**Prompt**:

In an attempt to improve highway safety, Prunty County last year lowered its speed limit from 55 to 45 miles per hour on all county highways. But this effort has failed: the number of accidents has not decreased, and, based on reports by the highway patrol, many drivers are exceeding the speed limit. Prunty County should instead undertake the same kind of road improvement project that Butler County completed five years ago: increasing lane widths, resurfacing rough highways, and improving visibility at dangerous intersections. Today, major Butler County roads still have a 55 mph speed limit, yet there were 25 percent fewer reported accidents in Butler County this past year than there were five years ago.

Write a response in which you discuss what specific evidence is needed to evaluate the argument and explain how the evidence would weaken or strengthen the argument.

**Essay**: 7 48 – 8 30 (42 min)

The author’s contention in the prompt is for Prunty County to utilize the same improvement as Butler County in their highway. The cites this due to the ineffective results of Prunty County’s previous attempt at lowering the speed limit and the alleged decrease in the accidents in Butler County over the past 5 years. However, in order of the argument to hold, three pieces of evidences need to be evaluated.

How do we know that the number of accidents has not increased?

First, it seems as though the author prematurely concludes that the lowering of the highway speed limit didn’t have any effect on the number of accidents. It is not stated how or when such a conclusion came to be. It could be the case that the author is referring to a period of time that immediately follows this change. In the case of Butler County, it is evident that it took a period of 5 years for the effects of their highway improvement to assimilate. Perhaps, many drivers are not aware of this change and assume the speed limit is still 55 miles per hour. This could also explain the highway patrol reports that many drivers are exceeding the speed limit. If the scenario above is true, then the author’s claim is unwarranted.

Second, it is necessary to evaluate the correlation between the reported fewer accidents in Butler County to improvement project that was conducted 5 years ago. It is possible that the reduction could be attributed to an external factor that is independent from the highway alterations. Perhaps a change in demographics or a natural inclination for the Butler Country residents to follow the law is responsible for the recent decrease in reported accidents. It could also be that the accidents didn’t decrease as the authenticity of the reports could be questionable. If either of these situations is valid, then the author’s contention does not hold water.

Finally, even if the accidents in Prunty County were not decreased due to decreasing the highway speed limit, the author assumes that implementing a similar course of action as Butler County would yield the same result which may not necessarily be true. Perhaps Prunty County and Butler County have very different populations and highway conditions. It could that Butler County is a relatively sub-urban area not abound by vehicles where Prunty County may be part of a large city with abundant traffic prone to accidents. It could also that Prunty County is heavily populated which increases the chances of people who overlook the law unlike Butler County which may not be as populated. If any of the aforementioned reasons prove true, then the strength of the author’s argument is reduced.

To conclude, the author’s argument, as it stands now, is flawed and need to be re-evaluated. This can be done by conduction a well-planned study to determine the cause of accident trends in both the counties so that an appropriate course of action may be pursued that is warranted by data which would increase its efficacy.