

Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs



Municipal Police Radar

House Transportation Committee

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Good morning Chairman Taylor and Chairman Keller and members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Chuck Mummert and I am the Mayor of Elizabethtown Borough in Lancaster County. I also currently serve as the Immediate Past President of the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs. I am honored to have the opportunity to talk with you today about this important traffic safety issue.

The Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) is a statewide, non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to serving 956 borough governments. Since 1911, PSAB has represented the interests of boroughs and helped to shape the laws that laid their foundation. The Association improves and assists local governments through legislative advocacy, research, education and other services. With more than 2.6 million Pennsylvanians residing in borough communities, our members strive to deliver quality leadership and service to citizens across the Commonwealth.

For many years, PSAB has advocated for our municipal police to be permitted to use radar as a safety tool in our communities. Over the years, PSAB and the Lancaster County Boroughs Association has adopted numerous resolutions urging the General Assembly to allow Pennsylvania municipal police the ability to use the same speed timing equipment as the Pennsylvania State Police.

We are optimistic this issue will be given full scrutiny and consideration by this committee. While this issue has been controversial, I hope that this will be the year that the legislature votes to empower local police with the tools they need to do their job and keep our residents safe.

It is disconcerting that in 2018, Pennsylvania remains the only state in the country that does not allow any of its municipal police to use this important device. Like other police departments around the country,

our municipal police put themselves in the line of duty, they carry guns and tasers and they make arrests. Yet, unlike other police officers, the General Assembly prohibits municipal police the use this simple, life-saving device.

Pennsylvania has long held the distinction of being in the top five states with the highest number of speed-related vehicle fatalities in the country.¹ Our commonwealth unfortunately ranks second in the highest percentage of traffic fatalities that were speeding-related.²

Most speed related fatalities happen on roads that are *not* interstate highways. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration's 2015 fatality data shows that Pennsylvania is second in the country in the number of speed related fatalities on non-interstate local roads.³ According to these statistics, there were 540 speed-related deaths in 2015. Those lost lives were our residents, neighbors, friends and constituents.

And while speeding is one of the most prevalent causes of traffic crashes, with accurate enforcement, it can be one of the most preventable. Speeding-related crashes cost billions of dollars and cause thousands of deaths each year.

To help curb speeding in our communities and save lives, our police need the most cost-effective and time-effective tools available. Radar is acknowledged by law enforcement personnel to be the safest, most accurate, and most economical speed-timing device. Relying on stop watches to time drivers between two white lines is archaic, costly and time consuming.

¹ 2015 Traffic Safety Fact Sheet on Speeding, NHTSA's National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 9.

² Ibid., 8.

³ Ibid., 9.

PSAB's Municipal Policy Statement cites the "*primary responsibility for law enforcement should rest at the local level. To carry out this responsibility effectively, municipalities must constantly seek to improve their law enforcement capability*". PSAB's membership recognizes radar and other speed detection technologies as a vital resource in much needed traffic control and calming situations.

PSAB strongly supports Senate Bill 251 (PN 1316) as the best way to reign in the unfortunately high number of speeding fatalities on local roads. SB 251 allows the use of radar and lidar in a fair and reasonable manner by ensuring accurate training of police officers, warning signs to motorists, citations only for speeds over 10 miles-per-hour of the maximum speed limit, a 90 day written warning phase-in period, and caps on the total amount of revenue from citations at 20 percent of the municipal budget with excesses returning to the state's General Fund.

PSAB members throughout the state have adopted policy resolutions urging you to pass Senate Bill 251 to address the problem of speed-related deaths. We also urge the members of the committee to favorably report Senate Bill 251 from your committee as soon as possible.

In closing, on behalf of Elizabethtown Borough, the Lancaster County Boroughs Association and the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, I urge this committee and the full House of Representatives to move Senate Bill 251 forward so that all municipal police officers, regardless of the size of the municipality, are afforded the opportunity to equally enforce maximum speed laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to allow me to present testimony and I welcome questions from the committee members.