



The Pennsylvania Municipal League
President – Salvatore J. Panto, Jr., Mayor, City of Easton



The Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners
President – John Kuntzelman, Commissioner, East Pennsboro Township

PML and PSATC Testimony before the House Transportation Committee

Supporting Senate Bill 251 and the Local Use of Radar

April 4, 2018

Chairmen and members of the House Transportation Committee, I am Amy Sturges, Director of Governmental Affairs, for the PA Municipal League and the PA State Association of Township Commissioners. Together the two associations represent over 160 full-service municipalities that support the option to utilize radar as a public safety device to control speeding in their communities. Thank you for holding today's hearing.

Gaining the authorization for local police to use radar is a perennial advocacy item for local government. Much time and energy has been devoted to this effort over many decades. Our most recent efforts, as part of the broad-based Radar Coalition, have proved successful. November's Senate vote for final passage of SB 251 was overwhelmingly supportive. ***We now urge the Transportation Committee to allow the momentum to continue by moving SB 251 to the full House for a vote.***

Protecting the public's health, safety and welfare are the primary duties of local government; and the most effective tools should be at a municipality's disposal in meeting these duties. Speeding motorists on local roads are jeopardizing public safety and breaking the law. With Pennsylvania the lone holdout on the use of radar by local police, one has to ask, why at the state level are we willing to protect people who are breaking local laws and creating public safety hazards?

When discussing this issue with local elected officials they tell us time and time again that speeding on local roads is the number one complaint they receive from their constituents. Hand in hand with that statement, is the question I regularly receive from local officials -- what could possibly be the hold-up when there is broad support among local government, the FOP, police chiefs and the State Police?

Compared to the current methods of local speed enforcement, radar has been shown to be more accurate, effective and economical. It is not a cumbersome device, it can be used by one officer, and it is not limited to flat stretches of roadway – all drawbacks of the current set of local tools. Furthermore, radar has been used by the Pennsylvania State Police since the 1960s. In fact, when patrolling local roads, the State Police are using radar. With nearly half of municipalities patrolled by the State Police, radar is widely used now on local roads. This fact creates an inequity among

municipalities and denies paid departments the same level of public safety enforcement and deterrence.

No one disputes that officers must be fully trained in the operation of radar. Senate Bill 251 requires local police to receive the same training as the State Police. Furthermore, the devices must be certified and regularly calibrated for accuracy. Other provisions are also contemplated to protect motorists. Each local governing body must pass an ordinance authorizing its use. Signage must be erected at major entry points into a municipality. A 90-day warning period must be observed before issuing citations. Points do not accumulate unless the speed is more than 10 miles an hour over the posted limit. And, fine revenue must be reported and is capped at 20% of a municipal budget. Together, these provisions provide more than adequate warning and protection for motorists inclined to speed.

If a fear of local revenue generation is behind the unwillingness to allow local radar, that fear is unfounded. The cost associated with speed patrols easily exceeds the small municipal share of a citation – approximately \$25.00. Costs include the timing devices, the calibration and certification of the devices, the salary and benefits of the police officers, and the cost of sending an officer to court. Based on 2014-15 data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median cost of a local police officer in PA is \$50.00 an hour. Without taking into account court time and equipment overhead, an officer would have to give two citations an hour just to recover his or her salary and pension costs – saying radar will be a local revenue maker just doesn't add up when you look at the numbers. Furthermore, it is illegal to require or suggest that officers issue a certain number of citations (71 P.S. 2001).

PML and PSATC are strongly opposed to the newly introduced House Bill 2148. The requirement of engineering and traffic studies before radar can be used, the presumption that quotas are going to be prevalent, and the six-year time limit are our primary reasons for opposition.

In conclusion, we hope that today's hearing will resolve any reservations that still exist about authorizing local radar. Public safety is the number one goal at the local level. Pennsylvania should not continue to withhold an effective enforcement tool from paid police forces as it sends a message that speeding motorists are more valued than law-abiding pedestrians and motorists.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. The PA Municipal League and PA State Association of Township Commissioners ask for you to move SB 251 to the full House this month.