

BOARD MEETING:
2ND AND 4TH TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH
(410) 226-5122



101 Market Street
P.O. Box 339
Oxford, Maryland 21654

Commissioners of Oxford

March 11, 2020

Delegate Kumar Barve, Chairman
Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 1132 - Talbot County - Speed Monitoring Systems - Intersection of Maryland Route 333 (Oxford Road) and Bonfield Avenue

Chairman Barve,

Please accept this letter as supplemental testimony to the Environment and Transportation Committee's hearing on March 10, 2020 on House Bill 1132, authorizing the placement and use of a speed monitoring system at the intersection of Maryland Route 333 (Oxford Road) and Bonfield Avenue in Oxford, Talbot County, Maryland.

During the Committee's hearing on House Bill 1132, the Committee advised that it applies a four (4) parameter test when considering legislation addressing speed monitoring systems and traffic signals: (1) an unduly hazardous condition exists warranting the speed monitoring system; (2) revenue from the speed monitoring system will not be paid directly to the local jurisdiction; (3) revenue exceeding the cost of the speed monitoring system will be used to address the unduly hazardous condition; and (4) the bill contains a sunset. The purpose of this letter is to address the four (4) parameters as established by the Committee and the consistency of House Bill 1132 with those parameters.

(1) An Unduly Hazardous Condition Exists.

As discussed during the Committee hearing, Oxford prides itself as being a walkable and bikeable community. Maryland Route 333 is a two-lane state highway that runs 9.79 miles from Easton to the Oxford Bellevue Ferry. Route 333 is the only road access into Oxford. The speed limit on Maryland Route 333 changes from 50 mph to 35 mph one-third of a mile from the incorporated boundary of Oxford. The speed limit on Route 333 reduces further to 25 mph at the incorporated boundary. The Oxford Volunteer Fire Department and the Oxford Community Center, both of which are frequently accessed by pedestrians on foot or bicycle, are located on Route 333 three hundred and fifty (350) yards from the incorporated boundary. The Oxford Community Center houses the Oxford Kid's Camp during the summer with children traveling to and from that location on foot or bicycle.

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The entry to the Town via Maryland Route 333 is in a densely populated residential neighborhood, with porches a few feet from the road, children and adults walking and biking along the road, and tourists wandering the streets. The Town has raised concerns over speeders on Route 333 for many years with little to no assistance from the State Highway Administration until recently. Last summer, the Town experienced a tragedy when the President of the Oxford Voluntary Fire Company Auxiliary left her house on Bonfield Avenue to cross Route 333 to the firehouse for an auxiliary meeting. Within seconds of stepping onto Route 333, the Auxiliary President was struck and killed by a vehicle entering town at a speed nearly three times the speed limit of 25 mph.

Although the Town has a police department, it employs only three (3) officers at its maximum capacity, and schedules only one officer on duty at a time. With these limitations, it is virtually impossible to regulate speed at the entrance of Town in a deterring manner.

Based on the limited capacity of the Oxford Police Department, the reduction in speed from 50 mph to 25 mph, the change from the wide state highway road to a narrow town road, the residences surrounding Maryland Route 333, the amount of pedestrian traffic, and the location of the Oxford Volunteer Fire Department and Oxford Community Center, the Town believes an unduly hazardous condition exists, as evidenced by the tragic event last summer. The Town believes that the addition of a speed camera will deter individuals from speeding until such time that the Town can develop and implement other effective means for reducing driving speed on Maryland Route 333.

(2) *Revenue will not be Paid Directly to the Local Jurisdiction.*

The Commissioners of Oxford realize the volume of traffic coming into the town is not comparable to the locations where speed cameras have been installed on highways in larger cities and do not anticipate receiving any revenues from the speed camera. The Town's intention is to work with an authorized company to provide the speed cameras with no revenues funneling back to the town. The Town understands that it may be necessary to subsidize the cost and believes that is a necessary expense for the safety of its citizens and tourists.

(3) *Revenue will be used to Address the Unduly Hazardous Condition.*

As explained above, the Town does not expect to see any revenue from the placement of a speed camera. However, in the event that revenue is generated, the Town will use the funds to further address the condition by implementing other traffic calming mechanisms such as rumble strips or other pavement surface treatments and street trees. As provided by the Maryland Code Ann., Transportation Article § 21-809, the Town will be required to introduce and pass a resolution or ordinance prior to placing the speed camera at the proposed location or issuing any citations. As part of that resolution or ordinance, the Town will establish specific regulations for the handling of any revenue from the speed camera to specifically address the traffic concerns.

(4) *The Proposed Bill Contains a Sunset Clause.*

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House Bill 1132, as proposed, does not contain a sunset clause. However, the Town proposes an amendment to the Bill to provide a ten (10) year sunset clause. The Town believes that ten (10) years is the minimum necessary to address the unduly hazardous condition of drivers speeding entering the town. Based on discussions with the State Highway Administration, the Town believes ten (10) years is a reasonable amount of time to allow the Town to implement alternative and additional traffic calming measures to reduce the speed entering town. The Town believes that anything less than ten (10) years would not give the Town enough time to implement additional measures to effectively reduce speeders on Maryland Route 333.

Conclusion

The Town appreciates your consideration of this very narrow legislation permitting the Town of Oxford to address the very serious issue of drivers entering the town at excessive speeds. This has been an ongoing problem for many, many years. We feel that House Bill 1132 meets the four (4) parameters established by the Committee and request your favorable recommendation and approval of House Bill 1132. The Town strongly believes that House Bill 1132 will have a positive impact for the small town of Oxford without inconveniencing any other community or citizenry. Please let me know if you need any further information regarding our request.

On behalf the Commissioners of Oxford,



Cheryl Lewis, Town Administrator