Fight Back With Facts

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Cambridgeshire County Council
Att.
Graham Hughes,
William Hunt
Richard Lumley
Cllr Matthew Shutter
by email

re Agenda no 4, forward plan 2018/058 and your September 11th and 13th meetings, and specifically, your £500k to £600k proposal to upgrade your "safety" cameras

Dear Sirs,

Having read the above Agenda over the weekend I am writing to you **as a matter of urgency** to suggest that you delay any approval and contract decisions until you have seen the compelling evidence I can provide that **not only Cambridgeshire's "safety" cameras but all such cameras across the country cause more collisions than they prevent**.

I anticipate of course that you will find my assessment surprising as it conflicts with almost all other analyses including those mentioned by your Agenda, so it would seem best if I start with the following points:

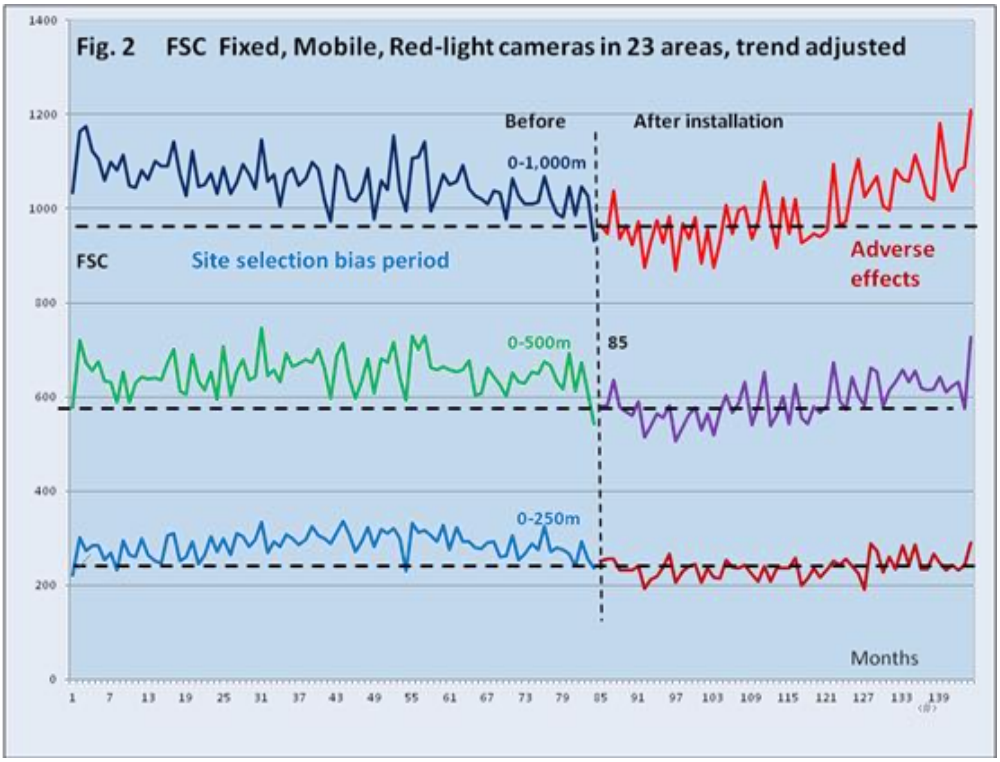
- My detailed analysis, soon to be published as widely as possible, soundly based on tens of thousands of hours study of data and methods, explains not only that almost all other analysts are very seriously mistaken but also, in considerable detail, **why** they are.
- The reductions they claim far exceed the proportion of collisions or injuries that involve speeding in the first place – and are therefore not remotely credible.
- Your sections 2.11 and 2.12 state that the effectiveness of your cameras has been assessed using Professor Allsop's "*four time period method (2013)*", apparently by Professor Allsop himself.
- For the record, that *four time period method* was first devised by independent analyst Dave Finney who used it to analyse Thames Valley's fixed and mobile cameras and found that (a) **both types, far from reducing collisions, increase them** and (b) all the reductions claimed by Thames Valley Police actually **occurred due to Regression to Mean, in the year or so between the site selection periods and camera installation.** See http://speedcamerareport.co.uk/
- Section 2.1.2 of the Agenda states that "……*it is recognised that this method gives a conservative estimate of effect as a peak in collisions (the site selection period) is removed from the data set*" - but that is the reverse of the truth. It is of course essential that the abnormal numbers of collisions during site selection periods be excluded, to avoid falsely-high estimates of pre-installation normality. But It is because (unlike the Finney original) the Allsop version of the method consistently fails to exclude those abnormal numbers, thus finding benefit where Finney found only adverse effects. In other words, **the results are not *conservative* but *much exaggerated*, if not totally spurious.**

