

## THE HUMAN COST OF A PUBLIC POLICY WHICH HINDERS AND PREVENTS MUNICIPAL POLICE FROM ENFORCING THE MAXIMUM SPEED LAWS IN PENNSYLVANIA

The latest *Traffic Safety Facts on Speeding* were published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in June 2015 using data collected in 2013. The NHTSA has two statistical measures of motor vehicle speeding within each state. One is “the number of speeding-related fatalities” and the other is “the percentage of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities.”

In 2013, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had the third highest number of speeding-related fatalities in the United States of America. (See Table 1) That same year, Pennsylvania also had the third highest percentage of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities in the nation. (See Table 2) There were four states which were on the top ten lists of both statistical measures of speeding-related fatalities for 2013. Pennsylvania was not only one of those states, it lead all four states in both statistical measures *making Pennsylvania arguably the worst state in the United States of America for speeding-related fatalities.* (See Table 3)

In its *Traffic Safety Facts on Speeding*, the NHTSA also publishes the number of *speeding-related fatalities by roadway function class* for each state. From the busiest roads to the least busy roads, the classes are: (a) interstate rural; (b) interstate urban; (c) non-interstate freeway and expressway; (d) non-interstate other principal arterial; (e) non-interstate minor arterial; (f) non-interstate collector; and (g) non-interstate local.

An analysis of the speeding fatalities in Pennsylvania by roadway function in 2013, shows the rural and urban interstates and the non-interstate freeways and expressways, *where the maximum speed limits are primarily enforced by Pennsylvania State Police using radar*, account for only 12.9 percent of the speeding-related fatalities. Conversely, on all other classes of roadways, *where municipal police, to varying degrees, enforce the maximum speed limits using speed-timing equipment that is inferior to radar and unusable on many roadways because of their slopes and curvatures*, the speeding-related fatalities were, on average five times higher. (See Tables 4 and 5)

While there may be a number of ways to quantify the cost in human life of a public policy that hinders and prevents municipal police from enforcing the maximum speed laws determined by the General Assembly of Pennsylvania to be safe speeds, the following is considered to be as good as any. It compares the percentage of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities in Pennsylvania, which is 45.53 percent, and asks the question how many fewer speeding-related fatalities would there need to be to bring the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania under the national average of 29.38 percent. *The answer is 277 lives.*

If the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania had 277 fewer speeding-related fatalities, it would have 931 total fatalities (1,208 - 277) and 273 speeding-related fatalities (550 - 277). This would result in a percentage of speeding-related fatalities to total fatalities of 29.32 (931/273) which is slightly less than the national average. *In 2013, the cost of a public policy which*

*hinders and prevents municipal police officers from enforcing the maximum speed laws is estimated to be 277 human lives and unknown related physical injuries and property damage.*

**Table 1**

| <b>STATES WITH THE HIGHEST<br/>SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES IN 2013</b> |                |                                    |
|--|----------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Ranking</b>   | <b>State</b>   | <b>Speeding-Related Fatalities</b> |
| 1  | Texas          | 1,175                              |
| 2  | California     | 961                                |
| 3  | Pennsylvania   | 550                                |
| 4  | Illinois       | 421                                |
| 5  | North Carolina | 413                                |
| 6  | New York       | 358                                |
| 7  | Florida        | 344                                |
| 8  | Missouri       | 308                                |
| 9  | South Carolina | 306                                |
| 10   | Arizona        | 290                                |

**Table 2**

| <b>STATES WITH THE HIGHEST<br/>PERCENTAGES OF SPEEDING-RELATED<br/>FATALITIES TO TOTAL FATALITIES IN 2013</b> |                |  |
|---|----------------|--|
| <b>Ranking</b>  | <b>State</b>   | <b>Percentage Of Speeding-Related<br/>Fatalities to Total Fatalities</b> |
| 1   | New Hampshire  | 48.89  |
| 2   | Wyoming        | 45.98  |
| 3   | Pennsylvania   | 45.53  |
| 4   | Hawaii         | 43.14  |
| 5   | Alaska         | 43.14  |
| 6   | Illinois       | 42.48  |
| 7   | Washington     | 41.51  |
| 8   | Missouri       | 40.69  |
| 9   | South Carolina | 39.90  |
| 10  | North Dakota   | 39.86  |

**Table 3**

| <b>STATES WHICH WERE IN THE TOP TEN LISTS FOR BOTH<br/>HIGHEST SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES AND HIGHEST PERCENTAGES<br/>OF SPEEDING-RELATED FATALITIES TO TOTAL FATALITIES IN 2013</b> |                |                                    |                                       |
|---|----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|   |                |                                    | <b>Percentage Of Speeding-Related</b> |
| <b>Ranking</b>  | <b>State</b>   | <b>Speeding-Related Fatalities</b> | <b>Fatalities to Total Fatalities</b> |
| 1   | Pennsylvania   | 550                                | 45.53                                 |
| 2   | Illinois       | 421                                | 42.48                                 |
| 3   | Missouri       | 308                                | 40.69                                 |
| 4   | South Carolina | 306                                | 39.90                                 |

**Table 4**

| <b>SPEEDING-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA<br/>BY ROADWAY FUNCTION CLASS IN 2013</b> |                               |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b><u>Function</u></b>   | <b><u># of Fatalities</u></b> | <b><u>% of Fatalities</u></b> |
| Collector  | 134                           | 24.4                          |
| Minor Arterial   | 124                           | 22.5                          |
| Local  | 113                           | 20.6                          |
| Other Principal Arterial   | 108                           | 19.6                          |
| Rural Interstate   | 36                            | 6.6                           |
| Urban Interstate   | 20                            | 3.6                           |
| Freeway/Expressway   | 15                            | 2.7                           |
| Totals   | 550                           | 100                           |

**Table 5**

| <b>SPEEDING-RELATED TRAFFIC FATALITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA<br/>BY ROADWAY FUNCTION CLASS IN 2013<br/>FROM LOCAL ROADS TO RURAL INTERSTATES</b> |                               |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b><u>Function</u></b>   | <b><u># of Fatalities</u></b> | <b><u>% of Fatalities</u></b> |
| Local  | 113                           | 20.6                          |
| Collector  | 134                           | 24.4                          |
| Minor Arterial   | 124                           | 22.5                          |
| Other Principal Arterial   | 108                           | 19.6                          |
| Freeway/Expressway   | 15                            | 2.7                           |
| Urban Interstate   | 20                            | 3.6                           |
| Rural Interstate   | 36                            | 6.6                           |
| Totals   | 550                           | 100                           |

