Automated enforcement is an effective tool to make roads safer. Research shows that red light cameras reduce violations and injury crashes, especially the violent front-into-side crashes most associated with red light running. Speed cameras have been shown to reduce vehicle speeds, crashes, injuries, and fatalities. Both types of programs should be designed, implemented, and administered properly. Poorly run programs are less likely to be durable and may undermine support for automated enforcement generally.

Speed and red light camera programs augment traditional enforcement to improve traffic safety by deterring dangerous driving behaviors. Automated enforcement does not require traffic stops, and well-designed programs can improve safety for all road users in a neutral manner.

Successful programs are transparent and have a strong public information component. Communities should take into account racial and economic equity when making decisions about camera placement and fines. Automated enforcement programs should be data-driven and should prioritize safety, not revenue. In fact, communities should expect that revenue will decline over time as fewer drivers run red lights or violate speed limits.

This checklist assumes your community is already legally authorized to set up a program. It provides a minimum list of considerations to help you follow best practices. The goal is to operate a successful program that reduces crashes and prevents deaths and injuries while maintaining strong public support. Automated enforcement can be integrated into broader efforts to discourage unsafe driving that includes optimizing speed limits for safety and improving roadway design.

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SECOND STEPS

☐ Make program design decisions, consulting with the advisory committee as appropriate.

Program design considerations

Target violations with the greatest safety consequences. For example, you might decide not to ticket for right-turn-on-red violations when pedestrians, bicyclists, and oncoming vehicles are not present or to limit violations in work zones to when workers are present, provided the road configuration has not also been altered for construction.

Establish a reasonable fine structure. Create options for indigent violators such as payment plans or other alternatives.

Establish a threshold that must be crossed before a vehicle is photographed for a violation of red light running or speeding (i.e., a period after a light turns red or a certain mph over the posted speed). The point is to target flagrant, rather than marginal, infractions.

Programs should include a process for evidence review by appropriately trained personnel to determine if a violation occurred and issue a citation if warranted.

Establish clear procedures for contesting an alleged violation. Consider options to contest online or by mail.

When possible, red light camera violations should be recorded in real time video, and videos of the offense should be made available to the vehicle owner for review via the Internet.

Fines in excess of program costs should be allocated to transportation safety programs.

☐ Use safety data gathered in the first steps to determine camera locations, ensuring that particular neighborhoods are neither overlooked nor overrepresented.

☐ Publicize the extent of the safety problem and the need for innovative solutions.

☐ Secure a vendor and establish payment based on the vendor’s actual costs, not the number of citations.

☐ Publicize procedures for contesting an alleged violation.

☐ Create a website and social media plan to publicize program details, such as how to pay and dispute tickets. Establish a method for answering questions accurately and in a timely manner.

☐ Develop an emergency action plan for handling problems, such as system malfunctions.

IMPLEMENTATION

☐ Hold a kickoff event with advisory committee members. Introduce a well-developed and sustained public education campaign focused on improving safety by changing driver attitudes and behavior.

☐ Connect the program to overall roadway safety in the community and identify the goal of zero tickets resulting from changes in driver behaviors.

☐ Install prominent warning signs.

☐ Start with a probationary period during which only warnings are issued.

☐ Follow current guidance from the U.S. Department of Transportation for implementation and operation of automated enforcement devices.

☐ Allow for due process. Minimize the number of days between the violation and citation issuance.

LONG TERM

☐ Publicize changes, including new camera locations. Reinstate the probationary period before ticketing begins at new locations.

☐ Monitor program operation and publicize results. Undertake periodic reviews and ensure racial, economic and other equity issues and public concerns are addressed.

☐ Require regular field reviews. Verify monthly camera calibration and synchronization with signals.

☐ Require regular evaluations of the traffic safety benefits of the program by collecting crash and infraction data. Before-and-after comparisons must use control intersections and roadways. Include control intersections and roadways that are not subject to spillover effects.

☐ Regularly meet with the advisory committee and media to review program status and sustain public support.

☐ Continue to improve programs based on new and updated guidance and best practices and look for opportunities to expand automated enforcement use.

☐ Consider other changes, including roadway design improvements, in order to reduce opportunities for unsafe driving.

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