



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY

April 15, 2021

The Honorable Laura Friedman, Chair  
The Honorable Vince Fong, Vice Chair  
Assembly Transportation Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 112  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Chairperson Friedman and Vice Chairperson Fong:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, medical, public health and law enforcement groups and insurance companies working together to pass highway and auto safety laws that prevent traffic crashes and deaths, reduce injuries and curb costs, urges you to support Assembly Bill (AB) 550. This legislation would improve safety on California roads by permitting use of automated speed enforcement systems, otherwise known as speed cameras. These systems are proven lifesavers and a critical technology to promote equity in ensuring traffic safety.

In 2019, 3,606 people were killed on California roads according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Speed contributed to 30 percent (1,066 people killed) of all traffic fatalities in the state. Moreover, preliminary estimates from NHTSA indicate that the national fatality rate and total for the first nine months of 2020 increased over the same time period in 2019. This is in line with troubling trends reported across the country, and confirmed by NHTSA, of drivers engaged in riskier driving behaviors including speeding, impairment, and lack of seat belt use during the COVID-19 pandemic. Media and analytics reports note distraction increased as well. Traffic fatalities on California roads are a public health and safety epidemic in urgent need of effective remedies. Utilizing data driven solutions including speed cameras is a sensible and necessary next step to improve safety for all road users.

Studies and experience clearly show that speed kills. Excess speed can contribute to both the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes and the resulting injuries to humans. Speeding reduces a driver's ability to react to emergencies created by driver inattention, unsafe maneuvers of other vehicles, roadway hazards, vehicle issues (such as tire blowouts), or hazardous weather conditions. AAA, Humanetics and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) jointly released research which found that modest five to ten miles-per-hour (mph) increases in speed can have a severe impact on a driver's risk of injury or even death.<sup>i</sup> Excessive speeds are especially perilous for pedestrians and bicyclists who lack safety protections present in vehicles; seemingly small increases in speed result in large decreases in safety levels. Consequently, speed mitigation policies especially benefit the walking and biking populations.

Nearly 31 percent of those killed on California roads in 2019 (1,105 people) were bicyclists and pedestrians (NHTSA). Given the high percentage of traffic fatalities suffered by pedestrians and bicyclists in the state, use of automated speed enforcement systems is a commonsense countermeasure. Speed cameras have been proven effective in changing driver behavior, leading to significant reductions in speeding-related crashes and violation rates on roadways where cameras are installed, without adding traffic stops.

According to research performed by IIHS, speed cameras are effective at reducing speed on a variety of roads. IIHS research notes that "studies of cameras on residential roads in Maryland, on a high-speed roadway in Arizona and on city streets in the District of Columbia found that the proportion of drivers exceeding speed limits by more than 10 mph declined by 70, 88 and 82 percent, respectively, six to eight

months after cameras were introduced.”<sup>ii</sup> In another study on speed cameras in Montgomery County, Maryland, IIHS found that speed cameras alone resulted in a 19 percent reduction in the likelihood that a crash resulted in a fatal or incapacitating injury.<sup>iii</sup>

At the end of this month, Advocates, IIHS, AAA, the National Safety Council and the Governors Highway Safety Association are jointly releasing an automated enforcement checklist list to assist communities in implementing new programs or improving existing ones. The checklist is a resounding confirmation of support for speed cameras from leading national traffic safety organizations.

When appropriately administered and implemented, speed camera programs improve public safety, promote neutral enforcement of speed limits and garner public support. We urge you to advance AB 550 and authorize use of this successful safety technology which is already reducing violations and saving lives in other states.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase  
President

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<sup>i</sup> Impact of Speeds on Drivers and Vehicles – Results from Crash Tests, AAA Foundation for Safety, Humanetics, and IIHS, Jan. 2021, available at <https://www.iihs.org/api/datastore/document/bibliography/2218>

<sup>ii</sup> IIHS, Topics: *Speed*, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/speed#speed-enforcement-methods>.

<sup>iii</sup> Effects of Automated Speed Enforcement in Montgomery County Maryland on Vehicle Speeds, Public Opinion and Crashes, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, August; available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2097>.