

----- Forwarded Message -----

**Subject:**Red light cameras - for the Encinitas City Council June 20

**Date:**Mon, 18 Jun 2018 00:17:55 -0700

**From:**Jim <jim>

**Reply-To:**jim

**To:**council@encinitasca.gov, clerk@encinitasca.gov, cblakespear@encinitasca.gov, jmosca@encinitasca.gov, tboerner@encinitasca.gov, tkranz@encinitasca.gov, mmuir@encinitasca.gov

For City staff: Please route this email to the members of the City Council, and make it available to the public along with the other documents for the item on the agenda of June 20.

6-18-18

Subject: Red light cam eight year extension on June 20 Encinitas agenda

Honorable Councilmembers:

Safety should be paramount, and safety is part of the City's Strategic Plan, yet the staff report contains no reliable safety stats. On page 2 the staff report claims that ticketing is down, "showing the effectiveness of the program," yet the Redflex monthly tables the City has provided to the public - which are published on the highwayrobbery (dot) net website - show that when calendar years 2016-2017 are compared to pre-recession years 2006-2008, annual ticketing is up 31% and violations recorded/processed incidents is up 65%.

Five years ago, on the occasion of a June 26, 2013 Council review of the camera program, staff prepared a study (copy attached) charting accidents over a twelve year period beginning four years before the installation of the cameras. Staff's report claimed that the cameras produced a 57% reduction in red light running collisions. Although there were just a few days lead time, Safer Streets LA prepared and on June 26 submitted to Council a very detailed discussion (copy attached) of the data staff used, and determined that staff had erroneously overstated - by approximately double - the quantity of pre-camera accidents. Safer Streets LA concluded: "As a result, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the effectiveness of [Encinitas'] camera enforcement but it is likely that little or no safety improvement has been gained through the use of photo enforcement."

Here I want to mention three other factors I hope the Council will consider when reviewing the long term stats of the City's red light camera program.

1. Recessions are known to reduce accidents, and prosperity is known to increase them. So it would be interesting to ask for an accident study updated to 2018, with the corrections suggested by Safer Streets LA, of course.
2. Police departments sometimes change their criteria for taking a report on a minor accident, a "fender bender." Here is an example of that, from Ventura.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Red light collisions</b>	<b>% Change from 2000 CATSS Launch</b>
1998	124	
1999	128	
2000	132	
2001	107	19%
2002	115	13%
2003	100	24%
2004	101	23%
2005	93	30%
2006	92	30%
2007	45	66%
2008	41	69%
2009	40	70%
2010	39	70%
2011	34	74%
2012	38	71%
2013	36	73%
2014	34	75%

Image above is from staff report in the City of Ventura, prepared for their Council meeting of March 30, 2015.

Ventura's 2015 table showed a remarkable drop after 2006, which prompted a councilmember to inquire about it. Staff's reply (at 3:20:20 in the 3-30-15 video) was:

*"The way the [Ventura] police department reports collisions now is vastly different than we did when we started this program. Now we only report - correct me if I'm wrong - now we only report injury or major property damage collisions. That's different. Our total collision numbers are down quite a bit because the reporting is different."*

3. City staff may feel pressure to issue enough tickets to keep a camera program in the black, after the camera rent and other expenses are paid. (Page 2 of Encinitas' current staff report says that revenue is dropping.) That pressure may explain the nationwide resistance to adding a fraction of a second to the length of yellow lights, a measure which is known to permanently reduce running. An example where that pressure was revealed to the public: In December 2009 Oakland's traffic engineers added to the length of the yellows at their camera enforced intersections, and violations dropped by almost half. The police quickly noticed the drop, complained to city management, and the engineers were required to take away the extra yellow time. (Further reading: See the Oakland Docs page at highwayrobbery (dot) net.)

If Encinitas staff's plan is to present the safety stats as a PowerPoint, or even verbally, during the June 20 meeting, I am concerned that doing so would have the effect of defeating any in-depth analysis by the public. Don't you want input from the public? (With all due respect to City staff but with Ventura and Oakland in mind, I suggest that Encinitas should have its stats done by a professional with credentials in the field of statistics and who is free of other ties or contracts with the City.) If you decide to stay your decision on the proposed eight year extension, would you please publish any new staff report well ahead of time so that I and other members of the public can have more than a weekend to examine the statistics and prepare our comments?

