



Written Testimony provided by Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Families for Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia
Thursday, September 14, 2023
Public Hearing, Monday September 18, 2023
Pennsylvania State Senate Transportation Committee

Dear Chair Wayne Langerholc,

The Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and Families for Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia offer this testimony on automated speed enforcement.

We want to express our support for the General Assembly to pass legislation on automated speed enforcement that must do two important things. First, make permanent the program that PennDOT, the Philadelphia Parking Authority and the City of Philadelphia have been operating for the past 5 years on Roosevelt Boulevard, and which is due to expire in December 2023. Second, expand the program to other dangerous roads in Philadelphia, subject to PennDOT and City Council approval.

In 2018, the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and Families for Safe Streets Greater Philadelphia, and other organizations strongly supported the state legislation that authorized automated speed enforcement on Roosevelt Boulevard to stem the swelling tide of deaths, especially borne by pedestrians.

The Roosevelt Boulevard automated enforcement has been very successful, as documented by the recent Transportation Advisory Commission's (TAC) 2022 review of the program, which found a 11% decrease in fatal crashes on the Boulevard compared to a 16% increase in other parts of Philadelphia during the same time period. The TAC recommended expansion of automated enforcement across the Commonwealth.

Based on crash data provided by PennDOT and the Philadelphia Parking Authority, we highlight these following results.

- Speeding tickets dropped by **92% in the first year of the program**
- Fatal and serious injury crashes dropped by **21%** from two years prior to 2020 and two years after on Roosevelt Boulevard, while across Philadelphia, fatalities and serious injuries rose.
- Since 2020, pedestrian fatalities dropped **64%** on the Boulevard, while they increased elsewhere in Philadelphia
- Since the automated speed enforcement program began, on average, 5-6 persons a year are being killed, as compared to 13, which was the average number of people killed before the program began. On average, **5 less people are being killed on the Boulevard thanks to automated speed enforcement.**
- Without automated speed enforcement, the number of people killed and injured on the Boulevard would have been much worse given the elevated number of crashes, fatalities and serious injuries that Philadelphia has been and still experiences across the City due to the 2020 pandemic.

We are on the record in support of HB1284, authored by House Transportation Committee Chair Representative Ed Neilson, which eliminates the 2023 sunset provision, plus allows the expansion of automated speed enforcement to other dangerous roads in Philadelphia, subject to PennDOT and City Council approval.

We also support Senators Argall and Schwank's bill, SB748, which makes the program permanent, but feel strongly that SB748 is not enough for what Philadelphia badly needs. Philadelphia needs the ability to apply automated enforcement to other dangerous roads in Philadelphia where speeding related fatal crashes is prevalent and common.

Fatal crashes are an epidemic across Philadelphia. In 2022, Philadelphia lost over 120 persons (motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists) who were killed in motor vehicle crashes. Three years after the pandemic, the number of people dying needlessly is still significantly higher than before the pandemic. And a selection of dangerous roads have been found to be where most of the fatal crashes happen. They need automated speed enforcement too.

Aggressive Driving (speeding, running red light and stop signs) accounts for 43% of crashes in Philadelphia. While dangerous roads and intersections are slowly being redesigned to be made safer; Philadelphia needs to use automated speed enforcement because it is the most cost effective option available to slow motorists down in the near term.

Hit and Run fatal crashes in Philadelphia are at an all time high. Over the three year period of 2020-2022, hit and run crashes killed on average 31 persons, compared to 16 persons in 2019. Philadelphia needs automated enforcement to slow people down throughout the City and to hold such motorists accountable to discourage the practice of leaving the scene of a crash.

80% of the fatal crashes happen on 12% of the roads in Philadelphia. Automated enforcement on a relatively small subset of Philadelphia's most dangerous streets should make a huge difference in the number of people killed because of speeding or reckless driving.

It's not just about numbers. The people who lost their lives because of drivers who drive aggressively and recklessly are precious human beings whose loss forever impacts their families and their communities.

Philadelphia's automated speed enforcement program was a strong response to a horrific crash in 2013 that took the lives of 4 individuals; Samara Banks and three of her four sons. In the words of Samara's aunt Latanya Byrd, who founded the Greater Philadelphia chapter of Families for Safe Streets:

"On July 16, 2013, Samara Banks and three of her four sons lost their lives when hit by two people drag racing on Philadelphia streets. Saamir was in her arms that night, Saasean in his stroller, and Saadeem holding on to the stroller. Samara was a young mother who cherished her kids and loved working with children. She was full of life! Samara's spirit will live on through her one son who survived the crash."

While Roosevelt Boulevard is the poster child of where speeding used to occur without repercussions in Philadelphia, speeding is a problem on other roads too. Several recent examples from 2023:

On Lancaster Avenue, a driver struck and killed Darlene Gaston, 58, who was crossing the intersection at 49th Street and Lancaster Avenue. She was thrown into oncoming traffic and killed by another motorist. The first motorist fled the scene and was never caught. She was a mother and social worker.

On Cobbs Creek Parkway, a speeding teenager slammed into another vehicle killing another driver in March, while in April, a pedestrian was killed on the same roadway by a speeding hit and run driver.

On North Broad Street, pedestrians and motorists have been killed by drivers in **nearly every month of this calendar year.**

In each of these cases, automated speed enforcement would have helped by incentivizing better driver behavior and in some cases, may have provided imaging to help identify drivers who flee scenes.

For this reason, we support legislation that will both *eliminate the sunset date* for the current automated speed enforcement program and expand the program to other dangerous roads in Philadelphia. HB1284 accomplishes this goal and SB748 would as well if amended with new language that allows for expansion to other dangerous roads. We urge the Senate to pass

HB1284 or an amended SB748 as soon as possible to prevent a shutdown of the current automated speed enforcement program. Lives depend on your actions.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah Clark Stuart
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