

CITY OF WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

PROPOSED CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

CITY COUNCIL/COMMITTEE MEETING OF: October 8, 2013 CUT OFF DATE: 9/17/13

RESOLUTION__ ORDINANCE XX PUBLIC HEARING __

ITEM TITLE: Photo Monitoring System to Enforce Traffic Light Signals

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The Chief of Police requests approval

PUBLIC NOTICE AND HEARING: N/A

ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION: N/A

FUNDING DATA: N/A

INSURANCE:N/A

The initiating Department Director will place below, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda.

| <u>DEPARTMENT</u> | <u>INITIALS FOR APPROVAL</u> | <u>INITIALS FOR DISAPPROVAL</u> | <u>DATE</u> |
|--|------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Public Works Administrator | <u>FE</u> | _____ | <u>9/12/13</u> |
| 2. Director of Finance | <u>DS</u> | _____ | <u>9-11-13</u> |
| 3. _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ | _____ | <u>9/12/2010</u> |
| 5. City Attorney | <u>[Signature]</u> | _____ | _____ |
| 6. City Manager | <u>[Signature]</u> | _____ | <u>9-12-13</u> |
| 7. Clerk of Council | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Initiating Department Director's Signature: <u>[Signature]</u> | _____ | _____ | <u>9/14/13</u> Date |



APPROVED AS TO FORM:

[Signature] 9/12/2013
CITY ATTORNEY

Revised: September 28, 2009

CITY COUNCIL ACTION MEMO

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
From: Chief Kevin L. Sanzenbacher
Date: Original April 15, 2013 Revised report September 9, 2013
Re: Re Light Enforcement System

THE ISSUE: Red light violations can be one of the most dangerous traffic infractions facing any community. These infractions can also be one of the most difficult for police officers to enforce. Modern technology has provided a way to electronically monitor and take enforcement action on these violations. This system, known as photo-monitoring, digitally records violations when they occur and then passes these photo files onto law enforcement for review and issuance of citations, if warranted. We would like to implement one of these systems in Winchester.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN: Develop a High-Performing City Organization

BACKGROUND: Red light violations can be very difficult to enforce because judges want officers to be able to testify that they observed the light indicating red for the travel lane of the violator. Unless the officer is behind the violator, or can see the signal from the side, judges will not convict without this testimony. This makes it very difficult for officers to target problem intersections with stationary patrol. Even if enforcement were easier there is only so much time officers can dedicate to red light enforcement. Of the violations written over the last five (5) years only about 4% were red light violations.

The photo-monitoring systems, which operates 24/7/365, photographs and videos vehicles both at the time the light changes from yellow to red and fractions of a second after the light turns red in their lane. The violation is captured when someone enters the intersection .5 seconds (per Virginia law) after the light changes. These captured violations are then reviewed by the vendor to make sure they are in compliance with pre-established business rules. These files are then transmitted to the police to be reviewed by a sworn officer. The officer then applies their own business rules to each violation to determine if a summons is issued to the owner of the vehicle. This process, as well as the \$50 fine, are all regulated by VA state law. There are a number of communities in Virginia and throughout the country using similar systems at this time.

State law only allows one intersection per 10,000 population to be monitored. Winchester would be eligible to have 2 intersections monitored under this standard. We have looked at crash data from various intersections throughout the City and decided to conduct tests on the capture system at several locations based on that data. A prospective vendor, without obligation to the City, then conducted a survey of those intersections. From that survey it was determined that the following intersections would be the most appropriate location for the initial deployment of cameras:

Pleasant Valley and Berryville
Pleasant Valley and Jubal Early.

This selection was based on the high number of violations for both "through" violations and "right turn on red" violations. These two intersections accounted for over 300 violations in a 12 hour period.

BUDGET IMPACT: This action requires no funds to be expended by the City. The vendor would recapture their costs through the imposition of fines. Any fines collected in excess of the monthly fee charged by the vendor would be passed on to the City each month. If fines did not cover the monthly expense to the vendor then the deficit would be carried forward to be charged off the next month's proceeds, if any. If the City ended the contract in a deficit situation the deficit would be cleared by the vendor, therefore the expense of the system would be cost neutral to the City.

DISSCUSSION: These camera systems have resulted in a negative community perception in other locales as they have been seen as an unfair means of taxing the citizenry and an invasion of privacy. We do not feel this would occur in Winchester. This is due to the fact that unlike other states, Virginia limits the number of cameras and the amount of fines. The maximum allowable fine is \$50.00. This is considered a civil penalty, and does not include any points to be issued against the driver's motor vehicle record or car insurance. Although not cheap, this is far less than fines in other jurisdictions and compatible with

finer associated with other moving violations. The State of Virginia also limits the number of intersections in which a jurisdiction may deploy cameras. Winchester is limited to two (2) intersections.

Also by focusing on high accident intersections our emphasis is on making the streets of Winchester safer- not in raising revenue. Finally, the State has prohibited the capture of images of drivers, only the rear of the violating vehicle and its tag will be captured. There are also penalties included for the release of any information captured by the system. These safeguards should protect the privacy rights of our citizens and alleviate concerns.

UPDATE:

This report was first brought to Council at the work session on May 21, 2013. At that time there were a number of questions raised by Council and citizens. The following is our efforts to try and respond to these questions:

- a. **Do we have any statistical data showing how the accidents at these intersections compare to other locations in the City?**

JUBAL EARLY/PLEASANT VALLEY

In 2011 Jubal Early and PVR accounted for 11 of our 141(7.8%) intersection crashes. Only Apple Blossom and Jubal Early had a higher rate N=12. In 2012 this intersection had the most collisions at 10 of 125 or 8%.

