



JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 508

September 7, 2021

Good afternoon, members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 508.

Under current law, county or municipal highway departments may install two flashing red or amber lights – one facing to the front and one to the rear - on their vehicles to alert other motorists of a potential traffic hazard, such as when a snowplow is operating in inclement conditions.

Several other states, including Michigan and Ohio, have permitted the use of green warning lights on certain vehicles for several years. There, science and experience have demonstrated that flashing green lights are more visible than red or amber lights in inclement conditions. Only blue lights, which are reserved for law enforcement vehicles, have better visibility than green lights.

Although envisioned primarily for use on snowplows, which commonly operate in periods of low visibility due to inclement weather, this bill authorizes county or municipal highway departments to use flashing green lights in lieu of, or in addition to, flashing red or amber lights on potentially hazardous vehicles.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Committee on Transportation and Local Government

Tuesday, September 7, 2021

1:00 PM

201 Southeast

[Sen. Jerry Petrowski \(Chair\)](#)

[Sen. Robert L. Cowles \(Vice-Chair\)](#)

Support of SB 508 - relating to: warning lamps on highway vehicles.

Dear Senators,

On behalf of Iowa County, we urge your support of Senate Bill 508. Within existing state statutes, warning lamps on vehicles may only be equipped with a red or amber light. Upon further review and analysis it has been determined that the most effective lighting comes from:

Other colors within the light spectrum – blue and green for example.

Differing or contrasting colors – use of amber or red with other contrasting colors.

Studies have determined the use of differing, contrasting schemes of colors on the back of vehicles enhance the ability to notice and recognize them. I feel that drivers have become complacent over the sole use of the amber rotating beacon in Wisconsin, and we need to find differing alternatives within LED and Light technology to provide alternatives to enhance visibility and vision. Light green (or white) has been determined to be one of the most effective colors for low or impaired light situations. In addition, the use of green / white along with other current red or amber lights in unison as a flashing or sequencing of light greatly enhance visibility in all conditions.

Furthermore, current state laws limit the use of blue lighting only for law enforcement vehicle recognition; which has proven to be a good thing. The law has preserved the best visible light alternative (blue) for law enforcement; and as a result, law enforcement has received some brand recognition from usage – most drivers correlate a flashing blue light to a police /patrol car. However; also within state statutes, any vehicle performing certain activities within right of way are required to utilize an amber flashing / rotating light / beacon; which then creates a situation where multiple other vehicle types are all utilizing the same configuration of lights and lighting for differing reasons causing confusion for motorists and the travelling public. By allowing the additional green (white) lighting only for municipal operations, over time will provide brand recognition of green = municipal operations just as blue does currently for law enforcement.

Iowa County has experienced three crash incidents in the last twenty-four months, which have led to injury or fatality. The addition of additional alternating lighting schemes on our fleet may have provided more advance notice or recognition by the driver and thereby reduced the severity or occurrence of these incidents by providing earlier warning. Your support of SB508 shows commitment to provide other tools in the tool box to improve worker and motorist safety within work zones by enhancing visibility which correlates to earlier detection.

Respectfully Submitted;

Craig E Hardy PE/PLS;
Iowa County Highway Commissioner

Eau Claire County Highway Department



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Jon Johnson
Highway Commissioner

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Sen. Jerry Petrowski (Chair)

Sen. Robert L. Cowles (Vice-Chair)

Support of SB 508 - relating to: warning lamps on highway vehicles.

Dear Senators,

On behalf of Eau Claire County, we urge your support of Senate Bill 508. Under current state statute, warning lamps on highway department vehicles can only be equipped with a red or amber lights. Upon further analysis, this is not the optimal lighting combination for driver and operator safety on state roadways.

According to extensive research and testing completed by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in August 2020, the use of a single flashing green light used in conjunction with flashing red lights on the back of winter maintenance equipment drastically improved the visibility of maintenance equipment in low-visibility winter conditions. These improved visibility results are informed by current research surrounding warning lights and human visual sensitivity to colored light¹.

Since May 2019, the Wisconsin County Highway Association has recorded forty-nine work zone related incidents for highway departments. Several of these incidents were related to inattentive drivers rear-ending county maintenance equipment where visibility conditions were poor or when work zones were not noticed soon enough. Your support for SB 508 shows commitment to research-based updates to public works operations that will improve roadway safety and awareness for the travelling public while also ensuring that dedicated equipment operators get home safely to their families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jon Johnson – Eau Claire County Highway Commissioner

¹ Zockie, A., et al. (2020). (rep.). Effectiveness of Green Strobes on Winter Maintenance Vehicles and Equipment. Michigan Department of Transportation Research Administration. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9622_11045_24249-537510--,00.html