

Additional
Testimony for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
On HB4763 and HB4762, June 6, 2013

To the Chairman and Committee Members and Bill Sponsors: (also sent by email 6/5/13)

Thanks for the opportunity to testify on Tuesday.

I want to add more data that the shortened testimony time did not allow me to cover, plus a couple of items regarding Ron Reagan and the Florida program he started.

I will attend the session on Thursday and would welcome more questions about these items and about my Tuesday testimony.

A. I hope everyone knows Mr. Reagan and NCSR are heavily supported by the camera vendor ATS. Mr. Reagan is, indirectly, paid by ATS to increase their camera business. The NCSR is not an independent traffic safety group, they represent ATS. See:

<http://ncrsafety.org/about-us/>

and

<http://www.thenewspaper.com/news/35/3585.asp>

B. It is possible Mr. Reagan has a single example where lengthened yellows had only a temporary effect on lower violation rates, but his claim of bounce-back in a few days to the same levels of violations with safer, longer yellows is simply false.

Fremont, California - a 71% drop in violations across 22 months with 0.7 second longer yellows

<http://saferstreetsla.org/590/data-safety-benefits-longer-yellow-signal-times/>

Fairfax, Virginia - a 90% drop in violations 43 months later, only slightly up from a 94% reduction

<http://www.motorists.org/red-light-cameras/fairfax>

C. Mr. Reagan discussed opinion polls showing approval for camera programs, but polls can get any result you wish if the questions are phrased well. There have been 30 actual citizen votes and cameras lost 90% of them. There will be very serious opposition and resentment from the public if ticket cameras are ever used in Michigan.

(over for page 2)

D. Chairman Schmidt stated that looking at yellow interval rules was a possibility to reduce abuses. This is always a difficult issue because the state would have a direct financial conflict of interest in requiring safer, longer yellow intervals. The safer the yellows are set, the smaller will be the state's 50% share of camera profits. I would be very happy to work with the bill sponsors to suggest precise language to require properly long yellows for safety in the bill. It will make the roads significantly safer at camera intersections and reduce the risks of higher crash rates at camera intersections, but will sharply cut the state's 50% share of the camera profits.

E. The Federal Highway Administration knows the MUTCD rules on yellow intervals are essentially useless for safety because they are not specific. I will be representing the NMA at a conference in Maine in June, as I did in Virginia in January, to help craft better MUTCD yellow interval rules. But it will be several more years before the safer rules are published in a new edition MUTCD.

F. There is a very real risk crash rates will go up at some camera intersections. The risk can increase with how improperly-low yellow intervals are set. I testified at a 2011 hearing in Pennsylvania about this result for the Philadelphia program where official police data showed increased crash rates over several years. Mr. Reagan testified at the same hearing. But the \$45 million earned by the Philadelphia program was more important and the program was extended.

G. See the series of reports from 10 News in Tampa, Florida about how the Florida Department of Transportation changed the rules to allow too-short yellows in 2011 to increase the ticket revenue for the state which gets 52.5% of the total revenue without paying any part of the camera costs.

<http://www.wtsp.com/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=319733>

ATS and other vendors "sell" cameras with safety arguments, but they mask the real purposes and the often negative effects.

Respectfully,

James C. Walker 
Life Member - National Motorists Association
www.motorists.org
2050 Camelot Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-668-7842
jcwconsult@aol.com