



ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
& AUTO SAFETY

August 31, 2023

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino, Chair  
The Honorable Brian W. Jones, Vice-Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
California Legislature  
State Capitol, Room 412  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Portantino and Vice-Chair Jones:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates), an alliance of consumer, safety, law enforcement, medical and public health groups, and insurance companies and agents working to advance laws proven to prevent crashes, deaths and injuries on our roads and contain related costs, urges you to support AB 645. This vital bill would authorize six cities, including Glendale, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose, to establish a Speed Safety System Pilot Program for automated enforcement (AE) to deter speeding, a leading killer on California roads. We urge you to advance AB 645 to implement this proven, lifesaving technology.

In 2021, 4,285 people were killed in traffic crashes in California, a 27 percent increase since 2015.<sup>i</sup> The rate of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased 37 percent during the same period.<sup>ii</sup> Urban drivers face even greater risk as 70 percent of California's traffic fatalities occurred in urban areas compared to 60 percent nationally.<sup>iii</sup> From 2015-2021 the number of people seriously injured in the Golden State increased by 50 percent, while the rate of serious injury per VMT increased by 62 percent.<sup>iv</sup> Additionally, California incurred more than \$29 billion in economic harm due to motor vehicle crashes.<sup>v</sup> Traffic safety is a serious issue in urgent need of proven solutions.

Greater adherence to speed limits saves lives and prevents injuries. Speeding was a factor in 29 percent of U.S. motor vehicle fatalities in 2021.<sup>vi</sup> The impact of speeding is even higher in California where 35 percent of motor vehicle deaths in 2021 involved speeding.<sup>vii</sup> Crash tests show that speed upticks of even five to ten miles-per-hour (mph) greatly increases the driver's risk of injury or death.<sup>viii</sup> Speed immensely impacts pedestrians and other vulnerable road users (VRU). The average risk of death for a pedestrian is 10 percent at an impact speed of 23 mph, 25 percent at 32 mph and 50 percent at 42 mph.<sup>ix</sup> Further, drivers who speed have been shown to exhibit additional deadly driving behaviors; more than half (51 percent) of speeding passenger vehicle drivers in fatal crashes were unbuckled, compared to 23 percent of non-speeding drivers.<sup>x</sup>

AE works to curb speeding and its impact. Research finds speed cameras resulted in a 19 percent reduction in the likelihood of crashes leading to serious injury or death.<sup>xi</sup> The California Zero Fatalities Task Force (created by the Legislature in 2018) affirmed the efficacy of AE and identified the technology as a key recommendation.<sup>xii</sup> Similarly, the U.S. Department of Transportation found that AE reduces fatalities and injuries by 20-37 percent and is particularly effective in school and construction zones.<sup>xiii</sup> Furthermore, changes resulting from the enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58) now permit use of certain federal funds for AE programs in school and work zones.

Law enforcement risk their lives saving our lives on the roadways every day and are very effective in deterring speeding. However, it is implausible for a law enforcement officer to be everywhere and catch every violation. Properly executed AE augments traditional enforcement without requiring an additional traffic stop.

We recognize the concerns raised about the impact of AE and note that AB 645 addresses many of them. Moreover, the bill is narrowly tailored. It creates a pilot program with a sunset date of January 1, 2032, limits participation, and is subject to stipulations and approval by the local governing body. In short, this bill is targeted in its applicability but will generate valuable data on the effectiveness of AE on state roads.

Five national safety organizations including Advocates, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, AAA, National Safety Council and the Governors Highway Safety Association jointly released the Automated Enforcement Program Checklist to convey our support for the technology and assist states and localities in launching or updating AE programs to improve safety, ensure transparency and public support, include equity considerations, and generate successful AE programs. We urge you to support AB 645 to employ this proven technology to curb speeding and save lives.

Sincerely,



Catherine Chase  
President

Encl.: Automated Enforcement Program Checklist

- 
- <sup>i</sup> State Highway Safety Report (2021) – California, available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tpm/reporting/state/safety.cfm?state=California>
  - <sup>ii</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>iii</sup> Fatality Facts 2021 State by state, available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatality-statistics/detail/state-by-state>
  - <sup>iv</sup> State Highway Safety Report (2021) – California, available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tpm/reporting/state/safety.cfm?state=California>
  - <sup>v</sup> NHTSA. 2023. The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019 (Revised), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>
  - <sup>vi</sup> NHTSA. (2023). Overview of Motor Vehicle Crashes in 2021. U.S. Department of Transportation, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813435>
  - <sup>vii</sup> NHSTA State Traffic Safety Information for California, accessible at <https://cdan.dot.gov/stsi.htm>
  - <sup>viii</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/datastoredocument/bibliography/2218>
  - <sup>ix</sup> Impact Speed and a Pedestrian’s Risk of Severe Injury or Death, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Sep. 2011., available at <https://aaafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2011PedestrianRiskVsSpeedReport.pdf>
  - <sup>x</sup> Traffic Safety Facts 2021 Data: Speeding, NHTSA, Jul. 2023, DOT HS 813 473, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813473>
  - <sup>xi</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>
  - <sup>xii</sup> Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force and Speed Limit Setting Report, available at [Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force and Speed Limit Setting Report \(CA\)](#)
  - <sup>xiii</sup> Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide, available at [Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide](#)