CITY OF ALBANY

PHOTO RED LIGHT
REPORT TO LEGISLATURE
Process and Outcome Evaluation

FEBRUARY 2013

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Executive Summary

- **Milestones**
  - February/March 2005 – Begin Awareness Campaign with Surveys/Community Input – 62% support or strongly support cameras
  - February 2007 – Video Surveys at potential intersections
  - September 1, 2007 – Warning Letters
  - December 20, 2007 – Began issuing Citations
- **Number of Cameras Systems** – 2 at Queen Avenue/Geary Street
- **Facts – Citations at Queen Avenue/Geary Street**
  - 2003-2007 average of 10 red light citations per year
  - 2008 – 1119 citations issued (over 8500% increase from high of 13 in 2004)
  - 2012 – 231 citations issued (79% decrease from 2008).
- **Facts – Traffic Collisions at Queen Avenue/Geary Street**
  - No Significant Impact: 1, 2, or 3 collisions each year for disregarding Red-Amber-Green from 2003 to 2012
- **Conclusion** – Red light cameras appear to be improving safety for the City of Albany
- **Vendor** – Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc.
- **Project Manager** – Captain Eric Carter
- **Reports** – A copy of the full report can be obtained by contacting the Project Manager at 541-917-3234 or by email at eric.carter@cityofalbany.net

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to comply with ORS 810.434 and provide the Oregon State Legislature a process and outcome evaluation for the City of Albany Photo Red Light Program.

BACKGROUND

On February 26, 2007, the City of Albany entered into an agreement with Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. for Red Light Photo Enforcement Services. Based on traffic accidents, citations and community input, the first intersection selected was Queen Avenue and Geary Street. This intersection ranked in the top ten intersections that the citizens of Albany identified as a traffic safety concern. Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. coordinated a video survey to validate the safety concerns and the location's suitability for installing red light cameras. The video survey showed that there were 96 red light violations in a 12-hour span on February 26, 2007.

The red light cameras at Queen Avenue and Geary Street have been operational for 66 months. The Albany Police Department began authorizing Warning Letters on September 1, 2007. The Warning Period ended on December 19, 2007 and the Albany Police Department began authorizing Citations on December 20, 2007.

THE EFFECT OF THE USE OF CAMERAS ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

Two sets of data assist in measuring red light camera effectiveness: citation data and crash data. Citation data measures the degree of driver behavior modification. Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) crash data for disregarding a Red-Amber-Green signal specifically measures crashes as a result of running red lights.

Currently, citation data points to increased safety at this intersection. Figure 1 shows historical citation data for calendar years 2003 through 2010. From 2003 to 2007, the average number of citations issued for running a red light each year was 10, with a high of 13 citations in 2004 and a low of seven citations in 2006. In 2008, the Albany Police Department issued 1119 citations for running red lights using the red light cameras at this intersection; over an 8500 percent increase from 2004, the year with the highest citations for the previous five years. This dramatic increase gives a clear picture of the true red light running problem that existed at the intersection. In 2012, the number of citations issued dropped to 231; a decrease of 79 percent from 2008. Historically, red light camera citations will peak at implementation. This will be followed by a period of decline and then a period of leveling off. The trends observed in Albany appear to be consistent with this historical trend.

