

## **RED LIGHT CAMERAS**

From a presentation by Mayor David Brummel, January 20, 2010

Much has been made lately in newspapers about the use of red light cameras to enforce traffic laws, with a good deal of heated rhetoric, including proposals by some legislators, that would limit or remove the authority of municipalities to use this important tool.

Imbedded in all the opinions, arguments, figures and suggestions on this topic there is a decisive fact: RED LIGHT CAMERAS REDUCE RED LIGHT VIOLATIONS BY 40-50 PERCENT, AND REDUCE INJURY CRASHES BY 25-30 PERCENT.

This is not a claim made by municipalities or by the purveyors of the technology.

RED LIGHT CAMERAS REDUCE RED LIGHT VIOLATIONS BY 40-50 PERCENT AND REDUCE INJURY CRASHES BY 25-30 PERCENT is the conclusion of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Red light camera enforcement works. Red light camera enforcement improves safety. That should be the end of the debate. But for many of the most vocal opponents, there seems to be a concern that municipalities are actually enforcing traffic laws – and they want us to stop doing that. They don't want to pay a fine when they violate state statutes that were enacted by the Illinois General Assembly.

Furthermore, there are many misconceptions and misunderstandings about the use of red light cameras.

Let me explain how our community uses this technology.

Apparent violations captured on camera are first reviewed by the red light camera vendor to look for situations that clearly are not appropriate for a citation. Those that pass this initial review are forwarded to our PD, where they go to our designated police sergeant to be scrutinized again. This final review is no different than what a police officer in the field would do: decide to cite a driver or not, based on the law, while taking into account circumstances and context, and applying the officer's best judgment.

This is not just Warrenville's policy. Other DuPage municipalities follow the same, stringent but fair approach to issuing citations, with results similar to ours.

In the past eight months, our red light camera vendor identified 90,424 potential violations in the City of Warrenville. Of these, we issued citations for 4,679 based on the police sergeant's review – 5% of the number of violations that were eligible for citations according to the company. If this process were solely about revenue, as many critics contend, it seems fair to point out that these numbers would be significantly different.

Accidents caused by red light violators have a huge impact on a municipality. Not only is the intersection shut down for a long period of time, causing traffic problems, a majority

of our police force must respond, preventing them from addressing other public safety issues in the community. In addition, these accidents can often result in severe injury, disability and even death.

For those who might think that they have been ticketed unfairly, there is a process. In Warrenville, individuals can contest a violation via mail or make an appearance at our regular adjudication hearings, held once a month at City Hall. It's simple, inexpensive, takes little time, and legal representation is not necessary. Violators have an opportunity to review their violations online as well.

The "big brother" argument concerning this issue seems weak at best. Red light cameras activate only as a vehicle crosses the stop bar when the light is red. Examples of cameras that run constantly, found liberally in every community, are in stores, shopping center parking lots, ATMs, office buildings and businesses -- but we've heard of no legislators attempting to ban these.

It is our experience that red light cameras are doing exactly what they are supposed to do: they are decreasing violations, thereby enhancing safety at our intersections, with our violations continuing to trend downward each month.