
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court St NE, HR F
Salem, OR 97301

January 31, 2023

Chairs McLain and Gorsek, Vice-Chairs Boquist and Boshart Davis, and members of the committee:

Multnomah County supports HB 2095, which allows cities to operate traffic photo radars and lifts some restrictions currently in place for regulating speed. We know that utilizing photo radar to reduce speed is an effective way to reduce traffic fatalities. Saving lives and improving safety is a very high priority for Multnomah County for both our public health division and our transportation planning and division.

Every community is composed of a different makeup of roadway systems, traffic patterns, and community transportation needs. Local governments are familiar with the needs of our system and we continue to learn and grow with community input. Because of this relationship with the community, it seems natural for local governments to be able to determine what speeds make sense on local roads, and to enforce those speeds. When a road is dangerous, local government officials are often the first to hear about it. Having the authority to set speed and enforce it can allow for local governments to be nimble and responsive.

People disproportionately impacted by traffic crash injuries would benefit from this bill. In Multnomah County, the death rate from crash injuries for Black residents is nearly twice the rate of fatalities for non-hispanic white residents. Unintentional injuries were the leading cause of death in the region for people aged 5-25 in 2018. Traffic stop enforcement bias could also be reduced with photo radar usage.

Given that much of the discretion in speed enforcement would shift from on-site enforcement to determining the location of speed cameras, local governments will need a process to ensure that speed cameras are not disproportionately positioned in areas with high traffic volume from low income and BIPOC community members. This process will differ from one local government to another. It should also be paired with safety, ADA and multimodal investments for these roads that provide people with options for getting around safely and reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles, which are the target for radar enforcement. With careful consideration and partnership with community members, this bill has the potential to save lives and serve as one tool of many to make our streets safer.

Sincerely,

Taylor Steenblock
Multnomah County Government Relations