ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY & AUTO SAFETY

July 29, 2025

The Honorable Anna Caballero, Chair
The Honorable Kelly Seyarto, Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 412
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Chair Caballero and Vice Chair Seyarto:

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 crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs, supports Assembly Bill (AB) 289. This bill would authorize a pilot program allowing the California Department of Transportation to utilize up to 75 speed safety cameras in active roadway work zones. This safety upgrade is critical and timely.

In 2023, 4,061 people were killed on California's roads, which is a 31 percent increase since 2014.[1] Speeding is a major contributor to traffic fatalities as 32 percent (1,303 lives lost) of traffic fatalities in 2023 involved speeding, and speeding related fatalities increased 31 percent from 2014-2023.[2] People in work zones are especially vulnerable. From 2014 to 2023, a total of 852 fatalities and 779 fatal crashes occurred in California work zones.[3] Overall, the Golden State incurred $29.1 billion in economic damage from all traffic crashes, the most of any state, which is equivalent to a "crash tax" of $736 per resident each year according to a 2019 analysis.[4] When updated for inflation alone, in 2025, costs would equate to $36.7 billion and $929 respectively.[5] Traffic safety is a serious and costly issue in urgent need of proven solutions.

Small increases in speed cause serious declines in safety. Crash tests show that speed upticks of even five to ten miles-per-hour (mph) greatly escalate a driver's risk of injury or death.[6] Speed increases also immensely impact pedestrians and other vulnerable road users (VRUs). 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.[7] 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.[8]

Speed safety cameras deter speeding and its impact and are recommended for adoption by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), among others.[9] A study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that speed safety cameras alone resulted in a 19 percent reduction in the likelihood that a crash caused a fatal or incapacitating injury.[10] Similarly, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) found that automated speed enforcement reduces fatalities and injuries by 20 to 37 percent and is particularly effective in school and construction zones.[11] Furthermore, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58) permits use of certain federal funds for automated enforcement programs in school and work zones.

Roadway workers and law enforcement risk their lives when performing their duties every day. Yet, it is implausible for law enforcement officers to be everywhere and catch every speeding violation. Speed safety cameras augment traditional enforcement without requiring a traffic stop and will improve safety for roadway work zones.

Advocates urges you to advance AB 289 to save lives. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President

cc: Senate Appropriations Committee members

[1] State Traffic Safety Information for California, NHTSA, available at https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm.

[2] State Traffic Safety Information for California, NHTSA, available at https://cdan.dot.gov/STSI/stsi.htm.

[3] Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS): 2014-2022 Final File and 2023 Annual Report File (ARF), NHTSA, available at https://cdan.dot.gov/query.

[4] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Feb. 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403.

[5] CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2019 to Jan. 2025, available at https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl.

[6] 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.

[7] 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.

[8] Traffic Safety Facts 2021 Data: Speeding, NHTSA, Jul. 2023, DOT HS 813 473, available at https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813473.

[9] Reducing Speeding-Related Crashes Involving Passenger Vehicles, NTSB, July 2017, SS-17-01, available at https://www.ntsb.gov/safety/safety-studies/Documents/SS1701.pdf.

[10] Effects of Automated Speed Enforcement in Montgomery County Maryland on Vehicle Speeds, Public Opinion and Crashes, IIHS; available at https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2097.

[11] Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide, Federal Highway Administration, January 2023, available at Speed Safety Camera Program Planning and Operations Guide.