

**OFFICE OF INDEPENDENT BUDGET ANALYST
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
MEMORANDUM**

No. 06-15

DATE: July 13, 2006

TO: Honorable Council President Peters and Members of the City Council

FROM: Jeff Sturak, Deputy Director, Office of the Independent Budget Analyst

SUBJECT: Red Light Photo Enforcement

Item 331 on the City Council docket of July 18, 2006 requests the authorization to reduce the grace period for the Red Light Photo Enforcement program from 0.5 second to 0.1 second. Additionally, with the approval of the Fiscal Year 2007 budget in June, \$1,522,000 was included in the Engineering and Capital Projects Department's budget to maintain the existing eight Red Light Photo locations and add an additional seven locations for a total of fifteen. These expenditures are offset by \$926,000 in revenue. The \$926,000 in revenue is based on the current 0.5 second grace period.

Background

The purpose of the Red Light Photo Safety Program is to prevent red light violations and reduce the possibility of collisions that may result from running red lights. The funds associated with this program are required to pay the capital costs and on-going maintenance costs associated with the program. The current program is administered by the Engineering and Capital Projects Department - Transportation Engineering Operations Division. An outside vendor is responsible for installing and maintaining the cameras, and processing the photos. Once the photos are processed they are sent to the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) for review. The SDPD - Traffic Division reviews the violations and issues the citations. Under the current contract the vendor receives a flat monthly fee for its services. The chart below shows the difference between the program cost and revenue with or without the grace period delay.

	With 0.5 second delay or W/O delay	Cost	Revenue
8 sites (Current)	With 0.5 Delay	\$865,000	\$820,000
15 sites	With 0.5 Delay	\$1.5 Million	\$926,000
15 sites	W/O Delay	\$1.5 Million	\$1.1 Million

Based on information provided in the Engineering and Capital Projects Department's Report to Council, the current policy is that if a red light is run at an intersection that has a Red Light Photo Enforcement camera within the first 0.5 second a citation will not be issued. With the current grace period 65% of the red light violations are not issued a citation.

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The national average reduction in violations for red light photo enforcement programs are 40%. Currently, the average number of red light running violations in San Diego has not changed.

The current Red Light Photo Locations are as follows:

- 10th Ave @ A Street
- 32nd St @ Harbor Dr.
- Black Mtn Rd @ Mira Mesa Blvd
- La Jolla Village Dr @ Towne Centre Dr.
- 54th St @ Montezuma Rd
- 60th St @ Imperial Ave
- Garnet Ave @ Mission Bay Dr.
- Grape St. @ Harbor Dr.

City staff is currently working on identifying the locations for the additional seven Red Light Photo Enforcement Cameras.

Recommendations

The Red Light Photo Enforcement program is designed to deter violations, prevent accidents, and change behavior. Based on the information provided by the Engineering and Capital Projects Department, the City of San Diego is not experiencing a reduction in red light violations while other jurisdictions are experiencing up to a 40% reduction in violations. Based on this information, the IBA recommends approval of reducing the grace period from 0.5 second to 0.1 second with the following caveats:

- The change in grace period and the location of the Red Light Photo Enforcement Cameras are made very clear to the citizens of San Diego. This should include information in local newspapers outlining the change in the grace period. This should be done well in advance of the change to each location. The Engineering and Capital Projects department staff should be commended for the public outreach programs that they have already undertaken to educate the citizens of the City on the program.
- Quarterly reports should be made to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee on the status and effectiveness of the program including the change in grace period.
- Any increased revenue above what is budgeted in the Fiscal Year 2007 budget should be deposited into the General Fund Unallocated Reserve.