

## Small towns may share speed camera

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Barnesville and Poolesville leaders are looking to implement speed cameras on their upcounty streets to help slow down drivers.

The controversial cameras, which advocates say are lifesaving tools, snap pictures of cars exceeding speed limits by at least 10 miles per hour. Vehicle owners are then mailed tickets.

“We’re at the point where we’re looking very strongly into this,” Barnesville commissioner Luke Fedders said at Poolesville’s town meeting earlier this month after a presentation by a private ticketing company, Redflex Traffic Systems.

Jay Specter, a Redflex representative, said the citations would be reviewed and ultimately issued by Montgomery County police. The revenue would go to the municipal governments, which either would split them with Redflex or pay the company a flat fee of \$8,000 a month per camera. Violators receive no points on their driving record for the \$40 citations.

“This system costs you nothing,” Specter said. “There’s no upfront cost.”

Barnesville and Poolesville officials have both said they are most interested in a mobile van system that would use digital imaging to catch speeding drivers and could be deployed in either town.

It would require a trained operator, whose salary would be paid by the towns at a minimum of 30 hours a week, Specter said.

“No promises, but I’d like to see the paperwork,” Poolesville Commissioner Eddie Kuhlman said during the Oct. 2 meeting.

One possible obstacle in the plan may be securing the cooperation of the county police.

Outside law enforcement authority is needed to implement the citations when a town does not have its own police force, Specter said. In Bowie and College Park, Redflex violations are reviewed by Prince George’s County Police, he said.

Poolesville Town Manager Wade Yost said Monday that the county attorney was reviewing the situation and expected to issue an opinion of such an arrangement soon.

“It’s up in the air whether the county will even enter into an agreement with us,” Yost said.

Poolesville Commissioner Tom Dillingham asked whether an existing county program allowing municipalities to hire off duty officers might provide an avenue to police review of the speed camera photographs. Yost said he would look into the possibility.

Last year Barnesville spent about \$9,000 on off-duty county officers who policed traffic in the 65-home town, Fedders said. “It made a difference but it wasn’t enough.”

At that time Dillingham said the cost of the arrangement seemed “reasonable.” No

one has so far speculated on how much the ticketing system would potentially bring in additional revenue.

Specter told town officials that the fact that some problem streets are county and state roadways would not affect the violations.

Poolesville Parks Board member George Deyo suggested that signs warning of the photo speed enforcement be posted at entrances to town as an additional deterrent.

“The idea isn’t to hide this,” Specter agreed. “If we get them to slow down and save lives, that’s the goal.”

According to the company’s Web site, Redflex Traffic Systems had contracts with 90 U.S. cities as of March.

Montgomery County already has a Red Light Enforcement Camera Program and is developing a speed enforcement program.

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