



City of Dallas



Dallas Stops on Red!

Red Light Camera Fact Sheet

We have reason to celebrate! The goal of the red-light enforcement program has and always will be to change driver behavior and reduce red light violations and accidents. Significant reductions in red light violations over the past year indicate that we are moving in the right direction and our streets are safer. This also indicates that red light cameras have been very effective in changing driver behavior.

City staff is preparing a May briefing to the Public Safety Committee recommending options on how to operate this system most effectively. Our desire is to maintain safety and continue to keep violations low using strategic and cost-effective enforcement methods. Potential enforcement options include; rotating cameras between sites, moving cameras to new sites, and installing decoy cameras. Staff is in the process of determining the costs and equipment changes required to support these types of enforcement options.

The public and media are curious about the status of the cameras, revenue shortfalls, and plans to scale back or expand the program. We have prepared a list of commonly asked questions and attempted to answer these questions based on the knowledge we have at this time. Additional details will be provided in May as staff determines the feasibility of different enforcement scenarios.

1. Why did the violations drop so quickly?

We believe that violations have dropped dramatically due to a combination of initiatives:

- Dallas installed 60 cameras throughout the city over a short six-month period.
- Camera locations were placed geographically throughout the city to create awareness and influence driver behavior citywide.
- Camera systems installed in many of the surrounding suburbs over the past four years created awareness about red light running and influenced driver behavior in Dallas.
- In 2005 and 2006 the City replaced traffic signal bulbs throughout the City with brighter and larger bulbs. This has significantly increased the visibility of traffic signals and reduced unintentional red light violations.

- Over the past two years, the City has updated signal timings at 500 of the 1300 traffic signals citywide using federal funding. Signal timings have been updated to: 1) distribute green time to meet traffic demands, 2) improve progression between signals, 3) reduce vehicle stops, and 4) reduce fuel consumption. Fewer stops and less congestion also improve safety by reducing the potential for drivers to run red lights.
- Over the past 5 years, about 10% of the signalized intersections have been widened to provide additional turn lanes, increase capacity, and reduce congestion. Lowering congestion reduces driver frustration and the potential to run red lights.

As you can see, Dallas has been implementing a variety of engineering countermeasures that contribute to fewer red light violations.

2. Why are some cameras inactive?

The rate of violations at some intersections has become so low that staff feels the cameras would be better utilized at locations with higher violation rates and safety issues. At the same time, we want to be sure that the enforcement program maintains the lower violation rates at existing sites. We are reviewing the effectiveness of rotating cameras between intersections to provide continued enforcement and maintain safe driving conditions. This method has been used by other cities with mature red light enforcement programs.

3. Will revenue shortfalls require other city services to be cut to pay for these shortfalls?

Our business model was based on a system that would be funded using the fines collected from red light citations. Now that driver behavior has changed so significantly, we need to develop enforcement strategies that will continue to affect behavior while being cost effective.

4. Why were yellow times increased at 10 camera locations?

The City of Dallas uses a formula recommended by the Institute of Transportation Engineers to determine the amount of yellow time required for each intersection approach. The formula is based on perception-reaction time and the approach speed. Dallas sets the yellow to the speed at which the majority of drivers approach the intersection. In some cases, but not all, the yellow has been set for speeds higher than the posted speed limit to offset speeding issues and reduce the risk to drivers on the cross street. This is a more conservative approach than using the formula recommended by transportation professionals. As traffic patterns change over time, signal timings need to be updated. Staff has been periodically collecting speed data at camera sites and adjusting the yellow time to meet current conditions.

5. Has Dallas experienced an increase in rear-end accidents?

A preliminary review of before and after accidents at camera locations does not indicate an increase in rear-end type accidents.

6. Have accidents reduced since the cameras were installed?

Research engineers suggest that 2 years of data are needed to make any conclusions. Multi-year analysis will account for any unusual spikes or lulls in accidents that would be misleading if reviewed in shorter intervals. However, preliminary data does show fewer accidents and would indicate that the system is moving us in the right direction. Preliminary results will be presented at the May Public Safety Committee meeting.