

# Executive Summary: Automated Traffic Enforcement Systems

Jurisdictions enforce their traffic laws in two main ways: traditional traffic enforcement, with police officers issuing tickets to violators in person; and traffic cameras, or Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) systems, which use automated cameras to capture violations, and mail tickets to the vehicle owner. D.C. and 27 states allow some form of ATE system.

For a more information on any of the following topics please see the full Automated Traffic Enforcement Systems report on the Budget Office’s website.

## Moving Violation Penalties

All states and D.C. issue fines for moving violations, but the fine amount varies by jurisdiction; severity of the violation; where it occurred; and the number of previous infractions. D.C. and 40 states also issue demerit points for certain police-captured moving violations, but only Arizona, California, Nevada, and Virginia attach demerit points to ATE-captured violations. In addition, Alabama and Missouri allow local jurisdictions to issue points. The number of points issued for a violation vary considerably between states.

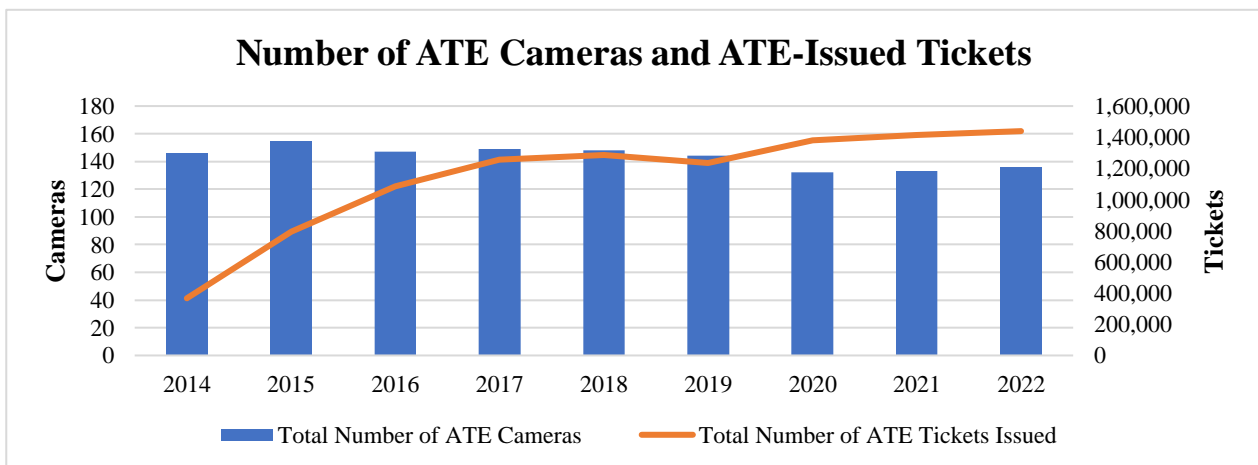
## Safety and Equity Impacts of ATE Systems & Demerit Points

Most studies have concluded that ATEs reduce speeding and red-light violations as well as the number of crashes within ATEs’ immediate vicinity. However, the evidence for ATE systems’ impact on driver behavior farther away from a camera is mixed. ATE programs’ impact on racial equity is also ambiguous, with some analyses reporting greater racial equity, while others found them to either exacerbate inequity or maintain the status quo.

Most studies have determined that point systems reduce traffic violations, accidents, injuries, and fatalities. However, there is mixed evidence of the longevity of these improvements, with some studies suggesting lasting benefits and others finding benefits lasting no more than 18 months after the system is introduced. It should also be noted that several studies detailed the challenges in determining the effectiveness of demerit point systems in isolation as they are typically used with other complementary measures, such as police enforcement or public awareness campaigns.

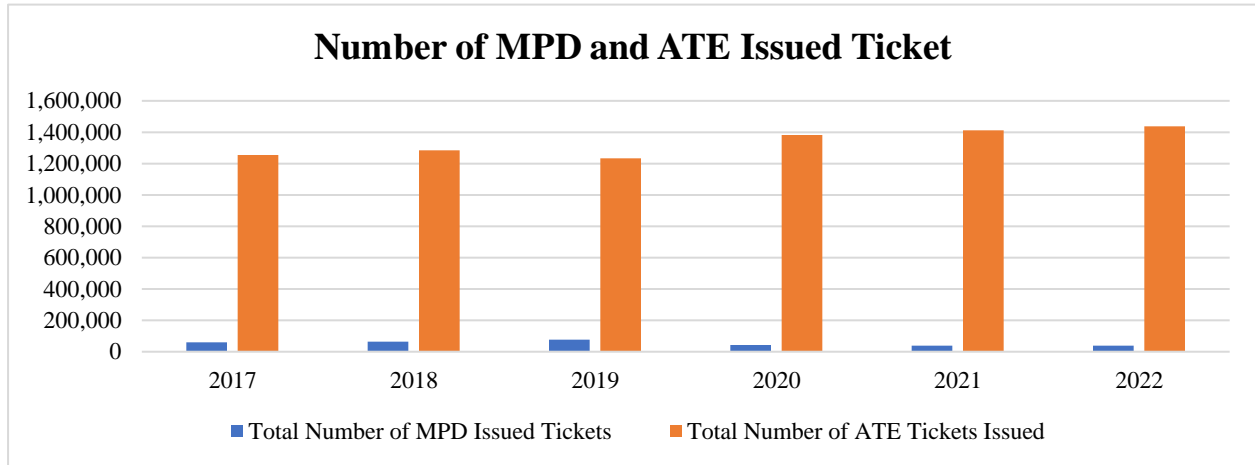
## The District’s ATE System

The number of ATE tickets has continued to grow despite the number of cameras decreasing over the past few years. Between FY 2014 and FY 2022, the number of ATE-issued tickets increased by 300 percent.



As of November 2023, there were 145 ATE cameras in D.C. (109 speed cameras, 29 red light cameras, and seven stop sign cameras). The District plans to install 342 new ATEs in FY 2024. The impact of ATEs is not felt equally across the District. Generally, the areas with the fewest cameras and fewer tickets per resident are whiter and wealthier, while the areas with more cameras and more tickets per resident have more residents of color and more residents with lower incomes.

Historically, the volume of ATE-issued tickets drastically exceeds the volume of MPD-issued tickets for moving violations. In 2022, the number of ATE-issued tickets (1.4 million) was nearly 40 times higher than the number of MPD-issued tickets (36,949). Moreover, since 2020, the number of MPD-issued tickets has steadily decreased as the number of ATE-issued tickets has increased.



Both ATE-issued and MPD-issued tickets require the payment of a fine, but only MPD-issued tickets result in points being assigned to a driver’s license. An individual’s license cannot be suspended for an ATE-detected violation. D.C. has reciprocity agreements with Maryland and Virginia to require drivers to pay and be assigned points for tickets issued by police officers, but not for ATE-issued tickets. Maryland and Virginia drivers account for the largest share of tickets, paid fines, and outstanding fines. Since January 2000, more than three million ATE-tickets, totaling \$841 million in fines and penalties, are outstanding.

