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March 26, 2008

6 Cities That Were Caught Shortening Yellow Light Times For Profit

Collected from the archives of TheNewspaper.com

Executive Summary

(Full story at <http://www.motorists.org/blog/6-cities-that-were-caught-shortening-yellow-light-times-for-profit/>)

Short yellow light times at intersections have been shown to increase the number of traffic violations and accidents. Conversely, increasing the yellow light duration can dramatically reduce red-light violations at an intersection. Some local governments have ignored the safety benefit of increasing the yellow light time and decided to install red-light cameras, shorten the yellow light duration, and collect the profits instead. Some of the cities that have been caught with short yellow light times include:

1) Chattanooga, Tennessee

The city of Chattanooga was forced refund \$8800 in red light camera tickets issued to motorists trapped by an illegally short yellow time. The refund only occurred after a motorist challenged his citation by insisting that the yellow light time of 3.0 seconds was too short

2) Dallas, Texas

The city's second highest revenue-producing camera, at the intersection of Greenville Avenue and Mockingbird Lane, issued 9407 tickets worth \$705,525 between January 1 and August 31, 2007. The intersection's yellow stands at just 3.15 seconds, 0.35 seconds shorter than the recommended bare minimum by the Texas Department of Transportation. A local TV station, KDFW-TV, investigated and reported on these results.

3) Springfield, Missouri

The city of Springfield, Missouri slashed its yellow warning time by one second at 105 state-owned intersection signals in preparation for installation of a red light camera system in 2007. The city told the Springfield News-Leader that it was "standardizing" and had increased the yellow time at 136 city-operated lights to meet national standards. Assistant Director of Public Works Earl Newman disagreed, saying he was "...concerned that many individuals run the light if the light remained yellow too long."

4) Lubbock, Texas

KBCD, a local television station, exposed the city's short timing of yellow lights at eight of the twelve intersections where the devices were to be installed. Prior to the news investigation, Lubbock City Engineer Jere Hart assured city council members that he would not increase yellow times. After the investigation became public, red-light cameras were installed, but proved to be both unprofitable (due in part to a new state law giving 50% of the ticket camera profit to the state) and unsafe (accidents increased where the cameras were installed). They were removed.

5) Nashville, Tennessee

In 2006, Nashville resident Joe Savage obtained the data on every red light running ticket issued on Broadway street since 2000. He said that yellow lights are longer at intersections along Broadway until the areas where police are issuing tickets. At those locations, Savage clocked the yellow signal time at less than 3 seconds, in violation of both state law and federal regulations. A local newspaper, The Nashville Scene, then confirmed his findings.

6) Union City, California

In 2005, Union City, California was caught trapping motorists with a yellow signal time 1.3 seconds below the minimum established by state law. The city was then forced to refund more than \$1 million in red light camera fines.