

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Update on Bellevue's Photo Enforcement Program.

STAFF CONTACT

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Police Department

POLICY ISSUES

Council policy

Bellevue City Council authorized participation in the photo enforcement program in 2009. The contract between the City and American Traffic Solutions (ATS) expires April 30, 2014. Staff is providing this update on the program as background for Council, and will be seeking direction on whether to continue the program as currently configured, authorize expansion of the program, or discontinue the program, as of May 1, 2014, when the contract expires.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

 Action

 X Discussion

 X Information

Staff seeks feedback this evening or at a future Council meeting on how to proceed.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

In the interests of maintaining a safe traffic and pedestrian environment, Bellevue City Council authorized the initiation of photo enforcement in September 2009 with two school-zone cameras and red-light cameras at three carefully selected intersections in the City. The cameras have been in operation since then, with the exception of the months of July and August when school is out and the two school-zone cameras are disabled.

As noted above, the goal of using photo enforcement technology is to positively impact driver behavior at intersections and locations where there was a high incidence of speeding and running red lights, and the intersections/school-zones were selected on that basis.

Infraction History

Each infraction is assessed a \$124 fine. Photo-enforced traffic infractions have shown a steady decrease overall since 2010, the first full year of operation, from 22,798 in 2010 to 11,956 in 2013, a 48% decrease. This reduction was anticipated as the intent of installing the cameras was to cause a change in driver behavior. The chart below provides a breakout by year of the infractions at each of the camera

locations. Three of the five locations experienced a significant decrease in infractions, while two locations experienced an increase in infractions as described below:

- The largest increase, 19%, occurred on Southbound 148th at Main Street. This location showed a decrease in 2010 and clear increases after that, the most significant in 2013. The increase may be attributed to the increased traffic resulting from the redevelopment of the Kelsey Creek Shopping Center at that location and greater volume of left turning vehicles heading east on Main Street.
- A 9% increase in infractions occurred at the school-zone camera at Lake Hills Elementary School. This location had the least number of infractions overall. Despite showing a 2% decrease between 2012 and 2013, it experienced an overall increase of 9%. Some of the increase may be attributed to increased traffic on SE 8th (where this camera is located) due to the reconstruction and detour for the West Lake Sammamish Parkway project.

Camera Location	2010 Infractions	2011 Infractions	2012 Infractions	Infractions Issued – FY 2013	Annual Percent Increase (Decrease)
Stevenson Elementary Speed- Zone Camera	6,870	5,338	5,123	4,608	(33%)
Lake Hills Elementary Speed- Zone Camera	1,360	1,341	1,509	1,484	9%
Northbound 148th at Bel-Red Road (Red-Light Camera)	4,274	3,708	2,777	2,072	(52%)
Southbound 148th at Bel-Red Road (Red-Light Camera)	8,442	5,502	3,929	1,592	(81%)
Southbound 148th at Main Street (Red-Light Camera)	1,852	1,567	1,700	2,200	19%
Total Infractions (Average)	22,798	17,456	15,038	11,956	(48%)

Traffic Safety in Bellevue since Program Inception

The data indicate that collisions at *photo-enforced* locations have decreased. Many factors, both controllable and uncontrollable, affect collision statistics. Photo enforcement cannot *prevent* collisions, but the tool can promote and encourage a culture of safer driving throughout the city, with the ultimate goal of reducing collisions and promoting safer driving habits by changing behavior. Collision data over time is included below and shows a decrease in collisions at these intersections since the cameras were installed in 2010.

Measures	2008*	2009*	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total Collisions Citywide	1,891	1,932	1,778	1,820	1,704	1,779
Collisions at Photo-Enforced Locations	29	38	27	22	21	20

*These collision amounts are prior to start of photo enforcement.

Fiscal Impacts of the Program

In addition to the goal of maintaining a safe traffic/pedestrian environment, Council directed that the program be “cost-neutral”. The City pays \$20,750 monthly (\$249,000 annually) to ATS for the five cameras and the services it provides. These services include camera maintenance, infraction monitoring and billing. Since the program began in 2009, the City has paid ATS \$963,239 in fees for these services.

Photo Enforcement Revenues and Costs				
	2010	2011	2012	2013*
Gross Photo Enforcement Revenue (100% of revenue collected by King County, Bellevue receives 35% monthly)	\$ 1,340,535	\$ 1,998,999	\$ 1,589,724	\$ 1,214,332
ATS Contract Costs	\$ (218,945)	\$ (239,500)	\$ (249,000)	\$ (249,000)
Court direct Photo Enforcement Costs***	\$ (83,782)	\$ (75,947)	\$ (89,816)	\$ (57,510)**
Net Photo Enforcement Costs/ Revenue	\$ 1,037,808	\$ 1,683,552	\$ 1,250,908	\$ 907,822

*2013 cost data is subject to preliminary reconciliation.

