

HB 2621: THE CASE FOR PILOTING FIXED SPEED CAMERAS

In 2013, 36 people died in traffic crashes in Portland, more than double the number of homicides in the city. The number of people killed on Portland roadways has remained stubbornly flat for the past 20 years. The economic and societal costs of these crashes are immense. The CDC estimates the costs of lost work and medical expenses due to traffic fatalities in Oregon to be \$422 million a year.¹ The National Safety Council pegs the cost of traffic fatalities and injuries to be \$150 million a year in the City of Portland alone.²

Traffic fatalities are not inevitable and can be prevented through smart policy and system design. The City of Portland is joining other cities in embracing Vision Zero – the tenant that even one death on our roads is too many. Fixed speed cameras are part of this strategy. They slow traffic and reduce serious crashes and fatalities.

CONTROLLING SPEED ON PORTLAND'S URBAN HIGH CRASH CORRIDORS

The majority of serious crashes in the Portland area occur on arterial roadways. Portland's high-volume, multi-lane arterials suffer serious crash rate 4.3x higher than that of the region's freeway system.³

The City of Portland designates the ten worst of these arterial roadways High Crash Corridors. **These ten High Crash Corridors, just 3% of Portland's road network, account for over 51% of city's pedestrian fatalities.**

Portland's High Crash Corridors often cut through neighborhoods where residents have few transportation options. The poorest Portlanders with the fewest transportation resources often have to cross our busiest, fastest roadways to get to school or access transit. The chance of being struck and killed as a pedestrian are 2.3x higher if you live in a high poverty area of Multnomah County.⁴

Speeding and aggressive driving are the top contributing factors to serious crashes across the region. Over 100 jurisdictions across the country use automated speed enforcement to combat these dangerous driving behaviors.

City	Fatalities per 100,000
New York	3.9
San Francisco	4.0
Oakland	5.0
Seattle	5.2
Chicago	6.0
Portland	6.2
	(2009 data)

WHAT OTHER COMMUNITIES ARE DOING TO ADDRESS THESE CHALLENGES

The City of Portland is widely known for its innovation in transportation, but our progress on transportation safety has stalled. Many cities with safer road systems (notably Seattle, Chicago and New York) are successfully utilizing a traffic safety tool Portland lacks: fixed speed cameras. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration finds that photo radar systems reduce crashes in the range of 20-25 percent.⁵ This is a significant crash reduction that would have immediate positive outcomes for our community.

HB 2621 would authorize piloting fixed speed cameras on Portland's most dangerous roads. This would prevent roughly 1,800 injury and 495 serious injury crashes and save 16 lives over the pilot period. Additionally, ~\$71 million in related wage and productivity losses, damage, and medical expenses costs would be avoided.

¹ CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/statecosts/or.html>

² National Safety Council: http://www.nsc.org/news_resources/injury_and_death_statistics/Pages/EstimatingtheCostsofUnintentionalInjuries.aspx

³ Metro: http://library.oregonmetro.gov/files/appendix_22_safetyreport.pdf

⁴ Governing Magazine: <http://www.governing.com/topics/public-justice-safety/gov-pedestrian-deaths-analysis.html>

⁵ NHTSA: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/DOT/NHTSA/Traffic%20Injury%20Control/Articles/Associated%20Files/HS810763.pdf>

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is speeding really dangerous?

Speeding is a top contributing factor to fatal crashes across the Metro region. Traveling at excessive speeds is consistently linked to higher crash risks. The faster a driver is going, the longer it takes them to recognize and react to a dangerous situation. Portland's High Crash Corridors have posted speed limits ranging from 25mph – 45mph. If a pedestrian is struck at 20mph, they have a 90% chance of surviving. A person struck by a speeding driver on a High Crash Corridor is more likely to die than survive.



Doesn't Portland already have speed cameras?

Currently, state law allows photo radar systems to be operated in mobile vans for no more than four hours in one location with a uniformed police officer present. This results in inconsistent enforcement and a swift "decay effect" – travelers quickly return to speeding once the van leaves. The fixed speed camera system proposed in HB 2621 provides more consistent speed enforcement on Portland's most dangerous roads.

Will this bill authorize "speed traps"?

HB 2621 has robust signage requirements, giving travelers ample information and opportunity to obey the law and avoid a ticket. Before passing a fixed speed camera, drivers will see a sign informing them "Traffic Laws Photo Enforced" and a speed reader board displaying their current rate of speed.

What will the typical fine be?

The penalties will be the same as a speeding violation initiated by any other means. The typical speeding citation in Oregon is a Class C violation (11 to 20 mph in excess of the speed limit) resulting in a \$160 presumptive fine.

Is this a tool to fix city budget issues?

The purpose of HB 2621 is behavior change, not revenue generation. The City of Portland is proposing to phase in a pilot program of 10-20 cameras only on roads where speeding is resulting in higher rates of serious injuries and deaths. Experience from other communities show that fixed speed cameras result in drivers quickly changing their behavior. Seattle's fixed camera system saw a 64% drop in the average number of citations per day after two years. HB 2621 directs that any amount paid to the City of Portland as a result of this program may be used only for operating and maintaining the fixed photo radar units and for improving traffic safety for all modes.