PLEASANT VALLEY/BERRYVILLE

In 2011 this intersection accounted for 4 of 141 crashes or 2.8%. This ranked it 11th among all intersection crashes. In 2012 this intersection ranked 3rd with 5 of 125 crashes or 4%.

- b. **Do we know how many of these accidents are attributable to people running red lights?**

In 2011 24 (4.9%) people were cited for "disregard stop/go light" out of 485 citations issued for collisions. This ranked 6th in number out of 36 categories. Right away and following too close received the highest number of citations. These citations cannot be attributed to the intersections in question as those statistics are not captured.

In 2012" disregard stop/go light accounted for 5.6% of collision tickets issued.

- c. **Do we know what measures (if any) the Police have taken to address the problem (placing an officer at the red light to monitor for violators, etc.)?**

As I stated in my previous report red light enforcement is extremely difficult. Judges want officers to be able to testify that they observed the light turn red in the offenders lane. Unless the officer is directly behind the offender these observations are hard to make. Despite these difficulties in 2011 the WPD issued 213 red light violations or 4% of total citations issued and in 2012 we issued 187 or 3.1 % of total citations issued.

- d. **Do we know how many red light tickets have been written for violators running these lights?**

JUBAL EARLY/PLEASANT VALLEY

In the period of 2011-2012 100 citations were written at this intersection. 15 of those citations were specifically for violations related to not stopping for the red light.

PLEASANT VALLEY/BERRYVILLE

In the 2011-2012 period 33 citations were written at this intersection. 4 were specific charges for not stopping at the red lights.

- e. **Are there actually studies that show that Red Light Cameras increase accidents?**

It is correct that there are several studies that do indicate that accidents do increase at intersections with red light cameras. Most of these studies indicate that the type of collision that occurs are rear end collisions where the trailing car will run into the car making a quick stop for a red light. This type of collision can also

occur when there is a police car visible at the intersection. These studies also indicate that the T-bone type crash is reduced. These are the accidents that usually result in far greater injuries and death.

There are many conflicting reports on this issue and many statistics can be produced that often seem to conflict with each other, but the primary finding on most of them is the more serious type of collision is usually reduced. I have attached a report from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), which is an independent organization that has conducted a long-term study on red light cameras. Their conclusion was that in 12 of 14 cities using red light cameras fatal crash rates were down. In 11 of the 14 cities the total crashes were down compared to the period of time prior to the installation of the cameras.

f. **How have these concerns been addressed in other localities?**

We are not unique. There are a number of other jurisdiction in Virginia and throughout the country using cameras to enforce red light violation. The most prominent locales in Virginia are Newport News., Virginia Beach and Chesterfield. Also the IIHS study highlights other states using red light cameras.

g. **Do we (the city) have the engineering in place at these intersections to support Red Light camera technology?**

Please see the following response form Director Eisenach to this question:

In general, yes, our signal equipment at these intersections will support the red light camera technology. With that said, if the red light cameras were to enforce vehicles turning right that do not stop on red, we would need to add a signal head on southbound Pleasant Valley at Jubal Early so that there is a separate signal head specifically for the right turn lane. This would be relatively easy to accomplish. If the red light cameras only enforce the straight-thru movements at the intersections, we would not need to make any modifications.

The reported cost of these modifications would be approximately \$2500.

h. **Comments from citizens expressing concerns about the systems as captured in the Council meeting minutes:**

1. The system will be used as a surveillance tool to provide citizen information to government agencies.

Response- The data gathered will be held by the private vendor. The ordinance as drafted and the authorizing State law assign fines of up to \$1,000 for disclosure of information without legal justification. Also, as noted above, pictures will only be captured of the rear of vehicles, not the operators or passenger faces.

2. Concerns were expressed about the use of Redflex as the vendor.

Response- If the ordinance is approved by Council an RFP will be issued soliciting bids from multiple companies. As per procurement law the bid for this project will be used to select the vendor giving the City must the most favorable terms and most comprehensive submittal.

3. The camera systems do not promote safety as advertised, but actually result in more collisions.

Response- See e. above

RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff recommends that the Common Council adopt the ordinance as proposed.

