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Meet reader 'W Howard,' undercover traffic cam exec

By [Scott North](#) and [Rikki King](#)

The [controversy surrounding traffic enforcement cameras](#) has been a big draw for people who post comments to [Heraldnet.com](#). Some folks seem compelled to weigh in with opinions on nearly every story. Apparently that includes at least one vice president at an Arizona-based camera company.

A poster using the screen name "W Howard" has commented 43 times on our site since June. The unifying themes in these posts are that the cameras are good, that they are making the world safer and that anyone who says otherwise -- particularly Mukilteo initiative activist Tim Eyman -- needs their head examined.

Some readers have suggested "W Howard" has been posting comments as part of a marketing campaign run by [American Traffic Solutions, Inc.](#) The Scottsdale-based company contracts to provide enforcement camera services in Lynnwood and Seattle. It had inked a similar deal in Mukilteo last year, then Eyman [pushed for a public vote](#). Upshot: no cameras in Mukilteo, and a spreading movement around Washington that has growing numbers of people asking questions about enforcement camera technology.

Heraldnet.com requires that people who wish to post comments supply us with a live email address at the time they create their user account. "W Howard" gave an address at American Traffic Solutions. It is one used by [Bill Kroske](#), vice president of business development at ATS. Somebody techie here ran down the internet protocol address that's being used for "W Howard's" posts. The electronic trail led straight back to Kroske's company in Scottsdale.

Kroske pitched Mukilteo on the cameras. He recently was in Bellingham, suggesting a similar arrangement. He's been the public face of American Traffic Solutions in arranging camera contracts in Washington.

We wrote him Tuesday asking about the posts. Why not simply stand behind your product, out in the open?

That got a quick response from Charles Territo, vice president of communications at American Traffic Solutions. He didn't address whether Kroske is behind the "W Howard" posts. He did offer this statement:

"There is no coordinated effort at ATS to engage in commenting. However, it is not surprising that our employees like many other advocates feel strongly about the benefits red light safety cameras provide. The views expressed by our employees are strictly theirs."

He said any comments offered by ATS can be found on their [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Youtube](#) pages.

"ATS is not now and has not ever been shy about our support for the use of red-light safety cameras," Territo added. "However, the only official positions from ATS come from our communications department."

Eyman chuckled when told about the Kroske connection.

"It shows a level of sophistication and manipulation," he said. " ... If you've got a product that everybody loves it is going to be self evident. You don't need to manipulate web sites, sounding boards and impersonate local folks to get the message out."

In a strange sort of poetic justice, other readers already have taken "W Howard" to task. You can read those comment threads [here, where he gets called out](#), and [here](#), where he confuses us with Canada -- and gets caught.

Here are some of his other greatest hits. Click on the links to go back to the original stories and comments.

Monroe, beware those [Mukilteo rednecks](#):

Stick to your guns Council

This is not a backwoods city to be manipulated by a bunch of radicals manipulated by Slick Timmy Eyman. He may have buffaloeed his home city, but don't let it happen here.

Jan 27, 2011 12:25 pm | 2 replies | Request removal

W Howard

Oh, he [lives in Lynnwood](#):

Half cup empty

It is easy to get negative press by focusing on the money. The fact is that the traffic in Lynnwood is terrible. This is a transition city where people use our roads to get to and from other locations or bypass the freeway. My guess is that the vast major of violations come from people who don't live here - and have little motivation to care about the safety of the local residents. If these people don't mind breaking the law and are willing to

donate to the city's budget need. That's our win and their loss...of course a positive headline of that nature would get the same press!

May 3, 2011 8:52 am | 0 replies | Request removal

W Howard

Or was it Everett? He just wants to [prevent pedestrian deaths](#):

cameras

Like them or not, we need some traffic cameras in Everett. I thought they were suppose to be installed a year ago! Seattle has pointed out the cameras are for pedestrians as well as violating drivers. The data there says they have been successful on both counts.

Jan 2, 2011 6:41 am | 1 replies | Request removal

W Howard

And he's [gotten a ticket](#):

A dose of reality

Well written, Sgt. Davis. I contributed once... paid my fine and learned a lesson. Now every time I see that flash go off I say to myself, "yup, another lesson learned" - at least I hope so.

