

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN



Testimony of Ryan Lynch, policy director
Tri-State Transportation Campaign
Joint Committee on Transportation

March 12, 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of House Bill 5458, **An Act Concerning Municipal Automated Traffic Enforcement Safety Devices at Certain Intersections.**

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working towards a more balanced, transit-friendly and equitable transportation system in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. Today we urge the Transportation Committee to support this red light camera legislation.

We do this because red light cameras have proven useful in promoting safer roads for all who use them.

First, they help our police officers uphold the law. Given the limited resources available to law enforcement on Connecticut's roads, it is understandable that they cannot monitor all roads at all times. Red light cameras provide assistance to our police in capturing law breakers and, in the long term, can serve as a deterrent to excessive speeds while driving.

Most importantly, red light cameras can save lives. A recent report conducted by the Tri-State Transportation Campaign found that 135 pedestrians and cyclists were killed on Connecticut's roads in the three years from 2008 to 2010. These fatalities are not simply the price of doing business in Connecticut. We can do more to prevent them. Red Light Cameras can help.

As someone who has been a recipient of a ticket from a red light camera in New York City, I can assure you that these cameras work. Since being issued a ticket, I am certainly a safer driver and am even more cognizant of my surroundings, particularly when going through intersections.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety research, Red Light Camera's saved 159 lives in 2004-08 in 14 of the biggest US cities. Had cameras been operating during that period in all large cities, a total of 815 deaths would have been prevented.

The report indicated that red light running killed 676 people and injured an estimated 113,000 in 2009. Nearly two-thirds of the deaths were people other than the red light running drivers — occupants of other vehicles, passengers in the red light runners' vehicles, bicyclists, or pedestrians.

While they may seem unpopular, appearances can be deceiving. Red Light Cameras are actually in high demand elsewhere in the region. The New York State Legislature is considering requests from both Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island and the City of New York to expand their camera programs.

Red Light Camera's are an integral component for creating safe streets for all users of the road. Connecticut has debated this issue for long enough. With this legislation, no community would be forced to adopt Red Light Camera technology. Rather, it would simply allow those communities to utilize cameras as an additional tool in their safety toolkits. It is time to finally provide them with it.

Tri-State is also here to testify in opposition to House Bill 5459, An Act Concerning Mass Transit Fares. This bill would require a study when fares are raised, including an analysis the impact on ridership. Tri-State supports analyzing the impacts of fare increases and service cuts on bus and rail riders. However, Tri-State does not believe that the study is what needs to be emphasized at this time. That's because, what happens when fares increase and service is reduced is pretty well documented. Ridership drops, congestion increases hurting our environment and users have less disposable income, which in turn hurts local economies.

Instead, the Transportation Committee should couple this bill with one that dedicates any fare increases on bus and rail riders to expanded or improved service on the state's current and future transit systems.

The recent fare increases were first proposed as a tool to help enact the Plan B budget last summer. Unfortunately, even though the Plan B budget was never adopted, the fare increases were. Balancing the budget on the backs of the nearly 80 million transit riders in the state is unfair.

Instead, these fare increases, the first of three annual increases, must be invested in better transit service. Riders, if they are going to pay more, need to see more for their money. The Committee should amend this bill to mandate that the revenues raised on the backs of transit riders, goes to transit improvements.