- Section *4.3 of the Agenda,* ***Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications*** include these words: "*Safety cameras attract significant public scrutiny and it is important to note the work undertaken to establish the effectiveness of existing camera deployment across Cambridgeshire in putting forward the recommended".* I wholeheartedly agree than legislation should be in place to reinforce the duty of care we all owe one to another, whether public servants or not. In this particular context, it seems to me, that the above statutory responsibility requires that proper consideration be given to the compelling evidence I can provide, that your cameras and all others cause many more collisions than they prevent.
- As you will appreciate, I cannot provide in this one initial communication all the evidence I have available but I would be happy to travel to see you as soon as convenient and at my own expense, to review it with one or more appropriate persons.
- Before I can analyse your Appendix 1 data I need clarification of what seem to be very strange numbers indeed in Columns headed **A** and **B**. They are stated to be:

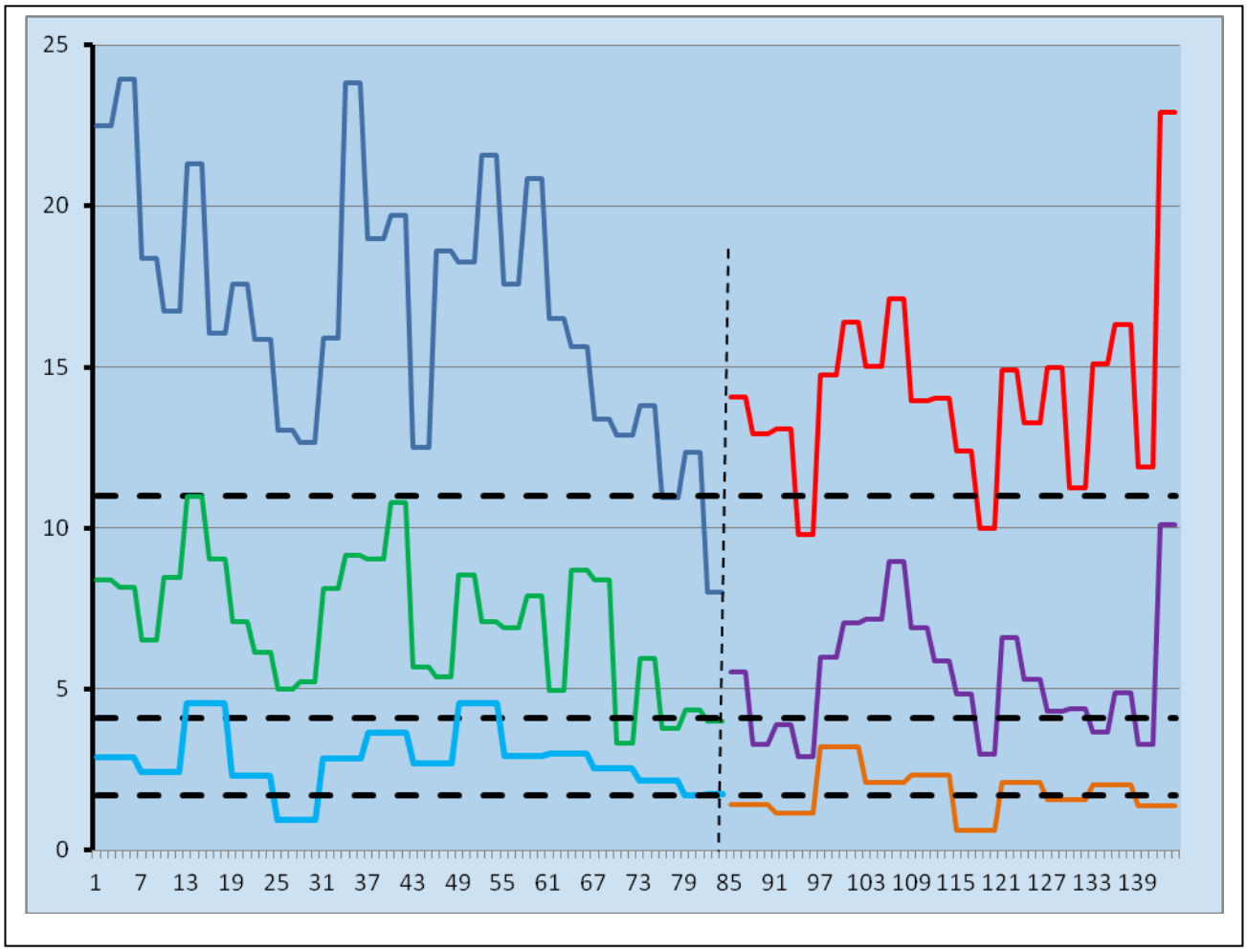
Graphs based on Stats19 data

One of the many fundamental errors of almost every camera analysis to date has been that the limited amount official data they use, for the most part, covers **only 500m either side of the cameras and no more than the width of the road.** This means that the data fails to include any of the large number of widely-recognised adverse effects of cameras that can (and indeed do) extend well below those narrow boundaries. In general too, analyses cover only 3 years after installation.

My analysis uses instead the **much larger volumes of readily-available Stats19 data** for collisions that occur within 1km of each camera. All the graphs of results show consistently and clearly that there are **no significant reductions within 250m radius, but very significant increases within 500m and especially within 1km.** Here are just two of the many examples I have available:



Cambridgeshire and PB, Trend-adjusted Fatal and Serious Collisions from 7 years before installation to 5 years after installation in month 85, when colours change.



Data are quite volatile because the numbers are small

Dark Blue	**-**	**within 1km, before installation**	**Red**	**–**	**within 1km, after installation**
