipality should periodically re-evaluate the need for the sign and determine whether to remove, relocate, or keep it.

For more information on this sign, refer to:

- PennDOT Publication 236, *Handbook of Approved Signs*
- *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways*, 2009 edition



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