May 4, 2011 10:42 am | 0 replies | Request removal

W Howard

But it's [all about the kids](#), anyways:

Safety and Kids should be the focus

When technology is developed that makes us safer, we need to get our paranoia out the way and take advantage of it. The cameras have produced dramatic results in reducing people speeding through school zones; and the new school bus law (passed by one of highest margins in history) will allow cameras to catch people passing buses with the stop sign out while loading or unloading children. So suck it up Eyman and explain it to the parents and educators in your home town why they will not be able to make it safer for their children.

May 15, 2011 11:40 am | 2 replies | Request removal

W Howard

You can find the complete "W Howard" collection by searching Google for "site:heraldnet.com "W Howard"'"



Comments

Log in or register to post a new comment.

To read other terms and conditions, [click here](#)

Unethical

I don't know if it's legal or not, but I believe that any business that engages in this kind of behavior should be permanently barred from any kind of government contracting in WA state.

If it's not current law, we should organize to get it passed.

May 19, 2011 4:38 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Chris Bingham

[Post reply](#)

(No heading)

Rinnwald is right. It's great to see some decent reporting coming from the Herald, as others have acknowledged this paper being the lapdog of local government for a long time.

Keep up the good work! 😊

May 18, 2011 2:23 pm | 1 replies | [Request removal](#)

woodman woods

[Post reply](#)

Re: (No heading)

I agree that this is good reporting. Nice to see.

As far as the paper being a lapdog for local governments, I would say fine tune that claim to say they're a lapdog for tribal governments.

May 19, 2011 11:12 am | [Request removal](#)

william edmunds

This has been going on for awhile

<http://bellaliberta.wordpress.com/2010/10/09/traffic-camera-scam-fake-support-of-photo->

[enforcement-red-light-and-speed-cameras-rynskis-blogski/](#)

and this: http://blogs.pitch.com/plog/2011/02/red-light_camera_debate_websites.php

American Traffic Solutions is the most unethical company on the face of the planet. Just think, they have access to your DMV files, and make money off scamming people based entirely on the municipality taking their word on the evidence.....real trustworthy folks we are dealing with.

May 18, 2011 9:58 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Matt Hay

[Post reply](#)

The Herald enabled this peddler

Dear Herald, the policies allowing anonymity on comments, and of not checking bonafides, has given unfair advantage to the pro camera side, and weakened your own perceived impartiality. The stories may well be as evenhanded as possible, but the chorus of commentators may well be shills for one side or the other. Your reporters and editors are named as befits professional standards. In the interest of fairness, all commentators would do well to be required to do the same. This might be the only way to quiet some of the yapping we all have got so used to, and to return civility to a useful public forum.

May 18, 2011 9:28 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

jon coulter

[Post reply](#)

Monroe City Council

Monroe, you got some splainin' to do! Or, we can just vote you out of office next election. Sounds like a deal to me! 😊

May 18, 2011 4:02 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

mock wisdom

[Post reply](#)

Crickets.....

Usually "W Howard" would be all over a scamera post with his astro-turfing comments by now.

/crickets/

May 18, 2011 2:42 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Peter Witting

[Post reply](#)

(No heading)

Let's just give Arizona back to Mexico and be done with it already.

May 18, 2011 2:34 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Trevor Cook

[Post reply](#)

Great Story

Once again, the Herald nails it. Thank you for bringing the truth to light on the topics that people care about. I think your reporters rock!

May 18, 2011 12:18 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Moon Dance

[Post reply](#)

Traffic lights have increased the problem

Having lived her for over 10 years, can tell you the lights have made things more dangerous. I have been gone through 44th and 196th several times only to have the person in front of me slam on their brake because the yellow was shortened when the cameras were installed. I have a grade schooler in the backseat and this intersection is a safety hazard. People are more focused on avoiding \$\$tickets\$\$ then being safe to those around them. Also, I have decided to drive on the 25 mph side streets through the residential neighborhoods. I imagine others are doing the same thing. Traffic is being redirected off of 35mph commercial lanes and into the streets children play around.

May 18, 2011 11:58 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Kristi Rupp

[Post reply](#)

W Howard

Mr. Howard...I suggest that you get back to the golf course, and maybe you can talk all those golf course executives in Arizona to install red light cameras at each tee to regulate play, in the interest of safety, of course (won't have to yell "FORE" so often). Oh, and don't forget the southern border...I bet you could halt the migration of illegals with your arsenal of cameras! See ya!

