

Rep. Tom Patton Sponsor Testimony- HBs 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, and 553

House Transportation and Public Safety Committee

11/29/22

Chairman Baldrige, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and the Members of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity and honor to provide sponsor testimony on House Bills 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, and 553. These seven bills aim to combat the growing issue with misuse of local authority. Please, allow me to start by briefly describing all seven pieces of legislation:

HB 547: Prohibits a municipal corporation or township that does not operate either a fire department or an emergency medical services organization from utilizing traffic law photo-monitoring devices.

HB 548: Prohibits a local authority with a population of 200 or fewer from utilizing traffic law photo-monitoring devices.

HB 549: Prohibits a local authority, in any year, from issuing a total number of traffic tickets based on the use of traffic law photo-monitoring devices that exceeds two times the population of the local authority.

HB 550: Prohibits a local authority from deriving more than 30% of the total annual revenue of the local authority from the issuance of tickets for traffic law violations based on evidence recorded by traffic law photo-monitoring devices.

HB 551: Requires 80% of all revenue from a traffic camera ticket be used for law enforcement expenses.

HB 552: Prohibits placement of a traffic camera within one-half mile of an interstate highway entrance.

HB 553: Prohibits a local authority, located in a county with a population of one million or more, from using traffic cameras to enforce traffic violations on interstate highways.

The abuse of these traffic camera issuances are highly evident in the village of Linndale. Linndale, which is located just outside the city of Cleveland, has a population of under 200 people and is no greater than 52 acres in area. Linndale is notorious for operating traffic cameras, and issuing a large amount of tickets. The misuse of these cameras was not clear to me until we took a closer look at the numbers.

Based on a regular audit produced by Auditor of State, Dave Yost's office, the village of Linndale's general total cash receipts tallied \$1.3 Million in 2019. Of that \$1.3 Million, nearly 93% of Linndale's total revenue in 2019 was generated via licenses, fines and permits, which include traffic camera tickets. This is clearly an unjust use and abuse in municipal local authority.

Aside from the numbers, this touches a much broader and more important public safety issue that can potentially save lives. When drivers see a police officer on the road they are reminded that they must maintain a safe speed at all times, and if someone is in fact driving recklessly or over the speed limit the police officer is there to witness, pull-over, and ticket that individual. In a village like Linndale, the offender would simply receive a ticket in the mail a month or two later, and the offender's illegal behavior would not be apprehended.

Traffic stops have the potential to result in a number of findings such as unregistered weapons, suspended licenses, possession of narcotics, or even stolen vehicles. With the over-employment of traffic cameras these traffic stops simply do not occur. With that said, it is more than reasonably apparent that traffic cameras do not increase public safety, they hinder public safety, and the State of Ohio is letting small local authorities, like Linndale, get away with it.

In closing, I would like to add that traffic cameras have proven to be a nuisance to the public providing zero increase to public safety, and while I understand their purpose in principal, I have yet to see it in practice. A local authority who receives nearly 93% of their annual cash receipts from the issuance of said tickets is simply gaming the system and this issue must be addressed. The aforementioned legislation would achieve exactly that.

Chairman Baldrige and the Members of this committee, thank you again for allowing me this testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you all have at this moment.