

RED LIGHT CAMERA OPERATIONS

The use of red light cameras has been under a lot of scrutiny and topic for debate, with proponents arguing that they improve intersection safety by reducing the number of red light violations and accidents. Critics, on the other hand, are raising concerns about privacy, accuracy, and the possible misuse by authorities. Despite the controversy, many municipalities, like ours, will continue to deploy red light cameras to enhance traffic safety and enforce traffic laws.

The following highlights the legal framework, operational procedures, and benefits of red light camera programs.

Legal Framework

The red light camera program in Florida is authorized and governed by Section 316.0083, Florida Statutes commonly known as the Mark Wandall Traffic Safety Act. Enacted in 2010, this statute outlines the legal framework for the implementation and operation of red light camera systems.

City Responsibilities

Cities participating in the red light camera program are responsible for:

- Implementing and maintaining red light camera systems in accordance with state law.
- Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of camera equipment.
- Processing citations and adhering to legal procedures.

Role of Police Officers

Police officers play a crucial role in the red light camera enforcement process by:

- Reviewing and verifying violations captured by the camera system.
- Issuing citations based on evidence provided by the camera system.

Role of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

The FDOT plays a crucial role in:

- Setting the timing of traffic control signals, which directly impacts the operation of red light cameras.
- Collaborating with local authorities to ensure compliance with state regulations.
- Conducting annual inspections of traffic signals, at the request of the City, to ensure timing remains in compliance with FDOT standards.

Operation of Red Light Cameras

Red light cameras operate by capturing images and video footage of vehicles that violate traffic signals. The system automatically detects violations, records relevant data, and generates

citations for review by law enforcement. All intersections with red-light cameras are marked with signs stating “Photo Enforced”. The cameras are also highly visible to drivers.

Private Companies Involvement and Responsibilities

Private companies (vendors), such as American Traffic Solutions, often facilitate the installation, maintenance, and operation of red light camera systems under contracts with local governments.

Vendors have certain responsibilities regarding traffic surveys or studies before implementing a red light camera program. These responsibilities typically include:

- **Traffic Engineering Study:** Conducting a comprehensive traffic engineering study to assess the need for red light cameras at specific intersections. This study evaluates factors such as traffic volume, crash history, signal timing, and pedestrian activity to determine the suitability of red light camera installation.
- **Intersection Analysis:** Analyzing the specific intersection(s) where red light cameras are proposed to be installed to identify high-risk areas prone to red light violations and accidents.
- **Data Collection:** Gathering relevant data on traffic patterns, signal operation, and historical crash data at the identified intersections to inform decision-making regarding the implementation of red light cameras.
- **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** Conducting a cost-benefit analysis to evaluate the potential effectiveness of red light cameras in improving intersection safety compared to the associated costs of installation, maintenance, and operation.
- **Compliance with State Regulations:** Ensuring compliance with state regulations and guidelines governing the use of red light cameras, including adherence to statutory requirements for conducting traffic surveys or studies before implementation.
- **Documentation:** Document the findings of traffic surveys or studies conducted, including any recommendations or conclusions reached regarding the need for red light cameras and their potential impact on traffic safety.

Revenue Distribution

Revenue generated from red light camera citations is mandated by state law to be distributed as follows:

- **State Allocation:** A percentage of the revenue collected from red light camera citations is allocated to the state's general revenue fund. This portion of the revenue contributes to funding various state initiatives and programs related to transportation and public safety.
- **City Allocation:** A portion of the revenue is allocated to the city or municipality where the red light camera program is implemented. This allocation allows local governments to fund traffic safety initiatives, infrastructure improvements, law enforcement efforts, and other community projects aimed at enhancing road safety.

- City Expense (rental and maintenance contract): We have a monthly contract with Verra Mobility. The contract consists of costs associated with equipment installation, maintenance, monitoring, data processing, and administrative tasks related to the program's operation.

Judicial Process

Those cited for running a red light have the right to contest the citation through the judicial process. The process involves:

- Appealing the citation with a city magistrate.
- Presenting evidence and arguments to contest the violation.
- Appealing the citation with a county judge.

Recent Traffic Studies

Recent studies have shown that red light cameras have a positive impact on road safety by reducing accidents and improving compliance with traffic signals, such as the following:

“The Impact of Red Light Cameras on Traffic Safety: A Comprehensive Analysis” - Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) 2023

- The study analyzed data from intersections equipped with red light cameras across multiple cities in Florida.
- Researchers found a significant reduction in the number of red light violations and subsequent crashes following the implementation of red light camera enforcement.
- Specifically, the study reported a ****25% decrease**** in the incidence of red light running violations at monitored intersections.
- Additionally, there was a notable ****20% decline**** in the occurrence of intersection-related accidents, including side-impact collisions and T-bone crashes.
- The study concluded that red light cameras play a crucial role in promoting traffic safety by deterring risky driving behaviors and improving compliance with traffic signals.

This study provides empirical evidence of the positive impact of red light cameras on road safety, demonstrating their effectiveness in reducing violations and preventing accidents at intersections.

The use of red light cameras in Florida serves as an effective tool in enhancing road safety and promoting compliance with traffic laws. By understanding the legal framework, operational procedures, and benefits of red light camera programs, communities can work towards creating safer roadways for all motorists.