



Automatic speed enforcement in Finland

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In 2004, Finland extended its automatic speed enforcement from 280 to 8 kilometres. Risto Öörni of the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, explains the costs and the benefits

Automatic speed enforcement in Finland is operated by the police and is based on cameras installed on poles along main roads and mobile semi-automatic speed enforcement installed in police cars.

The system measured only point speeds until August 2010 when the first system with enforcement based on travel time measurements was put into use.

Until 2006, Finnish law required the police to identify the driver before issuing a warning notification or a fine. At present, the police can issue a fine and send it to the owner of the vehicle who can then either pay the fine or appeal against it. In the latter case, the police carry out normal pre-trial investigation for the offence.

The most common speed limits on the Finnish main roads are 80, 100 and 120 km/h. The coverage of automatic speed enforcement has been increased in the country, especially on road stretches or road links with high numbers of accidents.

Costs and benefits

In 2001, a governmental decision was made to extend the coverage of automatic speed enforcement to 800 kilometres in Finland. The socio-economic benefits of the increase in enforcement based on the basis of the literature study, impact estimates (made by Mäkinen 2001), and unit cost estimates by the Finnish Road Administration. The minor errors present in the original calculations (Öörni 2004) have been corrected.

When estimating the costs of increased enforcement, the initial investment related to the installation of cameras was estimated to be about US\$2.93 million. The annual operating costs related to increased enforcement were estimated to be of the same magnitude as the initial investment if speeding offences less than 20 km/h are handled by means of administrative process instead of criminal procedures involving the police. If speeding offences are handled according to criminal procedures, the costs were estimated to be slightly higher.

The estimate for the annual operating costs includes the operation and maintenance of cameras, the hours needed for enforcement and costs to the police for investigating speeding offences if necessary.

The increase in enforcement described above was estimated to reduce the number of road fatalities by 4 (3.7) in a year. With the unit cost values published by the Finnish Road Administration (US\$2.69 million for a fatality), the annual socio-economic benefits were estimated to be US\$10.7 million.



The benefit-cost ratio was 1.0 over a 10-year lifetime. The increase in the benefits and cost per kilometre was

After 2004

The calculation in 2004 when automatic traffic control was introduced to cover new road sections. The average speed increased and the average speed has been maintained since 2009. This has led to a reduction of the traffic flow enforcement or

References

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