

If speeding is not a problem, then what is?

For every death from	there are...
Bullying ⁴⁰	60 deaths from speeding
CJD ⁵¹	15 deaths from speeding
Gun crime ⁵²	12 deaths from speeding
Heron ⁵³	10 deaths from speeding
Domestic violence ⁵⁴	6 deaths from speeding
Knife attacks ⁵⁵	4 deaths from speeding
All murders ⁵⁶	1 death from speeding
Passive smoking ⁵⁷	1 death from speeding
Superbug MRSA ⁵⁸	1 death from speeding

In terms of the sheer numbers involved, speeding qualifies as both a police and public health priority.

Even when another cause is involved, speed will always aggravate the consequences. Road crashes may be classified as fatal, serious and slight but there is a big range within the serious injury category. Impact speed will affect the extent of brain injury and fractures, as well as the likelihood of a full recovery, permanent disability, or death.

Some have claimed that speed cannot be a problem since motorways have the safest record. But motor-

ways have restricted access and no junctions. Drivers separate and protect opposing vehicle flows and pedestrians and cyclists are not allowed on motorways. These are reasons why there are fewer collisions per kilometre travelled on motorways.

“Simple physics: A lump of metal going fast will hurt you more than one going slowly”
The Economist, ‘Speed kills. So why are speed cameras so controversial?’, May 8th 2004

1. “Speed is not a problem”
 Excessive speed is the most common contributory factor identified in fatal crashes. A recent Department for Transport study reported 28% of fatal crashes in 2003 and 30% in 2002 involved excessive speed⁴⁸. This is a conservative estimate since contributory factors are based on the limited information known at the time the crash is reported. This will be within days of the crash occurring and before any proper speed estimates have been calculated or witnesses or drivers formally interviewed. Speeding will need to be very obvious for a police officer to record it at this stage. Yet even this conservative approach finds speeding responsible for over 900 deaths each year, almost twice the number caused by drink driving⁴⁹.

www.slower-speeds.org.uk). The four most common arguments are summarised below.

6 Countering criticism

A small but vocal minority of motoring correspondents and lobbyists for the motor industry have

campaigning against the use of speed cameras. Most of the critics do not accept that speed is a problem, while a few agree speeding is a key factor but do not believe that cameras are an effective way of reducing speed. In 2003, the Slower Speeds Initiative and PACTS (Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety) published a comprehensive rebuttal to speed camera critics (www.pacts.org or www.slower-speeds.org.uk). The four most common arguments are summarised below.

Camera revenue

Of the £120 million collected in fines by safety cameras last year, £100 million was spent by SCPs on camera operations and related road traffic injury prevention³⁴. Only £20 million went to the Treasury, the equivalent of less than 17% of the total, a lower percentage than VAT. The DT spends over £1.2 billion on road safety, 11% of its total £11 billion budget³⁵. Meanwhile, crashes cost the country over £17 billion every year³⁶. The Safer Streets Coalition has recommended that all camera fines should be invested in road safety.

Much has been said about the revenue raising capability of speed cameras and four key points should be remembered:

1. Only law-breakers are fined, - to ‘the polluters pay’.
2. The revenue earned is very low. The 2002/2003 total camera fine income was less than 0.3% of legal motoring activities, less than 1% of tobacco taxes³⁷ and less than one-quarter of the £500 million paid to victims of uninsured motorists in 2004³⁸ or the £560 million spent on medical care for road crash victims in 2003³⁹.
3. Cost savings greatly outweigh the revenue generated. With enforcement costs of only £54 million and the value to society of crashes avoided at over £221 million in 2002/03, the benefit to cost ratio is 4:1⁴⁰.
4. Government does not fund support services for road traffic victims. While Victim Support receives over £30 million per year from the government to support victims of crime, road traffic victims are not included under their mandate⁴¹. RoadPeace has argued that camera fines should be invested in the support and rehabilitation of road crash victims, as is the case in Australia, which would redress the unfairness and remind drivers that speeding is not a victimless crime.

Under-investment

Many more cameras can be economically justified even by the motoring organisations. The Motorists Forum has recommended that the “implementation of road safety engineering schemes giving at least a benefit cost ratio of 2:1 over the whole life of the project should be encouraged”⁴². The last evaluation found that cameras had a 4:1 benefit cost ratio after just three years, while a 1996 Home Office study found that speed cameras had a 25 times investment return after five years⁴³.

True cost of speeding

Just before Christmas last year our 16 year-old daughter was knocked down by a speeding motorist estimated to have been driving at between 49 and 63 mph in a 30 mph zone. Her injuries were horrific. All over Christmas and the New Year period she lay unconscious in the local intensive care unit, her life in the balance. Against all odds she survived...The costs in both human and financial terms have been incalculable: It does not take much imagination to estimate the physical and psychological effects on our daughter. Plus the effects on our family and our friends, not knowing whether she’d make it through to the next day...Add to this the cost of her continued recovery, including a total of nine weeks in hospital, numerous outpatient appointments, seven operations so far, scans and drugs; one course of new antibiotics alone cost some £5000. Then there’s the police investigation, the ongoing procedures in both the criminal and civil courts, the costs of providing investigators when she had to sit her GCSEs from her hospital bed, the cost in terms of her father and I having to take extended leave from work. The list could go on...Speeding is a crime and if those who speed get caught, and have to pay the financial penalties, then so be it. The costs to us all of not using the available technology to prevent speeding will be far, far higher. The civil liberties arguments are spurious: if someone is speeding and seen by a police officer, why should it be any different if they are “seen” by a camera.

P. Jordan, mother of teenager seriously injured by speeding driver

*The guidelines for use of safety cameras have had perverse effects. Cameras can only be used if “there has been a site survey by a road safety engineer and there are no other obvious, practical measures to improve road safety along this stretch of road”. We cannot think of any other case where society as a whole is expected to bear the costs of lawbreaking, and effective law enforcement is only deployed as a last resort. In addition, safety camera partnerships are prevented from taking action against speeding traffic by artificial constraints. These mean that most cameras can only be operated once several people have been killed or injured. **The guidelines must be amended**”¹⁷*

concluded that:

RoadPeace and SSI are not the only ones who think the SCP restrictions are extreme and counter-productive. In their recent report on Traffic Law Enforcement, the House of Commons Transport Select Committee

It is worth remembering that over four times as many people are killed in road crashes than are murdered.

Children are also much more at risk from strangers behind the wheel than elsewhere: while on average, less than ten children are killed each year by strangers, 120 children are killed on the road¹⁶.

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Number of cameras

The number of cameras has been misreported by many who have confused operating (i.e. active or ‘live’) cameras with camera housings. It has been reported that a mere 1000 cameras are rotated between

6000 safety camera sites¹¹, thus an average of one in six cameras is active, but this ratio varies between the partnerships.

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