STATUS REPORT

SPECIAL ISSUE: RED LIGHT RUNNING

INSURANCE INSTITUTE
FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

Vol. 46, No. 1, Feb. 1, 2011

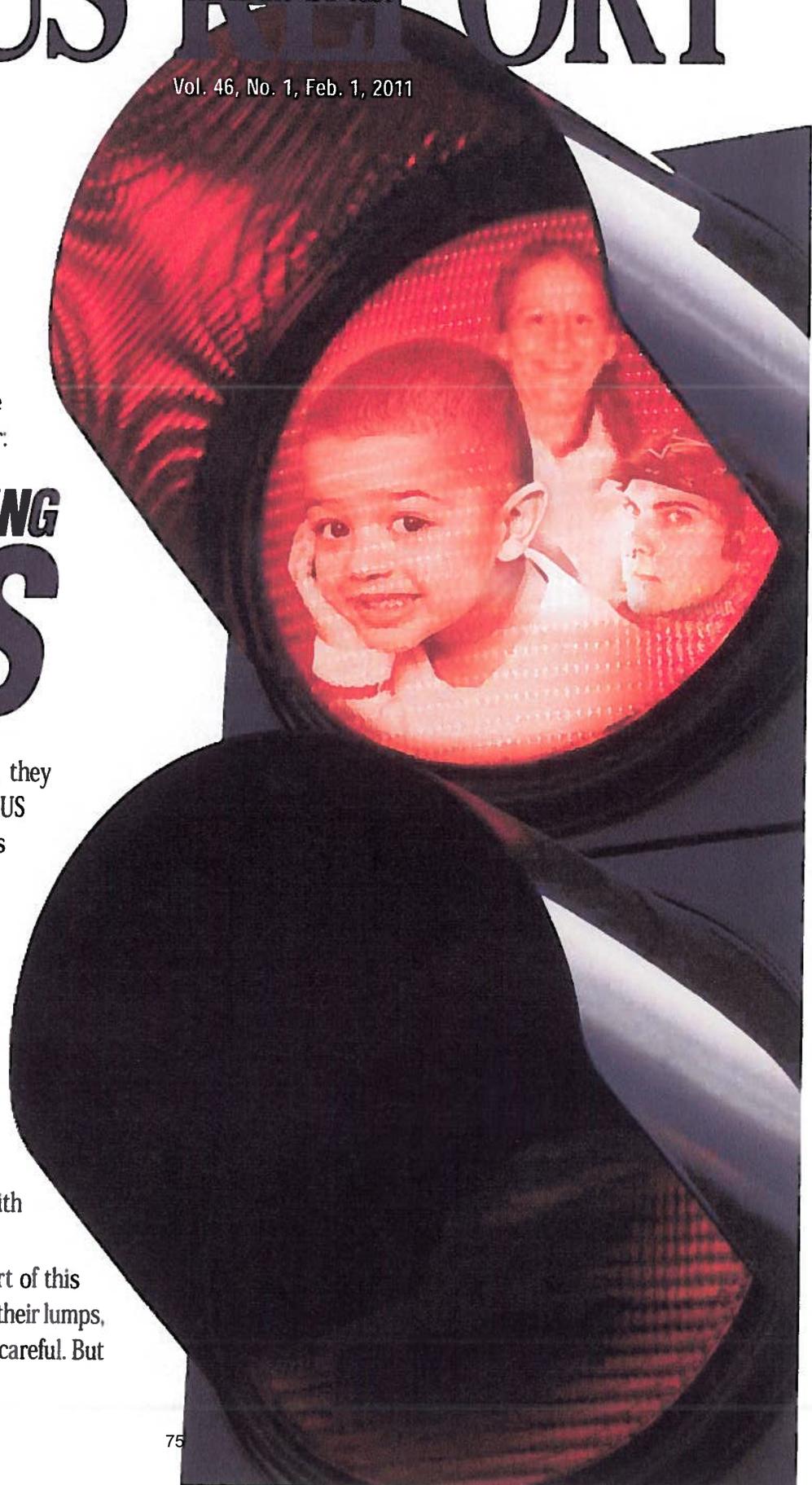
The red light runners think they've been wronged. They're convinced that the cameras documenting their violations are nothing more than a scheme to pick the pockets of motorists. The truth is simpler:

RED LIGHT RUNNING KILLS

and red light cameras save lives. In fact, they saved 159 lives in 2004-08 in the 14 biggest US cities with cameras, a new Institute analysis shows. If cameras had been operating during that period in all cities with populations of more than 200,000, a total of 815 fewer people would have died.

Camera opponents don't acknowledge the connection between those whose red light running sets off a benign flash and those who cause a deadly collision. Instead, they argue about "big brother" and equate fines for violations with taxes on drivers.

Not everyone who runs a red light is part of this group. No doubt, most violators calmly take their lumps, paying their tickets and vowing to be more careful. But



a vocal minority get angry, and their outrage gets broadcast on the internet, magnified by the media, and channeled into campaigns to ban red light cameras on the local or state level. When officials try to assure the public that cameras are about safety, not revenue, they are all but drowned out by the protests of these aggrieved drivers.

"Somehow, the people who get tickets because they have broken the law have been cast as the victims," says Institute president Adrian Lund. "We rarely hear about the real victims — the people who are killed or injured by these lawbreakers."

People like Deborah Parsons-Mason, a California mother of 4 who was fatally hit by a red light runner while crossing the street near her home. Or Marcus May-Cook, who was sleeping in his car seat when a red light runner ended his life after only 3 years. Or Jacy Good, who was permanently disabled and lost both her parents in a red light running crash just hours after her college graduation. The Institute is highlighting their stories and others on these pages to bring the discussion back to the real victims.

Red light running killed 676 people and injured an estimated 113,000 in 2009. Nearly two-thirds of the deaths were people other than the red light running drivers — occupants of other vehicles, passengers in the red light runners' vehicles, bicyclists, or pedestrians.

Since the 1990s, communities have used red light cameras as a low-cost way to police intersections. The number of cities embracing the technology has swelled from just 25 in 2000 to about 500 today.

Without cameras, enforcement is difficult and often dangerous. In order to stop a red light runner, officers usually have to follow the vehicle through the red light, endangering themselves as well as other motorists and pedestrians.

