

Name: Charles Wailonis

Title: see end of testimony

Organization or Agency: see end of testimony

Topic: HB05917 - AA IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISION ZERO COUNCIL...

Opposes

Testimony:

I write today in opposition to HB5917 (Vision Zero), specifically Sections 16 through 20 based on the information below.

In 2001, “automatic traffic enforcement safety devices” were first proposed in Connecticut and since that time our legislature, responding to the will of the people, has repeatedly and correctly rejected same. That same year, as an Administrator with the City of New Haven Department of Traffic and Parking, I was asked to examine this type of enforcement. My investigation, and every traffic study since, has revealed the same results.

Automatic Traffic Enforcement Devices Increase Accidents. Although major studies have shown little or no decrease in intersection accidents, all have shown a significant increase in rear end collisions as motorists panic and slam on their brakes when traffic signals turn yellow. The increase in time police must then spend on accident investigation as well as the increase in traffic disruption negates any supposed benefit of not having police periodically on scene observing traffic flow. The same results were found with speed cameras. A study of cameras used in work zones showed an increase in accidents as drivers suddenly reduced speed and were rear ended. Studies also showed the lowest accident experience in work zones occurred where a marked police vehicle was present. Speed traps (arbitrarily set low speed limits in cities and school zones), were found not to decrease accidents, but again to only serve as a revenue generator for cash strapped municipalities.

Section 17(a) provides no criteria other than “history” for determining camera placement. A typical traffic signal may operate at 1 cycle per minute (often with only a 2 second yellow). At a 4 way intersection, that means motorists can face 2,102,400 cycles per year. Five accidents in 1 year at that intersection would equal a “history” of only .00023%. Yet even in that case, studies have proven accident rates are reduced if yellow light times are slightly lengthened.

Sections 17(b) & (f) gives the vendor complete control to operate and maintain the system including determining if there was a violation. Yet repeatedly throughout the country, vendors, their employees, public officials and politicians have been convicted of illegal camera operations, offering and accepting bribes, phony statistics and shortening yellow light times to increase ticket production. As I have stated to your Committee many times before, in my 35+ years of government service, never have I seen a so called “traffic safety initiative” so rife with scandal and corruption.

If you review previous years Transportation Committee testimony on this issue, you will see opposition from the NAACP, ACLU, AAA, the National Motorists Association, the trucking industry and traffic engineers from throughout the country. These operations are designed to make money and have little to do with traffic safety. In fact, over the past several years, hundreds of municipalities have discarded the cameras realizing they were of little value and 18 states have banned their use.

Section 19 provides a hearing procedure as established by CGS 7-152(c). This permits the mayor of a municipality to appoint a hearing officer (criteria - over 18 and does not issue citations). Therefore, the municipality issues the violation, then appoints the person to serve as the hearing officer. Controversy has surrounded this setup for years (e.g. Bridgeport, New Haven and the State have been challenged re: Parking Violation Hearings). Also, the appointee serves at the whim of the mayor. A Hearing Officer was

dismissed by a former New Haven Mayor who, in the mayor's judgment, was "voiding" too many appealed violations (reducing revenue). In addition, Section 17(g) requires any defense submitted by the motorist be visible on camera (if the directing police officer standing on the sidewalk is off camera, you loose). Obviously, this system is "stacked" against the motorist who is guilty unless proven innocent.

Finally, started in Sweden (where 64% ride bicycles), Vision Zero has seen very little success in the United States. In a recent poll, almost 70% of Americans were against VZ recommendations, primarily due to their draconian measures. In fact, a number of initiatives introduced in New York City were found to be unconstitutional by the courts. In addition, after implementation, several municipalities have determined that VZ initiatives have NOT reduced accidents as hoped. Our elected officials job should not be to force on the public what some local politicians believe is best, but to represent the majority of the people who are overwhelmingly against these money making cameras in our state. I therefore ask you to oppose Sections 16-19 of this bill.

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