



Mayor David Martin Testimony

S.B. 388

Transportation Committee

March 14, 2018

Senator Leone, Senator Boucher, Representative Guerrera, Representative Carney and members of the Transportation Committee -- thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 388, "*An Act Establishing A Pilot Program for Speed Detecting Cameras and Concerning Speed Warning Signs.*" The passage of this bill can save lives, so I want to thank the Committee for considering it.

Stamford is a growing city, mainly due to millennials, college students, and businesses moving into our downtown and South End neighborhoods. Our downtown has become a destination for not only our residents and but visitors from across Fairfield County and the greater New York region; and we have more pedestrians now than maybe ever before.

We also have schools located on roads that are extremely busy. Many of our school's students share the streets with vehicles that are traveling at excessive speeds. While we exercise great care protecting our children, it's not possible, even with the best school zone signage and local police enforcement, to prevent tragic accidents from happening.

As Mayor, I'm proud of the work our public safety professionals have done in Stamford to protect our citizens and visitors. Indeed, Stamford continues to be recognized as the safest city in New England. However, I'm not proud and saddened by the number of pedestrian accidents and fatalities. Strange as it might sound, when you visit Stamford, you are far more likely to be killed by a car than by a bullet.

In 2017 Stamford had 62 pedestrian crashes resulting in some type of injury, eight additional crashes resulting in life-changing injuries, and unfortunately three pedestrian fatalities.

Nationally and locally, pedestrian accidents are increasing. Data from the calendar year 2016 released by the U.S. DOT show a growing increase in pedestrian fatalities. The DOT data shows that there was a 5% increase in fatalities from 2015 to 2016, which continues an established upward trend. Distracted related driver deaths increased by over 2.2%, from 2015 to 2016 while pedestrian deaths increased 9%.

There are many facets to this issue, and there is no perfect solution to this problem. However, we cannot stand idly by and continue to endlessly debate the issue while people's lives are at risk. As we have seen in so many other areas of public safety we must explore new solutions. We are looking to

once again to be creative and explore new tools and technologies to help in our efforts to protect pedestrians. We must change the way we are enforcing moving violations on our streets to make our intersections safer for pedestrians.

This is why we are seeking your support to conduct a pilot program in Stamford, and if you chose, other municipalities facing a similar challenge. We strongly ask, and citizens in Stamford are asking, that we use electronic speed and intersection enforcement to change the behavior of drivers at key, high risk locations where drivers encounter pedestrians. The objective of the pilot is simple, increase intersection safety, reduce vehicle speed, and increase driver attention at critical locations. Research has shown that using this technology greatly improves driver behavior, and more importantly, reduces the number of severe accidents.

Here are a few examples of why what we are currently doing isn't working:

Stamford has 320 miles of roadway which is the most miles of any municipality in Connecticut. Our dense downtown often yields many conflicts between pedestrians and cars. One of Stamford's busiest and most dangerous intersections is Washington Blvd. at Tresser Blvd and is between our Train Station and the downtown. There is significant pedestrian traffic at all times of day and six lanes of cars. Urban boulevards like Washington and Tresser do not allow a safe space for a police officer to pull over a violator. Strawberry Hill Avenue, Vine Road and High Ridge Road are all major corridors where hundreds of students must negotiate with cars. Again, it's not possible for police to monitor and enforce in all these high-risk locations.

I am asking you to give us an additional tool we need to make our citizens and children safer. Electronic enforcement is not a silver bullet. There is no perfect solution to this growing, urgent problem, but it will help us move from just talking about what we can do to actually trying new ways to address this serious problem.