City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

File #: 09-0102R, **Version:** 0

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        INTRODUCTORY*

        CITY OF BALTIMORE
        COUNCIL BILL   R
        (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Clarke, Middleton

        A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Legislation - Baltimore City - Speed Monitoring Systems

FOR the purpose of requesting the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2009 Session of the Maryland General Assembly to introduce legislation to authorize the placement of speed monitoring systems on the streets and highways of Baltimore City.
        Recitals

   The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) defines speed monitoring systems, also referred to as speed cameras, as electronic devices operated by police to enforce speed limits. Also known as photo radar, these devices monitor the speed of passing vehicles and are programmed to photograph vehicles traveling a set amount above the speed limit. Unlike other methods of traffic law enforcement, speed cameras do not require offending motorists to be pulled over. There are 2 methods for deploying speed cameras - mobile speed cameras are accompanied by police and moved around among various locations; fixed cameras are unaccompanied and photograph vehicles speeding at specific roadway locations.

   In a statement released January 31, 2008, the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) strongly supported new research from the IIHS that reinforced the effectiveness of speed cameras in reducing highway speeds based on a study of 2 jurisdictions: Scottsdale, Arizona, and Montgomery County, Maryland. Both were commended for their innovative but different ways of implementing cameras. In Scottsdale, the first U.S. locality to demonstrate the effectiveness of fixed speed cameras, drivers on the busy Loop 101 that had been exceeding the 65 mph speed limit by driving faster than 75 mph dropped to 1 to 2%. The total number of target crashes (non-peak period crashes) was reduced by about 54%.

   In Montgomery County, speed cameras are being used to enforce limits of 35 mph or less in residential areas and school zones. Since installation of the cameras, the proportion of vehicles going more than 10 mph faster than the posted limits has fallen 70%. In addition, speeds have fallen by 39% on roads where signs were posted warning of overall enforcement but where cameras were not yet operational. A poll conducted in the county by IIHS found that 74% of respondents believed that speeding is a problem on residential streets, and 59% favored the use of speed cameras.

Although research has proven the effectiveness of speed cameras in Montgomery County, state legislation authorizing the use of speed monitoring cameras in the State of Maryland has not been readily accepted. The Major Issue Review: 2003 -2006, a publication of the Department of Legislative Services, Maryland General Assembly, details the background of the Speed Monitoring Cameras issue - In 1997, the General Assembly passed legislation authorizing law enforcement agencies to mail a citation to a motor vehicle owner whose vehicle was recorded running a solid red light by a traffic control signal monitoring system, or red light camera. In subsequent sessions, legislation was introduced that would allow the use of similar technology to identify speeding drivers.

Senate Bill 455 of 2003, vetoed by the Governor, would have authorized State and local law enforcement agencies to issue warnings or citations to vehicle owners for speeding at least 10 mph over the posted speed limit. Speed cameras would have been placed only on a highway in a residential district with a posted speed limit of 35 mph or in a school zone.

Chapter 15 of 2006 authorized the use of speed monitoring systems in Montgomery County under that same conditions as the 2003 legislation. A violation is a civil infraction subject to a maximum penalty of $40. The County is required to use revenues from to cameras to increase local expenditures for public safety. Related public safety expenditures must be used to supplement and may not supplant existing local expenditures for the same purpose. Chapter 15, originally introduced and passed as House Bill 443 during the 2005 session, was vetoed by the Governor, but the veto was overridden by the General Assembly in the 2006 session.

A press release from the Baltimore City Health Commissioner, February 7, 2008, on Childhood Injury Deaths in Baltimore City 2002-2006, revealed that motor vehicle-related accidents accounted for almost 40% of accidental child injury deaths. In comparable statistics, information from the office of the Chief Medical Examiner for the State of Maryland indicated that there were a total of 146 deaths resulting from motor vehicles in 2006.

According to information from the Department of Transportation, there are approximately 2,000 miles of streets, alleys, and highways in Baltimore City. It is imperative that we protect all that traverse these byways to the very best of our ability. To that end, Baltimore City must have the authority to implement a speed camera program such as the one in Montgomery County that experience has now proven to be very effective.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Honorable Chair and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2009 Session of the Maryland General Assembly are respectfully requested to introduce legislation to authorize the placement of speed monitoring systems on the streets and highways of Baltimore City.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City Senate and House Delegations to the 2009 Maryland General Assembly, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Director of Transportation, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Government Relations, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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