
OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT BUDGET ANALYST REPORT

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Item Number: 332

Red Light Photo Enforcement

OVERVIEW

On Tuesday, November 13, 2007 the City Council is being asked to approve the selection of American Traffic Solutions (ATS) as the vendor for the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program. In addition, the City Council is asked to approve a three year contract with ATS that is not to exceed \$4.5 million for the term of the contract. The contract also includes two option years to renew once the original contract expires.

The purpose of the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program is to prevent red light violations and reduce the possibility of collisions that may result from running red lights. The current program is administered by the Engineering and Capital Projects Department (E&CP) – Transportation Engineering Operations Division. An outside vendor is responsible for installing and maintaining the cameras, and processing the photos. The San Diego Police Department – Traffic Division is responsible for reviewing the violations and issuing the citation. The program is intended to be cost neutral to the City with the funds necessary to administer the program budgeted in the E&CP – Transportation Engineering Operations Budget. For Fiscal Year 2008, 1.00 position and \$1,527,571 in expenditures are budgeted. The majority of the \$1,527,571 is for contractual obligations.

The Current Red Light Photo Locations are as follows:

- Balboa Avenue at Gerald Griffin/Terry Bennett (Between I-805 & Ruffner Road)
- College Avenue at College Grove Drive
- 10th Avenue at “A” Street

- Black Mountain Road at Mira Mesa Boulevard
- La Jolla Village Drive at Towne Center Drive
- 54th Street at Montezuma Avenue
- 60th Street at Imperial Avenue
- 32nd Street at Harbor Drive
- Mission Bay Drive at Garnet Avenue
- Grape Street at North Harbor Drive
- Aero Drive at Murphy Canyon Road

FISCAL/POLICY DISCUSSION

Update on the Change in Grace Period Approved by the City Council on July 18, 2006

On July 18, 2006 the City Council approved the reduction of the grace period for the program from 0.5 seconds to 0.1 seconds. The reason given for the reduction of the grace period was that the program was not an effective deterrent in red light violations and accidents with the grace period set at 0.5 seconds. As pointed out in the Mayor's November 7, 2007 report to the City Council (Report No. 07-183), with the change in the grace period to 0.1 seconds the program is now experiencing a 4% reduction in red light violations at red light photo locations and a 62% decline of red light running accidents.

Grace Period is the time between the light turning red and the activation of the camera.

Additionally, with the grace period reduced to 0.1 seconds the program is now trending towards being fully cost recoverable.

When approving the reduction of the grace period in July of 2006 the City Council directed the Mayor's staff to do the following:

- Present reports bi-annually to the Public Safety & Neighborhood Services (PS&NS) Committee on the status and effectiveness of the program including the change in grace period.
- Return to the City Council in one year to analyze the impact of the changes to the program.
- The addition of any new intersections to the program shall be brought before the City Council for approval.

As of November 2007 the PS&NS Committee has not been updated on status of the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program. The Mayor's November 7, 2007 report to the City Council (Report No. 07-183) does contain brief information on the current status of the program and the impact of changing the grace period but does not include information on the long-term plan for the program or the identification of new intersections.

American Traffic Solutions Inc. Contract

The current vendor contract expires in December 2007. If approved, American Traffic Solutions will assume the maintenance of the program in December. The paragraphs below highlight the difference between the current contract and the proposed contract with ATS.

Current Contract

Currently, the City is charged a fixed monthly fee of \$4,670 per site for maintenance and service. To add additional sites the City is charged \$150,000 for installation costs. ***Under the current contract the City owns the Red Light Photo Enforcement equipment and infrastructure.***

ATS Contract

If approved, the Contract with ATS will require the City to pay a fixed monthly fee of \$3,750 per month for the 11 existing sites. For new sites ATS will charge a fixed monthly fee of \$5,195 with no cost for installation. ***A major difference from the current contract is the equipment installed and used at new sites will be leased by the City.***

An improvement in the ATS contract from the previous vendors is the inclusion of performance measures tied to quality and timeliness of response to the City. Examples of the performance measures included in the contract are:

- Quality of photos used as evidence for citations.
- Time required by the contractor to complete notice of violations.
- Credit against the City's monthly fee if a site is not capable of recording violations for more than forty-eight (48) hours.

It should be noted that the IBA was not able to identify in the Mayor's November 7, 2007 report to the City Council (Report No. 07-183) or the backup material provided in the Council's docket a discussion on the benefits of changing the City's policy from owning the Red Light Photo Equipment to leasing of the equipment. Due to the lack of information the IBA offers the following questions:

- What are the economic benefits to leasing the Red Light Photo equipment instead of purchasing?
- What happens to the leased equipment once the ATS contract expires? Will the City have to install new equipment or find another vendor to provide leased equipment? What is the impact to the program if the equipment owned by ATS is removed?

CONCLUSION

The Red Light Photo Enforcement program is designed to deter violations, prevent accidents, and change behavior. With the change in grace period from 0.5 to 0.1 seconds the running of red lights and accidents is being reduced and the program is trending towards becoming cost neutral to the City. ***However, the IBA has concerns with approving the new contract with ATS when a discussion on purchasing or leasing of equipment for future sites has not occurred.*** The IBA also recommends that bi-annual reports be made to the PS&NS Committee on the current status and the long-term plans for the program including information on future sites. This is consistent with the direction given by the City Council in July of 2006 when approving the change in grace periods.

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