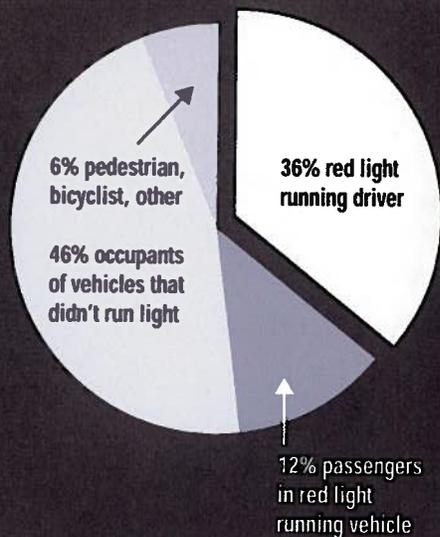
Moreover, the manpower required to police intersections on a regular basis would make it prohibitively expensive. In contrast, camera programs can pay for themselves by requiring people who break the law to shoulder the cost of enforcing it.

"The cities that have the courage to use red light cameras despite the political backlash are saving lives," Lund says. "If they are able to recover some of their traffic enforcement costs at the same time, what's wrong with that?"

Previous research has established that red light cameras deter would-be violators and reduce crashes at intersections with signals. Institute studies of camera programs have found that red light violations fell at intersections where cameras were installed (see *Status Report*, March 7, 1998, Dec. 5, 1998, and Jan. 27, 2007; on the web at iihs.org). In two of those studies, researchers also looked at traffic lights without cameras and found the decrease in violations spilled over from the camera-equipped intersections. In Oxnard, Calif., injury crashes at intersections with traffic signals fell 29 percent citywide after automated enforcement began (see *Status Report*, April 28, 2001; on the web at iihs.org).

The Institute's latest study provides powerful confirmation of the benefits of cameras, showing they reduce deaths throughout entire communities. Looking at US cities with populations (continues on p. 6)

RED LIGHT RUNNING DEATHS 2009, BY TYPE OF ROAD USER





Clockwise from left, Jean, Jay, Jared, and Jacy Good



Jacy Good on day of crash

JEAN GOOD AND JAY GOOD, 58 **MAIDENCREEK TOWNSHIP, PENNSYLVANIA**

Hours after Jacy Good's graduation from Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa., she and her parents packed the family's 1989 Oldsmobile station wagon, strapped a sofa to the roof, and headed home to Lititz, a tiny Lancaster County town.

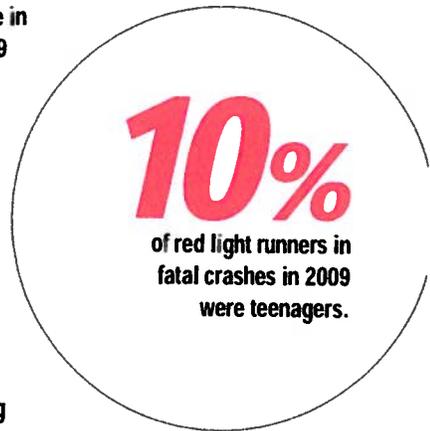
At 21, Good felt on top of the world. She planned to spend a few weeks at home before going to New York, where a job with Habitat for Humanity awaited. Her mother, a middle school English teacher, and her father, a foundry mechanic, were both brimming with pride.

Nearly halfway into their 70-mile trip, a chain-reaction crash set off by a red light runner sent a tractor-trailer into the opposite lane and into their car. Jay Good, who was at the wheel, and Jean Good, who rode in back and wasn't using a safety belt, died at the scene. Jacy Good, who was in the front seat, was left with a traumatic brain injury, partially collapsed lungs, a lacerated liver, 2 damaged carotid arteries, a shattered pelvis, and other injuries.

Weeks later, after she regained consciousness, Good began to learn the details of the crash. The driver of the minivan that sailed through the red light, causing the tractor-trailer to veer into the Goods' station wagon, was 18 years old, had 2 teenage passengers and, according to police, was using his cellphone when the crash occurred. He was cited for careless driving and running a red light and paid \$662 in fines and other costs.

Good believes the cellphone was to blame in the May 18, 2008, tragedy. "There's no question in my mind that there would have been no accident if he had not been on his cellphone," she says.

Now 24, Good expects to wear an ankle brace for the rest of her life. She had surgery last summer to recover some function in her limp left arm. Meanwhile, she's become an outspoken campaigner against distracted driving, lobbying lawmakers, appearing on the Oprah Winfrey Show, and addressing high school students. Her activism is in part a way to honor her mother and father's memory, Good says. "I know if the roles were switched, this is what my parents would be doing for me."



BILLY RAY SPENCE, 64 LUBBOCK, TEXAS

"What're you boys doin'?" That's what Billy Ray Spence, better known as Billy Kool, would say when he walked into a room. And when he did, you knew the party was about to get started. Spence, a heavy equipment operator who moonlighted as a bartender, was a captivating storyteller, jokester, poker player, and briefly married bachelor who lived just down the street from his elderly mother in Lubbock, Texas. He was killed at age 64 while running an errand on the afternoon of Nov. 11, 2008.

His red 1996 Jaguar XJ6 was broadsided by a Ford Explorer whose driver ran a red light. The driver of the Explorer, Marcelo Perez Jr., 35, was charged with manslaughter. Perez, who tested negative for alcohol and drugs, was no stranger to that intersection: He had been in another crash there just weeks earlier, leading to a charge against him of failing to stop and render aid.

Perez died of an unrelated condition before either case could be resolved.

Sandra Johnson says her big brother went off to the Air Force in the 1960s as Billy Spence, but returned as Billy Kool. His name for everyone — or, at least, everyone he liked — was "Ace." Billy Kool's ability to tell a story made him the life of the party. Johnson says he could captivate an audience of grown men with a card trick or a story about three little bears.

