

Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments

Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee

April 9, 2021

Agenda Item 3d

Assembly Bill 550 (Chiu): Vision Zero: Speed Safety Cameras

Subject: Establishes a speed-safety camera pilot program in highway work and local zones.

Overview: AB 550 requires the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) to establish a stakeholder working group to establish guidelines for two pilot programs for speed safety cameras: one focused on local streets the other on state and local work zones.

Recommendation: Support

Discussion: As noted in Agenda Item 3c, when it comes to roadway safety, particularly for vulnerable roadway users such as pedestrians and bicyclists, one thing is clear: higher speeds equate to higher rates of serious injury and fatalities. AB 550 aims to provide the state and local agencies with a critical new tool—speed safety cameras—to help enforce speed limits in construction zones and school zones. This legislation is co-sponsored by the Bay Area cities of Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose, who have been champions of vision zero policy for a number of years.

The bill requires the Secretary of CalSTA on or before July 1, 2022, to adopt guidelines for two speed safety pilot programs:

1. **Work Zone Pilot Program.** Authorizes the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to establish, in collaboration with the California Highway Patrol, a work zone pilot program where speed safety cameras may be used in active work zones on state highways. If the state highway functions as a local road, Caltrans must have a written agreement with the local transportation department.
2. **Local Streets Pilot Program.** Authorizes a local department of transportation (including public works division of a city or county if it does not have a transportation department) to establish a local program authorizing speed safety cameras on local roads, including in school zones.

In developing the guidelines, AB 550 requires that CalSTA consult with Caltrans, the California Highway Patrol (CHP), the State Department of Public Health, local governments, privacy stakeholders and others. Thirty days after the guidelines are finalized and submitted to the Legislature, Caltrans and local agencies would be authorized to implement compliant speed safety programs until 2027.

Camera-Based Enforcement: Evidenced Supports Its Effectiveness

Across the United States, numerous peer-reviewed studies (<https://www.davidpublisher.org/Public/uploads/Contribute/58d1d8f04c149.pdf>) have shown that speed detection systems reduce the number of severe and fatal collisions by as much as 58 percent. An international study cited by the IIHS found that the presence of automated speed enforcement reduced the share of vehicles traveling above the speed limit from 14-65 percent and reduced the risk of crashes resulting in injury or fatality from 11-44 percent. In a 2017 study, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) found that speed safety cameras resulted in reduced speeding and the likelihood that a crash involved a severe injury or fatality

and recommended all states remove barriers to their use. Despite their use in over 150 communities (<https://www.iihs.org/topics/speed/speed-camera-communities>) in 16 different states, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), California still prohibits speed safety cameras.

Privacy Protections Incorporated into Legislation

Any enforcement policy that involves cameras should have privacy protections built into it. Under AB 550, information collected under the program is restricted to being used only to administer the program itself. Additionally, a local jurisdiction participating in the pilot program must adopt a privacy policy setting out clear restrictions on the use of data and provisions to protect, retain, and dispose of that data. Data from a system cannot be used for any other purpose or disclosed to any other person or agency except as required by law or in response to a court order or subpoena. The bill also prohibits the use of facial recognition technology.

Equity Considerations

The bill requires that equity considerations be incorporated into the guidelines up front and that Caltrans and local agencies participating in the program offer a “diversion program” whereby fines can be paid via a payment plan, the option to enroll in community service in lieu of payment and the establishment of reduced fines and penalties for low-income individuals. The bill also caps fines at rates much lower than for standard speeding tickets. Specifically, a citation would be capped at \$125, including fees. This is compared to speeding tickets in construction zones, which can range from \$360 to as high as \$650 depending on how much above the limit the vehicle was driven. In addition, the bill provides that the ticket would be a civil citation, and therefore would not affect a motorist’s driving record or insurance rates.

Summary

Staff recommends a support position on AB 550, a cornerstone of the recommendations emerging from the state’s Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force and consistent with our 2021 Advocacy Program (Item 9A) and Plan Bay Area 2050’s goal to advance Regional Vision Zero Policy (Strategy T9). Support for AB 550 is also consistent with MTC’s Regional Safety/Vision Zero Policy (Resolution 4400), which established a regionwide policy to encourage and support actions towards eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries in the Bay Area by 2030.

Bill Positions:

Support

City of Los Angeles (cosponsor)
City of Oakland (cosponsor)
City of San Francisco (cosponsor)
City of San Jose (cosponsor)
Walk San Francisco (cosponsor)
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

Oppose

None on file


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