



Staff Report

AUTOMATED RED LIGHT PHOTO ENFORCEMENT PROJECT - UPDATE

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

On March 9, 2010, construction began on the automated red light photo enforcement systems at Ralston Avenue & El Camino and Ralston Avenue & Old County Road. The work has been completed and the system is ready for activation on April 15, 2010.

Background

On February 12, 2008 the Belmont City Council passed resolution number 9975, authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with Redflex Traffic Systems for automated red light photo enforcement systems. This resolution followed five staff reports before council beginning in February of 2006 and culminating with a public hearing on September 25, 2007 (in compliance with §21455.5 CVC). In compliance with this resolution, City Manager Jack Crist entered into a contract with Redflex Traffic Systems as vendor for the project. Since entering into the contract, this will be the second staff report to Council updating the status of the project.

Discussion

Based on staff analysis, two locations were chosen for the application of automated red light photo enforcement, Eastbound Ralston Avenue at El Camino Real (SR-82) and Westbound Ralston Avenue at Old County Road. As noted in previous staff reports, both of the locations are high-volume intersections:

Ralston Ave & El Camino Real (SR-82):

- Ralston: Approx. 29,722 vehicles per day
- El Camino: Approx. 34,000 vehicles per day

Ralston Ave & Old County Rd:

- Ralston Ave: Approx. 32,352 vehicles per day
- Old County Rd: Approx. 11,591 vehicles per day

A study conducted at the two locations, in a 12-hour period on a weekday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., showed the following red light violations:

E/B Ralston Ave at El Camino Real (SR-82)

- 2 Left Turn Violations
- 10 Straight Through Violations
- 16 Right Turn Violations

W/B Ralston Ave at Old County Rd:

- 11 Straight Through Violations
- 67 Right Turn Violations

Both intersections are difficult to enforce through conventional means, due to their configuration and layout. There are no locations where an officer can monitor the intersections in a car and limited locations where enforcement can be carried out by a motor officer. Utilization of automated red light photo enforcement at these locations allows for re-deployment of limited traffic enforcement resources to other areas.

The traffic signals at both intersections are maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and as a result, staff and the vendor began extensive work with Caltrans which culminated in the issuance of an encroachment permit by Caltrans on October 9, 2009 clearing the way for work to proceed. After further staff work, construction of the systems began on March 9, 2010.

The systems will be activated on April 15, 2010. This will commence a minimum 30-day warning period, where only written warnings will be issued and no citations will be issued (in compliance with §21455.5(b) CVC). As noted in previous staff reports, the decision to issue a citation will be made by Police Department staff as would be done in the case of a conventional citation (in compliance with §21455.5(c)(F) CVC).

As noted above, maintenance of the traffic signals will be done by Caltrans, which includes maintaining the minimum yellow light change interval in accordance with the Traffic Manual of the Department of Transportation (in compliance with §21455.7 CVC).

In California, drivers are permitted to make a right turn on a red light, after stopping as required (except when a sign is in place prohibiting a turn). Vehicles making a right turn on red are hazardous to both pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians and bicyclists are involved in approximately 22% of all right turn on red collisions and 93% of those collisions resulted in injury (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data). The San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle Route Plan lists Ralston Ave, Old County Road and El Camino as main bicycle routes. The proximity of both intersections to the Caltrain Station, SamTrans bus stops as well as several restaurants and shops adds to a high pedestrian and bicycle volume. As a result, right turn on red violations will be enforced as part of this program.

General Plan/Vision Statement

Establishment of an Automated Red Light Photo Enforcement Program furthers the Belmont Vision Statement, adopted October 2003 as outlined below:

Key Value - Easy Mobility

- We put a priority on getting out of, into, and through town efficiently.
- Bicyclists, walkers, and other non-drivers get where they're going easily and safely.
- We require safe residential streets and smooth-flowing thoroughfares.

Fiscal Impact

The contract with Redflex Traffic Systems calls for a monthly fee of \$11,740 (\$5,870 per approach). This fee covers costs relating to maintenance of equipment and processing of violation data for review by Police Department staff. Fines collected will be used for the monthly fee and to cover department overhead relating to the system. Any excess funds will be applied to Police Department traffic education and enforcement efforts.

Public Contact

Posting on the City Council Agenda. This project was initially presented at the February 14, 2006, with follow-up presentations at the June 27, 2006, July 25, 2006, December 12, 2006, April 10, 2007, September 25, 2007, February 12, 2008 and May 27, 2008 City Council Meetings, where it was also posted on the City Council agendas. Those meetings were also televised on Channel 27. Since January, 2006, references to Belmont's efforts in this area have been noted in numerous articles on the subject in area newspapers.

Recommendation

This report is an informational update to the Council and no action is required. Further updates will be provided to the Council as the project moves forward.

Alternatives

1. Provide other direction to staff.
2. Take no action.

Attachments:

None.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Halleran
Police Lieutenant

Donald Mattei
Acting City Manager

Staff Contact:

Patrick Halleran, Lieutenant

(650) 595-7430
path@belmont.gov