

Comment from Pamela Bertone

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I have been a paramedic for over 20 years working largely in the rural setting. Currently, I am an EMS Education Program Director at a community college in Virginia. I do not speak for the community college, only for myself. According to data from NHTSA as cited by the following source, (citation 1 in attached document), speed is the most common cause of fatalities. Yet, the foci of much of the efforts cited in the document to which I'm replying is more on the other top causes, namely driving under the influence and distracted driving. We must take greater effort to go after the most common cause, and the cause that most of us are guilty of (and thus don't want to influence) - SPEEDING. Changing the laws regarding camera placement is essential. Since we are advocating for fewer traffic stops, and many police jurisdictions have gone that way, why not utilize those officers as mobile cameras. If we install cameras on commonly driven highways, motorists will know when to modify their driving to fool the system, If we utilize police officers as mobile cameras and write citations digitally, without traffic stops, that might serve as a deterrent.(Citation 2) However, that doesn't address the issue of where most fatalities occur- on rural roadways, where undivided two- lane roads, which are often curvy with poor visibility, occur. (<https://bencrump.com/faqs/where-do-most-car-accidents-happen/>) My husband worked as a paramedic in Fairfax county for 20 years, I worked in Culpeper County, VA as a paramedic for 5 years. I ran far more fatalities than he did, despite the shorter window of time because of this factor. (Citation 3) This article cites a person claiming that leadership will dictate /inform safe driving practices which will influence drivers; a premise that is frankly ridiculous. The PEW institute examined the responses of a great many states with rural roadways and their efforts following appropriate research. Many of them refer to infrastructure changes such as widening the shoulders of the road, installing rumble strips at the median and sides of the lanes, removing trees that are too close to the roads, and installing lighting in the median, as well.(Citation 3) Rural crashes that occur at intersections could be avoided by installing roundabouts. Fatalities are almost non-existent in roundabouts. People can run red lights and stop signs-it's nearly impossible to deliberately speed through a roundabout. (Citation 4) Many of these interventions, namely rumble strips and roundabouts will likely interrupt another significant cause of fatalities: distracted driving.

I'd like to comment specificall on which entities should receive funding for EMS- for profit companies have no business in claiming funding. Traditionally, companies advocate for their paying lower taxes but are eager to claim tax money when it's available. This is an intolerable hypocrisy. Additionally, let them dip into their profits for this purpose. I'm not interested in my tax dollars funding private industry which traditionally pays their people horribly while their CEOs get wealthier, especially as they continue to dramatically underpay their employees. When a private entity promises to save a county or city money, you can bet it's because they've cut corners inappropriately. Ask nearly any person who works for a private ambulance company in Virginia, off the record, and they will give you their opinion. In this respect, I have only anecdotal data. Apart from that, we have a most recent example of large and profitable for-profit entitites gobbling up government funding while smaller companies who needed the funding missed out. This is the most crucial piece that NHTSA must be mindful of when administering grants-establishing that the money goes where the most need is. A CEO claiming he has 1500

jobs to "save" or "protect" as justification of receiving money is no more important than a CEO of a small company with 15 employees; if we must give money to private ambulance companies, let's look at their CEO's financial portfolio and tax returns before we hand over money. The burden of improving one's business should be on the business, not on the taxpayer. Period. One of the greatest tragedies is when Congress finally agrees (enough) to create massive spending for its citizens and its infrastructure only to have it disbursed too rapidly and without proper care to ensure the people who need it can get it, and to more frequently ensure those who don't need it can't take it. There are far too many business owners at the table and not enough employees to weigh in. Is this something you can address? I hope so.