

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

Subject:City Council Agenda Item C7

Date:Tue, 08 Apr 2014 09:22:21 -0700

From:saferstreetsla.org

To:mkilian@cityofvista.com

CC:turnbull@cityofvista.com

Please distribute the following comments on Agenda Item C7 to the appropriate persons and to the public.

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I am writing to you to provide some information that may affect the red light camera program in Vista. I recently served on a subcommittee of the California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC) studying the proper setting of yellow light times in California. In February, the full CTCDC unanimously adopted the subcommittee's recommendations which included changes to the way yellow signals are timed throughout the state. The adopted changes will apply to all signalized intersections, not just those monitored with red light camera systems.

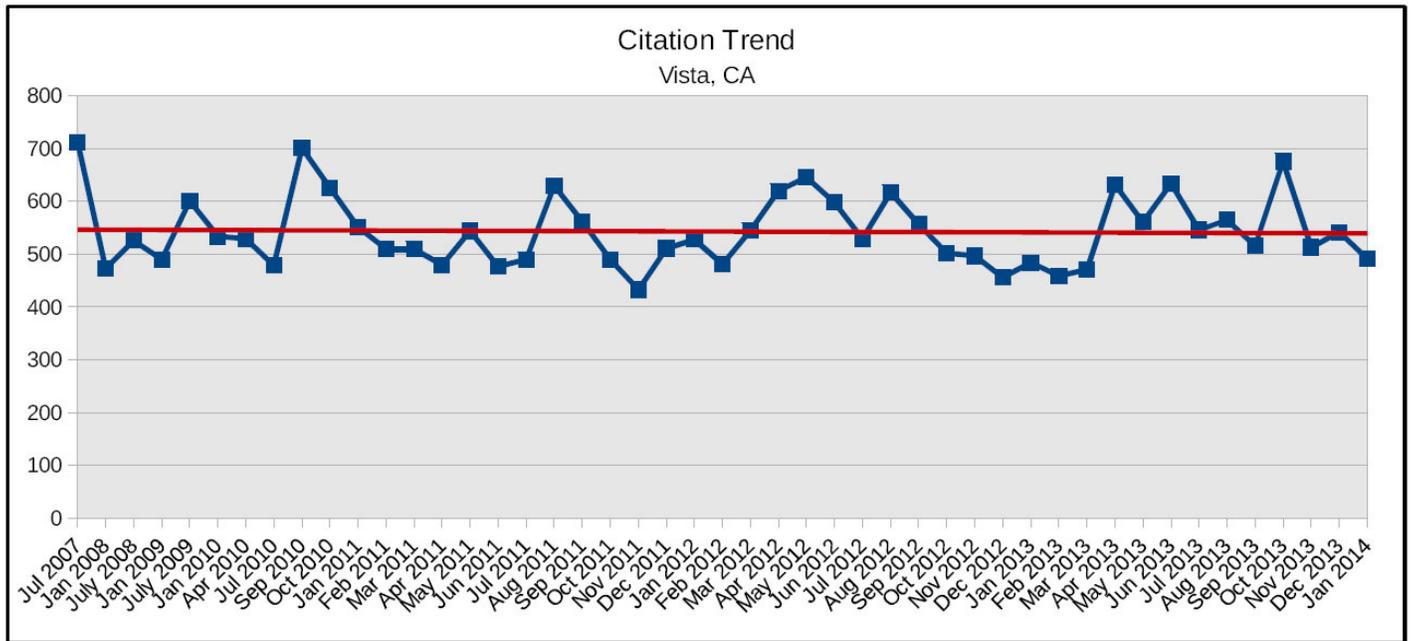
Without reviewing your city's current signal timing protocols, I cannot currently advise you as to how these changes, which will generally result in somewhat longer yellow change intervals, might affect the signal timing in your town. However, it is our belief that the new requirements will likely result in some increase in the yellow interval at most intersections throughout the state.

Since longer yellow intervals, even increases as small as 0.3 second, have been shown to reduce the incidence of red light running by as much as 40% - 70%, any changes required at your red light camera intersections will likely reduce the number of violations captured by the photo enforcement system. This is, of course, a good thing as the goal of any red light camera program is to reduce the number of motorists who run the red light, regardless of whether the violation is willful or unintentional. This may also reduce the amount of fine revenue generated by the citations issued and which has been subsidizing the program.

We are aware that you may be deciding on whether to renew your red light camera contract for another two years at tonight's City Council meeting. Therefore, we wanted to let you know about the coming changes so you can factor that in to you deliberations on this matter. Since it is unknown to what extent this may affect the fiscal aspects of the photo enforcement program, you may wish to consider not locking yourselves into a 2 year contract at this time. A number of officials in other cities, including Santa Ana and South San Francisco, have recently expressed their regret at having signed long term red light camera agreements without the ability to cancel at will.

We would recommend that if you choose to renew the contract, you do so on a month-to-month basis with the ability for the city to cancel with 30 days notice. This would provide time to evaluate the effect the new signal timing requirements may have at intersections in Vista and any fiscal impact on the program. In any case, the city should ensure that a renewal contract of any term length provides the city with the ability to cancel the contract for convenience without penalty upon 30 days notice.

Additionally, we have reviewed Exhibit 5 (Citation Trend) in the staff report on this item. Using the citation data supplied by the city's red light camera vendor, we have also graphed the citation trend and cannot duplicate the results presented in the staff report. Our graph appears below.



While we did not have data prior to 2007, as can be seen from the graph, the citation trend has remained fairly constant since mid-2007. Further, we reviewed some additional data from the red light camera vendor and believe that the large changes in violation rates prior to 2007 reflected in Exhibit 5 may have in part been the result of signal timing changes or changes to the operational parameters of the red light camera system, rather than purely due to changes in driver behavior.

Finally, we calculated the percentage of violations by type of movement. The vast majority of citations, 51%, are issued for rolling right turn violations, primarily at the intersection of Sycamore and Shadowridge. Left turn violations make up about 17% of citations and straight through violations comprise approximately 32% of citations.

City officials should consider the implications of issuing \$500 citations for rolling right turns at the intersection of Sycamore and Shadowridge. Due to the configuration of this intersection, it is highly unlikely that a right turn on red violation will ever result in a collision. There is no pedestrian crosswalk and no traffic approaching from the left. Therefore, even if a motorist were to roll the turn, there is no increased risk to pedestrians or other roadway users. While it is unquestionably a violation to make a rolling turn without coming to a complete stop, the \$500 penalty for doing so is far in excess of the nature of this type of violation, especially at this location. While the city cannot control the amount of the fine, city officials do have the option of whether to cite for this violation at this intersection. We urge you to examine this policy and reconsider whether you truly feel that a \$500 citation, which for some could be their entire month's rent, really fits the crime.

We hope the information we have provided above is of use to you as you consider this issue.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter with me, please do not hesitate to call or email.

Sincerely,

Executive Director - Safer Streets L.A.
Research Fellow - Reason Foundation
Member - CTCDC Yellow Timing Subcommittee

cc:
Mayor Judy Ritter
Deputy Mayor John Aguilera
Council Member Dave Cowles
Council Member Cody Campbell
Council Member Amanda Rigby