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Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Testimony on: SB 368 - "Speed Monitoring Systems – Municipal Corporations – Authorization"

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 10, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of Sierra Club supports SB 368, which would authorize a municipal corporation to implement and use speed monitoring systems on municipal highways under its jurisdiction. A municipal corporation would need to:

- submit to the county a plan describing the proposed location of the speed monitoring system, and
- receive permission from the county to use the system at the proposed location. If the county fails to respond to the request within 60 days, the municipal corporation may implement and use the speed monitoring system as described in their plan submission.

The bill would forbid a county from unreasonably denying a request from a municipal corporation to install a speed monitoring system at an identified location. Any denial would have to be in writing and could be contested by the municipal corporation in the Circuit Court. The bill also would forbid a county from placing fees or unreasonable restrictions on speed monitoring systems installed by a municipal corporation within its corporate limits.

Transportation is now the primary contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in our state. Tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks are also a major source of health-damaging air pollution. This means there is a growing need to get individuals out of their cars, taking public transit, riding bikes, and walking more. However, it's quite difficult to make this happen near roads where drivers may be speeding, particularly if they are greatly exceeding the maximum speed limit.

We live in a car-centric culture where transportation planning, roads, and vehicle laws are focused on getting vehicles to their destinations as swiftly as possible. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some drivers feeling they have priority on the road, and there are high rates of injury and death for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as vehicle drivers and passengers. Research shows that a vehicle's rate of speed has a direct impact on the ability to see ahead and notice people in or near the roadway, how quickly one can respond to avoid potential problems, how long it takes to stop a vehicle, and how likely someone will die as a result of a car accident. Clearly, there is an understandable need to control speeding on our roads, and allowing municipalities to install speed monitoring systems on their highways can curtail excessive speeding.

SB368 could help bring about needed change. It would lead to improved enforcement of speed limits on our highways and increased revenue for municipalities from fines paid by drivers who were caught speeding. Most importantly, this bill could lead to safer roads for everyone, including bikers, pedestrians and drivers. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.