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By Claire

Grand jury report criticizes Citrus Heights red-light camera program

BIO

Police: Cameras reduce accidents, fatalities at trouble intersections

UPDATED 8:17 AM PDT Jun 25, 2015

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CITRUS HEIGHTS, Calif. (KCRA) — The Sacramento County grand jury released a report Wednesday on its investigation into red-light cameras, saying the city of Citrus Heights ignores its own policies in overseeing them and assessing their effectiveness.

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Watch report: Grand jury report slams Citrus Heights red-light camera program

"Citrus Heights chronically and systematically ignores its own policies for oversight, testing, monitoring, maintenance and record keeping," the report stated.

The report also alleges that the program "fails to routinely collect and analyze the necessary data" to gauge the effectiveness of a program whose goal, according to police, is to reduce the number of accidents and fatalities.

KCRA 3 asked Citrus Heights police about the findings.

"We'll obviously look into areas they have identified and where they make the recommendations," said Lt. Ryan Kinnan. "Those ones we find that have merit to them, we will look into finding ways to address them and we'll look into areas where the grand jury has missed the mark."

Kinnan said Citrus Heights police still need to review and assess the report, and could not speak to its specifics, but the department is confident the cameras, which were installed at five intersections in 2008, make drivers safer.

There are currently eight red-light cameras in the city.

"It does reduce broadside collisions at the intersections where we have found there is a high number of collisions," Kinnan said.

Kinnan added that the cameras are an invaluable resource.

"We can't be everywhere all the time," he said. "Using technology nowadays gives us the opportunity to increase our ability to serve the public."

Each red light ticket costs \$512, he said.

The report also states the raw data police gave them was flawed, because it included intersections where no camera existed and also duplicated certain accidents.

Furthermore, the report stated the city needed to better monitor the duration of yellow lights.

Many drivers KCRA 3 talked to were surprised to hear about grand jury's findings.

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"If it's helping out, then awesome -- keep them there. That way it justifies it," said driver Yvan Padilla. "But if it's just to bring in revenue, that doesn't make any sense."

"If they don't check the data and don't see if they work, then what the hell is the point of doing it?" asked Violet Warfield. "They could be investing in other things that could be helping with traffic laws."

Kinnan said about \$100 of revenues from each ticket goes to the city.

From June 2014 through April of this year, the city has gotten \$20,000 from ticket revenues and most - if not all - of that money is earmarked for fixing roads, according to Citrus Heights police.

Reflex Traffic Systems, the company that operates Citrus Heights' cameras, sent KCRA 3 the following statement saying it is reviewing the findings: "Redflex will continue to provide whatever assistance the city of Citrus Heights requests or requires to improve and increase the effectiveness of this important road safety program."

The city has 90 days to assess the report and respond in writing to the grand jury's findings.

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