

AASHTO-AGC-ARTBA Joint Committee
2024 ARTBA Discussion Paper
“Revisiting Technology to Improve Safety in Works Zones”

Crashes in highway work zones continue to endanger project team members from the public and private sectors, law enforcement officers, and roadway users themselves. The National Work Zone Information Clearinghouse estimates a total of about 96,000 work zone crashes in 2022, resulting in about 37,000 injuries and 891 fatalities. Anecdotally, transportation agencies and industry have reported greater frequency of reckless driver behavior since the COVID-19 pandemic, including extreme speeding, distractions and impairment. Finally, increased transportation investment has resulted in a greater number of work zones in many states, along with their related risks.

As a strategy to reverse these trends, a growing number of states have authorized – or are considering – automated speed enforcement (ASE), also referred to as speed safety cameras (SSC). These devices detect speeding and capture photographic or video evidence of vehicles violating a set speed threshold. Agencies can use this technology to supplement more traditional methods of enforcement, engineering measures, and education to alter the social norms of speeding. Data from early adopters, such as Illinois and Maryland, show the benefits of their use.

Since ASE generally requires authorization in state law, it is useful for advocates around the country to share experiences, successes and challenges in enacting and implementing this policy. In about 20 states, public agency and industry partners have successfully detailed advantages such as improved worker safety; enhanced protection for motorists, their passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, and other roadway users; and reduced hazards for law enforcement officers and emergency responders. In addition, there are direct safety benefits in reducing traffic congestion that results from work zone incidents themselves.

At the same time, advocates must address points of opposition, including misconceptions that ASE:

- Primarily intends to generate revenue for the jurisdiction,
- Enables government invasion into personal privacy,
- Overloads the court system with less-important legal matters,
- Undermines the role of law enforcement officers; and
- Can be improperly deployed to target particular communities.

In their continuing efforts to promote the state-level consideration and adoption of ASE, the associations comprising the Joint Committee ask the following:

- If your state has successfully adopted ASE, what have been the results?
- If not, why have your elected officials chosen to defer or otherwise not approve ASE?
- How have advocates countered the arguments against ASE outlined above?
- What are some non-traditional coalition partners that can help advocate for ASE?
- Are there other emerging technologies worthy of consideration to improve work zone safety?