

**Subject:**Menlo Park red light cams - Contract Expiring

**Date:**Mon, 6 Aug 2018 17:09:27 -0700

**From:**Jim <jim>

**Reply-To:**jim

**To:**[piohtaki@menlopark.org](mailto:piohtaki@menlopark.org), [ccarlton@menlopark.org](mailto:ccarlton@menlopark.org), [rdueller@menlopark.org](mailto:rdueller@menlopark.org), [racline@menlopark.org](mailto:racline@menlopark.org), [kkeith@menlopark.org](mailto:kkeith@menlopark.org), [admccintyre@menlopark.org](mailto:admccintyre@menlopark.org)

8-6-18

Subject: Red Light Cameras - Contract Expiring

Venue: Possible Upcoming Council Meeting

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

The amount of the rent you agree to pay to Redflex is important because it puts pressure on staff to keep ticketing up.

**From:** Dixon, William A  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 15, 2018 2:28 PM  
**To:** Mackdanz, Scott L  
**Cc:** Bertini, David C  
**Subject:** Redflex Information

According to the current budget information our Redflex numbers are way down year to date. I'm trying to determine if this is due to one installation being lower than the rest or if the lower numbers are across the board.

Please have Deborah contact Redflex and get a fiscal year (16/17 vs 17/18) to date comparison of each installation.

Thanks

*Commander William A. Dixon*

MPPD internal correspondence obtained via a public records request

I and others came to a council meeting five years ago (8-20-13) and - well after midnight - suggested that the new Redflex contract you were about to vote upon would have you pay way too much

for the red light cameras. You took our advice - to an extent - and by the next council meeting had renegotiated to obtain a 9% discount, saving the City \$107,400 which - I believe - saved 1074 motorists from getting a ticket.

Three years ago I wrote to you (copy below) and suggested that it might be time to negotiate again. Had you taken that suggestion you could have saved as much as \$424,800 (and the need to issue 4248 tickets). But you did not renegotiate - you continued to pay the 2013 rent of \$4950 even though, with four of the camera installations about to turn seven years old in Summer 2015 you might have been able to obtain a price close to the Elk Grove price of \$2000.

My copy of the contract you approved in 2013 says it is to expire at the end of this month. Per 2018 invoices I received this April, you still were paying \$4950. By now the contract may have been extended a year or more, but if Section 6.1 hasn't been changed or removed, you still have the ability to cancel/suspend on short notice, to give yourselves the opportunity to get a better price. Which will cut the number of tickets you need to issue in order to break even - or could allow you to reduce the amount of the fine for a right turn.

### Can the City Reduce the Right Turn Fine?

In 2016 66% of the City's camera tickets were for right turns. (In 2015 it was 38%.) Many people think that a City cannot reduce the \$500.00 fine for right turns, but the City of Los Angeles was able to cut the fine in half by citing under CVC 21453(b), which has a considerably lower base fine than does 21453(a). Menlo Park can easily afford to reduce the fine, as in the typical month the program nets the City substantially more than the cost to operate it; in May the monthly remittance (see attached) from the court to the City was \$58,347 while the (way too high) monthly rent you paid to Redflex (\$26,000) was less than half of that.

### Have Cameras Made Us Safer?

I want to pass along a Case Western study which came to national attention via a July 19 article in phys (dot) org. The study was published (posted) in the Social Science Research Network on November 30 last year. The authors made an in-depth statistical analysis - with "controls" - of the camera programs in Houston (which shut its cameras down in 2012) and Dallas and found, "... the cameras changed the composition of accidents, but **no evidence of a reduction in total accidents or injuries.**" (Abstract, page 1 of the pdf of the study, emphasis added.) The study further found, "... the model suggests that **the camera program led to a decrease in social welfare.**" (Page 5 of the pdf of the study, line 5, emphasis added.) (The study is a large file so I have not attached it here. It is available on the University's website; Google the title, Criminal Deterrence when there are Offsetting Risks: Traffic Cameras, Vehicular Accidents, and Public Safety.)