Your staff's report mentions other cities that have ended their camera programs. Attached is a compilation of comments made by police chiefs, city managers, firemen and councilmembers in cities having a collective 200 years of experience with red light cameras. (The attachment has "Candor" in the file name.)

Finally, because it could function similarly to a quota, requiring sufficient tickets to cover it, I want to mention the amount of the *rent*. You are being asked to pay \$3000, while Del Mar pays about \$1600.

Regards,

Jim

cc: Media

**Thread of earlier correspondence:**

**Subject:**Fwd: Red light cameras - for the Encinitas City Council June 26

**Date:**Sat, 22 Jun 2013 15:34:54 -0700

**From:**Jim <[jim](mailto:jim)>

**Reply-To:**[jim](mailto:jim)

**To:**[council@encinitasca.gov](mailto:council@encinitasca.gov), [clerk@encinitasca.gov](mailto:clerk@encinitasca.gov), [tbarth@encinitasca.gov](mailto:tbarth@encinitasca.gov), [kgaspar@encinitasca.gov](mailto:kgaspar@encinitasca.gov), [lshaffer@encinitasca.gov](mailto:lshaffer@encinitasca.gov), [tkranz@encinitasca.gov](mailto:tkranz@encinitasca.gov), [mmuir@encinitasca.gov](mailto:mmuir@encinitasca.gov)

For City staff: Please route this email to the members of the City Council, and make it available to the public along with the other documents for the item on the agenda of June 26.

6-22-13

Re: Red light camera contract, agenda item June 26

Honorable Councilmembers:

I'd like to suggest that you take testimony on June 26 and then continue the matter to a later date to allow staff to answer the following questions.

1. How have the violations by holders of confidential plates been handled? (This was question # 1 in the email I sent you in March, copy below.)
2. Is it for safety, or money? One way to gauge is to look at how many of the tickets were for rolling right turns, the least dangerous type of violation. The Redflex bar charts available at [the Encinitas page on highwayrobbery (dot) net] suggest that a high proportion of the violations recorded by the most prolific camera (ENEC-01) is for rolling rights. Is that high proportion maintained when citations are issued?
3. How many tickets go to visitors? I am attaching a report I just received from another city, showing that 85% of that city's citations went to visitors. [See also FAQ # 22 at highwayrobbery (dot) net.] In my March

email I suggested that to protect local motorists from blunders by visitors, Encinitas should do some inexpensive and quick improvements to make its problematic intersections more prominent. If the Encinitas camera program was truly about safety, that work would have been done by now, or at least well underway. Has it been done? And, there is another visitor-related question to consider. The staff report prepared for your June 26 meeting indicates that Encinitas City Hall is breaking even on its camera program but doesn't address the effect that the heavy ticketing of visitors can have on the private economy. In other words, how many of the 24,000 people you have ticketed over the years were visitors who may have reacted by taking their business elsewhere? Would a high proportion of rolling right tickets - which are widely perceived as unfair - further increase the likelihood that ticketed visitors decide to avoid Encinitas? (When visitors avoid the City the damage is not confined to the private sector; City Hall's sales tax and bed tax income is affected.)

4. The staff report stats claim that accidents rates and severity are down because of the cameras, but where is the control group, i.e., a comparison to contemporary stats from non-camera intersections in cities in the region? A control is needed because:

- a. Long before there were cameras there already was a nationwide downward trend in accidents as cars, drivers and roads improved.
- b. During the last five years covered by the stats you have before you, we have been in a recession, with reduced mileage driven. With fewer miles, accidents go down.
- c. More cars now have side impact air bags, which reduce severity.

5. Does the presence of the cameras adds significantly to congestion by making drivers so fearful of a ticket that they hesitate to make perfectly legal turns, screech to a halt on fresh yellows when it would have been legal *and safer* to have proceeded, and drive well below the already-low speed limit so that they can execute those premature stops? (At first glance these herky - jerky behaviors may seem more orderly - like a military drill team - but in fact they destroy the smooth/homogeneous flow of traffic and contribute to congestion. Further, focusing one's eyes on the signal light - in order to avoid a ticket for being 0.1 or 0.2 second late - is a distraction for all drivers, and goes against the advice all experts give, "Keep your eyes moving.")

6. Why does the staff report include [at the end of the pdf] a copy of the letter from Brian Ceccarelli without addressing the points his letter made?

