

PHOTO RADAR 2013 ODOT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ORS 810.438 specifies the use and reporting requirements for municipal Photo Radar Programs in operation. The law allows the cities of Albany, Beaverton, Bend, Eugene, Gladstone, Medford, Milwaukie, Oregon City, Portland and Tigard to operate photo radar. In addition to individual cities reporting directly, it requires the Oregon Department of Transportation to review all submitted reports and provide an executive summary by March 1 of each odd-numbered year to the Legislative Assembly, focusing on the process and outcome evaluations for cities using Photo Radar programs in Oregon.

Photo radar has been in use in Oregon for many years. A photo radar program uses a camera to capture the license plate of speeding vehicles. The camera and radar (or laser) device are mounted to a marked police vehicle that measures the speed of vehicles. A ticket is mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle. The owner has the opportunity to respond to the ticket claiming innocence through a “certificate of innocence” or “certificate of nonliability.”

This executive summary of the cities’ reports was prepared by ODOT as required under ORS 810.438. It summarizes the cities’ evaluation summaries of their Photo Radar programs. Copies of the cities’ reports will be submitted to the Legislative Assembly directly from each city as required under statute. This report previously provided Photo Red Light information however that piece was removed in 2007 as it was deemed redundant to what the cities are already providing to the Legislature directly.

PROCESS AND OUTCOME EVALUATION – Photo Radar Programs

The Effects of the Using Cameras on Traffic Safety

Beaverton reports that it has been operating a well-established photo radar program for the last 18 years. The program has been very successful in reducing speeds in Beaverton neighborhoods. Beaverton continues to see reductions in average speeds where photo radar is in use. Beaverton maintains a place for public comment on their website and also provides a police traffic hotline and reports that feedback remains mostly positive.

Medford reports that they are currently operating two vans within the city. One is radar equipped and one is lidar equipped. The vans are deployed five to six days a week and are operated by five part-time sworn officers. Vans are dispatched to areas that have received complaints of speeding vehicles and that meet the threshold requirement in regards to traffic counts and reported speeds. Speed surveys are conducted using a radar display trailer and the data gathered as the result of these surveys is used to justify establishing new radar van sites.

Milwaukie: The goal of the Milwaukie Police Department’s deployment of the photo radar van is to reduce traffic crashes and increase driver, passenger, and pedestrian, safety within the city by reducing vehicle speeds.

In order to obtain the department’s overall goal, the photo radar van will be deployed in school zones, highway work zones, residential streets, and other streets to include the two highways that

intersect in the city that the local jurisdiction has determined have an unusually high number of crashes or speeding complaints.

In compliance with ORS 810.438(2) (b) the Milwaukie City Council has made a finding that speeding on both highway 224 and highway 99E have a negative impact on traffic safety, thereby meeting the legal requirement for deployment along these specific problematic areas.

Initially, one officer who is certified by our vendor ACS, State and Local Solutions (ACS) was assigned to deploy the photo radar van. The department's initial deployments were dedicated to the Highway 224 Milwaukie Bypass corridor and Mcloughlin Blvd. traffic corridor within the city's jurisdictional boundaries.

Currently the Milwaukie program has five officers trained in the deployment of the photo radar van. One officer is assigned full-time. The others are trained but, currently are not assigned to deployment of the van.

Milwaukie's reported improvements in Traffic Safety

The City of Milwaukie's photo radar program has been very successful in helping to reduce traffic crashes within the city boundaries.

Traffic Crashes:

2006	2007	2008
Fatal - 0	Fatal - 1	Fatal - 1
Injury - 42	Injury - 44	Injury - 32
Non Injury - 127	Non Injury - 123	Non Injury - 98
Total - 169	Total - 168	Total - 131

Traffic Crashes:

2009	2010	2011	2012
Fatal -1	Fatal-0	Fatal-0	Fatal - 0
Injury - 28	Injury-38	Injury-60	Injury - 44
Non- Injury - 107	Non-Injury-94	Non-Injury-118	Non- Injury -112
Total - 136	Total-132	Total-178	Total - 156

Portland has been operating a photo radar van since it was allowed by the 1995 legislature. Studies have shown that photo-enforcement has been effective in reducing speeding within the boundaries of the City of Portland. The trend is clearly visible that with increasing exposure to photo radar, the percent of vehicles that were exceeding the posted speed limit has been decreasing. A possible interpretation of this trend is that photo radar vans are decreasing vehicle speeds; in turn, this could be assumed to be decreasing speed related crashes. There are other interpretations of course. People are now more familiar with the photo radar vans and their deployments and learn to slow down.

Degree of Public Acceptance

Beaverton reports that 64% of Beaverton citizens believed photo radar worked very well (March 2011). The opportunity for public comment continues via the city website, city council meetings, police traffic hotline phone number and directly to the photo enforcement program coordinator.

Medford reports that citizen acceptance of Photo Radar programs has grown since its inception in 2002. They believe this is a result of how the program is administered, in a fair and open manner. Of the 2,101 citations issued in 2012, only 19 were challenged in court, furthermore, 462 were dismissed by court clerks due to a “certificate of innocence” provided by the cited party. Again, this provides confidence to the community that the program is administered in an open and consistent manner that seeks to deter rather than punish. They received very few complaints in 2012 about the program and most of the complaints were questions regarding statutory requirements of speed van warning sign placement.

Milwaukie: The Milwaukie Police Department enjoys a strong public acceptance of photo radar as reported through seven different city neighborhood associations. In January 2011, the City of Milwaukie conducted a review of the photo radar program with their Public Safety Advisory Committee. The committee voted unanimously to continue its support of the photo radar program.

It should also be noted that in May 2011, the Milwaukie City Council voted to extend its contract with ACS and upgraded the technology to all digital equipment which has resulted in greater exposure clarity.

Portland has been monitoring public opinion of photo radar over the years of deployment and enjoys a strong public acceptance of photo radar as a valuable tool against speeding. In September 2011, a public opinion poll was conducted that showed 74% of city residents approved of photo radar use in neighborhoods. This same poll showed that 89% of city residents approved of photo radar use in school zones.

Administration Process for the use of Photo Radar

Each city follows their own administration process to operate their photo radar units however all are very similar. Processes for each city are detailed in the individual city reports submitted.

Beaverton: The administrative process begins on page 6 of their report.

Medford: The administrative process begins on page 1 of their report.

Milwaukie: The administrative process is contained on page 5 of their report.

Portland: The administrative process is contained on pages 11 of their report.

Summary:

It appears from these reports and various conversations with each city that they are following the law as written and implementing legislative direction received during hearings for the operation of Photo Radar programs.

The Photo Radar program has been in operation in Oregon for 18 years. It appears to have a positive impact on reducing average speeds within the communities in which it is used. With high public acceptance and safety benefits of reduced speeds in school zones, residential and other roadways, photo radar appears to be making a positive impact to safety in the communities in which it is used.

Because of the limited number of photo radar vans in operation, it is impossible to make a direct correlation between crash reduction and the use of the systems. Unlike photo red light cameras which are 24/7 monitoring operations, photo radar vans are moved to different locations within a jurisdiction and is not allowed to be in any location more than four hours. Moving the photo radar vans is necessary so that drivers don't get used to the locations of the vans and adjust their speeds as they approach them. However, moving the vans frequently makes it difficult to identify speed and crash reductions over a long-term time-frame.