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RE: House Bill 644 – Vehicle Laws - Speed Monitoring Systems – Residential Districts

January 31, 2025

Dear Delegates Guyton, Fair, Foley, Forbes, Lehman, Stein, and Stewart:

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support for House Bill 644 – Vehicle Laws - Speed Monitoring Systems – Residential Districts.

This bill will give Baltimore County, and other local jurisdictions statewide, the opportunity to deploy speed monitoring systems, generally referred to as “speed cameras,” in specified residential area locations that are outside school zones.

Currently, Baltimore County is only authorized to use speed cameras in a school zone with a posted speed limit of at least 20 miles per hour. Installing a new school zone camera has a positive effect on negative driving behaviors. It slows the vehicles down significantly, and reduces crashes.

Because of the current school zone restriction, Baltimore County Police are unable to grant requests by community members for deployment of speed cameras on numerous residential area roads with high speeds and numbers of crashes. House Bill 644 will expand the opportunity for the same positive impacts in other residential areas that we have experienced in school zones.

Community traffic safety:

The Police Department has specialized units dedicated to traffic management and to vehicle crash investigations, due to the high volume of traffic accidents that cause property damage, personal injuries, and deaths.

The Police Department regularly responds to community requests to assess safety of roadways and where possible deploys traffic management devices, including speed cameras, to improve public safety. These community requests have been increasing. Even where speed cameras are currently authorized, the Police Department attempts other solutions. Traditional enforcement is conducted with or without radar, in marked or unmarked police vehicles. The Police Department works with DPW/Traffic Engineering to see if traffic calming (curbs or islands), signage, and/or speed bumps are appropriate based on analysis of a specific roadway.

Speed Camera Program:

The Police Department’s Safe Speed Automated Enforcement Program uses speed cameras to encourage motorists to slow down in school zones where traffic data and citizen complaints show that speeding is a problem, and other measures are not successful. Advantages of automated enforcement with speed cameras include that they are not dependent on patrol car availability, and reduce risks inherent to police traffic stops.



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Locations for speed cameras are published; details for deployment and enforcement are posted on the County website here:

<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/police/traffic-cameras/>

However, the Police Department currently is not able to place speed cameras outside school zones, even when there are multiple citizen complaints and when traffic data show that speed cameras would benefit public safety.

The Department routinely receives requests from concerned residents for new speed camera locations. Frequently, these locations fall outside of the ½ mile school zone radius the current program allows, preventing the implementation of automated enforcement options. Most of these complaints are not in commercial or industrial areas; they are in residential communities or the roadways leading directly to them.

Here are four examples, for illustration, of locations where the Police Department would currently deploy speed cameras, if they were authorized. (These examples are for illustration only because up-to-date data would be needed prior to site selection.) Each location has been evaluated for the installation of a residential speed camera. The evaluation is initiated by a complaint originating in the community or within the Department. The evaluation includes a speed survey, crash data (obtained from Crime Analysis Unit) and a physical site evaluation. Factors that must be considered for the actual placement are the geometry of the roadway (curves or hills), sight distance (for radar-based equipment) and on-street parking. There is a scoring system that was developed, in conjunction with Traffic Engineering, to assist in the ranking of the locations that we use in the school zone speed camera program. All the roadways in these examples are outside school zones.

Residential Speed Cameras would likely be recommended for the following:

Greenspring Avenue @ Quarry Lake Drive, Pikesville (Precinct 4)

Evaluation requested by community members.

Targeted roadway would be 7000 block of Greenspring Avenue, speed limit of 35 mph.

North and southbound directions are recommended for use of a speed camera, with a

score of 78 of 100 on the Site Selection Score Sheet.

Daily analysis shows there are approximately 7900 vehicles in the southbound direction alone and approximately 750 vehicles were in violation, August of 2021. The average speed was over 9 mph above the speed limit, with the 85th percentile being +17mph.

Crash data shows there were 6 crashes at this intersection in a 6 month time frame.

This is considered high for a residential roadway.

Silver Spring Rd @ Sherington Road, Nottingham (Precinct 9)

Evaluation requested by community members for years.

Targeted roadway would be 4400 block of Silver Spring Road, speed limit of 35 mph.

East and westbound directions are recommended for use of a speed camera, with a

score of 67 of 100 on the Site Selection Score Sheet.

Daily analysis shows there is approximately 4000 vehicles in the eastbound direction alone and approximately 550 vehicles were in violation, December of 2020. The average speed was over 7 mph above the speed limit, with the 85th percentile being +15 mph.

Crash data shows there were 2 crashes at this intersection in a 6 month time frame.

This is considered moderate for a residential roadway.

Franklin Square Drive @ King Avenue, Rosedale (Precinct 9)

Evaluation requested by community members.

Targeted roadway would be 9400 block of Franklin Square Drive, speed limit of 35 mph.

North and southbound directions are recommended for use of a speed camera, with a

score of 66 of 100 on the Site Selection Score Sheet.

Daily analysis shows there is approximately 4910 vehicles in the eastbound direction alone and approximately 428 vehicles were in violation, December of 2021. The average speed was over 7 mph above the speed limit, with the 85th percentile being +13mph.

Crash data shows there were 4 crashes at this intersection in a 6 month time frame.

This is considered moderate for a residential roadway.

Dolfield Boulevard @ Mill Centre Drive, Owings Mills (Precinct 3)

Evaluation requested by community members.

Targeted roadway would be 9700 block of Dolfield Boulevard, speed limit of 35 mph.

North and southbound directions are recommended for use of a speed camera, with a

score of 70 of 100 on the Site Selection Score Sheet.

Daily analysis shows there is approximately 7600 vehicles in the southbound direction alone and approximately 1050 vehicles were in violation, July of 2020. The average speed was over 8 mph above the speed limit, with the 85th percentile being +14mph.

Crash data shows there were 4 crashes at this intersection in a 6 month time frame.

This is considered moderate for a residential roadway.

Impact of HB 644:

Enactment of House Bill 644 will allow the Baltimore County Police Department to add speed cameras to encourage motorists to slow down in residential areas where traffic data and citizen complaints show that speeding is a problem. This change in State law will allow the Police Department to use proven tools to improve public safety by reducing speed-related vehicle crashes in residential areas, for each camera location outside a school zone that is approved by the County Council. All the existing protections for automated traffic enforcement programs, including publishing locations for cameras, would apply.

Again, Delegates Guyton, Fair, Foley, Forbes, Lehman, Stein, and Stewart, thank you for introducing House Bill 644 and for the opportunity to express my support. I appreciate your thoughtful collaboration to promote public safety in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Robert O. McCullough/mzf

Robert O. McCullough
Chief of Police