

Testimony to be given before the House Transportation Committee, at the hearing on HB 562.

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak before this Committee concerning the annual inspection legislation, HB 562. As I read the analysis of the bill, it was apparent that a great deal of thought has gone into the proposed legislation.

We would like to offer several suggestions concerning the bill, reflecting some concerns of over 19,000 service stations and repair shops, and over 1,650 jobbing stores in the commonwealth. Although we are concerned as small businessmen in the commonwealth, our remarks will be primarily oriented toward the individual vehicle owner/driver, and the effects of this legislation on him.

We consider it a positive move to provide for the inspection of vehicles to be spread out over the available time span, rather than continue the costly and inconvenient deadlines now mandated. There is a great deal of strain on the state inspection/repair system when half of the vehicles to be inspected have the same inspection deadline. By spreading the deadline over the available time period, and still allowing up to 90 days for the inspection itself, you will save much wear and tear on the system, and on the owners of vehicles.

As we focus on the concerns we all have for safety of people and property, several items come to mind:

1. It seems critically apparent that if a vehicle is in need of a repair (as a result of normal wear and tear, or else as a result of an accident), in month number 4 or 5 of an inspection period, that the vehicle will be driven only one or two months with semi-annual inspections. But, with annual inspections, that same vehicle will be driven 7 or 8 months, if there is no other influencing factor. Whether we are referring to a missing headlight, or worn brakes, I would have a deep concern both for the driver of the unsafe vehicle, and for the people and property near the unsafe vehicle.

2. In the 2/24/81 Bill Analysis by Paul J. Landis, there is a reference to a report issued by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, in 1980, which stated: "...there was no correlation between safety and those states that have no inspection, once a year inspection and the several states that have semi-annual inspection." If this report is accepted,

then we should all be quite willing to eliminate safety inspections entirely. With my limited education, I understand that the word 'correlation' is a precise technical, statistical term. Normally the use of statistical terms and studies is accompanied by the study reference, to allow the verification of its validity. It is tempting to conclude that the present use of the word correlation is a layman's attempt to give credibility to some wishful thinking.

Attached to the back of this record is a simple graph of highway fatality rates, for three categories of states: those with no safety inspections, those with annual inspections, and those with semi-annual inspection. Not surprisingly, the states with no inspections show a higher fatality rate per hundred million miles traveled, compared with states having a safety inspection program. In this study, for 1980, the states with no inspection show a 23% higher death rate than states with semi-annual safety inspections. In looking further down the chart, we note that the states with annual inspections have a 6% higher death rate than the states with semi-annual inspections.

Please note that there is no claim to statistically valid correlation ... just a confirmation of what seems to be common sense. It is easy for me to understand that there would be occasions when a vehicle with a safety defect would go undetected longer, in a state with annual safety inspections, compared with the same vehicle in a state with semi-annual inspections. But I am at a complete loss to imagine any situation in which a vehicle with a safety defect will be corrected earlier in a state with fewer safety inspections.

3. It is significant to me that school buses are to be required to have safety inspections twice each year, and I quote the analysis dated February 9, 1981, by Thomas J. Usiadek: ... "because of the large number of people that mass transit vehicles and school buses carry, these vehicles will still be inspected twice a year."

If we are to believe that we are just as safe with annual inspection, why are the school buses to have semi-annual inspection? On the other hand, if we recognize the greater safety of semi-annual inspections, are we to believe that there are more passengers riding school buses than there are riding in the passenger cars we see on the road daily?

It is very tempting to view the great interest in annual inspection as an expedient reaction to the lobbying efforts of the groups who are pressing for less hassle in their driving. What price should we be willing to pay for the 6% more deaths that would apparently be expected with a reduction of safety inspections to once per year?

4. The bill analysis prepared by Paul J. Landis, 2/24/81, raises the rhetorical question: "Is it the Commonwealth's responsibility to protect the motorist from himself." (sic)

That statement seems to apply more appropriately to the question of mandating seat belts than safety inspections. With seat belts, the motorist is endangering only himself. Please join with me, though, and recognize that the safety of the vehicles on the road is very much a concern of the innocent passer-by, who is subject to being hit head-on by the unsafe vehicle.

5. The Landis Analysis states that the Department and Governor indicate that the bill will save the motorists of the Commonwealth approximately 63 million dollars annually in out of pocket expense.

Since the state fee will be increased from \$1.00 to \$2.00, we note that the Governor cannot be referring to the revenue change at the state level. Would that 63 million dollars be savings resulting from safety defects that will not be corrected? Which car heading toward you on the road will be the one with the problem?

It seems unlikely that the savings will be realized from lower charges from garages and service stations, since they must have a proper return for their time and investment in their facility. This seems similar to the electric utility, which raises its rates when usage is reduced: the costs must be recovered.

6. A minor point, related to re-inspections: the wording of the Analysis of Section 4703 seems to indicate that a vehicle that has been out of the Commonwealth for thirty days has ten days within which to get inspected. It seems that this Section must surely refer to a vehicle that has no current inspection (and registration), rather than applying to all vehicles that have been out of the Commonwealth for thirty days.

7. A final point: the Landis Analysis indicates that with the advent of new materials and automobiles, the need for semi-annual inspection has been questioned. I sincerely hope that we are building them better, for many reasons. However, we note that we have had 'new materials and automobiles' each year for the full time that automobiles have been made, and there are still many repairs required on the vehicles, year after year. To reinforce this point, even if our automobiles were to be built perfectly this year, we still have quite a few older, less perfect automobiles running about, waiting to unleash their defective fury on some unsuspecting soul.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these thoughts today. This is very serious business that you are considering; we respect and appreciate the time that is being devoted by you all.

Vehicle Safety Inspection Frequency vs Highway Fatality Rate

