



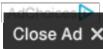
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Roswell looks past red-light cameras



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Roswell is considering joining a growing number of cities that are ditching red-light cameras as a means of traffic control.

The city's transportation director says the cameras are simply not what they're cracked up to be.

"If we look at all the crashes in Roswell, those attributed to running a red-light are only 2.7 percent," transportation director Steve Acenbrak said. "We're talking three a year when we have nine a day."

After generating close to \$1.6 million in profits the first three years, Roswell's traffic camera program has lost about \$26,000 over the past two years.

"When you look at the number of crashes before the cameras were installed compared to after, they're virtually the same," Acenbrak said.

The City Council will consider the recommendation at a meeting later this month.

Governments are finding it harder and harder to keep the cameras, which can cost in the tens of thousands of dollars to operate. Almost universally, revenues from traffic violations decrease over time as drivers learn to adhere to strict rules around the intersections. Also, Georgia enacted a law in 2009 requiring that yellow lights be lengthened by one second at intersections where the devices are employed.



Hyosub Shin, hshin@ajc.com

Roswell is considering joining a growing number of cities who are ditching red-light cameras for traffic control. The city's transportation director says the cameras contribute to accidents and are losing the city money. This photo was taken at Alpharetta Highway & Holcomb Bridge Road abd Crossville Road in Roswell on Friday, Nov. 9, 2012.

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Snellville scrapped its cameras several years ago. "The violations had fallen so significantly that we were at the point in our budget where we couldn't afford to keep them," Snellville Police Chief Roy Whitehead said.

The city had more than 3,000 violations the first month it installed eight cameras at three intersections in 2006. Four years later, violations had dropped to fewer than 400 per month.

But not everybody is ready to scrap the devices.

Gwinnett Police have asked for two additional cameras in 2013 to go with the five already in use at three intersections. Records show the cameras have cost the county \$236,000 to operate through August. Revenues through June — the latest month available — were at \$131,000.

"Generally speaking it does look like it costs more to operate those cameras than the revenue you get," county spokesman Joe Sorenson said.

Marietta is still operating cameras. So is Alpharetta.

"At this point there's been no discussion about not using them," Assistant City Administrator James Drinkard said.

Alpharetta arranges its contracts so the city breaks even on the cameras, regardless of the number of violations.

"That insures that the cameras pay for themselves," Drinkard said. "We had to do something about these crashes at intersections."

ROSWELL'S RED-LIGHT PROGRAM

Costs and revenues for past five fiscal years:

Year Billed Collected Expenses Net

2007* \$563,500 \$303,030 \$215,813 \$87,217

2008 \$1,510,793 \$1,267,133 \$431,880 \$835,253

2009 \$1,218,880 \$1,063,875 \$433,080 \$630,795

2010 \$571,570 \$555,435 \$367,880 \$100,463

2011 \$534,590 \$419,423 \$421,316 -\$1,893

2012 \$424,270 \$320,953 \$345,005 -\$24,052

Total \$4,823,603 \$3,929,849 \$2,214,974 \$1,627,783

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