

Pennsylvania House of Representatives Transportation Committee

Testimony of Former State Representative Ron Reagan, Director of Outreach, National Coalition for Safer Roads ((NCSR)

November 14, 2011

Good Morning,

My name is Ron Reagan and I am the Director of Outreach for the National Coalition for Safer Roads (NCSR). NCSR is a trade based association representing a coalition of safety advocates, cities and police departments that use red-light and speed safety cameras. NCSR is funded by the nation's leading safety camera provider ATS. The goal of NCSR is to share the benefits of road safety camera programs.

As a staunch advocate for red-light safety cameras, I have a fundamental belief that every driver and passenger deserves every opportunity to get home safely from work, school or the day's errands. I also believe that red-light safety cameras help secure that opportunity for you, your family and your neighbors.

I served in the Florida legislature from 2004-2010. During that time I authored the legislation that later became the Mark Wandall Safety Act named after a constituent of mine that was killed in a preventable red-light running collision. I sat where you are today and heard many of the same arguments from many of the same people. In the end my colleagues disagreed with groups like the National Motorists Association and agreed with me that red-light cameras save lives.

The arguments you'll hear against cameras are the same ones we heard in Florida. I am here to tell you today that enabling others to run red-lights is just as dangerous as running red-lights. Sadly, two-thirds of those injured or killed in red-light running collisions are those other than the red-light runner. And contrary to the belief of groups like the NMA, there is no constitutional right to break the law, run red-lights and put other drivers, passengers, pedestrians and bicyclists in danger.

Just like in Pennsylvania, in Florida it took several years to pass enabling legislation for camera use. I applaud this body for the thoughtful and deliberate discussions on this issue. Ultimately, as it should be in Pennsylvania, safety should be the paramount reason for expanding camera use in the state.

The Federal Highway Administration tells us red-light running collisions killed an average of 885 people and injured 165,000 every year for the past decade. A 2010 poll by AAA found that one in three drivers had run a red light in the past 30 days, yet 93% of drivers say doing so is unacceptable. Clearly, much work remains to be done to change drivers' behavior.

Red-light safety cameras are an integral piece to making our roads safer. Transportation experts say the way to make roads safer is through engineering changes, educating drivers and enforcing the laws. Since their introduction in this country more than 20 years ago, red-light safety cameras have proven to be an effective influence on driver behavior by providing police with evidence to ticket red-light runners and to capture drivers' attention to change their dangerous behaviors.

New studies released this year speak to the effectiveness and popularity – yes the popular support --of red-light safety cameras. In one of the most extensive research projects thus far in the nation on this topic, Dr. Troy Walden of The Texas Transportation Institute and his team examined 11,122 crash records from the 275 intersections in Texas where red-light safety cameras are in use and found:

- Right-angle crashes – the most life-threatening type of red-light running collisions – decreased by 32 percent at intersections with red-light safety cameras.
- Red-light related crashes decreased by 25 percent at intersections in Texas with red-light safety cameras.
- Overall, the state recorded 633 fewer crashes at intersections in Texas with red-light safety cameras.

Earlier this year the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) released a study that found red-light safety cameras in 14 large U.S. cities saved 159 lives in a five-year period, and 815 more lives could have been saved if all 99 large cities had used these cameras

As for popularity, a September poll by Public Opinion Strategies found that nationally 67 percent of voters support using these cameras. This summer, a poll out of New Jersey, where 17 municipalities are using red-light safety cameras, found that 77 percent of voters surveyed support the use of red-light safety cameras. Also this year, IIHS announced its poll that found 66.3 percent of drivers in large U.S. cities favor the use of red-light safety cameras to enforce against red-light running, and of that amount 42.2 percent strongly favor the devices.

Red-light safety camera supporters are in the majority, and yet too often our voice goes unheard. In the end I am hopeful that Pennsylvania will approve the expanded use of cameras so that other cities in the state can share the benefits that the City of Philadelphia already enjoys.

While red-light cameras can't stop red-light running from happening altogether, they have proven to change driver behavior reducing the number of violations and the odds of a red-light running related collision occurring. I believe that if these cameras can save the life of just one individual, they are worth their weight in gold.

Ron Reagan is a former Florida speaker pro tem, who lives in Bradenton.