While you are waiting for staff to answer the questions above, here are some more things for individual

councilmembers to consider and look into.

A. Other cities have said - in plain words - that they found no discernible improvement in safety despite operating cameras for years. If you would like to read what was said in those other cities, and who said it, go to this link [Link removed. The "Candor" document is attached].

B. When I read the minutes of the November 2012 meeting of the Traffic Commission I was amazed to see that when the question of the amount of the fine came up, the closest estimate anyone present could make was that it was \$300. Would their decision have been different if they had known that the cost is double that if the motorist elects to attend traffic school - as most do?

C. Last year State Senator Joseph Simitian sponsored SB 1303, which enacted a requirement that the fake red light camera "tickets" sent out by many cities - including Encinitas - must carry a heading saying "Courtesy Notice - This is Not a Ticket." This new requirement, coming from an otherwise very pro-enforcement legislator, speaks a lot about how Simitian regarded that aspect of the red light camera business. (The purpose of the fake tickets - also called "Snitch Tickets" - is to fool motorists into revealing who was driving their car.) A motorist who too-late finds out that he has fallen for this official ruse loses some of his trust in law enforcement. Is the public's trust in law enforcement something to be thrown away for a little additional money?

D. Most of the tickets that are not for rolling right turns are for split-second thru and left turn violations. In his letter to you, Brian Ceccarelli recommended adding one or more seconds to the yellows, but if you will look again at the Redflex bar charts (linked above) you will quickly see that an increase of just half a second would eliminate nearly all thru and left turn violations. (At this point I should address the question which always comes up when someone suggests lengthening yellows: "Won't people get used to the longer yellows, and run them just as much as before?" The short answer is a flat "No." To read the many studies of that issue, go to FAQ # 6 on highwayrobbery (dot) net, click on the link to "studies," and search for the word "rebound."

E. Nowadays, law enforcement feels obliged to issue enough tickets to keep City Hall in the black, after the camera rent is paid. Thus, if the program is extended for more years, the amount of rent the council agrees to pay will act very much like a quota. The existence of a quota would explain why the number of tickets has remained so steady in Encinitas, and may explain the nationwide resistance to adding a fraction of a second to the length of yellow lights. An example: In December 2009 Oakland's traffic engineers added to the length of the yellows at their camera enforced intersections, and violations dropped by almost half. The police quickly noticed the drop, complained to city management, and the engineers were required to take away the extra yellow time.

F. The staff report doesn't mention that your vendor, Redflex, is alleged to have bribed Chicago officials

to the tune of \$2 million or more - and that other cities, so far unnamed, are under investigation. [2018 update: Redflex' former president is now in federal prison.]

Rather than contracting for more years of cameras, compromise, congestion and unnecessary rerenders, please remove the cameras and, to reduce accidents, install the engineering countermeasures I described in my earlier email.

Regards,

Jim

cc: Media

----- Original Message -----

**From:-** Mon Mar 18 22:11:45 2013

**X-Mozilla-Status:**1001

**X-Mozilla-Status2:**10800000

**X-Mozilla-Keys:**

**Message-ID:**<[5147F388.408070](mailto:5147F388.408070)>

**Date:**Mon, 18 Mar 2013 22:11:36 -0700

**From:**Jim <[jim](mailto:jim)>

**Reply-To:**[jim](mailto:jim)

**User-Agent:**Thunderbird 2.0.0.22 (Windows/20090605)

**MIME-Version:**1.0

**To:**[council@encinitasca.gov](mailto:council@encinitasca.gov), [clerk@encinitasca.gov](mailto:clerk@encinitasca.gov)

**Subject:**Red light cameras - for the Encinitas City Council

**Content-Type:**multipart/mixed; boundary="-----060905020307070300050002"

For City staff: Please route this email to the members of the City Council, and place it on the agenda of the next meeting, under Written Public Comments.

3-18-13

Honorable Councilmembers:

I have heard that you will be examining the City's red light camera program. I would like to suggest a couple things to look at.