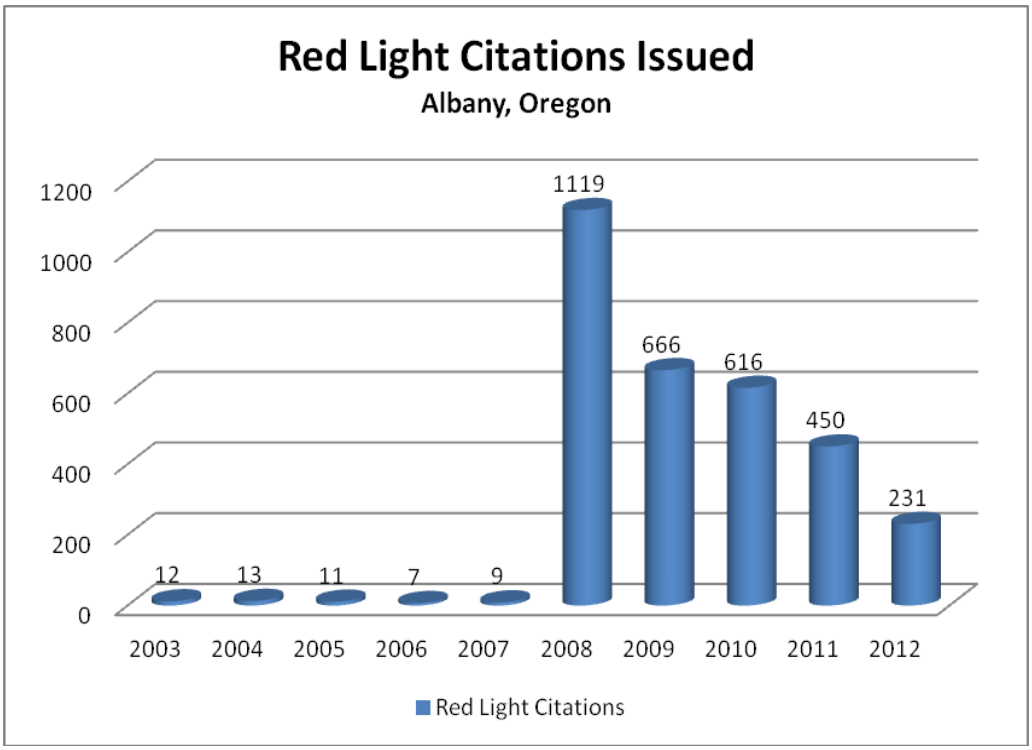

Figure 1. Red light citations issued from 2003 through 2012.

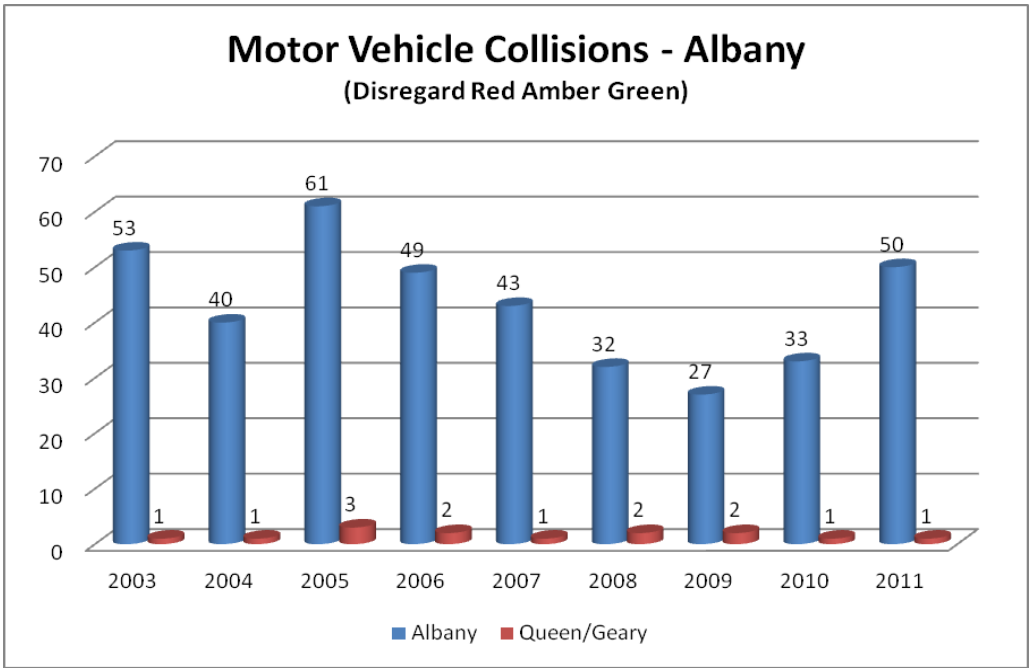

Figure 2. ODOT crash data for disregarding a Red-Amber-Green signal.

