

Photo Red Enforcement Talking Points

HB1558 Tata eliminates sunset where programs are in effect

HB1868 Brink extends sunset to 2006 with VCU Study

HB2095 Hugo extends sunset to 2007 (SB780)

HB2105 McQuigg statewide with guidelines no sunset (SB732)

HB2274 Oder Permits dangerous intersections to have cameras, repeals sunset

HB2389 Barlow adds Williamsburg/James City extends sunset to 2006.

SB721 Edwards eliminates sunset and adds Roanoke City

SB732 Colgan statewide with guidelines no sunset

SB780 Mims extends sunset to 2007(HB2095)

Background

- The bill before the General Assembly only extends the sunset clause for 2 years for the jurisdictions already allowed to have red light cameras. This will allow more time to study the issue and allows the localities that have already invested in the programs and like them to continue the programs while more data is collected.
- Seven jurisdictions maintain a photo-red program in Virginia: City of Alexandria, Arlington County, Fairfax City, Fairfax County, City of Falls Church, the Town of Vienna, and the City of Virginia Beach.

Virginia Statistics

- **Red light running caused almost 5,000 crashes in Virginia in 2003.** Red light running, which is defined as the act of a motorist entering an intersection after the traffic signal has turned red, caused almost 5,000 crashes in Virginia in 2003, resulting in at least 18 deaths and more than 3,800 injuries. (*VDOT, 2004*)
- **Red cameras can reduce crashes.** Fairfax, VA had a 41% reduction of red light related violations and crashes after the first year of implementation. *National Cooperative Highway Research Program*
- **Virginia Transportation Research Council research supports.** “. . . there are indications that Virginia’s programs potentially improve safety. The number of crashes attributable to red light running has decreased, although the number of rear-end crashes has increased. . . . The number of citations mailed has also decreased. Thus cameras do appear to be affecting driver behavior. (*Virginia Transportation Research Council, December 2004*)

General

- **Red light running is most frequent urban crash.** Running red lights and other traffic controls—like stop and yield signs—are the most frequent types of police-reported urban crash, Institute research shows. Researchers studied police reports of crashes on public roads in four urban areas during 1990 and 1991. Of 13 crash types researchers identified, running traffic controls accounted for 22 percent of all crashes. Among crashes involving running traffic controls, 24 percent involved running red lights.

- **Red light running causes injuries.** The same study shows that motorists are more likely to be injured in crashes involving red light running than in other types of crashes. Occupant injuries occurred in 45 percent of the red light running crashes studied compared with 30 percent for other crash types. (*Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, March 2004*)
- **Red light cameras are not novel.** More than 100 communities across the US are using red light photo enforcement programs to reduce the incidence of red light crashes and enforce compliance with traffic signals. Red light cameras are being used in 18 states and the District of Columbia. For a complete listing of those localities go to http://www.hwysafety.org/safety%5Ffacts/rlc_cities.htm (*Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, December 2004*)

National Statistics

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that about 6.4 million crashes occurred on the Nation's roadways in 2000. Approximately 40 percent of all crashes are intersection-related. (*Federal Highway Administration, December 2004.*)

The Public Pays

- Motorists are more likely to be injured in crashes involving RLR than in other types of crashes. Occupant injuries occurred in 45 percent of the RLR crashes, compared to 30 percent for other crash types. (*Federal Highway Administration, December, 2004*)

Public Awareness

- Public opinion surveys suggest that roughly two-thirds of respondents support red light cameras. (*Virginia Transportation Research Council, December 2004*)
- *[insert AAA survey data]*
- A telephone survey of 300 Virginia Beach residents in October and November of 2004 showed that 86 percent knew the red-light cameras were in place and 84 percent approved of them. About 62 percent thought that the city had a serious problem with red-light runners and 88 percent thought the cameras would help remind people not to run red lights. (*Virginian Pilot article January 5, 2005*)
- According to a survey conducted by U. S. Department of Transportation and the American Trauma Society, 63 percent of Americans witness a RLR incident more than once a week. One in three Americans knows someone who has been injured or killed because of a red light runner. (*Federal Highway Administration, December, 2004*)

Other State & Country Statistics

Based on a survey conducted as a part of a National Cooperative Highway Research Program synthesis project, a majority of jurisdictions reported downward trends in RLR-related violations and crashes because of red light cameras.

- Fairfax, VA 41% after first year

- San Francisco, CA 68%
- Los Angeles, CA 92%
- Charlotte, NC more than 70% during first year (*Federal Highway Administration, 2004*)

Q&A

Why not hire more cops?

Enforcing traffic laws at intersections by traditional means poses special difficulties for law enforcement officials, who in most cases must follow a violating vehicle through a red light to stop it. This action can endanger motorists and pedestrians as well as the officers themselves. Intersection enforcement efforts generally require additional manpower such as two officers at one location. In view of 9-11 and the increased demand on law enforcement time on homeland security; communities don't have the resources to allow law enforcement to patrol intersections as often as would be needed to ticket all motorists who run red lights. (*Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police, December 2004*)

Don't Traffic signals alone lead to crashes not because of red light cameras?

The common acceptance of traffic signals as a solution to all right-of-way problems has perhaps naively led many people to the conclusion that by simply introducing a traffic signal one can prevent or eliminate all intersection accidents. Traffic studies in urban areas indicate that accidents may very well increase after the installation of traffic controls.

In this regard, whereas traffic signals tend to reduce right-angle accidents, rear-end and turning accidents are generally higher. (Transportation and Traffic Engineering Handbook, Second Edition.)

Photo enforcement is a violation of constitutional privacy that leads to George Orwell's 1984

Photo enforcement of red light runners should not be perceived as a threat to liberty or part of Big Brother *a la* 1984. Here's why:

First, people who run red lights are breaking the law. But unlike those who run red lights and are ticketed by a police officers on the scene, those who receive tickets through photo enforcement do not receive points against their license or other penalties indicative of a criminal offense—they only receive a civil fine. In addition, this fine is rebuttable by simply signing an affidavit stating that the person was not the driver. That ends the entire event.

Second, if the fear is “guilty until proven innocent”, the problem already exists. Parking tickets are issued without the presence of the driver and are issued by private collection firms hired by cities and towns.

Third, the Virginia Transportation Research Council attached to its study of red light cameras a legal analysis of the various privacy, due process issues, etc. and concluded that red light camera enforcement does not violate constitutionally protected rights.

Didn't the Virginia study demonstrate that rear end crashes increased with photo red?

Yes it did. But an important point was also noted in the study. Rear end crashes cause less damage and injury than the traditional T-bone crash of running a red light and, hence, the use of red light cameras increases net safety. A second point that I would make is that as red light cameras are known to be in place, people are more likely to stop for a red light, instead of pressing the accelerator to rush through.