



Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts

PRESS RELEASE

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Hon. Fortunato N. Perri, Sr.
Administrative Judge
Philadelphia Traffic Court

Philadelphia Traffic Court Sees Banner Year Amid New Safety Initiatives and Collection Procedures

Philadelphia, July 24, 2002 C Philadelphia Traffic Court Administrative Judge Fortunato N. Perri announced today that new initiatives and effective collection techniques enhanced safety and yielded record citation disposition and revenue growth in recently completed Fiscal Year 2002.

A number of traffic safety initiatives were launched successfully during the last fiscal year, which ended June 30. The efforts resulted in traffic safety improvements that benefit all Philadelphians

More drivers responded to citations during the last fiscal year, producing significant Traffic Court increases in revenue. In fact, **Guilty Pleas** were received in connection with 61,653 citations. Critically, **Not Guilty Pleas** in an additional 278,382 citations were heard and adjudicated by the Traffic Court in Fiscal Year 2002.

The dramatically improved citation response and collection rate benefited city and state treasuries. Revenue collected at Traffic Court was at an all-time high of \$23.6 million C a nearly 40% increase from the previous high of \$15.8 million in Fiscal Year 2001.

Working with the Philadelphia Office of Administrative Review and its vendor, ACS State and Local Solutions Inc., Traffic Court revamped the way it had been doing business with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

As a result, daily information is now transmitted electronically to PennDOT with requests to immediately suspend the driving privileges of drivers who fail to respond to citations, and to

suspend, or re-suspend, the driving privileges of drivers who default on payment plans established with Traffic Court. Drivers no longer may enter into payment plans, make a minimal payment, obtain a restoration of driving privileges, and then fail to make continued payments.

If you make an agreement to pay, you must make all the payments or you lose your driver's license again and you won't drive until all of your fines are paid in full," Judge Perri said.

Traffic Court requested PennDOT to suspend driving privileges of 130,463 individuals during the last fiscal year.

As a result of this program, and an aggressive series of collection notices, the response rate for drivers receiving citations for motor vehicle violations has increased an astounding 30% in one year. The increase has been particularly robust for Philadelphia residents who in the past have been reluctant to respond to citations.

A response includes any violator who pleads guilty by paying the citation, enrolling in a payment plan, or requesting a trial by pleading not guilty and posting the determined collateral.

Judge Perri is particularly proud of his initiative and support of an aggressive effort by the Philadelphia Highway Patrol to rid area highways of unsafe trucks or those operated by unsafe drivers.

Traffic Court has also enlisted the Philadelphia Sheriff's Office to assist its Court Enforcement Officers to serve arrest warrants on individuals who habitually ignore traffic citations. This combined with a program to file judgment liens in the First Judicial District's Office of the Prothonotary has improved the overall response rate and fines collected.

The court's efforts are enhanced by our cooperative agreements with other city and state agencies that have led to this year's successes," Judge Perri said.

With the onset of City-Wide Live Stop on July 1, 2002, Judge Perri expects continued success in both safety and the collection of fines in Fiscal Year 2003.

Finally, Judge Perri announced a new initiative designed to simplify the payment of traffic citations for the public. The Philadelphia Traffic Court has unveiled the **Traffic Court Citation Online Payment System** which allows violators to pay their Traffic Citations through the Internet, using a credit card. The **Traffic Court Citation Online Payment System** is available through the First Judicial District's Website, at <http://courts.phila.gov>.

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