When it comes to statistics I am a lay person, but even I have noticed that when the subject is red light

cameras and the number of collisions at a particular location over the years or before and after cameras, often the report is missing a control group such as a comparison with other intersections. The importance of having a control group was highlighted out by a report commissioned in 2016 by the City of San Leandro (a Redflex client), in which the engineer concluded:

"After reviewing over 13 years of collision data for the two intersections, our findings are inconclusive with regards to an ARLE [red light camera] reducing collisions."

"For whatever reason, it appears that the injury plus fatality collision rate at signalized intersections (with or without ARLE) has decreased dramatically over the most recent nine year period (when compared to the previous nine year period). **ARLE cannot take credit for this reduction, because the collision rate decreased more at signalized intersections without ARLE.**" (Emphasis added.)

The San Leandro report is a large file so has not been attached here. It is available at a link on the San Leandro Docs page at the website highwayrobbery (dot) net.

You probably know that other California cities have ended their camera programs. (29 programs remain out of the 103 that once operated.) Attached is a compilation of comments made by police chiefs, city managers, firemen and councilmembers in cities having a collective 200 years of experience with red light cameras. (The attachment has "Candor" in the file name.)

### Conclusion

1. The rent and the fine for a rolling right are both too high and the safety argument is weak; the camera program needs close examination before any further extension.
2. If staff's plan is to make public its detailed argument in favor of cameras no earlier than the weekend before the Council meeting at which the matter is to be decided, or even to wait until the time of the meeting and do a PowerPoint or verbal presentation, I am concerned that doing so would have the effect of defeating any in-depth analysis by the public or the press. I am sure you want such input, so I ask that you please publish any new staff report well ahead of time so that the public and the press can have more than a weekend to read it and comment.
3. The City should have its safety stats done by a professional with credentials in the field of statistics and who is independent of other ties or contracts with the City.

Sincerely,

Jim

Previous email, from 2015

**Subject:**Red light cams - save \$424,800 for the City, or 4248 tickets to Menlo Park motorists

**Date:**Sat, 07 Feb 2015 14:59:45 -0800

**From:**Jim

**Reply-To:**[jim](mailto:jim)

**To:**[editor@highwayrobbery.net](mailto:editor@highwayrobbery.net), [piohtaki@menlopark.org](mailto:piohtaki@menlopark.org), [ccarlton@menlopark.org](mailto:ccarlton@menlopark.org), [rdmueller@menlopark.org](mailto:rdmueller@menlopark.org), [racline@menlopark.org](mailto:racline@menlopark.org), [kkeith@menlopark.org](mailto:kkeith@menlopark.org), [admcintyre@menlopark.org](mailto:admcintyre@menlopark.org)

2-7-15

**Honorable Menlo Park Mayor and Councilmembers:**

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

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

Table from Exh. D of the Elk Grove Contract, full document available at [highwayrobbery \[dot\] net](http://highwayrobbery.net)

**In Aug. 2013 Menlo Park agreed to pay \$4950 for cameras that were then five years old, so will pay 72% too much (compared to the Elk Grove price schedule) over the five years of the extension it agreed to, \$497,184 extra. To cover that excessive rent, Menlo Park will need to issue an extra 4972 tickets (assuming that the City receives an average of \$100 for each ticket issued).**

**But there is a way out. At the Aug. 2013 meeting you did not delete the unusual requirement for a 4/5 vote to cancel on short notice, but provided that after Feb. 15, 2015 only a 3/5 vote would be required (see Section 6.1 of the contract). Thus, starting next week, a simple majority can vote to cancel the program so that the City can, if it wishes, negotiate a better price. (If the City is able to negotiate the \$2000 "Elk Grove" price for the Aug. 2015 - Aug. 2018 portion of the extension, it will save \$424,800, and 4248 tickets.)**

**FAQ # 17 at highwayrobbery [dot] net has more information about other cities' contracts, how much they pay - and how they negotiated their low prices.**

**Regards,**

**Jim**

**cc: Media**

--

\*\*\*\*\*