Green	**-**	**within 500m, before installation**	**Purple**	**–**	**within 500m, after installation**
Light Blue	**-**	**within 250m, before installation**	**Orange**	**–**	**within 250m, after installation**

3-month averages to reduce volatility of the 1,000m and 500m graphs

6-month averages to reduce volatility of the 250m graph

Comments

Site selection bias is clear, and extends way back before installation because of installation delays - no other analyst takes this fully into account.

There is clearly little effect within 250m radius but also clear are the **substantial adverse changes within 250m and 500m radius.** All of the large numbers of graphs available show the same effects – significantly worse trends after camera installation, especially from 250m radius outwards and increasingly so later on.

I do not of course expect you to take accept my results at face value at this stage but I am fully prepared to justify them to you in detail at the earliest opportunity. As it happens a friend who shared a flat with me way back in the early 1960's still lives in Cambridge and I had been thinking of coming up to see him and his wife in the near future, so a visit to discuss these figures would be welcome in any case.

I appreciate also that you do not know me from Adam, but the following true story seems to me to be relevant:

Some years ago a documentary about scientific inventions during WW2 interviewed an elderly gentleman who claimed to have been in charge of assessing new ideas for winning the war. He said that **as 99% of ideas brought to him were mad, he rejected them all so that he would be right 99% of the time**. We will never know how many potentially useful inventions he blocked, how many days or months sooner the war would have ended or how many lives and limbs would have been saved had he not rejected them.

Almost 58 years after I first came to Cambridge as an engineering research student, and after running my own specialist electronics company for 30 years, **I have never been as certain of anything as I am that my analysis is correct** – indeed, Professor Allsop himself wrote to me that he cannot fault my methods. Bearing in mind the numbers of deaths and injuries and scale of spending involved, I suggest that it must be worth an hour or two of someone's time to review my results.

I await your prompt response.

Sincerely

Idris Francis