



**TESTIMONY BY
THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS**

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

ON

AUTOMATED RED LIGHT CAMERA ENFORCEMENT

PRESENTED BY

**ELAM M. HERR
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HARRISBURG, PA**

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Chairman Geist and members of the House Transportation Committee:

Good morning. My name is Elam M. Herr, and I am the assistant executive director for the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the 1,455 townships in Pennsylvania represented by the Association.

Townships comprise 95 percent of the commonwealth's land area and are home to more than 5.5 million Pennsylvanians — nearly 44 percent of the state's population. These townships are very diverse, ranging from rural communities with fewer than 200 residents to more populated communities with populations approaching 60,000 residents.

Today our society is moving at a faster pace and more people are in a hurry in an attempt to keep up with their busy lives. Township supervisors frequently hear complaints from their residents that cars are traveling at excessive speeds and causing dangerous conditions on township roads. In fact, speeding and traffic-related conditions are the most frequent complaints received by the board of supervisors in many townships.

When the General Assembly authorized Philadelphia to use automated red light camera enforcement the program was designed to enforce traffic signal safety and decrease accidents. Now that there is a possibility of expanding this law to encompass additional high-traffic intersections outside of Philadelphia, we should review the safeguards that were placed in the original law and determine if additional common-sense provisions are needed.

Nationally, the use of automated red light cameras has been prolific. Hundreds of municipalities and about half of the states have automated red light camera enforcement in place. Unfortunately it appears that in some cases outside of Pennsylvania, these devices have not always been installed strictly for safety purposes and some contracts tie the vendor's compensation to the number of tickets that are issued. As such, recent studies by public interest groups suggest caution in implementing additional devices and recommend that reasonable measures be put in place to separate safety from financial gain of both the vendor under contract and the municipality authorizing the cameras.

Pennsylvania's current law establishing automatic red light cameras has checks and balances in place to ensure that only those intersections meeting established criteria are targeted and with a revenue distribution formula designed to increase safety, not just increase revenues.

State oversight of automated red light camera enforcement programs is a recommended practice and one that is in place in Pennsylvania. PennDOT establishes the criteria for the intersections and evaluates and must approve all proposed intersections. We agree that this is a reasonable provision which should continue with any expansion of this program.

In addition, the Department oversees the Automatic Red Light Enhancement Grant program, which provides traffic safety enhancement grants to municipalities across the state. Half of the revenue from the currently authorized automatic red light camera program is deposited into this fund. Philadelphia receives the other half of the funding. If this program is expanded, this revenue split should be retained, with the municipality in which the cameras are located receiving half of the revenues and the successful ARLE program receiving the other half.

PSATS can support a limited expansion of this program to intersections that meet PennDOT criteria and that are approved by the Department. While some proposals would expand the program to third class cities only, we contend that this program should focus on the problem intersections that meet the Department's criteria and for which an alternative engineering solution is not available, regardless of where the intersection is located. Many heavily traveled intersections that present a safety problem are located in townships and other municipalities that could benefit from this enforcement mechanism. The purpose for expansion of this program is to improve public safety at problem intersections throughout Pennsylvania, not in a select few municipalities.

Absent extending the program to all municipalities, it give the appearance that the expansion is an attempt at revenue enhancement for third class cities, rather than the safety focus that it should be.

We believe that the ability to use automated red light cameras in a limited capacity would enhance municipalities' ability to enforce traffic signal compliance and therefore improve safety for our communities. These devices have been shown to decrease red-light running and side impact accidents, according to the Insurance Institute for Public Safety.

Legislation such as SB 595 (PN 1703) includes appropriate limitations on automated red light enforcement programs that are similar to recommendations from public interest groups. We believe that these protections are reasonable and include the following:

- Ensure that the payment to vendors is not tied to the number of tickets issued;
 - Restrict the use of driver data obtained by vendors for enforcement purposes; and
- Maintain a reasonable process for contesting tickets, including an accepted defense if the person named in the notice was not operating the vehicle, did not own it at the time, or the vehicle had been stolen at the time.

In addition, we recommend that SB 595 be extended to include all municipalities of all classifications since there are townships with very busy intersections that may meet PennDOT's criteria for these devices. Without this inclusion PSATS cannot support the expansion of this safety program.

We believe that authorizing the use of automated red light enforcement for a limited number of intersections outside of Philadelphia would enhance traffic safety in the commonwealth.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to comment on this issue. I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.