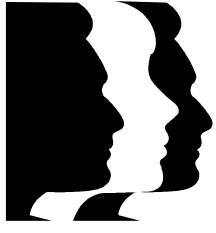


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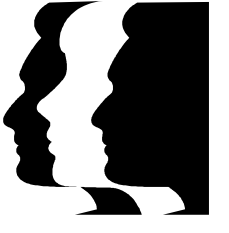


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## Traffic Cameras Flash No More

Red light, speed enforcement cameras lose money and the support of legislators.

by Ashley Murphy

Once again, red light cameras are making the spotlight here in Cleveland. Except, this time, it's because they are being taken down, instead of being put up. The reasoning behind this is because the red light systems aren't making enough money. Of course, this didn't come from the

City of Cleveland. Traffipax, the company Cleveland is currently contracted with, is terminating the agreement.

At the end of January, City Manager Janice Casteel received a memo from Traffipax stating that both parties, Traffipax and the City of Cleveland, have been operating the current camera sites at a financial loss and that the

company wishes to terminate the agreement.

Currently, there are five red light camera locations at the following intersections: Paul Huff Pkwy./Stuart Rd. and North Lee Hwy./Keith St.; Raider Dr. and Keith St.; 25th St. and Keith St.; 20th St. and Keith St.; and 25th St. and Peerless Rd.

The company's plan is to have all of the sites decommissioned by

March 31, 2010. However, citation data will be sent to the City of Cleveland, in an agreed upon format, so that the city will still be able to collect on unpaid citations.

This brings back the issue of red light cameras being used as a ploy to bring in additional government revenue, which seems to be the biggest issue among those who oppose traffic enforcement cameras. That, and the fact that they believe it is an invasion of privacy, unconstitutional and a "Big Brother" government watch.

One of the main reasons, traffic camera tickets don't go against one's driving record. A law set in place in 2008 made traffic enforcement camera citations a non-moving violation. Meaning, one can accrue several tickets and not be penalized, as far as their driving records are concerned. In addition, these photo enforced citations are not turned in on a person's insurance. They just penalize a person's wallet in the direction of the city and the traffic enforcement camera company administering the citations.

The Cleveland City Council and Casteel have said that this program was not a revenue based decision, but a decision made for the safety of motorists traveling through the area. The red light cameras have been credited for "greatly" reducing the number of traffic accidents at the intersections.

After reviewing the pre-camera data for FY 2008 and the numbers post-camera for FY 2009, it is true that traffic accidents have been reduced by 55% between the five intersections. However, only two intersections saw a dynamic difference. Paul Huff Pkwy./Stuart Rd. and North Lee Hwy./Keith St. went from 59 accidents in

2008 to 20 in 2009, after the cameras were installed. The intersection of 25th St. and Keith St. saw a 50% decrease, from 46 to 23.

These two intersections were also improved close to the time red light cameras were installed there. The design of each intersection is in correspondence with the other, so both have the same layout. Before, there was only one turning lane for the east and west bound traffic. Since the improvements, both intersections have added an extra turning lane on each side, east and west, allowing more traffic to proceed through the intersection with more ease than before. Could these intersection improvements also be credited for reducing the number of collisions?

The remaining intersections decreased very little, and one actually increased by double. At 20th St. and Keith St. accidents went from 7, before cameras, to 4 after the cameras. At 25th St. and Peerless Rd., accidents went from 19 to 18 and at Raider Dr. and Keith St. accidents went from 5 in 2008 to 10 in 2009, post-camera.

Like the City of Cleveland, several jurisdictions believe in red light cameras and their ability to keep motorists safe, while others see them as a money-grabbing scheme and can't see the logic behind such systems. Nevada, New Hampshire, West Virginia and Wisconsin have previously banned red light cameras completely. Just this past year, Maine, Mississippi and Montana joined in the ban. Missouri and Tennessee are sponsoring upcoming legislation that wouldn't ban the cameras, but greatly limit them, due to recent findings in cities across those states.

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