

Subject: Fwd: Fwd: Victorville red light cams - meeting on Mar. 17 - city claims crashes are down 92%

From: editor <editor@highwayrobbery.net>

Date: Wed, 18 Mar 2015 13:48:33 -0700

To: editor@highwayrobbery.net

Highwayrobbery.net sent this email to the VV council

3-13-15

For the City Council, for agendized red light camera item, 3-17-15 meeting

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

The staff report for the upcoming Victorville council meeting became available yesterday (copy available at highwayrobbery [dot] net/TrcDocsVictorvilleContr2015Mar17StaffRep [dot] pdf) and it says that crashes are down 92% since the red light cameras were installed in Victorville. That's an amazing reduction, far higher than that reported by any other city having cameras; if the figure is accurate the efforts that led to the reduction should be thoroughly documented and published in professional journals so that other cities - and motorists - can benefit.

Victorville's huge drop in accidents stands in stark contrast to other cities. Stockton just shut down their cameras. Modesto has suspended the operation of theirs. Santa Ana will shut down in June. Last year, Riverside shut down their camera system as did Davis, Highland, Inglewood, Laguna Woods, Oakland, Oceanside, South San Francisco and Walnut. In 2013 Belmont, El Cajon, Escondido, Hayward, Murrieta, Poway, Redwood City, San Diego, San Rafael and South Gate shut theirs down. The authorities in those and other towns have said that the cameras made no significant difference. Their statements are attached, for your review.

Remarkably, over the same period that Victorville's accident rate plummeted, ticketing did not decrease but actually rose and is up 52% since 2009, the first full year of the cameras' operation, per figures found in a graph that is part of the staff report. That rise occurred despite the fact that in 2010, six cameras were permanently shut down. The rise, occurring while accidents are dropping, suggests that the City has ticketed more and more people each year for technical violations having no impact upon safety.

The staff report provided another figure suggesting a high level of technical violations: 27% of the tickets are going to Victorville residents. That's high. Usually, after cameras have been around for years, local residents have learned where the cameras are and will be a very small proportion of those recently ticketed. It can be as little as 1.5%, and 10% is common, per figures in FAQ # 22 at highwayrobbery [dot] net.

The "technical" ticketing may be driven by the "cost neutral" terms of the contract between the City and Redflex, because under those terms the City has come to owe the company \$1.7 million (a box in the staff report says \$1.1 million, but that's a typo), most of which the company would have to write off, were the contract to end. The prospect of losing a million Dollars would give any company a powerful incentive to not wait until the end but get the money now, by encouraging an artificially high level of ticketing. (In Victorville, the rise does seem to be artificial: In 2014, ticketing by the City's two most heavy-hitting cameras doubled between the beginning and the end of the year, per figures available at highwayrobbery [dot] net.) If Victorville intends to continue

having red light cameras, it will need to change Redflex' compensation to a flat amount per month, so that the company has no financial incentive to manipulate the number of tickets. (A copy of the contract is available on the Victorville page at highwayrobbery [dot] net.)

Looking again at who gets the tickets, the 73% going to visitors is important because operating cameras in an area with high turnover can never stop the running; there's always fresh meat, um, new visitors, making mistakes, being distracted or lost (unless you can keep them out of the City by installing a dome, like the one they have in Chester's Mill, Maine). A visitor won't know that there's a camera up ahead, so the presence of a camera won't, by itself, keep him from running the light and endangering the other people - mostly local residents - who frequent the same intersection. In other words, just putting up cameras and issuing lots of tickets is futile. If a city genuinely wants to minimize running, and accidents, it will do the following things to make the problematic intersections stand out, look more important. (Ask your staff to report as to how many of these things they've already done, and when they did them.)

1. Put up more visible signal lights (larger diameter, with bigger backboards, with more of them placed on the "near" side of the wider intersections).
2. Paint "signal ahead" on the pavement.
3. Install lighted overhead street signs for the cross street (also placed on the "near" side), and larger bulbs in the streetlights at the intersection.

Then there is the issue of what to do about right turns. The annual report Redflex filed with the Judicial Council on behalf of the City (copy attached) says that in 2013, Victorville issued 937 tickets for right turns. I don't have right turn ticketing figures for before 2013, or after, but I submit that if you investigate and find that the number of tickets for right turns has not declined despite years of photo enforcement, the City should study its records to determine when during the red phase most of those tickets occur and then install "blank out" signs programmed to light up and prohibit right turns during the high risk period.

On the subject of right turn tickets, I want to pass along a remarkable statement, from a Dec. 26, 2014 Wall Street Journal interview: "Mr. [James] Saunders [president of RedFlex] suggests jurisdictions refrain from issuing a [rolling right] ticket except when a pedestrian is in the crosswalk." The headline was, "Can the Red-Light Camera Be Saved? - Money-hungry politicians discredit a hopeful safety innovation." (A Jan. 22, 2015 column in the Dallas Morning News confirmed the statement The Journal had attributed to Saunders: "When I asked Redflex spokeswoman Jody Ryan about her boss' comments urging cities to lighten up on rolling reds, she answered, *'It only makes sense that Jim is going to say, 'Look, we need people to be thoughtful about how they are implementing these programs and how they are issuing citations.' It wasn't that shocking.'*")

Please ask staff to report to you the average age of those ticketed, broken down by camera location and lane. Age is of interest because those locations where the age of violators is found to be significantly higher probably need to be made more navigable for older drivers. Sometimes it will be as simple as lengthening the yellow light by half a second.

