

**INTEROFFICE MEMO**  
**MINNEAPOLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
**CODEFOR UNIT**

217 South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street  
Minneapolis MN 55401

(612) 673-3587 office  
(612) 673-3069 fax  
gregory.reinhardt@ci.minneapolis.mn.us



**To:** Public Safety & Regulatory Services Committee

**Cc:** Chief William P. McManus

**From:** Lt. Gregory W. Reinhardt

**Date:** 08/25/04

**Subject:** PS & RS Overview for Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems

---

**Recommendation:** The City Council receives and approves recommended ordinance and the Police Department's plan to use Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems within the community.

**Presenters:** Lt. Gregory W. Reinhardt-Minneapolis Police Department, Mary Ellen Heng-Minneapolis City Attorneys Office, and Mark Etzbach- Industry Consultant.

**Goal:** Increase traffic law compliance and reduce accidents.

**Department's Intent:** Chief William McManus " The purpose of using red light cameras is not to punish people. It is prevent accidents and save lives. The very presence of the cameras helps reduce the chance of accidents even occurring in the first place.

**Background:** Each year there are approximately 14,000 accidents in Minneapolis. Of these (accidents) nearly 3,100 persons reported injuries. Last year, there were 17 fatal accidents.

Accidents as a result of red light violations are particularly dangerous. These types of accidents often involve broadside impact, where occupants have the least amount of protection. These collisions lead to serious injuries and /or deaths, extensive property damage, and high insurance costs.

Most certainty, traffic accidents have a economic impact to victims, but also to the greater community. Each year the National Safety Councils (NSC) sets accident cost figures based upon the prior year's data. Using the 2002 formula established by NSC the total economic lost for the citizens of Minneapolis in 2002 is **\$131,400,000** (MN DPS 2002).

Traffic accidents as the result of red-light violation are not merely a Public Safety issue but should be also considered a Public Health issue. Reduction in such accidents, may reduce rising health care costs and the strain of providing trauma care centers to treat traffic accident caused injuries

**Enforcement:** Recently the Department increased the size citywide Traffic Unit. This was an effort to keep our streets safe and secure. The officers in this unit have performed in nothing short of an exemplary fashion. But budget impacts and rising violent crime in neighborhoods has force competing needs on these officers' services. Tradition traffic enforcement alone is not enough to detect violators. The traditional response to red light violations is an officer observes, chases and cites violators. This technique oft times hazardous and or expensive. Despite the efforts of all members of the Department, citizens are still being injured and some lives are lost.

**Increase Compliance:** The Department proposes to increase compliance to traffic laws, reduce red light violations, reduce traffic accidents, and injuries/deaths via the implementation of Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems. These systems, commonly known as red-light cameras, will be strategically place throughout the city at intersections identified as having a high occurrence of traffic accidents and/or related injuries. It is expected that once the Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems are in place, that violations and accidents at non-designated intersections will also decline.

**Identify Intersections:** The Office of Traffic and Parking Services Division, of the Department of Public Works, issues a monthly report indicating top 20 accident intersection within the last 4 years, 12 months, and current year. Red light semaphores control some of these intersections. The report details incident of occurrence, number of crashes, injuries and/or deaths. This report is based upon the approximate 6,900 traffic accidents reported to the Minneapolis Police Department in the last 12 months. Additionally, there are nearly 7,000 other accidents that are reported to the State of Minnesota via a self-reported MN State Accident Report. Data from these two sources can be examined to determine which intersection are the most traffic accident-prone. Traffic Engineering will also be required to determine the exact characteristics of each identified intersection.

**Stakeholders:** The implementation of Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems will impact other partners in the city and criminal justice system. The introduction of a new ordinance to enforce red light violations has broad public policy implications. It is important to identify and involve partners in this effort to ensure cooperation and coordination. Some of the stakeholders, but not limit to are:

- Citizens
- Media
- City Attorneys Office
- Department of Public Works
- City Council
- Hennepin County Violation Bureau
- Hennepin County Bench
- Vendors/contractors
- Minneapolis Police Department

**Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems:** Red-light cameras are in use in at least 21 states in the US. Cities include New York, San Francisco, Phoenix, and Los Angeles. In the Mid-West Chicago, IL and Sioux City SD have red-light cameras. They are also used through-

out the world. Edmonton, an equally cold-weather site, has been using Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems since 1999.

**Effectiveness:** Do Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems work? Several of the following communities report these results.

- New York City, NY: 34% reduction in violations.
- San Francisco, CA: 42% reduction violations in first six months
- Oxnard, CA: 42% reduction in violations.

**Equipment:** At the heart of Automatic Traffic Law Enforcement Systems are cameras. These cameras are generally of three types: wet film (35 mm) digital and video. Some systems use a combination of two types of mediums and others use multiple cameras for each application.

To activate any these cameras, a vehicle must travel into the intersection after the light has changed from yellow to red. Most systems take at least two pictures of the vehicle; some take three to include a picture of the driver. Most cameras record date, time of day, time elapsed since beginning of red signal, and/or speed of vehicles.

### **Steps to Implementation**

1. Identify Public Safety problems and solutions, design Goals
2. Identify Stakeholders
3. Introduce and enact ordinance
4. Select and evaluate sites
5. Issue a Request For Proposal
6. Public Awareness campaigns.
7. Choose best system, based upon cities needs, priorities, and resources
8. Test
9. Implement
10. Evaluate and modify