

**Testimony from James Sikorski Jr., a Luzerne County, PA resident, for the Automated Traffic Enforcement Hearing, in PA Senate Transportation, on 9-18-23.**

I want to thank the committee for allowing me to speak on this topic.

Pennsylvania does not seem to be complying with various state and federal policies. These may be laws, regulations, rules, etc. Why are we not posting speed limits at the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile free-flowing traffic speed, making yellow traffic lights longer, making the flashing yellow lights on school buses longer, and using fewer stop signs? We are going the opposite way with failed policies like Vision Zero. PA has not gotten the message that poor engineering and predatory ticketing of safe drivers does not work. Despite our best efforts to fail, PennDOT keeps saying year after year that state roads are the safest in history. That is odd, since I keep hearing the opposite.

Worldwide, nationwide, and in Pennsylvania, automated enforcement has failed. I have seen various media accounts over the years about problems in Philadelphia with red-light cameras. Crashes went up, some cameras were THREE percent accurate, FBI probe, whistleblowers, etc. In Bensalem, erroneous speed camera tickets went out for a long time. We were told these things could not happen. There was supposedly massive oversight, accuracy checks, reviews, etc. How can the above things occur then? The major difference now is that the Philly media was more fair in the past, so you saw more balanced coverage.

It does not matter if we are talking about red-light cameras, speed cameras, or stop-arm cameras. It is always possible to maximize the number of tickets issued, by implementing slight changes. If too few tickets are issued the cameras will come down. Many cameras are installed for free, so tickets must be issued to keep them up. Then we have the various state programs that are funded by camera ticket revenue. So if cameras need revenue to stay up, and the state programs are funded by ticket revenue, what is the incentive to lower ticket volume? Many people need a large ticket volume to keep everything running.

What further causes problems is that the actual driver is not cited, and there are no meaningful ways to appeal these "tickets", which are really not standard tickets. So if I drive a rental car, is my credit card just automatically billed? Do you see a problem with that? What about limiting the defenses people can use? How about limiting discovery and other standard court procedures?

So the problem gets even worse. The engineering makes everyone into an offender. Ticket aggressively. You cannot appeal properly. Does that sound fair in the state that started America?

Many areas are removing automated enforcement, but we are foolishly doubling down on the cameras. Then we have proposals to expand the use of existing technologies, as well as allow new technologies. Some areas are either implementing or talking about implementing cameras to do things that the assembly has not authorized, nor have local ordinances been enacted. Are these devices even legal? If you question this, you get no responses.

If this were meant to be fair, then best-practice engineering would be followed, only egregious violators would be cited, only the driver would be cited, there would be full rights in court, etc. Then to be even more fair, how about removing all fine revenue? Make tickets community service or a charitable contribution. None of this will happen, so how about a compromise? Make all government entities

PAY for cameras to be used. No more contracts that share revenue with camera operators. No slices of every ticket going to who knows where either. With stop-arm cameras, many entities get a slice of the pie. You see, there is an incentive to ticket.

As stated above, it is very easy to set things up to ticket the safest drivers who have every intention of obeying the law. Speed limits too low, yellow lights too short, school bus yellows too short, school buses you never see, etc.

PA law also conflicts with other states for various things, which makes this even worse. I saw a school bus once that had a flashing yellow that was under a second. Are you serious? Who could stop for that? I have seen work zone speed limit signs that were different. Stop lines on roads that were worn off. In other cases, people may be cited for committing minor technical fouls that harm nobody.

In order to be fair, the only people who should be permitted to testify or submit testimony today should be those who can certify they have no conflicts of interest. Anyone who makes money either directly or indirectly from automated enforcement should not get a voice in this matter. That includes government officials as well.

All automated enforcement in Pennsylvania should be immediately repealed. For the pilots, allow them to sunset. No new automated enforcement should be approved either.

Contrary to what people claim, almost all drivers want to get places safely. I have seen events distorted to promote automated enforcement too. If foolish people are drag racing on a street, it is not normal behavior. Where are the police? These events do not magically pop up out of nowhere. People rushing to a hospital, another thing. It is shameful to exploit oddball events like these.

Besides the people who make money from cameras, then we have the people who simply hate cars. We have bicycle groups who get involved in driving topics, then I see news stories about bicyclists disobeying traffic laws. OOPS!

We are at a crossroads right now. We can tell the world that if you come to PA, you will face indirect taxation in the form of traffic tickets, or we can hang out the welcome sign and try to get more residents, businesses, tourists, and others here. What will we do? Average people will always vote against automated enforcement. This is why the bills get little fanfare, quick votes, votes late at night on holiday weekends, etc. Rules may even be temporarily suspended for voting. We have seen many things over the years. But I ask you, are you truly serving the needs of your constituents?

Please vote NO on automated enforcement in Pennsylvania. Do the right thing. Thank you.

Sincerely,

James Sikorski Jr.