

HB 410 – TRAFFIC CAMERAS INTERESTED PARTY TESTIMONY 1-23-18

Sharon Montgomery, traffic safety activist

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, I have been following traffic safety efforts for fifteen years, after being a victim of a serious three-car crash in 2000, caused by a driver using his phone and resulting in a death and serious injuries. While hearing sponsor and proponent testimony, and reading news articles about this issue over the years, a number of questions and thoughts came to my mind. I'm sharing them with you as food for thought.

This bill addresses four aspects of the traffic camera issue:

- 1) **Mistaking legal for illegal:** right turns on red for failing to stop for the red light, and driving at a reasonable speed based on existing conditions for driving at a speed higher than recommended on the signs.
- 2) **The procedures for dealing with the issued citations**
- 3) **The revenue received by the local government using the cameras.**
- 4) **Evidence of safety improvements.**

MISTAKES

Perhaps a simple solution to the problem of right turns on red is to eliminate that option at intersections with cameras. That option to turn instead of waiting for nobody is often abused anyway; maybe we need to rethink it. A common abuse is a situation I encounter regularly at a centrally-located major intersection in my town. I am behind the stop bar in the curb lane. Cars in the lanes to my left are forward of the stop bar., blocking my view. The driver behind me honks at me to jump into the first little break in traffic that occurs. Then we have two choices: I can move up into the crosswalk for a better look or I can not move. If I move, I can end up blocking the crosswalk because there is not a break in traffic. If I don't move, the driver behind me becomes impatient and angry and we know that impatient, angry drivers are not safe drivers.

PROCEDURES

I don't have the sponsors' legal expertise nor the cited drivers' first-hand experience, but it certainly appears there are procedural problems and it appears the provisions of this bill can solve those problems.

REVENUE

A few budgets ago, law enforcement agencies were allowed to charge \$4 for crash reports instead of the lower actual cost the public records law requires. Free online reports are preliminary and don't include some pages. Why is it okay to make money without increasing safety, but not okay to make money while increasing safety?

What evidence is there that municipalities have installed cameras for revenue only? How do we determine motive?

Why is it not okay to make money while also doing something good? Legislators make money when they come here to do good things.

Only Linndale and Brice have been cited as problem municipalities. Are they the exceptions or the rule? Is it possible that small villages have cited so many offenders because there **are** so many offenders? Isn't it possible drivers knowingly disregard safety laws more where they know police presence is very low?

SAFETY

There are fewer T-bone crashes with red-light cameras but more rear-end crashes. Roundabouts are justified in part by the reduction of T-bone crashes. Why does that reduction justify one situation but not another?

If rear-enders are up, why not have that recorded, too? When enough people are punished for ACDA, perhaps fewer people will do it.

Rep. Ginter asked about evidence that cameras are reducing speeds. The sponsors said they were “not aware of any.” In 2014, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety studied Montgomery Co., Maryland's seven-year-old Safe Speed program and found

- the program continued to be effective in changing driver behavior.
- in 2013 the county introduced speed-camera corridors, where cameras are moved from place to place along a road so drivers can't just brake before a single camera spot then resume speeding, and this has led to further safety gains.
- drivers have also slowed down on roads without cameras.

IIHS President Lund presented these findings to the Governor's Highway Safety Association in 2015.

OTHER

Law enforcement use of technology has a long history. In 1845, the telegraph was dubbed an “electronic constable” in England when it was used to quickly communicate the location of a murderer on the loose.

Law enforcement use of technology—including cameras—is considered good in many other ways; why not traffic cameras?

In general, use of technology to supplement personnel shortages is encouraged; why not traffic cameras?

Traffic control and safety via technology is the “big thing” now: smart highways, smart vehicles, autonomous vehicles. Why is this one use of technology getting so much opposition?

The East Liverpool photo of an ODOT construction sign blocking the camera sign from drivers' view was used to imply East Liverpool was being sneaky about the camera. Construction signs are usually temporary. Has anyone checked to see whether the construction sign was erected after the camera sign?

I have two suggestions regarding HB 410:

1) *Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater:*

- If cameras are catching legal actions, then that is a problem to be addressed.
- If the process for delivering citations is flawed, then that is a problem to be addressed.
- If the procedures for dealing with the citations aren't working, then that is a problem to be addressed.

2) *Don't penalize cities for enhancing safety.* Revenue challenges already exist for many, if not most, local governments. They have been asked to “do more with less” and not to make up already-existing reductions in state funding by increasing local taxes.

- Cameras instead of humans are a way of “doing more with less.”
- Receiving some additional revenue as a by-product of enhancing safety is one way to offset existing state funding reductions without raising taxes and/or fees.

Thank you for letting me share these thoughts. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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