

05/09/2008

Police Report 'Substantial' Decrease in Crashes at Camera Intersections

By Ed Pruneau , *Missourian* Managing Editor

In the first two months of red light camera monitoring, car crashes at two Highway 100 intersections have shown a "substantial decrease," Police Chief Ken Hahn said.

From March 1 through May 7 this year, there have been a total of seven traffic crashes at the two intersections monitored by red light cameras - five at Highways 100/47 and two at Highway 100/Route A.

That compares to 16 crashes at both intersections - 11 at Highways 100/47 and five at Highway 100/Route A - for the same time period in 2007.

Hahn concedes that a much longer period - six months to a year - is needed to fully evaluate the impact of the camera system. But he said this two-month "accident history" is promising.

"We're happy with the short-term results," Hahn said Thursday. "It's not concrete, but it looks promising. A more accurate look will come after a year."

Hahn said he directed Officer Bill Hanneken to do the two-month look back on accidents and he plans to present the report at the next city council meeting.

There were no injuries reported in any of the crashes in 2007 or 2008.

According to the report, 11 of the 16 crashes in 2007 were rear-end accidents and the remaining five were side, or so-called "T-bone," accidents.

All seven crashes in 2008 were rear-end accidents and there were zero side crashes.

"This was exactly what we were trying to reduce," Hahn said of side crashes.

He said it appears that people are alert to the camera systems and are being more attentive at those intersections.

In the same two-month period in 2006, six accidents were reported at the two intersections, five rear-end and one side crash, according to the report.

Five people were injured in those crashes in 2006, the study notes.

The city contracts with American Traffic Solutions (ATS) which owns and operates the camera system and receives a percentage of fines assessed for violations. The city has no upfront costs for the system.

Trained patrol officers view videos of suspected violations and make the decision whether or not to issue a citation.

Violations are treated as infractions, similar to a parking ticket, rather than moving violations and owners of the vehicles are issued municipal court summonses.

Motorists who receive citations can go online and view the video.

Police began issuing citations March 9. Before that, they conducted a month-long warning period to give motorists time to become aware of the cameras.