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MAYOR

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SB 855

February 27, 2020

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Matthew Stegman, Deputy Director of Government Relations
RE: SENATE BILL 855 - Baltimore City - Speed Monitoring Systems -
Interstate 83

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 854.

SB 855 authorizes the City of Baltimore to install a single automated speed camera along Interstate 83 within city limits.

Baltimore City is the only local jurisdiction in Maryland tasked with maintaining and operating an Interstate Highway, 6.7 miles of I-83 within Baltimore City limits, known as the Jones Falls Expressway (JFX). One of the earliest Interstate Highways built in the State of Maryland, construction of the JFX began in the 1950s. Today the JFX continues to serve as a vital transportation corridor for the Baltimore region, averaging over 140,000-weekday commuters during 2016, making it the busiest roadway under the jurisdiction of the Baltimore City Department of Transportation by far.

Unfortunately, the mid-century design of the JFX meant that a lot of safety standards that are available on most Interstates in Maryland are not present here. Shoulders are often not wide enough to safely allow for traditional speed enforcement measures, and turns are often sharper due to the roadway existing within the valley of the Jones Falls. The combination, along with a propensity for commuters to speed, has created a uniquely dangerous situation.

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The Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) reports that during a period covering January 1, 2018 through December 1, 2019 there were 687 collisions reported along the JFX. Of these, 546 were property damage accidents, 137 involved an injured person, and 4 were fatal. The JFX is patrolled by BPD, and each accident pulls finite first responder resources out of communities and pushes additional traffic into communities adjacent to the highway.

State authorization allowing for the installation of a speed camera on the JFX will undoubtedly make the corridor safer for commuters as it will incentivize drivers to obey the speed limit. Additionally, fewer resources deployed from the Baltimore City Police Department responding to crashes means more resources used in our neighborhoods to address crime. The authority sought through this bill is not unique to Maryland. The General Assembly gave Prince George's County expanded authority to install a speed monitoring system on Indian Head Highway to address unique and persistent traffic safety challenges along that roadway.

For the reasons above, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on SB 855.