



## Senate Bill 769

### *Vehicle Laws – Traffic Control Signal Monitoring Systems and Speed Monitoring Systems – Continuous Audits*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

Date: March 15, 2016

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 769. The bill would require the adoption of audit technology that is unnecessary given Maryland's current speed camera and red light camera oversight requirements, and likely would not produce significant changes in the issuance of citations.

SB 769 would require a speed camera or red light camera to be subject to an automated, real-time audit. The results of the audit must be retained by the local jurisdiction running the speed camera program and be admitted as evidence in any court proceeding for a violation that is the subject of the audit. MACo understands that the bill's sponsor will be offering amendments to remove the red light camera provisions, so MACo's written testimony will focus on the speed camera provisions.

MACo is concerned that the bill requires adaptation of a technology whose vendor pool is extremely limited. The principal vendor offering such audit systems, StarTraq, has designed its monitoring for speed camera programs operating in the UK, which have different operational and review standards than Maryland's program. Preliminary testing of audit systems elsewhere in the United States suggests there may be very little refinement achieved by adding this new layer of cost and oversight. Meanwhile, the cost of these vendor contracts would siphon operating costs away from other needed public safety priorities.

Maryland's program already has comprehensive checks and oversight requirements. In 2014, this Committee and the General Assembly passed bi-partisan legislation that made numerous reforms to local speed camera programs, including mandatory best practices training, review of each issued citation by a law enforcement officer, penalties for vendors that submit erroneous violations for law enforcement review, the creation of a citizen "ombudsman" who can review and void erroneous citations without the need for a citizen to have to go to court, and annual performance reports.<sup>1</sup> The legislation passed with the support of MACo, the Maryland Municipal League, and AAA-Mid Atlantic.

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<sup>1</sup> HB 929 and SB 350 of 2014

Since the adoption of those reforms, the media has not reported on any broad systemic issues regarding the use of speed cameras. The number of speed camera citations issued continue to decline in those areas that have mature camera programs. In August of 2015, WTOP news reported that speed camera tickets have dropped significantly in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties as drivers altered behavior and reduced their speeds in targeted zones:<sup>2</sup>

*In Prince George's County, Maryland, speed camera tickets have dropped by one-third over the last two years. In fiscal 2013, police issued 360,548 speed camera tickets. In fiscal 2015, the number dropped to 240,730.*

*In Montgomery County, Maryland, speed camera tickets dropped 20 percent over the same two-year period. In fiscal 2013, police issued 451,972 speed camera tickets compared with 355,321 issued through the end of March 2015.*

Wicomico County announced at the end of last year that it will not be renewing its speed camera program when its current vendor contract expires because the program has been successful in reducing speeding in the targeted school zones.

MACo and the counties would certainly consider a proposal from StarTraq or any other vendor who develops similar technology. MACo is willing to facilitate such a meeting with the local stakeholders' speed camera workgroup.

However, MACo cannot support the adoption of a broad mandate regarding technology that is untested with Maryland's existing speed camera procedures and likely wouldn't result in significant changes in citation outcomes. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to adopt an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 769.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://wtop.com/sprawl-crawl/2015/08/speed-camera-tickets-down-in-maryland/>