

# The Political Cycle of Road Traffic Accidents\*

Paola Bertoli

University of Economics, Prague

CERGE-EI Fellow<sup>†</sup>

Veronica Grembi

University of Milan

University of Economics, Prague

This draft: November 2018.

## Abstract

Road traffic accidents often mean lost productivity and medical expenditures. We explain trends in traffic accidents as a function of the political cycle using municipal data from Italy. We show that during municipal election years, the accident rate increases by 2.2%, with a 2.5% increase in the injury rate but no effect on the fatality rate. The effects are stronger in the two quarters prior the quarter in which the election is held, when the electoral campaign is intense, and in the second quarter after the election, when the elected mayor takes office. We argue that this is the result of a decrease in ticket rates during election years, as the expenditures on traffic police increase. Our results are robustly driven by the municipal political cycle defined in different ways, and their magnitude and direction are not explained by spillover effects between municipalities. Proximity to a national police station reduces the impact of local elections on injury rates.

*JEL Classification:* H70, H75, D72

*Keywords:* Road Traffic Accidents, Political Cycle, Municipalities, Elections

---

\*We would like to thank Giulia Mugellini (Polis-Lombardia) and Diego Gasperini (Ufficio di Statistica della Regione del Veneto) for providing us with the traffic accident data on Lombardy and Veneto, as well as The Linh Bao Nguyen for her excellent work as our research assistant.

<sup>†</sup>CERGE-EI, a joint workplace of Charles University and the Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Politických veznu 7, P.O. Box 882, 111 21 Prague 1, Czech Republic.