

March 15, 2005

Honorable Chairman and Members of the  
Public Works Commission

Regular Meeting of  
March 23, 2005

## **RED LIGHT CAMERAS**

### **Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Public Works Commission consider the benefits of red light cameras and discuss the feasibility of installing the cameras at various intersections in Hermosa Beach.

### **Background:**

Red light violations in which a motorist “runs” the red light at a traffic signal, contributed to 207,000 accidents in the United States in 2002. Unfortunately, it has been found that most red light violators “run” the red light because they are in a hurry. Therefore, consistent and stringent enforcement is necessary to remind motorists of their responsibility to obey traffic rules. To assist in this, red light cameras have been deployed in the United States since 1992 as a traffic enforcement measure to prevent motorists from entering intersections when the traffic signal lights have turned red.

Red-light cameras are specialized cameras that take still and/or video photographs while the traffic signal is red. The cameras are only operational during the red light phase of any particular direction or movement and take still photographs and/or capture videos of vehicles entering into the intersection while a red light is shown. The local government and/or its vendor use the photographs and/or videos to identify a motorist by reviewing records from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). If the responsible authority is able to identify the registered owner of the vehicle and obtain clear photographs of the driver, license plate number and violation, they send the registered owner a citation.

### **Analysis:**

Red light cameras have been proven to improve safety at intersections with high incidences of accidents. The cameras have also been credited with reducing the “societal costs” of accidents by \$38,000 annually per location. They also improve the ability to enforce public safety throughout the City by allowing police to focus on other enforcement needs and providing monitoring at multiple sites. In addition, knowledge of the deployment of red light cameras encourages drivers to stop at red lights at all intersections regardless of the presence of a red light camera. Finally, red light cameras generally operate at a break-even point so that their operation does not negatively impact local revenues.

When considering installing red light cameras, it is important to remember that this technology has been challenged in the courts and therefore must be installed in accordance with the following California statutory requirements.

- Only a government agency in cooperation with a law enforcement agency may operate a red-light camera program.
- Signs must clearly indicate the system's presence at each intersection or at all major entrances to the city or county.
- Yellow light time interval must meet the California Department of Transportation's minimum standards.
- Photographs must be kept confidential and made available only to governmental and law enforcement agencies to pursue red-light violations.
- The registered owner or any individual identified by the registered owner as the driver of the vehicle at the time of the violation must be permitted to review the photographic evidence.
- A citation must be delivered to the driver within 15 days from the date of the violation.

While there are several benefits to the red light cameras, the cameras have been noted to increase the occurrence of rear-end accidents by 3% but studies report that the reduction of right-angle accidents significantly outweighs this slight increase. In addition, red light cameras should only be implemented at appropriate intersections. In general, they should not be deployed at intersections where intersection design and controls are properly engineered and there are very few traffic violations. They also should not prevent the implementation of engineering and traffic signal improvements to enhance traffic safety at intersections.

Attachment: Report from Ray Abassi, Contract City Traffic Engineer

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Public Works/City Engineer