Spence retired, but never stayed that way for long. "He would always say, 'I just want to be home with nothing on but the TV,'" Johnson recalls. "And then when he'd go back to work, he'd say, 'I felt like putting clothes on, so I went back to work.'"



Billy Ray Spence

SHANE KIESER, 19 LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Shane Kieser loved wheels, and he loved adrenaline. When he wasn't racing at the BMX bicycle track, he was often doing stunts in the concrete bowl near his home in Las Vegas. His mother gave him his own insurance card in case she was at work the next time he landed on his face.

When Kieser got a motorcycle, his mother, Terri, wasn't thrilled but she took it in stride. Shane knew the risks and never rode without a helmet.

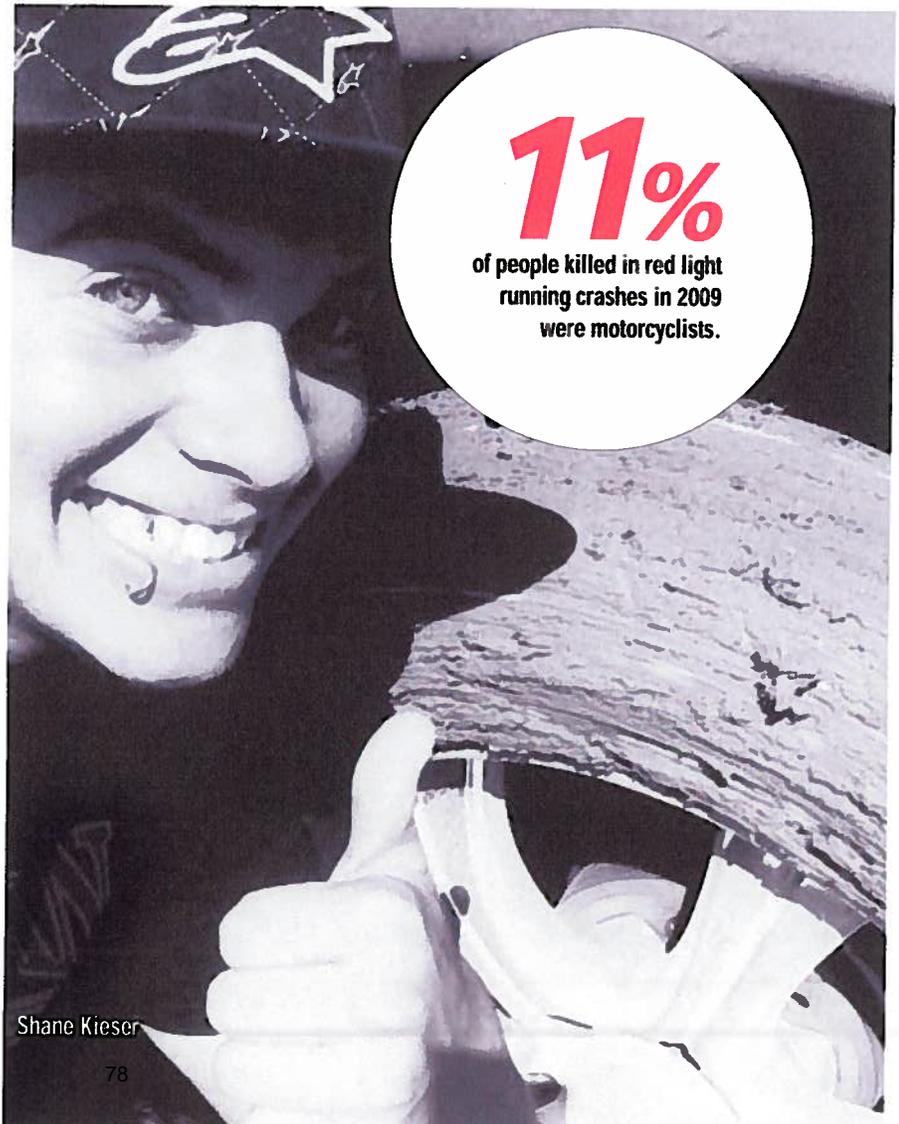
Early on the morning of Aug. 19, 2008, Kieser and his girlfriend headed to Walmart. They were night owls, says his mother, and "unfortunately, in Vegas everything is open at all hours of the day."

At 5:30 am, Kieser's 1994 Honda CBR slammed into a Toyota Corolla, killing him and injuring his girlfriend. The Corolla's driver wasn't hurt. Police say 3 witnesses saw the motorcycle go through a red light. Terri Kieser says that doesn't square with what she knows about her son.

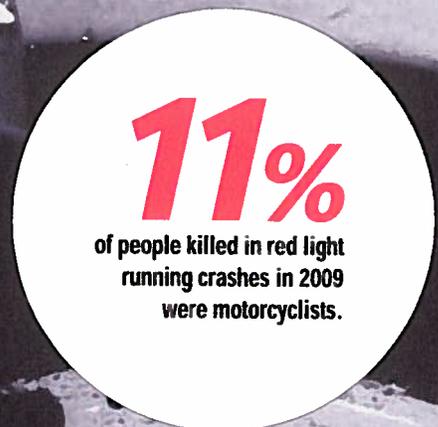
"I was always the first to go, 'What did Shane do?'" she says with a laugh, before turning serious. "But I want to say no. No. Maybe a yellow that he felt he couldn't safely stop at. But running a red with his girlfriend on the back? Never. Shane would never be crazy with somebody else's life."