1. Over the weekend there was an article in an Arizona newspaper, with the headline: "*Prescott Valley cop nixed wife's 7 photo radar tickets -- Independent audit finds 22 instances of officers dismissing infractions for family members.*" The equivalent of that here in California is that we have over 1.5 million private vehicles having "confidential" license plate numbers protected from easy or efficient look up, making those vehicles' owners effectively invisible to agencies attempting to process parking, toll, and red light camera violations. The confidential status is allowed by CVC 1808.4. My understanding is that when Redflex encounters a violation involving a vehicle having the confidential plates, they are unable to look up the registered owner's address in the version of the DMV database to which they have access, so must ask the client police department to do the lookup. [More information is in FAQ # 22 at highwayrobbery (dot) net.]

Since the confidential plates represent about 5% of all registrations, it would be reasonable to expect that 5% of the tickets in Encinitas, or about 150 tickets annually, would go to drivers having the confidential plates. Thus I suggest that you ask the police to report to you how many tickets they issued, during 2012, to vehicles having confidential plates.

2. Ask the police to tell you what percentage of tickets go to visitors to the region. Why is this figure of interest?

Monthly ticket counts available online at [highwayrobbery (dot) net] show, over the last several years, no significant decrease in the number of tickets issued by the City's red light camera program. No decrease in ticketing suggests that the cameras are not making City intersections any safer. (With red light cameras, ticketing is supposed to decrease over time.)

Anyone who watches the crash videos circulated by the red light camera Industry will notice that most of the crashes occur many seconds into the red. The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), with sponsorship by the Texas DOT, studied 41 crash videos obtained from red light cameras and confirmed what the public has been noticing: "With one exception, all of the right-angle crashes occurred after 5 seconds or more of red." They also reported that the average was 8.9 seconds into the red. See pages 5-15 and 5-16 of the study, available at FAQ # 6 on highwayrobbery (dot) net.

These real late runners (5+ secs. late) aren't doing it on purpose. Recent evidence suggests that most of them are visitors who, because they don't live in town, simply don't know that there's a signal up ahead. They are lost or distracted, and by the time they notice that the signal is there, it is too late to stop. (On July 22, 2012 the mayor of Hallandale, Florida disclosed that 78% of the tickets there go to visitors. In Washington DC about 80% of tickets go to visitors. It is claimed that in Paradise Valley, Arizona 98% of tickets go to visitors.) [For more info, see FAQ # 22 at highwayrobbery (dot) net.]



A minority of the violations are by "locals" who forgot there's a camera up ahead because they were distracted, or impaired.

Because they won't know or won't remember that there's a camera up ahead, the presence of a camera won't keep the visitors or the distracted/impaired locals from making the dangerous real late runs. To cut those real late runs, a city should install visual cues to make its most dangerous intersections more prominent and to warn motorists, "signal ahead." Most of these engineering countermeasures are cheap and quick to do. None of them carry the camera side effect of increased rearenders.

2005 research sponsored by the Florida Department of Transportation concluded that improving street markings (painting "signal ahead" on the pavement) near intersections would reduce red light running by up to 74 percent. See Section 3.4, p. 69 of the document, or p. 84 of the pdf, available at FAQ # 6 on highwayrobbery (dot) net. A large red light camera study sponsored by the San Diego Police Department rated engineering countermeasures such as better markings as "most effective" in reducing unintentional running, while enforcement, including cameras, was considered "less effective." See Table 6.3, p. 80 of the document, or p. 97 of the pdf, available at FAQ # 6 on highwayrobbery (dot) net.

The 2004 TTI study (at page 5-9, link above) noted that countermeasures like increasing the diameter of signal lamps from 8" up to 12" or adding signal heads had the potential to decrease crashes by 47 percent. The 2005 Florida research recommended the installation of a signal pole on the "near" side of intersections. See p. 135 of the document, or p. 150 of the pdf, available at FAQ # 6 on highwayrobbery (dot) net.

The 2004 TTI study (at page 5-9, link above) noted that adding backboards (back plates) to the signals had the potential to decrease crashes by 32 percent. [Or, enlarge the backboards you have.]

I suggest putting up larger and well-lighted name signs for the cross streets, and larger bulbs in the street lights, at known dangerous intersections.

The City has three red light camera locations. I suggest installing all of the countermeasures above, at those locations. The City can easily afford to do the countermeasures, as the City's annual CAFR audit (copy attached) shows that after the contingency reserve and the budget stabilization reserve have been set aside, there remains \$6.6 million of undesignated/unassigned/unrestricted funds available for spending at the Council's discretion.

Sincerely,

Jim

cc: Media

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