



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: April 1, 2021

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 967 **POSITION:** Support

BILL TITLE: Baltimore City – Speed Monitoring Systems – Interstate 83

This legislation seeks to authorize the placement of not more than two speed monitoring systems on I-83 in Baltimore City. The fines collected through this program shall be used for the cost of roadway improvements on I-83 in Baltimore City.

Under current law, a speed monitoring camera may be placed in a K-12 school zone or a highway work zone. Speed cameras around the University of Maryland were grandfathered in to allow them to remain in effect. In 2018, the General Assembly passed an exception to that law allowing Prince George's County to establish a speed monitoring system at the intersection of Old Fort Rd and MD 210. In 2019, the General Assembly enacted another law that allowed for the expanded use of speed monitoring systems along all of MD 210.

The reason exceptions have been made to the placement of speed cameras in certain areas is safety. It was recognized that traditional traffic enforcement was not effective in these areas. For example, the area of MD 210 is remote and was being used as a speed contest zone. There was a tragic accident during one of those speed contests that took the lives of several Marylanders. The Maryland State Police (MSP) and County Police provided weeks of enforcement initiatives but Law enforcement couldn't be present in the location every day. The exceptions to the speed camera law were necessary to increase public safety and reduce the incidence of this type of activity.

Interstate 83 in Baltimore City has similar public safety concerns. The speed of drivers is unsafe, but the enforcement of the violations is not viable. The roadways are elevated, narrow and have dangerous curves making traditional traffic enforcement difficult. On many portions of I-83 the shoulders are narrow or nonexistent and do not provide a safe area for a traffic stop to be initiated. It is dangerous for both the citizen and the police officer.

There is also a high volume of traffic accidents on I-83. Baltimore City Police (BPD) just released a report that indicated over 2,000 accidents had occurred on that roadway which were attributable to excessive speed. Once those accidents occur, BPD has to send several police officers to ensure the safety of the parties involved, investigate the accident and clear the roadway. Unfortunately, this is not safe for any of the persons involved. As recently as December of 2020 a Baltimore Police Officer was struck by a car while assisting a motorist on I-83. In 2011, a Baltimore Police Officer had her vehicle struck while she was assisting a motorist. She was then struck by her vehicle and thrown over the wall of an elevated portion of I-83 and suffered critical injuries.

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Incidents on I-83 within Baltimore City take valuable police resources away from the neighborhoods who need them. The MSP has partnered with the BPD, in accordance with legislation passed in the 2020 session, in an effort to relieve some of that burden on resources. But the safety issue has not been resolved. Multiple units are still required for each accident, regardless of the agency responding.

In 2019, the Baltimore Sun wrote a series of articles regarding I-83. One focused on speeding making I-83 unsafe, but that there was a limited amount of speed enforcement due to safety concerns based on the road design. A follow up article stated that I-83 had more than double the crash rate as other comparable roads in Maryland. All agree that safety is our primary concern. Due to the roadway design, it is unsafe and impractical to put police officers on I-83 to enforce the speed limits, but speed cameras can do so safely. They will reduce the speed of drivers which will in turn reduce the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities of the drivers who use this highway.

For these reasons, the Department urges the Committee to give House Bill 967 a favorable report.