**2013 Court Photo Enforcement Costs are a verbal estimate from King County.

***2010, 2011 and 2012 Court Photo Enforcement Cost information from King County Reconciliation.

The program covers direct contract costs. All infraction payments by vehicle owners are remitted directly to King County District Court (KCDC). Per the City’s contract with King County, the Court retains a portion of the fees received that originate from Bellevue cases to cover related Court costs and remits the remaining portion to the City on a monthly basis. In 2013, King County District Court collected \$1.2 million in revenue. For 2013, under the District Court Contract, the City receives 35% of the collections monthly. The remaining 65% stays with King County District Court until final District Court Reconciliation for the entire Court contract.

As infractions have decreased, so has revenue. Revenue is used to pay the costs of operating District Court, and there is an annual reconciliation of revenues and expenses. If the court expenses exceed the revenue received from fees and fines for all actions and cases that go before the court, the City is responsible for covering any gap. Conversely, if revenues exceed expenses, the balance goes to the City’s General Fund. Over the last several years, revenue has exceeded expenses.

ALTERNATIVES:

Staff is seeking direction from Council on what course to take in anticipation of the agreement with ATS ending on April 30, 2014. Alternatives for Council consideration include:

1. Expanding the program to additional locations.
2. Continuing the program as currently configured.
3. Discontinuing the program entirely.

Alternative #1: Expand the Program to Additional Locations

The original agreement with ATS approved by Council included the four locations that are currently photo enforced (with the five cameras), and three potential additional locations planned for camera installation with four cameras. The additional locations include:

- one red-light camera at the intersection of westbound NE 8th and 116th Avenue NE,
- one red-light camera at each of the westbound and eastbound directions of NE 8th and 112th Avenue NE, and
- a southbound speed zone camera at Sunset Elementary School on West Lake Sammamish Boulevard.

Council may decide to expand the program to these additional locations, while retaining the existing five camera locations. The cost for the additional three photo enforcement cameras and one school-zone camera would be \$16,000 per month, or an additional \$192,000 annually.

The Police Department has been tracking collisions at the unmonitored 112th and 116th intersections at NE 8th since 2011. Collision data is summarized in the table below:

Year	112 th @ NE 8 th	116 th @ NE 8 th	Total
2011	19	18	37
2012	24	25	49
2013	28	16	44
YTD 2014	3	4	7

The Department believes that installation of photo enforcement cameras at these intersections would encourage better driving behavior and continue to reduce the number of collisions, similar to what has been observed at the current enforced locations.

Historical collision data at SB West Lake Sammamish Parkway and Sunset Elementary has not been tracked. However, ATS tracked vehicle speeding on Thursday, February 13, 2014 at that location. It found that, between the school zone hours of 8:45-9:25 a.m., 11:35-12:35, and 3:30-4:10 p.m., 824 vehicles travelled southbound on West Lake Sammamish Parkway past Sunset Elementary, and 22 percent of them, or 182 vehicles, exceeded the posted speed limit of 20 mph by 6 mph or more. This was a one-day study only, but the data indicate the possible need for photo enforcement at this location.

The Police Traffic unit, which is responsible for evaluating each potential infraction for approval or rejection, would be impacted by the additional workload in evaluating the infractions from the new cameras. The table below shows time spent by traffic officers in reviewing potential infractions. It also shows the estimated impacts if four additional cameras were added for the next two years only:

Year	Total # of Potential Infractions Evaluated	Total Hours Spent Evaluating Infractions	Average Minutes/Seconds per Evaluation
2012	16,532	536.5	1 minute 57 seconds
2013	12,792	375.1	1 minute 40 seconds
Estimated 2014	19,838	579.0	1 minute 40 seconds
Estimated 2015	29,758	868.0	1 minute 40 seconds

Alternative #2: Continue the Program as Currently Configured

Continuation is anticipated to build on the overall success of the program in terms of reducing infractions and collisions at photo-enforced locations. The program will continue to be, at a minimum, cost neutral, but net revenues after ATS contract costs and court fees are factored in will also be reduced as infractions decrease.

Alternative #3: Discontinue the Program

The City would no longer contract with ATS and discontinue payments of \$249,000 annually for equipment. Revenue from photo enforcement cameras would be eliminated and would result in fewer dollars available to the City to support District Court operating costs. As with discontinuation of any fine or fee, that source of revenue would also be lost to the General Fund, which supports Police services.

Most significantly, if the program is discontinued, the positive changes made in driving behavior could be lost, which would negatively impact Council’s goal of maintaining a safe pedestrian and traffic environment. One 2012 behavioral study conducted by the Department of Psychology at Old Dominion University concluded that intersections in Virginia Beach that formerly had red-light cameras

experienced “an [infraction] rate that nearly tripled immediately after the law expired, and more than quadrupled one year later. To be more succinct, all risk reductions earned with automated enforcement had been lost within one year.” While one study is not sufficient to infer the resulting outcome in Bellevue, one could imagine a similar occurrence here.

RECOMMENDATION

The Police Department recommends continuing the photo enforcement program in Bellevue for an additional five years, and expanding the photo enforcement program to the additional locations-- specifically, adding red-light cameras at the NE 8th and 112th Avenue NE locations, at NE 8th and 116th Avenue NE location, and a speed zone camera at Sunset Elementary on West Lake Sammamish Boulevard.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL OFFICE FOR REVIEW

Contract between ATS and City of Bellevue