An aspiring mechanic, Shane was known for his goofy sense of humor. "Birthday parties — the candles were usually up his nose like a walrus," his mother says.

Every year on his birthday, Terri Kieser invites Shane's friends to a nearby mountain where he loved to ride his bike. She brings along homemade waffles — his favorite.



Shane Kieser



MARCUS MAY-COOK, 3
LANSING, MICHIGAN

Mindy Cook still can hear her little boy saying, "Mommy, I want you," the way he used to, his arms raised over his head so that she would scoop him up.

Marcus May-Cook was just 3 when he died on Aug. 10, 2008. Two days before, a 17-year-old unlicensed driver broadsided the car Marcus was riding in near his home in Lansing. Police determined that the teenage driver, Brianca Alexander, had gone through a red light. Marcus was asleep when it happened and never woke up.

"I see no end to this grief," Cook wrote in a letter she read at Alexander's sentencing hearing last September, more than 2 years after Marcus' death.

Alexander, who pleaded guilty to driving without a valid license, causing death, was sentenced to 2 ½ to 15 years in prison. Her mother received a year in jail with work release for allowing her daughter, who never had so much as a learner's permit, to take the car.

Marcus was an exuberant little boy who was convinced he would grow up to be Spider-Man. He wore a Spider-Man costume on Halloween — and kept wearing it long after the candy was gone. He even tried to climb the walls like the superhero, knocking over a shelf once in the process.

Cook knows that Marcus would have been excited to start kindergarten this past fall. He often imagined heading to school just like big sister Makyla. When their mother packed Makyla's lunch, Marcus insisted on one to carry to his grandmother's house, where he stayed while his mom was at work.

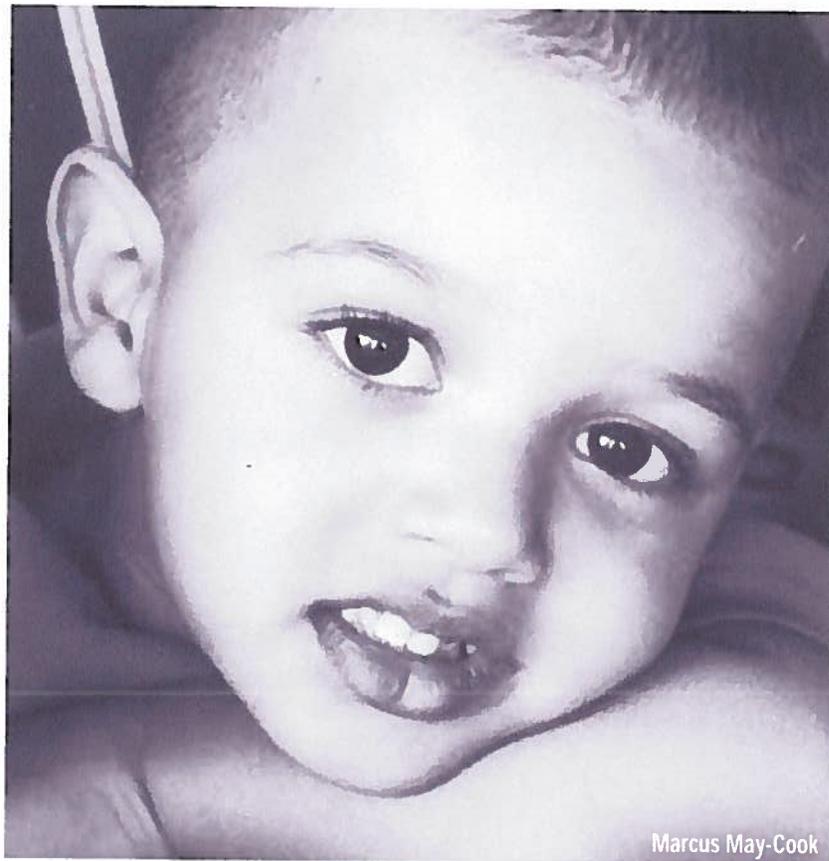
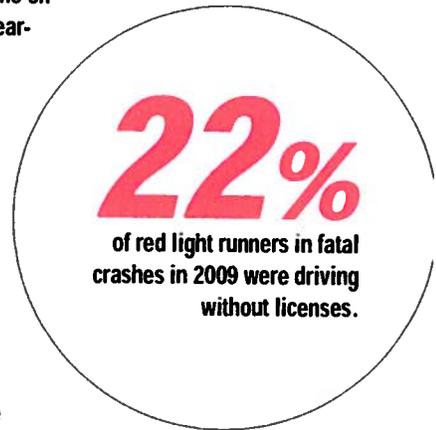
On the Friday of the crash, Marcus and his sister were riding along as their aunt drove their grandmother to her part-time job. Their cousin was in the back seat with them.

Cook was at work when she got the call shortly before 5 pm. When she saw Marcus at the hospital, he didn't look injured, but his brain had been severely damaged. By Sunday, tests confirmed that nothing could save him.

Cook's mother, who was riding in front, had a fractured skull and other injuries. She is no longer able to work. Makyla, who was 6, was injured but recovered. She and her cousin were riding in boosters, while Marcus was buckled in a child restraint.

Cook now has another son and says 1-year-old Marriion has begun to recognize his brother in photographs.

"Marcus," says Cook, "is always talked about."



