



CITY OF CITRUS HEIGHTS

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The City of Citrus Heights is committed to providing high quality, economical, responsive city services to our community.

October 1, 2015

Honorable Robert C. Hight, Presiding Judge
Sacramento County Superior Court
720 Ninth Street, Department 47
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Sacramento County Grand Jury Report: Red Light Cameras

Dear Judge Hight,

Pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the following responses are submitted to you regarding the 2014-2015 Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations regarding the Citrus Heights Red Light Camera Program.

Finding 1: Citrus Heights does not uphold its responsibility to operate and monitor its red light camera program.

Response to Finding 1: Partial Concurrence

The Citrus Heights Police Department (CHPD) Traffic Unit Sergeant oversees the daily operations and administrative functions of the Photo Red Light Enforcement Program (PRLEP). As well, the CHPD has two officers assigned to this program to review and process violations on a daily basis, attend annual training, maintain records involving day-to-day operations of the program, and conduct yearly audits of the records and facilities of Redflex Traffic Systems (the photo red light program vendor). Additionally, CHPD annually reviews, and makes necessary changes to, the already established Business Rules to be followed by Redflex Traffic Systems to include, but limited to, procedures for receiving, reviewing, and forwarding captures to and from the CHPD. Monthly maintenance is completed by a certified technician from Redflex and a written report of the results on each PRLEP intersection is forwarded to the CHPD. This monthly maintenance includes a secondary computer system to validate all aspects PRLEP hardware and software at the red light camera intersections.

As well, the City of Citrus Heights' General Services Division contracts with an outside company who regularly checks all traffic signals within the City limits on a bi-monthly basis. This company will report its findings to the City and the City will make any adjustments deemed necessary to traffic signals. While undergoing the collection of documents for the Grand Jury request, it was found that the contractor the City was utilizing was not always submitting the bi-monthly maintenance reports. As such, the City has discontinued its use of this company and is utilizing a different contractor to

perform the maintenance checks on the traffic signals to ensure proper maintenance and documentation.

Finding 4: The City has no process in place to be alerted when the yellow light sequencing falls below the minimum standard set by CA DOT and mandated by the CVC.

Response to Finding 4: Disagree

The California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) states "The minimum yellow change interval for through traffic movement shall be determined by using the 85th percentile speed of free-flow traffic rounded up to the next 5 mph increment" (California Department of Transportation, 2014, p. 882). Yet, the City of Citrus Heights intersections with red light camera utilize the 90th percentile resulting in longer yellow change intervals than required by the MUTCD.

Prior to the 2012 edition, the MUTCD did not make any recommendations as to the minimum yellow change intervals for protected left-hand turns. However, the standard used in California for protected left-hand turns and protected right-hand turns was 3.0 seconds (Bahadori, p.8). When considering traffic and safety related factors, the City of Citrus Heights increased this minimum to 3.5 seconds for all left-hand turns.

In the 2012 edition of the MUTCD, the Department of Transportation added "The minimum yellow change interval for a protected left-turn or protected right-turn phase shall be 3.0 seconds" (California Department of Transportation, 2012, p. 886). However, in the 2014 edition this section appears to be inadvertently omitted as the California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC) is voting to re-insert the same standard that was in the 2012 edition on September 3, 2015 (p. 11).

The City has a process in place to be notified when yellow light timing falls below the 3.5 second threshold for protected left-hand turns; as this is the lowest acceptable yellow light timing interval for a red light camera intersection. As of a result of the lower yellow change interval for protected left-hand turns, the City cannot set an alert process in place when yellow light timing falls below the 3.9 seconds standard for through traffic; as this would cause the intersections to turn flashing red all of the time.

It should be noted that even though the notification is set for 3.5 seconds, the Citrus Heights Police Department verifies the yellow light timing on all potential citations before issuance. This is to ensure that the yellow light intervals were functioning properly at the time of the capture.

Finding 5: Citrus Heights has no reliable process in place to ensure that the timing of the yellow light sequencing is consistent. CHPD performs stopwatch

audits of the yellow light sequencing using Redflex video, which is compressed and unreliable.

