

Submitter: Lacy Brown
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB711

Chair Gorsek and Chair McLain, and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of SB 711, relating to the use of photo radar in highway work zones. I have a PhD in Civil Engineering, I am a licensed Professional Engineer in Oregon, and I am a certified Road Safety Professional. I specialize in transportation safety, and spend my days partnering with local, regional, and state agencies to reduce the risk of people being killed or seriously injured on our roadways.

SB 711 addresses the safety of a unique and vulnerable aspect of our road system. The number of people killed or injured in traffic crashes in Oregon work zones has continued to increase over the last decade. In 2022 (the most recent year of available data), 11 people did not make it home to their family because they were killed in a work zone traffic crash in Oregon(1). No matter where a crash occurs, the risk of death and serious injury increases when vehicle speeds increase. Work zones create a particularly hazardous environment where drivers are navigating complex and changing travel patterns at high speeds, very close to construction works who are unprotected. To allow people and goods to travel through Oregon safely, we must maintain and improve our roads and bridges. We have an equal responsibility to keep the people working on our roads safe from harm, and managing speeds is one way to do so.

Enforcement efforts continue to be one of the most effective ways to manage speeds and reduce the likelihood of severe outcomes in crashes. Automated enforcement options, like photo radar (also called speed safety cameras), have proven to be one of the most effective strategies available, and require fewer resources than other enforcement efforts (2). Amidst budget cuts and reduced labor forces, agencies across the state and nation continue to struggle to fund and staff traffic enforcement, even though it plays a critical role in public safety.

SB 711 expands the ability for ODOT to implement photo enforcement in work zones without additional burdens on the limited enforcement resources. It will allow ODOT to make better use of one of the few “tools in the toolbox” for effectively managing speeds. Not only does this maximize the ability for this technology to be implemented to improve safety, but it also frees up enforcement resources to better serve other traffic and public safety needs.

For these reasons, I ask for your support for SB 711. Thank you for your time and consideration.

References:

(1)<https://www.oregon.gov/odot/Data/Pages/Crash-Data-Viewer.aspx>

(2)<https://www.nhtsa.gov/book/countermeasures-that-work/speeding-and-speed-management/countermeasures>