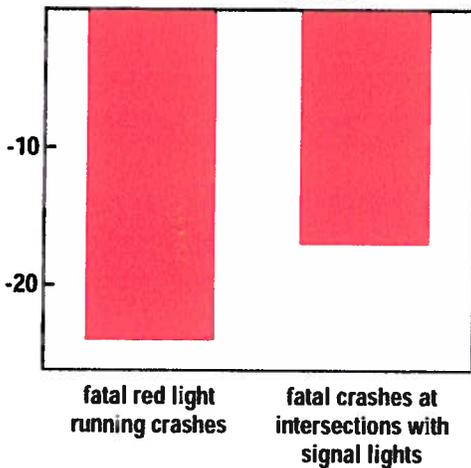
Marcus May-Cook



(continued from p. 2) over 200,000, the researchers compared those with red light camera programs to those without. Because they wanted to see how the rate of fatal crashes changed after the introduction of cameras, they compared two periods, 2004-08 and 1992-96. Cities that had cameras during 1992-96 were excluded from the analysis, as were cities that had cameras for only part of the later study period.

Researchers found that in the 14 cities that had cameras during 2004-08, the combined per capita rate of fatal red light run-

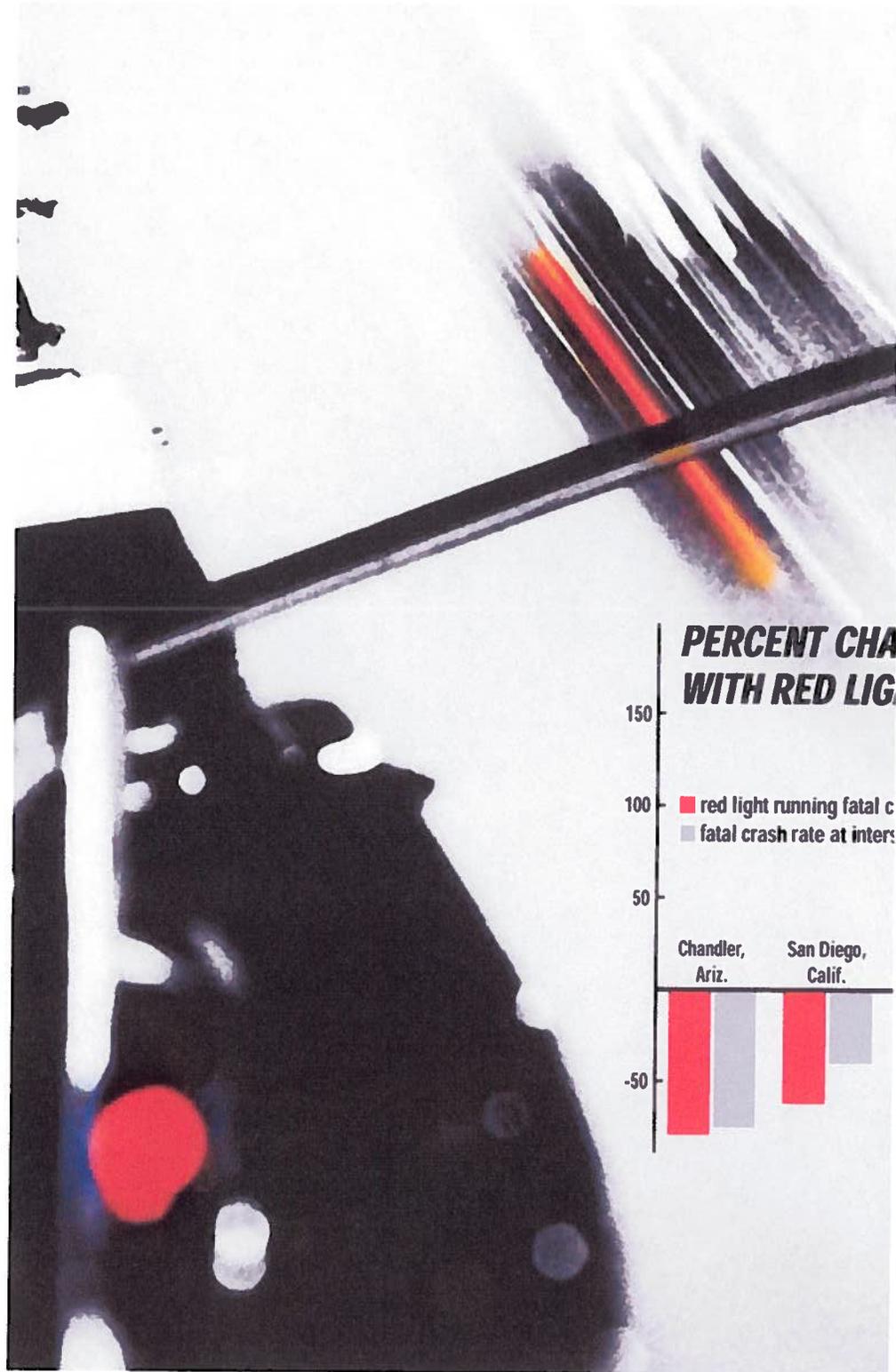
PERCENT DIFFERENCES IN ACTUAL CRASH RATES DURING 2004-08 IN CITIES WITH RED LIGHT CAMERAS VS. EXPECTED RATES WITHOUT CAMERAS



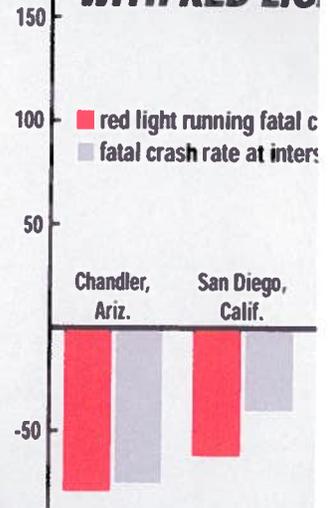
ning crashes fell 35 percent, compared with 1992-96. The rate also fell in the 48 cities without camera programs in either period, but only by 14 percent.

