

4. RED LIGHT ENFORCEMENT CAMERA PROPOSED EVALUATION TRIAL

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Corporate Plan Output: Unspecified safety works crash reduction investigations	

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to consider a trial installation of relocatable red light enforcement cameras within the city. The desirability of installing these cameras is discussed along with the expected outcome to be achieved. The report concludes that service providers be invited to trial the cameras in May/June of this year with a view to installing up to 10 relocatable red light enforcement cameras should the trial prove successful.

BACKGROUND

SAFE STREETS the Christchurch City Road Safety Strategy identifies intersection crashes as a major concern within the city. Fifty-eight per cent of urban injury crashes in Christchurch are at intersections compared with 48% in the other main centres. Of our intersection crashes 35% occur at traffic signals where four out of ten involve red light running.

Given the high crash rate at signalised intersections the Council in the last two years has embarked on a red light running advertising campaign with a focus on “the light is red for a reason so stop or be stopped”.

Both the 1998 and 1999 red light running campaigns have been evaluated to assess their effectiveness. It would appear from the evaluations that the most recent campaign has had limited effect on the frequency of red light running. Only 4% of the people sampled had recently seen police officers issuing tickets for red light running. In the 1998 campaign 7% had seen enforcement occur. It is also worth noting that the survey showed that almost 80% of the 1999 sample indicated that they expected it was “very unlikely” that offenders would be caught. The 1998 campaign had a 65% response in this area. All age groups apart from the 45–59 year group appeared to move significantly to “somewhat unlikely” to “very unlikely” that offenders would be caught.

The Council currently operates four fixed red light enforcement camera sites within the city. Unfortunately because of technical problems these are not all operational at present. The fixed site camera operates using a wet film camera which requires Council staff to remove the camera and film from the sites and have the film processed before forwarding it to the police enforcement section in Wellington. Currently around 114 red light violations a month are recorded and 35 tickets issued as a result of the fixed camera operation.

New technology has resulted in a number of relocatable red light enforcement cameras being available for use. A trial of this type of camera has been undertaken by Manukau City. The relocatable cameras in Manukau operated by a message being sent from the light pole when the red signal is operating to a remote video camera which films all vehicles entering or within the intersection during the red light phase. Police enforcement staff collected and scanned the resulting film to obtain speed, location and identification details of vehicles in breach of the traffic signals.

During the recent TRAFINZ conference in Christchurch a manufacturer displayed an example of the camera which would be available for use in the city. It is likely that other service providers will be available within New Zealand. Better, more secure product may be available.

DISCUSSION

The Council has applied resources into engineering and education programmes to address the cities red light running problem. Evaluation of the recent intersection safety campaign has shown that the public perceives enforcement at intersections is very limited. While the Council currently operates a fixed site red light enforcement camera with some success the presence is clearly not recognised by motorists in the city.

Relocatable red light enforcement cameras have been operated with considerable success at locations overseas. It is worth noting however that not all evaluations of red light camera operations have shown benefits. To operate a relocatable red light enforcement camera programme in conjunction with the continuation of the intersection safety publicity programme could be expected to show some safety outcome improvements.

In order to evaluate the success of a relocatable red light enforcement programme and the latest technology available in this area a trial of products available from manufacturers in New Zealand is suggested. A trial of these cameras during the May/June period will identify any problems with their operation and will help identify the best products to be utilised within the city. Following such a trial, if successful, it would be appropriate to install a number of these cameras in the city. To ensure the enforcement cameras are perceived as an effective safety tool we would need to continue the existing education programme.

The police are supportive of the investigation of a relocatable red light enforcement camera programme. In discussions with Superintendent Ray Hall of the Strategic Traffic Unit and the manager of the Land Transport Safety Authority, 200 hours of police time is available to assist with the evaluation programme.

Funds for a trial programme are available within the Unspecified Safety Works budget. Installation of 10 red light cameras could cost in the order of \$200,000. A commitment of Police resources will also be necessary. No funding is presently allocated in the Annual Plan. A report on the trial and future funding requirements will be presented later in the year.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking the above points into consideration it is concluded that a relocatable red light enforcement camera programme trial be developed within the city. As part of this trial surveys would be undertaken to ascertain the community perception of their success as a tool in changing driver behavior in association with red light running. Following the trial a contract could be signed with an appropriate manufacturer to operate ten sites within the city.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council call for an expression of interest for the provision of trial relocatable red light cameras to be operated within the city during May/June this year.
 2. That the expressions of interest be reported back to the Committee.
 3. That future funding provisions for the programme include funding for promotion.

(Note: Councillor Booth requested that his vote against this recommendation be recorded.)