

DID YOU KNOW???

AUTOMATED SPEED ENFORCEMENT – MAYBE IT’S TIME

Earlier this year I attended a traffic safety conference and picked up some printed material from a company that provides automated speed enforcement for cities and states in the US. As I was browsing through their promotional material, I was impressed with the statistics that they provided. Even if their information was slanted toward their product, the reduction in speeding was impressive.

Speed cameras, also called photo radar or automated speed enforcement, operate by recording a vehicle’s speed using radar or other instrumentation and taking a photograph of the vehicle when it exceeds a threshold limit. Speed cameras have been used in 12 States and the District of Columbia but not all of these programs may be active at present because local jurisdictions generally contract private firms for the operation of these systems and contract durations vary. Speed cameras also are used extensively in other countries such as Australia, Norway, and the United Kingdom.

In New York State, speed cameras are allowed in school zones in New York City and Nassau and Suffolk Counties. When a vehicle exceeds the threshold limit (the limit is set by the municipality and is normally higher than the posted speed limit), photos are taken of the vehicle and the license plate. Sensors detect when a vehicle breaks two separate laser beams. The sensors measure the time between the beam breaks to calculate speed. The speeding citation is issued to the registered owner of the vehicle and the owner is liable for the ticket. The fine is only \$50 and there are no points on anyone’s license.

Speed cameras can reduce crashes substantially. Thirteen safety impact studies of automated speed enforcement internationally, including one study from a United States jurisdiction, were reviewed. The best-controlled studies suggest injury crash reductions are likely to be in the range of 20 to 25 percent at conspicuous, fixed camera sites. Recent crash-based studies from the United States have reported positive safety benefits through crash and speed reductions from mobile camera enforcement on 14 urban arterials in Charlotte, NC, and from fixed camera enforcement on an urban Arizona freeway.

One study examined effects of a fixed camera enforcement program applied to a 6.5-mile urban freeway section through Scottsdale, Arizona. The speed limit on the enforced freeway is 65 mph; the enforcement trigger was set to 76 mph. Total target crashes [crashes during nonpeak periods that are materially affected by camera enforcement] were reduced by an estimated 44 to 54 percent, injury crashes by 28 to 48 percent, and property damage only crashes by 46 to 56 percent during the nine month program period.

Perhaps the most frequent complaint on our local streets and highways is speeding. It seems no one likes speeders but yet we are all guilty of doing it. With the results that speed cameras have on speed reduction, perhaps it’s time to call for it throughout the state. It will only happen, however, if we demand it from our legislators.

For more information on traffic law and traffic safety, visit the Traffic Safety Board web site at: www.franklincony.org and go to Traffic Safety Board under “Departments”. Visit us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: dwerner151@verizon.net or call me at 483-1882.