



House Bill 929

Motor Vehicles – Speed Monitoring Systems – Local Jurisdictions

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environmental Matters Committee

Date: February 18, 2014

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 929. The bill makes necessary reforms to Maryland's speed camera law and codifies a series of best practices designed to make the administration of speed camera programs more robust and transparent.

MACo supports county government speed camera programs and believes such programs reduce speeding and accidents in areas where children are walking or bicycling to school. However, MACo also believes that a county government that enacts a speed camera program has a responsibility to make certain that appropriate administrative and oversight protections are in place to ensure accuracy, fairness, and transparency in the system.

During the 2013 Session, the House Environmental Matters Committee formed a stakeholders' workgroup to address concerns raised about the administration of local government speed camera programs. Ultimately, the recommendations of the workgroup were combined into HB 929 of 2013, which passed the House with amendments but went to conference committee in the Senate and failed to pass before *Sine Die*.

However, the Environmental Matters Committee requested that the involved stakeholders, including MACo, continue to meet over the 2014 interim to further refine the bill. The stakeholders met, further clarifying and, where necessary, strengthening the language of HB 929 of 2013. The final product of the stakeholder efforts is reflected in HB 929 / SB 652 of 2014.

The key components of this year's bill address many of the concerns raised about the administration of local speed camera programs and include:

- Prohibits a local jurisdiction from making a vendor's fee contingent on a per-ticket basis on the number of citations issued or paid - existing contracts may continue for no more than 3 years

- Requires each local jurisdiction with a speed camera program to create an "ombudsman" to respond to citizen questions and concerns and void erroneous violations without a citizen having to go to court
- Defines "school zone" in State law to mean an area within 1/2 mile of a K-12 school where students are walking or bicycling to school, or being picked up or dropped off.
- Prohibits a local jurisdiction from issuing citations when placing a camera in a new location until at least 15 calendar days after required signage is installed
- Requires speed camera signage to comply with State Highway Administration standards
- Requires each local jurisdiction with a speed camera program to designate a program administrator to oversee the program and participate in a best practices training course at least once every two years
- Requires a local jurisdiction's contract with a speed camera vendor to contain certain penalty and cancellation clauses if the vendor submits a certain percentage of erroneous violations for review or violates the law
- Requires that the annual calibration of a speed camera be conducted by an independent calibration laboratory that is selected by the local jurisdiction and is unaffiliated with the manufacturer of the speed camera system
- Clarifies that a duly authorized law enforcement officer must review every issued citation
- Makes other minor clarifications and technical changes

MACo is supportive of all of these key provisions and believe that they will make for better-run and more transparent speed camera programs.

In conclusion, MACo believes that any speed camera program should be based on valid public safety concerns and have a high level of public confidence and support. The provisions of HB 929 will help achieve that goal. Accordingly, MACo recommends the Committee issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 929.