

# New Measures to Protect School Children in Nairobi and Beyond

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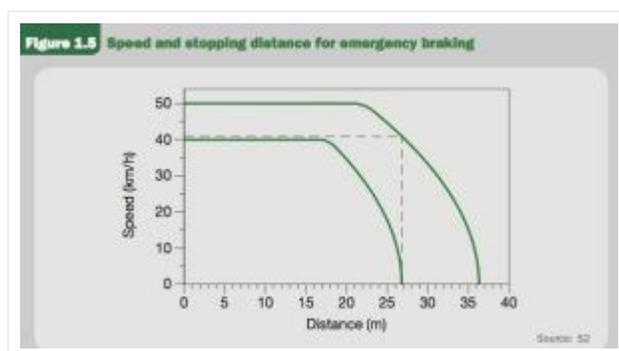


Recently, the [Kenya Alliance of Resident Associations](#) hosted a meeting on [the Traffic Amendment Act 2014](#). The bill, sponsored by MP Joseph Lekuton with support from the [International Institute of Legislative Affairs](#) proposes to protect nursery to secondary school children as they make their way to and from school, play or visit a health clinic. The proposed changes include stronger regulations for vehicles used to ferry kids to and from school, reduced speeds near well marked school zones and safe road design with good pedestrian walkways and crossing in areas where children predominate. Some initial resistance to this bill has emerged; it seems that [some legislators](#)

[do not like the reduced speeds and high fines for speeding in children/school zones](#). See [the report of the Departmental Committee on Transport, Public Works and Housing](#) where the MPs are willing to trade children's safety for what they think will be fewer traffic jams. (However, I do not believe that the slower speed causes jams-poor traffic management does. The whole city of New York runs on a speed limit of 40 km/hr.)

First, it might be noted that it has taken far too long for policymakers to offer some basic legal protections for some of the most vulnerable on Kenya's streets. It seems they forget the Kenya is a young society with many small people who no doubt find many roads with speeding vehicles, poor walkways and many traumatizing crashes even more terrifying than we do. Some have disabilities that make navigating the city even more difficult and treacherous.

Secondly, it is clear that Kenya is behind basic global practice for providing safe urban environments. This practice is not necessarily costly and can save lives and money. For example, all over the world speed limits are being reduced in dense urban areas for pedestrian safety. This is based on the simple fact that lower speeds generate more reaction time to avoid crashes and that if someone is hit at lower speeds the chances of survival increase significantly.



According to the latest [World Health Organisation Pedestrian Safety Manual](#): *The speed at which a car is traveling influences both crash risk and crash consequences. The effect on crash risk comes mainly via the relationship between speed and stopping distance. The higher the speed of a vehicle, the shorter the time a driver has to stop and avoid a crash, including hitting a pedestrian (see figure above). Taking into account the time needed for the driver to react to an emergency and apply the*

From the latest WHO Pedestrian Safety Manual

*km/h will stop in 27 metres.*

Thirdly, some of you may not be aware that while we debate how much regulation we need on matatus, school buses and other vehicles used to take kids to school are hardly regulated at all! Poor kids are often crammed onto bodabodas nearly ready to tumble off and without helmets. Some walk on very dangerous streets without footpaths and proper crossings. Others take schools buses driven by people who do not have correct training and are not properly vetted. Unlike matatus that are required to have a yellow stripe, school vehicles are also not required to be one standard color or have a feature that makes them visible to all.



School vehicles need better regulation.

*above). Taking into account the time needed for the driver to react to an emergency and apply the brakes, a car travelling at 50 km/h will typically require 36 metres to stop, while a car travelling at 40*



Children going to school in Kisumu.

Finally, basic design features for safety make a difference in reducing pedestrian harm including segregated footpaths that are easy to use and intelligently designed crosswalks and lights. Yet engineers in Kenya do not even have a basic road design manual for urban areas. This may change for Nairobi once the new [Non-Motorized Transport Policy is put into place and implemented](#). All these measures along with strong adult supervision of children on the streets ([The Lollipop Project](#) is doing this by placing crossing guards at the busiest intersections of Nairobi) can make a strong impact. The Bill by promoting many of these sensible measures would protect Kenya's children, save lives and introduce a

stronger culture of respect for pedestrians including the littlest, most vulnerable ones.