May 18, 2011 11:30 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Wes None

[Post reply](#)

Techies

Well local techies, why not take over this guys contract and at least keep the \$5k a camera he is charging a month local. Yep, \$60k a year per camera. Why are we sending this to AZ? Really Lynnwood, couldn't find anyone in WA that could put up a camera and monitor?

May 18, 2011 11:22 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

l d

[Post reply](#)

(No heading)

Sounds like an honest bunch down there in arizona running these camera companies, now doesn't it? This guy is just one in a long line of dishonest bloggers, misrepresenting themselves as locals.

But remember more importantly, these are the same companies our local and state politicians are in bed with. But of course, we all know it is about safety and for the children, right?

It is too bad that the public cannot get ahold of all the wheeling and dealing, back room winks and nods, paid junkets, wining and dining that really goes on between these sleezy camera companies and our equally sleezebag politicians.

That old saying is still appropriate and fits this story well: sleep with dogs, and you get fleas.

May 18, 2011 10:07 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

awol 50

[Post reply](#)

(No heading)

What's really surprising is The Herald rediscovering its muckraking abilities in this, and other recent stories. Too long, The Herald has been local government's lap dog.

Keep up the good work.

May 18, 2011 9:02 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Rinnwald

[Post reply](#)

W. Howard = ATS Executive

No one should be surprised that ATS engages in stealth support for scameras. They are losing the battle for public support as more and more people understand the reductions in safety with the bad engineering methods that are needed to make these scams profitable. Scameras have been voted out 100% of the time when the public is given the chance to say yea or nay to these predatory revenue devices. The science is on our website. Please read it and maybe you will join us to help rid the country of the scourge of ticket cameras. James C. Walker, National Motorists Association, www.motorists.org, Ann Arbor, MI

May 18, 2011 8:00 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

James Walker

[Post reply](#)

Good work!

Nice work, Herald! Their astro-turfing and comment-loading has been apparent for a while, I appreciate you calling this guy out. Plus, his comments are SO transparent!

May 18, 2011 7:10 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Peter Witting

[Post reply](#)

William Howard Kroske

I did a Google search of full name William Howard Kroske and came across a site listing a copyright for a pamphlet entitled "How to be happy and rich in real estate," by a William Howard Kroske. The same person as at ATS? Related? Unrelated? I dunno. Maybe "W Howard" (who reads these columns) will let us know.

May 18, 2011 4:08 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Henry Highway

[Post reply](#)

William Howard Kroske

Bill Kroske's middle initial is H. Whatcha wanna bet it stands for Howard?

May 18, 2011 3:57 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Henry Highway

[Post reply](#)

(No heading)

"There is no coordinated effort at ATS to engage in commenting. However, it is not surprising that our employees like many other advocates feel strongly about the benefits red light safety cameras provide. The views expressed by our employees are strictly theirs."

If they are using a work related computer, thats a different story.

Im sure the Herald staffers and the staffers at other companies prohibit the use of work related computers for "playing" on computers, checking personal email, and prevent access to a lot of websites.

I know of one company that prevented the workers to access Google, and MSN just because it prevented workers from checking personal email.

Maybe the Herald can dig deeper here. Maybe its against a law of some type that the ATS Man failed to mention that in his posts, like disclosure.

May 18, 2011 12:48 am | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

AquaSoxFan

[Post reply](#)

Good job

Excellent work. ATS pack your bags and go home!

May 17, 2011 9:18 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Ed Head

[Post reply](#)

(No heading)

Hey businesses in towns with Red Light Cams...pick up the phone, lay into these people, let them know that people are boycotting your business and entire town. Then organize to get everybody voted out and fired. Clean house. Or get out while you can. These people will ruin your business. Big government and criminal banksters have worked together. I can't support that. Or these people that do their jobs based on lies and expect others to pay for their unsustainable profession.

May 17, 2011 8:14 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

woodman woods

[Post reply](#)

(No heading)

Bravo, Herald, bravo.

May 17, 2011 7:40 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Tyler Johnson

[Post reply](#)

Ahahahah! Yes!

I am highly amused! Maybe next time Mr. Howard can find a Washington State proxy, or at least hide behind 7 proxies.

To many studies show red light cameras do not prevent accidents and in some cases can actually cause them. Nobody I've met so far approves of the red light cameras, and I believe those that do are either misinformed or working for the company (or is receiving other compensation).

Thanks for this.

May 17, 2011 7:33 pm | 0 replies | [Request removal](#)

Laura Reed

[Post reply](#)

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