

# Old Bethlehem Pike Traffic Enforcement Summary

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## Background

In 2010, numerous residents signed a petition concerning traffic issues along Old Bethlehem Pike. One hundred and seventy residents signed this petition voicing concerns over speeding vehicles, the amount of traffic which travels along the roadway, as well as litter being thrown onto the roadway and adjoining properties. The Pennridge Regional Police Department was tasked to address these issues by the Pennridge Regional Police Commission.

Old Bethlehem Pike is an asphalt, two-laned roadway which travels primarily north / south and has a posted speed limit of 35 mph. Pennridge Regional Traffic Safety Officer, Timothy Maloney conducted a traffic study along Old Bethlehem Pike and reported that in a seven day period, 36,000 vehicles travel the roadway. The average speed was 43 mph with an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of 47 mph. The JAMAR device (a radar device which determines and records vehicular speed) indicated that peak enforcement times / heavy traveled times were between 4:00pm and 6:00pm during the week and noon to 2:00pm on the weekends.

The department conducted numerous speed enforcement details in marked patrol vehicles, utilizing Accutrak and VASCAR speed timing devices. The department also placed “phantom vehicles” along the roadway during peak times as indicated by the JAMAR study. Lastly, the department used its speed board and speed trailer to help slow traffic.

During a meeting of the Pennridge Regional Police Commission, the department was asked to continue enforcement details and provide a six month report of activities. Below is a summary of the strategy used by the department and the activities completed during the previous six months as best retrieved for the department’s records management system.

## Summary

During the previous six months, the department took an active role in attempting to control speed along Old Bethlehem Pike. Two areas dealt with when addressing concerns of speeding in our municipalities were enforcement and education / awareness. With this philosophy, the department prepared for active enforcement by refreshing the speed enforcement lines along Old Bethlehem Pike for better visibility and conducted a speed limit sign survey to insure that the roadway was properly posted for enforcement.

Dedicated traffic enforcement details are details specifically designed to apprehend violators. Officers in marked patrol cars park off of the roadway and use the speed timing lines (distance) and an Accutrak and VASCAR speed timing device (time) to calculate speed. In Pennsylvania, local law enforcement cannot cite speeding motorists for traveling less than 10 miles an hour below the speed limit. The department used this as a guideline for stopping speeding vehicles, stopping at 10 mph over the posted limit or 45mph.

During the six month period, *officers conducted 136 dedicated traffic enforcement details at various locations along Old Bethlehem Pike. Enforcement efforts yielded 57 traffic citations and numerous written and verbal warnings for other motor vehicle code violations.* Officers reported that during the peak enforcement times, traffic is heavy and that more vehicles could have been stopped than they could get to.

In addition to enforcement activities, the department attempted to create omnipresence in the area. By using phantom vehicles prominently parked at locations where officers typically conduct speed enforcement details, motorist tended to slow their speeds without an officer being in the vehicle. The department also used the *speed board/speed trailer 13 times* in the 6 month period. The board and trailer were placed in the area of posted speed limit signs and kept at the location for approximately 1 week. The devices flashed the oncoming vehicles' speed, helping make the drivers more aware of their driving behavior.

## Results

At the end of the six month period, the department conducted another JAMAR traffic study on Old Bethlehem Pike. The JAMAR device was placed on Old Bethlehem Pike, obtaining data from both north bound and south bound traffic. Again, the properly posted speed limit is 35 miles per hour. A total of 28,634 vehicles traveled through the established zone with a majority of vehicles (65%) traveling between 36 and 45 miles per hour. A total of 22,239 vehicles traveled below 45 miles per hour. The mean (avg.) speed was found to be 41 miles per hour while the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed was 46 miles an hour. Peak travel times during the week were found to be between 5:00pm and 6:00pm. The weekend peak travel time was between 11:00am and 1:00pm.

In comparing the initial JAMAR traffic study and the "post-enforcement" JAMAR traffic study, the following was noted:

- Total vehicular traffic *appears to have been reduced.*
- The mean speed *decreased from 43 miles per hour to 41 miles per hour.*
- The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed *decreased from 47 miles per hour to 46 miles per hour.*
- The "peak enforcement" times remained relatively consistent.

## **Continued Enforcement Efforts**

It is the intention of the department to continue similar enforcement/awareness efforts throughout the year. In the event that additional Highway Safety Grant funding becomes available, the department should be able to take part in several enforcement details. If no funding is available, the department will continue with dedicated patrols and speed details when available. The Phantom Vehicle, speed board and speed trailer will still be used as well as the completion of additional JAMAR traffic studies to make sure that speeds do not increase throughout the remainder of the year.

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