Currently ODOT crash data for disregarding a Red-Amber-Green signal is available through 2011 and is shown in Figure 2. Crash data for this intersection has remained constant at one, two, or three crashes each year since 2003. The safety impact of the program and Queen Avenue and Geary Street appears to be neutral in terms of vehicle collisions.

Overall crash data for the City of Albany showed a downward trend from 2005 to 2009. Coincidently, 2005 was the year the City of Albany began its red light camera awareness campaign and actively sought out community input. However, in the past two years the apparent umbrella effect the City had hoped to realize has diminished.

PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN AND DEGREE OF PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE USE OF CAMERAS

As part of a media campaign, the City of Albany provided public service announcements for local television and radio. The Albany Democrat-Herald newspaper also published a number of articles leading up to and during implementation. In February 2005 and March 2005, the City of Albany Red Light Photo Enforcement Workgroup sent out a survey to the citizens of Albany. The results found that 62 percent of Albany residents "support" or "strongly support" the implementation of a red light enforcement program. Citizens were also presented with the opportunity to identify the most dangerous intersections and express opinions in favor of or against the program. No additional surveys have been conducted since 2005.

PROCESS OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE USE OF CAMERAS

Red light citations are issued after a multistep process agreed upon by the Albany Municipal Court, the Albany Police Department and Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. and in compliance with applicable Oregon Revised Statutes.

The red light camera system is connected to the traffic signal. The camera is activated only after the traffic signal turns red. Sensors in the street detect violations, causing the cameras to take pictures and save a 12 second video clip. This information is then encrypted to ensure that it is not tampered with. The vendor downloads violation data on a daily basis. At this point, the vendor takes up to five business days to determine if the violation data meets strict quality control standards. These standards include checking for a clear image of the driver's face, a clear image of the license plate, a clear image of the red light before the vehicle passes the stop line and after the vehicle passes the stop line, and a gender match with the registered owner of the vehicle. Attached is a Customer Management Report from January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012 showing violations and the reason violations were rejected.

The vendor presents the violations that have passed the quality control standards to the Albany Police Department for officer authorization. Officers use a secure website to review violation images and a 12 second video of the violation. Officers will also compare violation data to Department of Motor Vehicle data. If the officer determines that a violation has occurred, the officer will authorize a citation. If not, the officer will reject the violation. This takes place within three business days of receiving the violation from the vendor.

The vendor will mail the citation on or before the tenth business day. Included in the mailing is the citation, a Certificate of Innocence or Affidavit of Non-Liability in the case of a business, and information explaining how the defendant can view the violation images and video online and a respond-by date.

A Certificate of Innocence is a document that will be included in the mailing of the citation, which will allow the registered owner to fill out stating that he/she was not the driver of the vehicle at the time of the violation. The registered owner will mail the completed Certificate of Innocence to the Albany Municipal Court who will dismiss the original citation. The Court will then forward the Certificate of Innocence to the Albany Police Department, who will compare the violation images to the registered owner's driver's license photograph to determine if a match exists. If the police determine that the registered owner was the driver, they will forward the Certificate of Innocence to the vendor to reissue the citation within ten (10) days of receipt of the form. The citation will contain a new citation number, date of issue and respond-by date. If the police determine that the registered owner was not the driver, no further action will be taken, since the citation was already dismissed by the court. The registered owner is not required to identify the person operating the vehicle.

When a citation is issued in the name of a "business" an Affidavit of Non-Liability is included with the citation. This form will give the registered owner the opportunity to identify who was operating the vehicle at the time of the violation. The Albany Municipal Court will receive the Affidavit of Non-Liability, dismiss the original citation against the registered owner and forward the Affidavit to the Police Department. The police will forward the Affidavit to the vendor together with a cover memorandum directing that the citation be reissued to the named driver. The vendor will update the record to reflect the name and address of the driver as shown on the Affidavit of Non-Liability and process the new citation.

Defendants may also pursue traditional methods to have the citation dismissed. They may plead not guilty, have a court trial and be found not guilty by a judge.

CONCLUSION

Red light cameras appear to be improving traffic safety at the intersection where they are currently installed. The Albany Police Department will continue to closely monitor and evaluate future data in order to determine its overall impact on improving traffic safety for our community.