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## Right wing pressure group perpetuate anti-speed camera myth

9 July 2010

With one hand on their wallet and one foot on the accelerator, the right wing pressure group, the Tax Payer's Alliance (TPA), is perpetuating their anti-speed camera myth.

The effectiveness of speed cameras in reducing collisions, casualties and deaths has been demonstrated for both the UK<sup>1</sup> and elsewhere<sup>2</sup>. Six years ago, Professor David Begg, the chair of the Commission for Integrated Transport warned that the debate about this was over. He added that critics had been proved "totally and conclusively wrong" and that those that continue to make dishonest claims would **"end up with blood on their hands"**.<sup>3</sup>

The TPA continues its attack on speed cameras regardless. It has repeated again its claim that they are an ineffective safety measure and only exist to raise revenue. They seek to justify this by pointing to the overall rate of decline in road casualties relative to the number of passenger kilometres travelled, which slowed between 1991 and 2007 - a period in which the number of speed cameras grew significantly.

RoadPeace believes that this TPA analysis is inappropriate and both biased and botched in its application.

It is inappropriate. The relative significance of speed cameras to the overall road safety picture can be judged from a 2000 report of the Transport Research Laboratory<sup>4</sup> which suggested that "measures for speed reduction" (of which speed cameras were a leading but not the only component) were expected to contribute only about a fifth of the anticipated reduction in the decade to 2010. As TPA only consider national casualty figures, the impact of safety cameras is inevitably lost in the noise from other factors.

It is biased. Using the TPA methodology, the overall casualty rate in 2008 fell by 9% (and the corresponding death rate by 18%). Yet their analysis (conveniently) omits the data from 2008 and 2009.

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<sup>1</sup> PA Consultants (2005) The national safety camera programme Four-year evaluation report.  
[http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/nscp/nscp/coll\\_the\\_national\\_safety\\_camera\\_programme\\_evaluation\\_report.pdf](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/speedmanagement/nscp/nscp/coll_the_national_safety_camera_programme_evaluation_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Wilson C, Willis C, Hendrikz JK, Bellamy N (2009) Speed enforcement detection devices for preventing road traffic injuries (Review). The Cochrane Collaboration. Published by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

<sup>3</sup> <http://cfit.independent.gov.uk/pn/040615/index.htm>

<sup>4</sup> TRL (2000) The numerical context for setting national casualty reduction targets. TRL Report 382. ISBN1-84608-381-8

It is also biased in the division of the period of study. Of the 5,562 camera sites<sup>5</sup> available in March 2007, only 13% had been established by 1996 and 35% by 2000. Safety cameras (speed and red light—TPA hates both) became more widespread after 2001 when hypothecation was introduced and those providing the cameras could retain the fines. But it was in the earlier period (1991-2000), with fewer cameras, that the rate of decline in road casualties fell below the previous trend. In the period after 2001, the rate of decline was similar to that in the 1980s.

It is botched. The analysis assumes that the expected reduction in casualties (based on the trend) will be a constant number, rather than a constant rate. Looking at rates, rather than numbers avoids the conclusion that casualties will eventually become negative. It also provides a more balanced perspective on recent achievements: the average rate of decline in the 1979-990 period was 3.6%; in the period since 2001, when the bulk of the safety cameras were introduced, it was 4.6%.

In this broadside against speed cameras the TPA show their true colours: if their concern were really taxes, they would see the revenue raised from camera fines as a welcome shift of the tax burden from the innocent to those who break the law and endanger the lives of others; despite their reams of statistical tests that supposedly back up this press release, they lack either respect for or knowledge of data analysis and are unconcerned with evidence.

Beneath a banner of public interest and dressed in the trappings of science, TPA pursue an agenda of self interest and obfuscation. The price will probably be paid by others but there will be blood on their hands.

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*Notes to Editors:* Founded on the road danger reduction principle which seeks to achieve a more sustainable, civilised and healthy environment, RoadPeace believes the duty of care lies with motor vehicle owners and drivers and more needs to be done to reduce the danger they pose, especially to children, older people, pedestrians and cyclists.

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<sup>5</sup> As distinct from road cameras, which are generally installed in only a small fraction of the available sites.