

SUBJECT: RED LIGHT PHOTO ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

INITIATED BY: DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

(Oscar Delgado, Director of Public Works)

(Sharon Perlstein, Engineering Division, City Engineer)

PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

(Captain Sergio Aloma, LA County Sheriff's Department)

STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:

The City Council will consider adding enforcement of violations involving right turns on red to the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) Authorize the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Department of Public Works to amend the Business and Enforcement Rules for the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program to add enforcement of right turns on red when the vehicle speed exceeds 15 miles per hour or exceeds 10 miles per hour when the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department identifies public safety concerns.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

In May 1999, the City Council approved implementation of the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program. The program was started to reduce red light running at some of the major intersections in the City. The project is coordinated with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department as the law enforcement agency authorized to issue citations and represent the City in court. With limited resources for law enforcement, it is not possible to continuously place Sheriff's Deputies at intersections to cite red light violators. The City's goal for the program has been to improve traffic and public safety by increasing compliance with traffic regulations to reduce traffic accidents including fatalities. The City and Sheriff have been successful in reducing accidents and violations throughout the 18 year term of the project. See Attachment A for a brief history of the City's Red Light Photo Enforcement Program.

In the fall of 2015, the City Council approved an Agreement for Services with GATSO USA, Inc. as the new vendor to furnish and provide program management services for the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program. The vendor was selected after staff from the Department of Public Works and Sheriff's Department conducted an extensive evaluation of written proposals and interviews of three qualified firms. The scope of services for GATSO USA, Inc. includes deployment of a more modern Red Light Photo Enforcement Program, utilizing cameras with high resolution digital video technology, radar detection, as well as the capability to photograph vehicles and license plates from both the front and rear.

In accordance with State Law, the City conducted a 30-day warning period for the Red

Light Enforcement Program prior to the Sheriff issuing citations utilizing documentation from the new camera system. The warning period began on March 13, 2017 and ended on April 11, 2017. At the start of the 30-day warning period, the City's Public Information Office issued a News Brief to the media. Also, a notice was published in both the West Hollywood Independent and the Los Angeles Times. During the 30-day warning period, warning notices were mailed to registered owners of vehicles who were photographed committing red-light violations. Persons receiving warning notices, and now persons receiving citations are able to view photos and video of the violation on a password-protected website.

The Red Light Photo Enforcement Program currently operates at the following 8 intersection approaches:

1. La Brea at Fountain (northbound)
2. La Brea at Fountain (southbound)
3. Beverly at Robertson (eastbound)
4. Beverly at Robertson (westbound)
5. La Brea at Santa Monica (eastbound)
6. La Brea at Santa Monica (northbound)
7. La Cienega at Melrose (northbound)
8. La Cienega at Melrose (southbound)

Historically, the City's Red Light Enforcement Program only photographed red light violators as motorists travel straight through an intersection, perpendicular to opposing traffic. Broadside collisions, which have the highest incidence of bodily injury, are associated with red light violations of through movements. Historically, the City's program has not included issuance of Red Light Photo Enforcement citations to motorists making left of right turns, as turning motorists were assumed to be moving at lower speeds which typically pose less of a safety hazard. However, with the implementation of cameras with video capabilities, the Sheriff's Department has identified safety concerns for vehicles making right turns on red. The Sheriff's Department is concerned about vehicles making right turns on red, without stopping, at speeds of 15 miles per hour and greater. At these speeds, the video documentation discloses a motorist has minimal control to check for oncoming cross traffic. Additionally, the Sheriff's Department is concerned about vehicles making right turns on red, without stopping, at speeds between 10 and 15 miles per hour where other safety issues are observed in the video. Examples of these situations include the motorist not stopping for pedestrians crossing the street or the motorist unsafely crossing over several lanes of traffic prior to making the non-stopping right turn on red.

Both the cities of Beverly Hills and Culver City operate Red Light Photo Enforcement Programs which include enforcement of right turn on red violations. These cities have both issued citations for non stopping right turn violations for approximately 18 years, since the original commencement of their Red Light Photo Enforcement Programs. Enforcement of right turn on red violations is supported by the Superior Court judges assigned to preside over West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and Culver City's Red Light Photo Enforcement cases.

During the 30-day warning period, the Sheriff's Department identified safety concerns

with 250 incidents where the cameras documented motorists making non-stopping right turns on red. Of these incidents, approximately 100 involved non-stopping right turns on red at speeds at or over 15 miles per hour. Approximately 150 involved public safety issues related to non-stopping right turns on red with vehicle speeds in the range between 10 and 15 miles per hour.

The Sheriff's Department and Public Works Department presented reports regarding the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program to the Public Safety Commission on May 8, 2017, and to the Transportation Commission on May 17, 2017. Both the Public Safety Commission and the Transportation Commission approved recommendations supporting implementation of enforcement of the right turns on red when the vehicle speed exceeds 15 miles per hour or exceeds 10 miles per hour when the Sheriff's Department identifies public safety conditions.

The Red Light Photo Enforcement Program is implemented in compliance with Business and Enforcement Rules. In accordance with California Vehicle Code §21455.5(c)(1) the Business and Enforcement Rules provide the structure and methods for screening and issuing citations, for the processing and storage of confidential information, and to establish procedures to ensure compliance with these guidelines. If the City Council approves the recommended action, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the Department of Public Works will amend the Business and Enforcement Rules for the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program to add enforcement of right turns on red when the vehicle speed exceeds 15 miles per hour or exceeds 10 miles per hour when the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department identifies public safety concerns. During the 30-day warning period, warning notices were sent to the 250 motorists making the non-stopping right turns on red. Therefore, upon amendment of the Business and Enforcement Rules, the Sheriff's Department will proceed with issuance of citations for the right turn on red violations.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- OSP-2: Institutional Integrity.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

- IRC-1: Provide functional, safe and well maintained circulation and public infrastructure throughout the City.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:

On a monthly basis, City Staff and representatives from the Sheriff's Department meet with GATSO USA, Inc. to ensure the Red Light Photo Enforcement program is implemented in accordance with contract schedules and budget. Additionally, on an ongoing basis, representatives from the Sheriff's Department are in contact with the City Prosecutor's Office and the Los Angeles Superior Court to ensure the City's program meets all requirements of State Law and Court procedures.

If Red Light Photo Enforcement of right turns on red is approved for implementation, City staff and representatives from the Sheriff's Department will gather violation and traffic data over the following 12 months and report back on the findings to the Transportation Commission, Public Safety Commission, and City Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:

Red light running is estimated to cause more than 200,000 injuries and 1,000 deaths annually in the U.S., with fatality rates higher in the Western states. Historically, West Hollywood's program recorded over 25,000 red light violations annually. It would be impossible given the magnitude of the problem to attempt to alter dangerous driver behavior using traditional law enforcement techniques, i.e. Sheriff's on motorcycles.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

The Sheriff's Department and Public Works Department presented reports regarding the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program to the Public Safety Commission on May 8, 2017, and to the Transportation Commission on May 17, 2017. Both the Public Safety Commission and the Transportation Commission presentations included the viewing of several video clips of motorists making right turn on red violations accompanied by the Sheriff's Department explaining the traffic and pedestrian safety issues documented with each incident.

If Red Light Photo Enforcement of right turns on red is approved for implementation, City staff will work with the City's Public Information Office to publicize the program. This will be accomplished through a News Brief and posts to social media.

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS / CITY ENGINEERING DIVISION

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact. Staff will incorporate activities related to this item into currently budgeted work plans.

ATTACHMENT:

Attachment A – History of the City's Red Light Photo Enforcement Program