

**TESTIMONY OF
PHILADELPHIA POLICE COMMISSIONER KEVIN J. BETHEL
BEFORE THE PENNSYLVANIA SENATE MAJORITY POLICY COMMITTEE
ON DETERRING AGGRESSIVE DRIVING**

Good morning, Chair-member Argall and Vice Chair-member Picozzi and other members of the Senate Majority Policy Committee. My name is Kevin Bethel, and I am the Police Commissioner for the City of Philadelphia. First, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify here today to discuss the issue of aggressive driving in Philadelphia and our efforts to prevent these dangerous behaviors.

Since day one of the Cherelle L. Parker administration, the directive has been clear: public safety is not limited to addressing violent crime alone. It must also include a strong and consistent focus on quality-of-life enforcement because the conditions that impact daily life in our neighborhoods often contribute to broader issues of safety and disorder.

That vision was formalized through Mayor Parker's Executive Order 1-24, which established a comprehensive agenda for addressing both crime and the quality-of-life concerns that matter most to our residents. In direct response, I implemented a 100-day plan that aligned our department's priorities with that vision, ensuring that our officers are not only focused on crime reduction, but also on the proactive enforcement of issues that erode the sense of safety in our communities.

As part of that approach, beginning in 2024, we made aggressive driving, illegal car meetups, and the unlawful use of ATVs and dirt bikes a core focus of the department. These are not minor issues. They create dangerous conditions on our roadways, disrupt our neighborhoods, and have a direct impact on both public safety and quality of life.

To directly address illegal car meetups, illegal ATVs and dirt bikes, since March 21, 2024, Patrol Operations has been actively engaged in a sustained, weekend enforcement strategy. We have deployed dedicated Car Meet/ATV Details in both ROC North and ROC South every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night.

- In 2024, this resulted in 45 weekends of enforcement and 135 dedicated Car Meet/ATV Details.
- In 2025, we expanded to 52 weekends and 157 details.
- Year-to-date in 2026, we have already conducted 38 details across 13 weekends.

These operations are specifically designed to disrupt illegal car meetups, address nuisance vehicle behavior, and enforce traffic laws in real time. Their impact is evident not only in enforcement activity, but also in a measurable reduction in large-scale meetups across the city.

To date, these efforts have resulted in significant enforcement outcomes, including 728 car meet locations disrupted, 9,774 car stops, 400 arrests, 2,107 moving violations, 179 live stops, 35 ATV/dirt bike confiscations and 189 Nuisance Vehicle violations issued. Our focused

commitment continues to drive efforts aimed at reducing nuisance vehicle activity and improving overall roadway conditions.

Further, through the work of the Investigative Bureau and the creation of the Car Meet Investigation Group, we have taken a strategic investigative approach targeting organizers and repeat participants. As a result, regular car meet organizers are increasingly avoiding Philadelphia, choosing instead to relocate activity to neighboring states such as New Jersey and Maryland. Notably, since September 2024, there have been no meetups that meet the threshold of a large-scale “takeover.”

Car Meet Investigative Group’s investigative results to date include:

- 14 car meetups investigated
- 60 vehicles seized
- 50 arrests for offenses including Risking a Catastrophe, Riot, Criminal Mischief, and Conspiracy
- 255 nuisance vehicle violations issued, representing an estimated \$700,000 in fines

Turning to aggressive driving overall, Patrol Operations has approached this issue with the same level of focus and intensity as our car meet/ATV enforcement strategy. Through a sustained and proactive approach, we have implemented targeted enforcement initiatives along high-risk corridors, including Broad Street, Bustleton Avenue, Castor Avenue, Cottman Avenue, Ogontz Avenue, Henry Avenue, Aramingo Avenue, Island Avenue, and Harbison Avenue.

These efforts are designed to identify and address aggressive and reckless driving behaviors in real time and have been supported by coordinated public messaging and press conferences to enhance visibility, increase public awareness, and strengthen deterrence.

Since 2023:

- Car stops increased from approximately 138,000 to over 210,000 in 2025
- Live stop investigations nearly doubled
- Traffic Violation Reports more than doubled, increasing from about 18,000 to over 52,000

This reflects a clear change in enforcement culture and a proactive, data-driven approach to addressing aggressive driving and illegal vehicle activity. In 2026 alone, through the end of March, we have already conducted over 57,000 car stops and issued more than 16,000 traffic violations, demonstrating this sustained enforcement momentum.

Building on this momentum, we are continually evolving and refining our tactics to better serve our communities. For example, feedback from multiple community meetings has highlighted concerns regarding modified and excessively loud mufflers, and in response, we are expanding our enforcement efforts to address these issues. While citation numbers in this category have historically been low, early 2026 data already show increased enforcement activity, reflecting a growing focus in this area.

In addition to these enforcement efforts, I want to acknowledge the significant role that the General Assembly has played in supporting roadway safety through the authorization of Automated Speed Enforcement. Senator David Argall served as the prime sponsor of Senate Bill 172 of 2017, which first introduced Automated Speed Enforcement into Pennsylvania law. This legislation amended the Vehicle Code to permit automated speed cameras and established a pilot program limited in time and geography to Roosevelt Boulevard in Philadelphia.

As you well know, Senate Bill 172 required comprehensive data collection and reporting such as crash statistics, speed data, and overall safety impacts, to evaluate the program's effectiveness. The resulting data provided clear evidence of meaningful safety improvements and served as a critical foundation for Act 38 of 2023 (House Bill 1284), which removed the sunset provision and allowed for the expansion of speed cameras to additional corridors within Philadelphia.

The impact of this legislation is both measurable and significant. In 2019, prior to ASE implementation, Roosevelt Boulevard experienced 567 reportable crashes. Speed cameras were activated in August 2020, and by the end of that year, reportable crashes dropped to 351. By 2025, that number fell even further, to 282. Most recently, Broad Street, long known for high crash rates associated with reckless driving, saw speed cameras implemented in November 2025. While this is still fairly new, since then we have observed a significant reduction in reportable crashes in the last two quarters, the lowest we have seen in over 5 years. These results speak for themselves, and I want to thank Senator Argall for his leadership in advancing legislation that has directly contributed to safer roads for Philadelphians.

These efforts combined are part of a broader, strategic commitment to public safety. Guided by Cherelle Parker's vision for safer streets and an improved quality of life, we will continue to pursue innovative, data-driven approaches to addressing aggressive driving and illegal vehicle activity. For that reason, I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to be here today, along with my team, to contribute to this important discussion. Thank you.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.