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Parliament proposes reversal of 30km per hour speed limit laws near schools

By Kibiwott Koross Updated Tuesday, February 24th 2015 at 11:55 GMT +3

NAIROBI, KENYA: A parliamentary committee has proposed a reversal of traffic rules that aimed to curb road carnage near schools. The Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2014 states that too many of our children are being killed or maimed as they travel to and from school because roads are too dangerous and had proposed a speed limit of 30km per hour near schools.

But now an amendment by Maina Kamanda led Transport Committee wants the speed limit near schools to be revised to the current 50 Km per hour which could result to more road crashes, especially near schools.

In a letter seen by Standard by the committee to the Clerk of the National Assembly, the departmental committee on Transport, Public Works and housing proposed the amendment that would see the current speed limits maintained in the Bill that is currently in Committee stage.

They also proposed to lower fines from Sh25,000 maximum to Sh20,000. Initially, the bill also proposes introduction of statutory penalties for drivers exceeding the speed limit by fining them by the number of units by which speed is exceeded. Those who exceeded by between 5 and 10 kilometers would pay Sh10,000, 11-20 km Sh15,000, 21-30km Sh20,000 while those who overspeed by 31 km per hour would pay Sh25,000.

Children walking in and out of schools bear the greatest brunt due to their poor judgment ability and physical challenges, among other factors. They lack the cognitive ability to judge speeds and safe situations.

Stephanie Aketch, a road safety manager at Handicap International, a non-profit organisation that supports people with disabilities said the move was a blow to the safety of school children.

She said: "This is pretty dangerous. There was no need to amend the law in the first place. We ought to have even reduce it further."

National Safety and Transport Authority chairman Lee Kinyanjui however said they were not party to the committee's resolutions.

Speaking on phone, Kinyanjui said any available mechanism should instead be employed to reduce road crashes. "The main problem in our roads is pedestrian accidents and we should stop it using all available ways," he said.

Global Safety Partnership (2008) Speed management, a road safety manual for decision makers and practitioners, states that excessive and inappropriate speed is a major road safety concern for all countries. Speed determines the level of injury in case of a crash.

Last year, WHO noted that speed is a key risk factor for pedestrian injuries and fatalities.