

Testimony for SB338.pdf

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 28, 2025

The Maryland State Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 338: *Baltimore County - Speed Monitoring Systems - Interstate 695 and Interstate 83*

Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

Those who live in the Baltimore area and visit the city via the Jones Falls Expressway are by now familiar with the speed monitoring systems along the JFX. This speed monitoring system was installed three years ago after the General Assembly passed authorizing legislation. It has accomplished exactly what it was intended to do, namely cause drivers on the JFX to slow down and drive more safely. In fact, so many drivers on the JFX have slowed down that the income produced by the speed cameras is a fraction of the original predictions.

Last year, six of the current 7 Baltimore County State Senators sponsored this bill to place similar speed cameras on the Baltimore County part of the Baltimore Beltway. This year's bill adds the part of Interstate 83 between the Beltway and the Pennsylvania line. The reason is simple. There are drivers on 695 and 83 who seem determined to set world speeding records. Each of the sponsoring State Senators have had the same experience. We are driving at a responsible speed when a car passes us traveling at rocket-like speeds of 90 mph, 100 mph and higher. When this happens, it is shocking and scary. We cringe, convinced that we are about to witness a fatal accident up ahead. Clocking speeds like this in work zones is terrible, but driving 30 to 50 mph over the speed limit on other parts of the highway is nearly as dangerous.

Senators Brooks, Hettelman, Salling, Sydnor and Washington join me as cosponsors of this bill. All of our districts include a portion of the Baltimore Beltway and or Interstate 83.

Senate Bill 338 will bring the same monitoring system to the Baltimore Beltway and I83 as currently exists on the Jones Falls Expressway. The violations enforced by this speed monitoring system will be used to fund road repairs and safety improvements on the parts of Interstate 695 and 83 within Baltimore County. Furthermore, the fines will be imposed once a motorist exceeds 12 miles per hour above the posted speed limit.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 338 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

SB0338 - SHA - LOI - Baltimore County - Speed Moni

Uploaded by: Matt Mickler

Position: INFO

January 28, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Senate Miller Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

**RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 338 – Baltimore County – Speed Monitoring Systems
- Interstate 695 and Interstate 83**

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 338 and offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 338 authorizes the State Highway Administration (SHA) to place and use speed monitoring systems on I-695 and I-83 in Baltimore County and provides for the operation of these systems. Fines collected from violations must be used to cover the cost of roadway and safety improvements on I-695 and I-83 in Baltimore County.

The SHA thanks the bill sponsor for their efforts to improve highway safety in Baltimore County and agrees that automated speed enforcement can be an effective tool for this. The bill language is modeled after the work zone safety control program authorized under Article – Transportation, §21-810, with applicable changes. Unlike other local speed monitoring programs, this bill requires a different level of involvement from the State Highway Administration and would create two different standards of speed monitoring programs within the Administration.

SHA notes the following operational items for the committee’s consideration of this bill. As written, the bill limits operations to no more than four cameras in each direction for I-695 and no more than three cameras in each direction on I-83 in Baltimore County. SHA respectfully believes that the number of cameras in use should be determined by SHA based on safety data and operational conditions along the subject state roadways. Further, for the operation of the Safe Zones program, SHA does not currently have signage indicating that speed monitoring systems are in use. SHA believes this requirement in the bill will add to the operational costs and complexity of this program.¹ General photo enforcement signing is normally required, but upkeep of changeable signage adds complexity to the program administration.

With regard to the requirement that the systems be manned, SHA notes that this requirement was removed from the Safe Zones program under the Road Worker Protection Act passed during the 2024 legislative session. However, SB 338 appears to require manned operation of cameras.

¹ See from page 4, line 26 to page 5, line 2. SHA estimates the fiscal impact of additional signage upgrade to be approximately \$50,000.

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
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Operators are unnecessary for program operation, add to the program administrative costs, and are inappropriate for fixed camera installations anticipated under this bill. In addition, the bill proposes new training and reporting requirements for speed monitoring system operators, which further adds to operational costs and which is unnecessary if the cameras used are unmanned.

SHA notes that there is a difference in the speed tolerance language for cameras placed on I-695 and I-83. SB 338 sets the trigger speed for automated enforcement on I-695 at 12 miles per hour over the posted speed limit, whereas the trigger speed for the cameras authorized for I-83 would be 16 miles per hour over the posted speed limit. In the Maryland's SafeZones program, a driver may receive a citation if they exceed the posted speed limit by 12 miles per hour. Establishing different speed limit tolerances among automated speed enforcement programs may cause confusion among the traveling public and, potentially, programmatic issues.

Notably, the bill allows Baltimore County, SHA, the Maryland State Police, and the Baltimore County Police Department to identify high-risk locations along I-695 and I-83 for camera usage. SHA is best positioned to identify areas of highest risk and to deploy speed monitoring systems that do not conflict with Safe Zone deployments, which may already be present along work zones on I-695 and I-83.

The Maryland Department of Transportation values our partnership with the Maryland General Assembly to provide safe roads for everyone. The State Highway Administration appreciates the bill sponsor's commitment to safety and is currently working with them on amendments to resolve operational challenges with the provisions in this bill. The SHA believes the language in Senate Bill 338 and proposed program should be modeled after other successful County speed monitoring system programs in our State with SHA administering the speed monitoring system to achieve the desired outcome and most effective safety results. The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 338.

Respectfully submitted,

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