

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

*District Department of Transportation*



Public Hearing on

B25-0422, the “Automated Traffic Enforcement Effectiveness (‘ATE’) Amendment Act of 2023”

B25-0425, the “Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility (‘STEER’) Amendment Act of 2023”

B25-0421, the “License Suspension Reform Amendment Act of 2023”

B25-0435, “Fraudulent Vehicle Tag Enforcement Amendment Act of 2023”

Testimony of

Sharon Kershbaum, Interim Director  
District Department of Transportation

Before the

Committee on Transportation and the Environment

The Honorable Charles Allen, Chairperson

&

Committee on Public Works & Operations

The Honorable Brianne Nadeau, Chairperson

Council of the District of Columbia

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

10:30 a.m.

John A. Wilson Building

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Room 500

Washington, D.C. 20004

Good morning, Chairpersons Allen and Nadeau, members of the Committees, and staff. My name is Sharon Kershbaum, Interim Director of the District Department of Transportation, commonly referred to as DDOT. I am here today to present testimony on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser on the following traffic enforcement bills:

- B25-0422, the “Automated Traffic Enforcement (‘ATE’) Effectiveness Amendment Act of 2023”;
- B25-0425, the “Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility (‘STEER’) Amendment Act of 2023”;
- B25-0421, the “License Suspension Reform Amendment Act of 2023”; and
- B25-0435, the “Fraudulent Vehicle Tag Enforcement Amendment Act of 2023”.

Improving traffic safety is DDOT’s top priority, and it is the first goal outlined in the District’s long-range transportation plan, moveDC. DDOT works diligently to implement various traffic calming measures, including road diets, curb extensions, traffic control signals, and speed humps. Enforcement also plays a critical role in mitigating dangerous driving. As such, DDOT is collaborating with other agencies and with Council on the Automated Traffic Enforcement Equity and Safety Task Force. This Task Force has done research to provide recommendations

on the District's ATE program and other moving violation policies, including the fine schedule and financial penalties for late payments.

As the Interim Director of the agency that operates the District's ATE program, I will focus my testimony today on the ATE Effectiveness Amendment Act of 2023. We are proud of our ATE program. In 2021, [we commissioned a study of the program](#), which yielded positive results. Across all twenty-nine studied speed camera locations, after 12 months of installation, speeding decreased overall, injury crashes fell by 30%, and overall citations dropped by one-third. We have also found that about 70% of cited vehicles only received *one* citation. Our cameras cite less than 1% of passing drivers, meaning that they have a 99% compliance rate. Put simply, DDOT's ATE cameras work, and they keep our streets safer.

DDOT welcomes new approaches to make our fines more equitable and ensure they are creating long-term behavior change. However, we have concerns about operationalizing some of the provisions in this bill. First, assessing points against a driver for ATE violations in the District would pose challenges based on how we operate our enforcement program today. Our current practices and capabilities are limited to collecting vehicle information. As such, we would need to assess points to the registered owner of the vehicle, who may not have been the driver at the time of the violation. To most fairly allow vehicle owners the ability

to appeal the citation on the claim that they were not the driver, DDOT would need to produce an image of the driver as part of the evidence package for adjudication.

Collecting these images would require DDOT to have cameras facing both the front and the back of the vehicle at every relevant ATE location: one to capture the driver, and one to capture the license plate. This would double the number of cameras required, as currently only one camera is deployed per location. Doubling the number of required cameras at each location would result in half as many speed and red light camera locations across the District. Given the demonstrated effectiveness of ATE cameras to reduce injury crashes and speeding, reducing the number of locations where cameras are deployed could have adverse impacts on traffic safety across the District. Additionally, DDOT has not yet had the opportunity to test and verify the capabilities of our existing cameras to capture clear images of drivers, which would be essential for a points-based system.

This bill also includes a requirement to publish unedited copies of traffic safety analysis worksheets, which are used by our team of expert engineers to recommend appropriate safety interventions, including the most effective placement for ATE cameras. We believe that shorter summary versions of these long and technical worksheets are more helpful and accessible to the public. This year, DDOT committed to providing worksheet summaries on our website, and we are currently building out a public-facing dashboard that will explain why each

proposed ATE camera location was accepted or rejected. We are working to make this dashboard available this fiscal year and we believe this will most effectively communicate the data contained in the worksheets.

We would like to defer to our partner agencies regarding this bill's towing and immobilization requirements, but we note that Traffic Control Officers (TCOs) focus on ensuring pedestrian safety and do not currently carry the necessary equipment to identify boot- and tow-eligible vehicles. Our priority is to allow TCOs and school crossing guards to focus on their primary responsibility: controlling the flow of traffic.

Finally, regarding the "Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility ('STEER') Amendment Act of 2023", we defer to our agency partners for any administrative implications that may arise from updating the definitions of reckless and aggravated reckless driving. However, DDOT requests clarity from Council about what specific rules it believes our agency shall publish that are necessary to enforce the provision.

To close my testimony, I would like to reiterate DDOT's commitment to improving traffic safety and equity in the District. We look forward to collaborating with Council in achieving these and other moveDC goals. Thank you

for the opportunity to testify today. I am available to answer any questions that you may have.