The staff report does not discuss the allegations that Redflex spent \$2 million to bribe an official in

Chicago, probably because those allegations have long been common knowledge. What is not common knowledge, and in my opinion worse than what may have happened in Chicago, is the extent to which California officials, government employees and their associates have immunized themselves and their families from receiving photo enforcement and toll tickets by exploiting the CVC 1808.4 confidential registration address program. As of 2011 1.5 million private vehicles in California - about 5% of all registrations - had the confidential registrations. I would like to suggest that you ask staff how many City employees have the confidential registrations, and also ask the staff of the red light camera program to provide regular reports detailing their handling of the red light camera violations committed by those enjoying confidential registrations.

Conclusion

The staff report claims that accidents are way, way down - over the same period that running rose, a lot. With all due respect to staff, I again suggest that the accident statistics be re-run by a thoroughly independent professional with credentials in the field of statistics. A professional statistician's report will tell you which changes are statistically significant, and which are not.

During a new contract term of five years 90,000 tickets could be issued, with 27% of those (24,300) going to Victorville residents, so this decision is an important one. It does not have to be made right now. If you want a lower price, a clearly legal contract, better statistics, and more input from the public, bring this matter back to a later meeting. And, please publish the staff report at least a couple weeks before that meeting, to provide time for the public to see it and comment.

Sincerely,

Jim

Attachments:

Candor by Officials: Statements by authorities in other towns, from highwayrobbery [dot] net.

Annual report filed with the Judicial Council, from highwayrobbery [dot] net

Staff report for Mar. 17

Previous emails

cc: Media

----- Original Message -----

Subject:Fwd: Mar 17 agenda: Victorville Red Light Contract Expiring, Accident Report, Opportunity to Negotiate Price

Date:Wed, 11 Mar 2015 13:00:47 -0700

From:Jim <jim

Reply-To:jim

To:editor@highwayrobbery.net, lstevens@CI.VICTORVILLE.CA.US

3-11-15

For the City Council, for agendized red light camera item, 3-17-15 meeting

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

The Daily Press says that the sheriff has done a report about accidents, and will be presenting it to you. May I respectfully suggest that you should take the time to have such an important and pivotal report done, in depth, by a person who is both thoroughly independent of the City and the sheriff and who also has professional credentials and licensing in statistics?

In case you have not seen it, I am pasted below a copy of my previous letter to you.

Regards,

Jim

cc: Media

Attached: Feb. 9 letter

----- Original Message -----

Subject:Upcoming Automatic Extension of Victorville Red Light Camera Contract and Opportunity to Negotiate Price

Date:Mon, 09 Feb 2015 10:53:59 -0800

From:Jim <jim>

Reply-To:jim

To:editor@highwayrobbery.net, lstevens@CI.VICTORVILLE.CA.US

2-9-15

For the Victorville City Council

Subject: Upcoming Automatic Extension of Red Light Camera Contract and Opportunity to Negotiate Price

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

On March 16, 2010 you approved a five year contract with Redflex, and now that contract is about to automatically extend for two more years, unless you notify Redflex 30 days before the current expiration date. Thus – depending upon the date the contract was actually signed - **you may have as little as a week from now** to send that notification.

Why Not Let It Renew? The price!

In March 2014 the City of Elk Grove, California approved a new contract which specified the following schedule of rents for their five Redflex cameras.

Years in service	Fixed price not to exceed / Designated Intersection Approach per month
0-4.99	\$4696.00
5.0-6.99	\$4196.00
7.0-9.99	\$2000.00
10.0+	\$1500.00

From Exh. D of the Elk Grove Contract. Full contract available at highwayrobbery [dot] net.

In its 2010 contract Victorville agreed to pay rent of \$6000 per camera, and that rate will continue if the contract is allowed to automatically extend. Thus, Victorville could pay 163% extra (compared to the Elk Grove price schedule) over the two years of the automatic extension, an overpayment of \$910,704. To cover that extra rent, the City will need to issue an extra 9107 tickets (assuming that the City receives an average of \$100 for each ticket issued).

If there is concern about the unpaid balance the City owes Redflex, please consider that in another town (Ventura), Redflex has tentatively agreed to forgive \$1.7 million of that City's \$2.7 million unpaid balance - with a rent of \$2190 per camera.

Clearly, the close proximity of the expiration date gives Victorville staff insufficient time to negotiate a new contract. Many cities have dealt with such short deadlines by doing a month-to-month extension of the contract, but at the old prices. I would like to suggest that instead of continuing to pay the old prices for an indefinite number of months, the City should ask Redflex for a substantially reduced rent to apply during the negotiation period and, if Redflex will not agree to that, that the City should simply suspend the operation of the cameras during the negotiation period - similar to what Modesto has done.

Sincerely,

Jim

cc: Media

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