

ENFORCEMENT

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Money maker?

According to the financial newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, in Italy alone, municipalities collect €1.7 billion in speeding fines. And, as Paolo Sodi points out, many people wonder if this represents a ploy to replenish the often-empty municipal coffers. Here he argues there is a lot more to it than that

WORDS BY **PAOLO SODI**

Road transport systems have contributed enormously to the development of most countries in the world. By improving people's ability to access education, employment and health care and enhancing the efficiency of businesses to provide goods and services, such systems have resulted in a number of positive economic and social benefits. However, there are also adverse consequences.

Rapid motorisation has frequently been accompanied by corresponding increases in fatal road traffic deaths and injuries, while many urban areas now face the additional challenges of increasing levels of air pollution and associated rises in respiratory

diseases and increasing congestion, which in turn are linked to reduced levels of physical activity and other health consequences. The World Health Organisation's document "Managing Speed", published in 2017, highlights how speed has a positive effect on mobility in terms of reducing transport times, but has a negative impact on road safety, influencing both the probability of a traffic accident and the severity of its consequences.

Deadly effect

The damages deriving from road insecurity are known and huge: Approximately 1.25 million people die every year on the world's roads as a result of road traffic crashes. They are the number one cause of death among

young people aged 15–29 years. As well as the public health impact of road traffic injuries, the disproportionate impact of road traffic crashes on the younger age groups makes them an important development problem: road traffic crashes are estimated to cost countries approximately three per cent of their GDP, with the economic losses in low- and middle-income countries equivalent to five per cent of GDP.

All this has had a global response. In 2011 the United Nations declared a Decade of Action for Road Safety, which had the target of stabilising and then reducing the number of global road traffic deaths. In September 2015, this goal was augmented by a much more ambitious target within the Sustainable Development Goals 1 which, within its health



Enforcement

The answer consists of the triple E: Engineering, Education and Enforcement. Speed management measures should first be reflected in road design. Setting speed limits appropriate to the function of each road, by implementing appropriate training and information campaigns is a further important step in reducing speed. Finally, law enforcement is essential to make speed limits effective. Indeed, where countries have changed their speed limits, but have taken little action to enforce them, there have been very limited benefits. The enforcement of speed limits takes different forms in different contexts and includes manual and automated approaches.

Evidence has shown that enforcement through the use of automated speed control is most-effective at reducing speeds. A number of police forces around the world have adopted enforcement methods based upon an

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goal, calls for a reduction in the absolute number of road traffic deaths and injuries by 50 per cent by 2020.

Speed factor

Speed is at the core of the road traffic injury problem. More particularly, excessive or inappropriate speed is a key risk factor for road traffic collisions, deaths and injuries. Excessive speed is when a vehicle exceeds the posted speed limit for a particular road, while inappropriate speed is when a vehicle travels at a speed that is unsuitable for the prevailing road, weather and/or traffic conditions but within the speed limits.

Excessive speed is a problem common to all countries. A study among OECD countries showed that typically, 40-50 per cent, and up to 80 per cent, of drivers were driving above the posted speed limits, while a similar proportion of vehicles travelling at excessive speed has been found in low- and middle-income countries.

Speed is a contributing factor in the severity of all road traffic crashes. As average speeds rise, so too does the likelihood of a crash resulting in injury. If a crash does happen, the risk of death and serious injury is higher at higher speeds. A five per cent cut in average speed can result in a reduction of 30 per cent in the number of fatal road traffic crashes.

While those travelling in vehicles are much more likely to be injured in both frontal and side impact collisions when travelling at high speeds, the relationship between speed and injury severity is particularly critical for road users who are “vulnerable”,



ie pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists, as well as for children and the elderly. An adult pedestrian has less than a 20 per cent risk of dying if struck by a car travelling below 50 km/h, but almost a total risk of dying if hit at 80 km/h.

What is the contribution of speed to the dead and injured on the road? In high-income countries, speed contributes to about a third of deaths on the roads. In the United Kingdom, for example, speed is responsible for 28 per cent of all road traffic crashes resulting in deaths, while this figure is 30 per cent in Australia. In low-and middle-income countries this proportion is likely to be greater, given the higher proportion of deaths among vulnerable road users.

“anywhere, anytime” approach to deter all speeding on the network. The message is clear: speeding is illegal and unacceptable behaviour, and at odds with the interests of the community.

The financial penalties of speed cameras are therefore the result of a violation of the law, and should be reinvested in road safety measures, as required by Italian Highway Code, perhaps to repair the well-known potholes, of which the roads of the world are scattered, like good intentions.

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