

WHY SPEED CAMERAS?

3/11/2010

Over the past decade, the Town of Sykesville has been faced with the chronic problem of speeding motorists. In fact, speeding in and around our community has been, and continues to be, our Town residents' number one complaint.

In an effort to curb speeding, the Town has utilized a number of means and methods. Some of the means and methods have included the following (not in any particular order):

- ❑ Enhanced educational material in Town newsletters outlining the dangers of speeding and reminding motorists to slow down.
- ❑ Periodic newsflashes via email reminding motorists to slow down
- ❑ Extensive discussions with concerned citizens during Mayor and Town Council meetings about speeding in specific areas of town.
- ❑ Periodic flyers distributed to the community reminding residents to slow down,
- ❑ Construction of speed humps in high-speed areas.
- ❑ Installation of rumble strips in areas of concern.
- ❑ The use of a "Your Speed Is" sign in strategic locations that shows the motorists the speed they are traveling.
- ❑ Parking of unmanned police vehicles in high-speed areas.
- ❑ Increased enforcement through the use of radar.
- ❑ The design of narrower streets in some of our new subdivisions
- ❑ Retaining narrower streets in older parts of town.
- ❑ Additional signage along town roadways warning motorists about speed enforcement and pedestrian safety.

Unfortunately, while some of these methods have temporarily reduced speeding, none have proven effective in changing motorist behavior over the long term. One of the most effective means has historically been increased enforcement through the use of radar. Given limited staffing levels and the need to respond to the increasing number of other calls for service, even this approach has proven ineffective over the long term.

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On February 22nd, 2010, after extensive discussion at several public meetings and two formal public hearings, the Mayor and Town Council approved an Ordinance to allow the use of speed cameras within our community. This was made possible due to Senate Bill 277 that went into effect October 1st, 2009.

The objective of the program is to (1) effectively reduce speeding on our Town streets and roads, (2) increase pedestrian and motorist safety, and (3) shift more of the increasing cost of the need for our police to enforce our speeding laws to those who are breaking our speeding laws. This law allows for the placement of speed monitoring systems in school zones from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The respective areas will be sign posted and the locations will be listed on the Town's website (www.sykesville.net), as well as in public newspapers. The first 30 days of this program will serve as a "warning period".

A citation will be issued (mailed to the registered vehicle owner) if the operator drives at least 12 mph or greater over the posted speed limit. The fine for this violation is \$40.00.

This will not be considered a moving violation but rather is a civil fine carrying no points. If the fine is not paid, the Motor Vehicle Administration can suspend or refuse to re-register the vehicle. Insurance companies will not be able to consider these violations for rate increases or adjustments.

The Police Department has always taken an aggressive posture when it comes to speeding, both through education and enforcement. One or two officers working radar are unable to impact the number of violators using conventional enforcement methods. We need to change driver behavior; we need to slow down.

This enforcement effort should be viewed as a means to alter driver behavior, achieve voluntary compliance to speed laws and our ultimate goal, keeping our town safe.

FACTS

- ❑ Photo Speed Enforcement has been authorized by State law.
- ❑ Photo Speed Enforcement is placed only in sign-posted areas within a half-mile radius of the three school zones. The school zones include Sykesville Middle School, Ava Wanas Montessori and Springfield Presbyterian School / Stepping Stones Pre-School.
- ❑ Roads within the school zones will be sign-posted prior to enforcement. Enforcement will be based on speed complaints, vehicular and pedestrian traffic and threat-level assessments. ** For a list of some of the roads within our school zones, refer to the end of the document.*

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- The first 30 days of this Program will serve as a warning period in which no citations are issued.
- The locations of the cameras will be posted on our website and advertised in local newspapers.
- The equipment utilized for this program will be portable (not permanently fixed to a particular site) and will be leased by the Town; not purchased.
- The citations will be issued only to vehicles traveling 12 miles over the posted speed limit or greater; i.e.,

In a 25 mph zone, an individual would have to be traveling 37 mph or greater to receive a citation.

- A photo is taken of the vehicle and its tag number. That photo will be reviewed by a Law Enforcement Officer who will determine, based on the evidence, whether the vehicle was speeding (12 mph or greater over the posted speed limit).
- The citation is a civil fine carrying no points assessed on the individual's drivers license record. It is a set fine of \$40.00 that is set by State law.
- The individual does have the right to contest the charge in court. The individual does have the right to confront their accuser. The Law Enforcement Officer who reviewed and validated the violation photo will appear in court to present photo evidence.
- If the individual fails to pay the fine, his/her vehicle registration can be suspended or MVA can refuse to re-register the vehicle.
- The revenue that may be generated by this Program can only be used for public safety enhancements within our community.
 - a. Legislated Formula for Revenue. Fines collected by a political subdivision as a result of violations may be used to recover the costs of implementing and administering the Speed Monitoring system.
 - b. After implementing and administering costs are recovered, the subdivision may retain up to 10 percent of the Town's operating budget; i.e., if the Town's operating budget is \$2,000,000, the Town will be allowed by law to retain \$200,000.

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- c. All additional funds generated by this program (those funds that exceed 10 percent of the total revenues) shall be submitted to the State Comptroller).

The Comptroller shall deposit any money remitted to the General Fund of the State.

- ❑ By law, violations of this Program must be mailed no later than two (2) weeks after the alleged violation for vehicles registered in the State of Maryland and 30 days after the alleged violation occurred for vehicles registered in another State.
- ❑ An individual may elect to stand trial by notifying the issuing agency of this intent at least five (5) days prior to the date of payment as it appears on the citation.
- ❑ If the individual who receives the citation desires the officer to be present and testify at the trial, the individual shall notify the court and the State in writing no later than twenty (20) days prior to trial date.

Under more desirable conditions this program would be unnecessary. Unfortunately, we have used increasingly scarce Town resources to combat speeding in the Town with limited success. Conventional methods have proven ineffective over the long term.

Our mission is to change driver behavior and when this goal is achieved, the equipment will be removed and re-deployed on an as-needed basis.

The Mayor and Town Council believe that utilizing today's technology, at no additional cost to the Town, to enforce speed laws and to hold those who violate our laws accountable while creating a safer environment for our community is most effectively done through the use of photo enforcement.

* Below is a list of the primary roads within our school zones (minor roads could be included if warranted):

- ❑ Springfield Avenue
- ❑ Obrecht Road / Third Avenue
- ❑ Central Avenue
- ❑ Jeroby Road
- ❑ Sandosky Road
- ❑ Village Road
- ❑ Harlan Lane
- ❑ Spout Hill Road
- ❑ Jennifer Way
- ❑ College Avenue
- ❑ Kalorama Road