Response to Finding 5: Disagree

In *People v. Goldsmith* (2014), the Supreme Court of California concluded photographs and video taken by Automated Traffic Enforcement Systems (ATES) shall be considered an accurate recording of events and does not constitute as hearsay. Furthermore, the Court also stated that a computer system by its very nature is more accurate than a human witness (*People v. Goldsmith*, 2014). Further, all video recordings received by CHPD officers who review potential red light violations are not compressed. These officers receive and review the full video of the potential violation before issuing a red light citation.

Recommendation 1: The CHPD should routinely produce and analyze traffic incident data. This information should then be used to judge the effectiveness of the program. This will allow informed decisions such as whether the cameras are placed at intersections that yield the most desired effect.

Response to Recommendation 1: Partial Concurrence

On a monthly basis the CHPD holds a Crime and Traffic in Citrus Heights (CATCH) meeting. During this meeting, the department's Crime Analyst and Watch Commanders discuss crime and traffic trends. While red light camera intersections are not specifically discussed during this meeting, overall collision data is reviewed. As a result of this Grand Jury inquiry, the CHPD will be providing collision data specific to red light camera intersections at this monthly meeting. As for the second point of placement of red light cameras, the CHPD follows its procedures outlined in Policy 378.3 in determining whether to place a red light camera at an intersection. The following information is utilized when making a determination as to where to place the cameras:

- Citizen complaints
- Proximity to school zones
- Proximity to senior housing
- State collision statistics
- Pedestrian/traffic flow
- City Council recommendations
- Staff recommendations

As well, comprehensive surveys of intersections being considered for red light cameras are conducted to determine whether or not a camera is needed. These surveys include: pre-survey, video survey, and if needed, a post-survey. Examples of these surveys were provided to the Grand Jury.

After the comprehensive surveys are completed and reviewed by CHPD and the City's General Services Department, results are presented to the Citrus Heights City Council

to make the final determination as to whether or not to place a red light camera at a specific intersection.

Recommendation 2: Citrus Heights Public Works should set the minimum timing for yellow lights at the minimum standard, in order to trigger the red light flashing signal, indicating a problem with the timing.

Response to Recommendation 2: Disagree

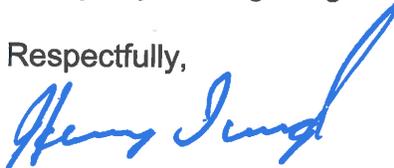
Refer to the response to Finding 4; as there is a process in place to trigger red light flashing when the yellow light timing falls below 3.5 seconds.

Recommendation 3: Citrus Heights should assign personnel to conduct an on-site physical timing of the yellow signal lights at each intersection where there is a red light camera. A written maintenance log should be kept.

Response to Recommendation 3: Disagree

As stated in the response to Finding 2, in *People v. Goldsmith* (2014), the Supreme Court of California concluded photographs and video taken by Automated Traffic Enforcement Systems (ATES) shall be considered an accurate recording of events and does not constitute as hearsay. As well, the Court went further to say a computer system is by its very nature more accurate than a human witness (*People v. Goldsmith*, 2014). In conjunction with the Court findings, the officers who review the video captures, can see the potential violations in real time and could conduct stopwatch audits if they deem necessary. Furthermore, these intersections have built in mechanisms to turn the signal lights to a flash, when the yellow light timing sequence falls below the minimum threshold. Therefore, the City does not feel on-site physical timing of yellow light signals is necessary.

Respectfully,



Henry Tingle
City Manager

cc: Becky Castaneda, Grand Jury Coordinator

Attachments: References

References

- Bahadori, H. *Minimum yellow change interval for intersections with red-light camera enforcement in California*. Retrieved from <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/engineering/ctcdc/agenda/YellowTiming.pdf>
- California Department of Transportation. (2012). *California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (2012 ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/engineering/mutcd/pdf/camutcd2012/CAMUTC2012.pdf>
- California Department of Transportation. (2014). *California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (2014 ed.). Retrieved from <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/engineering/mutcd/pdf/camutcd2014/CAMUTC2014.pdf>
- California Traffic Control Devices Committee. (2015). September 3, 2015 Agenda. Retrieved from <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/engineering/ctcdc/agenda/agenda-2015-09-03.pdf>
- Citrus Heights Police Department. (2014). *Citrus Heights Police Department Policy Manual*. Lexipol, LLC.
- People v. Goldsmith, No. S201443, (Ca. Sup. Ct. June 5, 2014).