

Testimony to Pennsylvania State Senate – Transportation Committee

By Jason Duckworth, Board Member, PenTrans

PenTrans is a not-for-profit organization that is a leading voice in Pennsylvania for efficient, affordable, accessible and safe transportation alternatives. Our diverse membership includes representatives from private and public sector groups involved with improving our transportation infrastructure and policies. Our ranks include experts in transportation, engineers, economists, elected leaders, and business owners like me. I am a resident of the City of Philadelphia and a residential real estate developer.

When we at **PenTrans** advocate for increased spending on transportation infrastructure or call for investments in public transit, we face daunting odds. The projects are complex, the policy issues are thorny, the timeframes are measured in decades and the dollars are simply staggering. So we are delighted with the passage of the transportation funding bill this past fall and thank this committee for its leadership in the bill's passage.

While we remain committed to these larger transportation efforts, the issues of speed cameras is a simple, straight-forward issue that can immediately save lives without burdening tax dollars.

In January, **PenTrans** held a panel in Philadelphia with Senator Stack, Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey and leading experts on speed camera technology from around the country. We learned that of the experience of other municipalities and the evidence is compelling: speed cameras lower speeds and save lives.

Multiple studies show that fatalities and serious injuries have dropped by 10-50% on roads with speed camera enforcement.¹ In Washington DC, for example, the police department credits speed cameras and red-light cameras with reducing crash fatalities from 48 in 2000 to 27 in 2011. Why? With speed cameras, motorists change their behavior and obey the law since it is enforced consistently, 24 hours per day, unlike periodic police patrols. And remarkably, we learned that this improved safer driving behavior isn't confined to the monitored roads; studies indicate that driving behavior improves generally throughout the area with speed cameras.

Philadelphia has had success with similar technology. Since 2005, Philadelphia has deployed red light cameras that automatically ticket motorists who run red lights. Since the program

¹ Professor Richard Allsop, "The Effectiveness of Speed Cameras: A review of evidence," RAC Foundation, 2010.

http://www.racfoundation.org/assets/rac_foundation/content/downloadables/speed%20camera%20effectiveness%20-%20allsop%20-%20report.pdf

Evaluation of Montgomery County (Maryland) Safe Speed Program.

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/olo/resources/files/2010-3_speed.pdf

started in 2005, one intersection, Grant Avenue and Roosevelt Boulevard, has seen violations drop from 25,673 in 2005 to 4,224 in 2011. It's no wonder that law enforcement, the insurance industry, and the National Safety Council are all strong advocates of speed cameras.

PenTrans has discussed this topic and we have had internal debates. We have reviewed the arguments for and against speed cameras. Ultimately, our Board, a group that includes some of the leading transportation engineers in the region, has ultimately decided to back speed cameras and Senator Stack's SB1211.

Fiscally, speed cameras pay for themselves. In many other jurisdictions, the fines cover the costs of the equipment and program administration and generate a considerable surplus. These surplus revenues could be legislated for a range of transportation purposes. In Senator Stack's proposed legislation SB1211, the funds would be allocated like the Automated Red Light Enforcement (ARLE) fund, which according to press reports has awarded \$33.3 million towards 234 safety projects statewide since 2010.²

I believe that the surplus should be reinvested in safety projects related to the roads from which the surplus is earned. Why? Because while speed camera technologies have been proven to be effective, they are only a partial solution. The design of the Roosevelt Boulevard is a deadly combination of Interstate-style geometries with frequent local access for motorists and pedestrians. Potentially more fundamental changes could be made to the Boulevard to make it safer, but only with funding.

When you consider the fact that since 2001, 144 people have been killed in traffic accidents on Roosevelt Boulevard alone, there is real urgency to act on Senator Stack's legislation.

PenTrans urges passage of SB1211.

² <http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/the-latest/64830-philly-to-get-nearly-5-million-in-red-light-camera-funds->