

9-10-17

Subject: Eight more years of red light cams in Solana Beach? (Council item Sept. 12, 2017)

Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers:

Some numbers not found in the staff report:

In 2016 rolling right turns comprised 51% of all tickets issued.

In 2016 the quantity of tickets for rolling right turns was 1/3 more than in the three preceding years, 2013 - 2015. (See notes at bottom of this letter for source of data.)

In 2016 the quantity of tickets for all movements (straight, right, left) was 46% more than in the three preceding years.

In 2016 the quantity of tickets for all movements was 63% more than in the three years 2010 - 2012.

Your neighbor Del Mar pays \$1578 per month for each of their cameras while you are being asked to continue paying \$2386, 51% more.

Safety is paramount, yet not found in the staff report are any statistics comparing current Solana Beach accident rates to the rates before the cameras were put in, or to controls.

More about safety. Personally, I identify with what Mark Twain wrote about statistics: *"Figures often beguile me, particularly when I have the arranging of them myself; in which case the remark attributed to Disraeli would often apply with justice and force: 'There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics.'*" So, when the question is, "Do cameras reduce injuries," the study I like the most - because it does not rely on statistical analysis - is the one San Francisco first published in August 2015 to satisfy the new CVC 21455.5(i) requirement to publish an annual report. A link to the October 2016 edition of their annual report is in the attached Candor pdf. Their study takes about five minutes to read.

In a May 2016 letter to me, San Francisco's Chief Traffic Engineer Ricardo Olea said:

"You are correct that engineering changes are the most effective way to reduce red light running crashes. We've had a long-standing record of improving intersection safety through signal upgrade improvements and signal timing changes." "We are the process of starting a new Red Light Camera contract which will reduce the total number of approaches being enforced in San Francisco, keeping some locations we believe are still needed based on crash and citation history."

Later in 2016 San Francisco reduced ticketing by 76%; during the five-month period September 2016 thru January 2017 they issued just 1273 tickets compared to the average

5310 tickets they issued in the same five-month periods a year and two years before. (*Solana Beach issued 1251 tickets in September 2016 thru January 2017.*)

How did San Francisco arrive at their decision to downsize? Their annual report, mentioned above, found that the installation of a red light camera seldom was followed by a drop in accidents. Instead, the drops occurred after engineering improvements like making the yellows longer, adding an all-red interval (both of which are cheap to do), or a general upgrade to the signal. (In one instance - see page 12 of the report - staff conceded what one of the graphs shows, that the camera may have had no effect whatsoever.)

Staff has reported to you that 90% of Solana Beach's tickets are going to visitors. Solana Beach is part of a megalopolis with an ever-changing population of visitors who will never have their driving behavior improved by cameras they don't know are there. If the City genuinely wants to minimize running and accidents by visitors (and "locals" too), it should do the following things to make the problematic intersections stand out, look more important.

- a. Put up more visible signal lights (larger diameter, with bigger backboards, with more of them placed on the "near" side of the wider intersections).
- b. Paint "signal ahead" on the pavement.
- c. 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 rolling right turns which were 51% of Solana Beach's camera tickets in 2016. Making the intersections stand out, or even lengthening the yellows, won't reduce the number of rolling right turn violations, nor will the increasingly heavy ticketing for the turns (blame the visitors), so I suggest that the council ask staff to identify the specific intersections having a lot of accidents associated with rolling right turns, and then consider installing "blank out" signs programmed to light up and prohibit all right turns during the riskiest portions of the signal cycle. If pedestrians or bicyclists are being run down, the City should not stand by and allow rolling right turns to continue unimpeded.

Now - before a new up-to-eight-year contract is signed - the council should be provided with a report about whether the cameras actually improve safety. That report should also include details of any engineering changes staff may have made to improve safety. A suggested format for the report would be either that used in the San Francisco study or that used in the San Leandro study, also linked in the attached Candor pdf. Or both.

If staff or Redflex submits accident statistics the morning of the 12th, I would have two comments:

1. The last minute presentation of said statistics would deny the public a suitable opportunity to review their veracity and provide detailed comments to the city council.

2. With all due respect to City and sheriff staff, any statistical analysis should be done by a professional who has academic credentials in the field of statistics and has not done previous work for the City.

I am including, below, a letter I sent you earlier, as it includes recommendations from a former president of Redflex and from the editors of the Union Tribune.

Regards,

(highwayrobbery.net)

Previous email follows.

Subject:More Years of Red light cams in Solana Beach?

Date:Tue, 03 Mar 2015 13:56:46 -0800

From:(highwayrobbery.net)

Reply-To:

To:lheebner@cosb.org, dzito@cosb.org, pzahn@cosb.org, mnichols@cosb.org, gmarshall@cosb.org

3-3-15

Re: Proposed renewal of red light camera contract with Redflex

Honorable Mayor and Council:

The former five year contract between the City and Redflex expired in October, and since then - I am told - staff has been negotiating a new contract and the parties are very close to agreement. Since I don't know for sure that staff will present the new contract to your Council for review, or *when* they might do that, I am taking this opportunity to raise a few points.

Shouldn't the program be evaluated, for effectiveness, before a contract is negotiated or signed? Among other things, wouldn't you like to know why ticketing has not decreased after years of enforcement but is in fact rising, with 2014 ticketing 40% (or more) higher than in previous years? (Data from highwayrobbery [dot] net.) May I suggest that the evaluation be done by a person having professional credentials in statistics and who is completely independent of the City and the sheriff? May I also suggest that after such an evaluation is published, and before any hearing is held before the Council, there should be a review period of a couple weeks to provide time for the public to comment on the evaluation?

If you determine that the program should be continued, then there is the question of the rent. For the last five years the City has paid \$2364 per camera per month, and I have

been told that the proposed new contract may continue at that same amount. You have had your Redflex cameras for a long time, since 2004; here is how Redflex has agreed to reward another City's loyalty.

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

Table from the Mar. 2014 contract between the City of Elk Grove, California and Redflex, for that City's system of five cameras.

If Solana Beach agrees to another five year extension and continues to pay the old price, the City will pay an extra \$103,680 over the five years (compared to Elk Grove's prices), and to cover that rent it will need to issue tickets to an extra 1037 motorists (assuming the City receives \$100 of revenue for each ticket issued).

Finally, I want to pass along a couple remarkable statements.

1. 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.")

Saunders's statement is highly relevant to Solana Beach because 66% of the City's tickets are for right turns. (See the annual report, attached.)

2. From an editorial in the U-T, published at the time the Poway city council was about remove the cameras from that city:

"Let's eliminate every trace of this bad civic memory. And to city leaders in Oceanside [closed in late 2014], Vista [closed in late 2016], Encinitas, Solana Beach and Del Mar — it's time to do likewise. The cameras are simply not doing the intended job."

Sincerely,

(highwayrobbery.net)

Source of data given in Sept. 2017 letter:

The 2013 - 2016 annual reports are attached to the Sept. 2017 email and were produced by Redflex in compliance with a law enacted in 2012 (codified as CVC 21455.5(i)).

The data for years before 2013, and any month-by-month data, is from official city documents available at links on the Solana Beach Docs page at the website highwayrobbery [dot] net.