

*Written Testimony
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Red Light Running Camera Hearing

Testimony of Rina Cutler, Deputy Secretary for Administration, PennDOT

PennDOT supports the extension of the Red Light Enforcement Pilot Program in Philadelphia, as well as adding automated speed timing systems, for a continuing effort to enhance public safety, especially on highways such as Roosevelt Boulevard.

Background on Roosevelt Boulevard

Eight of the 10 red light cameras that have already been approved in Philadelphia are located on Roosevelt Boulevard, and we believe these cameras have and will continue to make this highway safer for all its users.

PennDOT is extremely concerned about safety on this unique highway that is 12 miles long, 12 lanes wide, has 48 signalized intersections and moves over 70,000 to 100,000 vehicles a day.

Roosevelt Boulevard is one of very few highways of its kind in the United States -- essentially a limited access highway functioning as an urban street in a densely populated area. While the Boulevard may carry interstate-like traffic volumes, motorists and pedestrians use it each day to reach adjacent neighborhoods, churches, schools, shopping centers and businesses.

Sadly many of us have seen the tragic stories in the news, particularly last fall, regarding fatal vehicular and pedestrian crashes on the boulevard. What you don't always hear about are the hundreds of other aggressive driving crashes that occur each year on the Boulevard.

PennDOT is part of a multi-jurisdictional task force that is focused on enhancing safety on the Boulevard. We have taken steps to combat aggressive driving by increasing police enforcement, improving highway signing, and naming the Boulevard a "Highway Safety Corridor", which doubles the fines for most moving violations. The goal of the task force is to have no fatalities in this corridor. We believe the use of modern camera technology is a critical component that is needed to offset aggressive driving.

Aggressive Driving Definition and Prominence on Blvd.

Numerous crashes on the Boulevard are attributed to what is now termed aggressive driving. In fact, just last year there were 256 aggressive driving crashes on the boulevard. These crashes accounted for nearly 50 percent of the total reportable crashes on the Boulevard.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines aggressive driving as when an individual commits a combination of moving traffic offenses that endangers other

persons or property. Aggressive Driving offenses include red-light running, for which we now have eight intersections on the Boulevard with red-light running cameras, and speeding, which would be targeted for additional enforcement on the Boulevard through the use of the automated cameras.

Each of these offenses occurs daily on Roosevelt Boulevard. That's why PennDOT provides a safety grant to the Philadelphia Police Department, so its enforcement team can make a difference and have a positive impact on driver behavior. This grant is specific to Roosevelt Boulevard enforcement.

The reality of the situation is that police officers cannot be stationed at every intersection around the clock, and that is a principal reason why we support the Philadelphia Parking Authority's automated enforcement program. It provides the additional level of coverage that not only enforces the state Motor Vehicle Code but works to alter driver behavior. For every driver that today refrains from speeding through an intersection as the light turns red due to the presence of these cameras, we have avoided a potential crash and possible death.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, red light running causes about 800 crash deaths per year and about half of the people who are killed are not the signal violators. They're pedestrians and people in vehicles that are struck by motorists committing these violations. The Institute further states that another 165,000 people are estimated to be injured in red light running crashes each year.

Excessive speed is the single most contributory factor for casualties on our roads. The advent of speed cameras on the Boulevard would serve to further enhance public safety. National and international crash and speed data point to the effectiveness of speed cameras, and speed cameras put the cost of the program on violators rather than taxpayers.

Results/Insurance Institute for Highway Safety Study

Before red light cameras were installed in Philadelphia, they were shown to be highly effective in other cities, according to data provided by the Federal Highway Administration. For example:

- In New York City, there has been a 34 percent reduction in red light running violations, at 18 locations that use the red light cameras.
- In San Francisco, red light running violations dropped more than 42 percent at photo enforced intersections.
- And in Fairfax, Virginia (just outside Washington, DC), there was a 44 percent reduction in red light violations, just one year after cameras were installed at nine intersections.

Cameras are already being used in more than 200 cities across the country. A study done by the Federal Highway Administration of red light cameras in several cities across the country -- showed an average drop of about 25 percent in angle, or T-bone crashes, where the chance of injury is extremely high compared to other types of crashes.

In Philadelphia, the results have been even more dramatic, according to an independent study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. During the past two years, they studied red light violations at two intersections: Roosevelt Boulevard and Grant Avenue, and the Boulevard and Red Lion Road. For comparison, they also studied red light violations at three intersections in Atlantic County, New Jersey, where there were no cameras. At those Jersey intersections, there wasn't much of a change. But in Philadelphia, the cameras made an enormous difference in the violations, assisted by signal timing changes that lengthened the yellow phase. Here's what the study found:

- In November 2004, prior to the red light cameras, there were **1,364** red light running violations at those two intersections in an approximately 48-hour study period. In summer 2006, after the cameras had been installed, there were only **42** red light violations over the same period of time. This study showed the violation rate drop from over 10 per hour per intersection to less than 1 per hour per intersection.
- If you look at the number of violations *per ten thousand vehicles at the intersections*, there were **482** red light violations per ten thousand vehicles prior to the cameras, and less than **13** violations per ten thousand vehicles, after the cameras were there.
- Any way you look at it, red light violations are down at least **96 percent** at the two Boulevard intersections that were studied.

As you are aware, red light running enforcement cameras are still in their early phase on the Boulevard. Cameras were placed at the intersections with Grant Avenue, Cottman Avenue and Red Lion Road in 2005. Then just last month, cameras were installed at five additional locations.

While preliminary observations are promising, we really need to have three to five years of crash data both before and after the installation of the cameras to evaluate their effectiveness.

With only one full year of crash data available for the intersections where the cameras were installed in 2005, we witnessed an increase in overall reportable crashes at the intersections, but a decrease in red-light running crashes.

At the Boulevard's intersections with Grant Avenue, Cottman Avenue and Red Lion Avenue, there were three reportable crashes in 2006 due to red light running. In the three previous years, there were 8 in 2005; 6 in 2004; and 12 in 2003.

One intersection – Roosevelt Boulevard and Red Lion Road -- had 5 crashes in 2005, including one fatality, that were caused by red-light running. That same intersection had zero reportable crashes in 2006 due to red light running.

Additionally, total fatalities on the entire Boulevard dropped by one-third in 2006 from 15 in 2005 to 10 in 2006.

In short, the Red Light Running cameras have dramatically reduced the number of red-light running violations at these intersections and lives are being saved on the Boulevard.

We urge this committee to support both an extension of the program for the use of red light cameras in Philadelphia as well as the use of speed cameras as an enforcement tool. Thank you.

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