
Speed Cameras Fact Sheet

With properly posted speed limits and properly installed traffic-control devices, there is no need for ticket cameras. They can actually make our roads less safe. Here are ten reasons to oppose speed cameras:

1) Photo radar is still radar, and it can generate false readings.

Radar is not perfect. Unlike other normal tickets, citations resulting from cameras do not have a tracking history or a visual estimation by a qualified officer to back them up. Thousands of tickets can be generated between routine maintenance and calibration inspections, potentially resulting in just as many faulty readings.

2) This type of enforcement emphasizes ticket volume.

Despite claims to the contrary, photo radar is used in locations characterized by high traffic volume and under-posted speed limits. It is not profitable to use photo radar on residential streets, low volume roads or where speed limits are posted at the 85th percentile (the speed at which they should be posted).

3) Ticket cameras are very inaccurate on certain roads.

Tests done by the University of Virginia found that fewer than three percent of the photos taken of vehicles on Interstate-type roads provided a clear image of a single vehicle, the license plate number and the driver. Photo radar should not be used on high-speed, multi-lane highways. Yet, some greedy cities still use it on these types of roads.

4) Photo radar encourages artificially low speed limits.

In areas where proper speed limits have been set according to the 85th percentile (the speed at or below which 85 percent of traffic is flowing), cameras could only make money if their tolerance threshold was very low, such as one or two miles per hour over the speed limit. Politically, this is not acceptable, nor will the courts support this kind of enforcement. The only option is to put the photo radar on roads with unreasonably low speed limits, and then make sure the limits stay low.

5) Ticket cameras do not improve safety.

Despite the claims of companies that sell ticket cameras and provide related services, there is no independent verification that photo enforcement devices improve highway safety, reduce overall accidents, or improve traffic flow. Believing the claims of companies that sell photo enforcement equipment or municipalities that use this equipment is like believing any commercial produced by a company that is trying to sell you something.

6) There is no certifiable witness to the alleged violation.

A picture may be worth a thousand words, but it may also take a thousand words to explain what the picture really means. Even in those rare instances where a law enforcement officer is overseeing a ticket camera, it is highly unlikely that the officer would recall the supposed violation. For all practical purposes, there is no "accuser" for motorists to confront, which is a constitutional right. There is no one that can personally testify to the circumstances of the alleged violation, and just because a camera unit was operating properly when it was set up does not mean it was operating properly when the picture was taken of any given vehicle.

7) Ticket recipients are not adequately notified.

Most governments using ticket cameras send out tickets via first class mail. There is no guarantee that the accused motorists will even receive the ticket, let alone understand it and know how to respond. However, the government makes the assumption that the ticket was received. If motorists fail to pay, it is assumed that they did so on purpose, and a warrant may be issued for their arrest.

8) The driver of the vehicle is not positively identified.

Typically, the photos taken by these cameras do not identify the driver of the offending vehicle. The owner of the vehicle is mailed the ticket, even if the owner was not driving the vehicle and may not know who was driving at the time. The owner of the vehicle is then forced to prove his or her innocence, often by identifying the actual driver who may be a family member, friend or employee.

9) Ticket recipients are not notified quickly.

People may not receive citations until days or sometimes weeks after the alleged violation. This makes it very difficult to defend oneself because it would be hard to remember the circumstances surrounding the supposed violation. There may have been a reason that someone would be speeding or in an intersection after the light turned red. Even if the photo was taken in error, it may be very hard to recall the day in question.

10) Ticket camera systems are designed to inconvenience motorists.

Under the guise of protecting motorist privacy, the court or private contractor that sends out tickets often refuses to send a copy of the photo to the accused vehicle owner. This is really because many of the photos do not clearly depict the driver or the driver is obviously not the vehicle owner. Typically, the vehicle owner is forced to travel to a courthouse or municipal building to even see the photograph, an obvious and deliberate inconvenience meant to discourage ticket challenges.