The rate of fatal red light running crashes in cities with cameras in 2004-08 was 24 percent lower than it would have been without cameras. That adds up to 74 fewer fatal red light running crashes or, given the average number of fatalities per red light running crash, approximately 83 lives saved.

That's a substantial benefit, but the actual benefit is even bigger. Red light cameras also reduce fatal intersection crashes that aren't attributed to red light running. One possible reason for this is that red light running fatalities are undercounted due to a



PERCENT CHANGE IN FATAL CRASH RATES WITH RED LIGHT CAMERAS



lack of witnesses to explain what happened in a crash. Drivers also may be more cautious in general when they know cameras are around.

The rate of all fatal crashes at intersections with signals — not just red light running crashes — fell 14 percent in the camera cities and crept up 2 percent in the noncamera cities. In the camera cities, there were 17 percent fewer fatal crashes per capita at in-

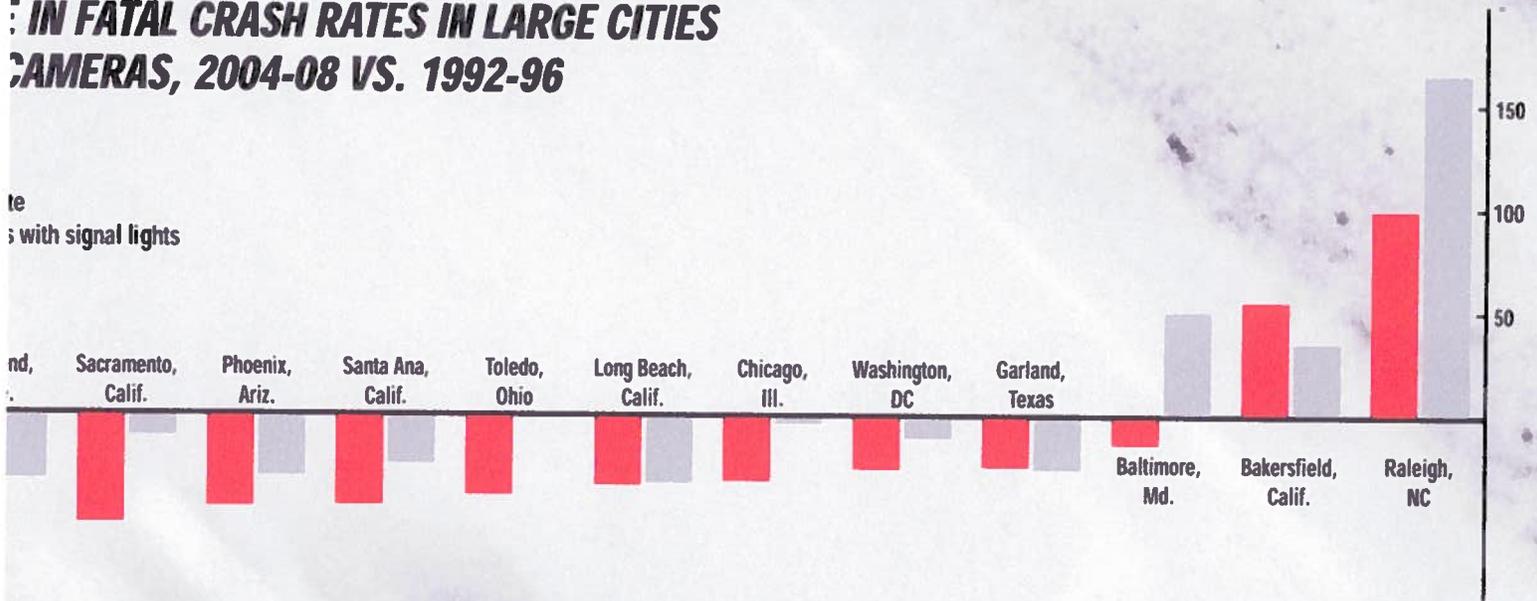
tersections with signals in 2004-08 than would have been expected. That translates into 159 people who are alive because of those automated enforcement programs.

If red light cameras had been in place for all 5 years in all 99 US cities with populations over 200,000, a total of 815 deaths could have been avoided.

"Examining a large group of cities over several years allowed us to take a close look

IN FATAL CRASH RATES IN LARGE CITIES CAMERAS, 2004-08 VS. 1992-96

te
s with signal lights



at the most serious crashes, the ones that claim people's lives," says Anne McCartt, Institute senior vice president for research and a co-author of the study. "Our analysis shows that red light cameras are making intersections safer."

Results in each of the 14 camera cities varied. The biggest drop in the rate of fatal red light running crashes came in Chandler, Ariz., where the decline was 79 percent.

Two cities, Raleigh, NC, and Bakersfield, Calif., experienced an increase.

"We don't know exactly why the data from Raleigh and Bakersfield didn't line up with what we found elsewhere," McCartt says. "Both cities have expanded geographically over the past two decades, and that probably has a lot to do with it."

A bigger mystery is why, in the face of mounting evidence that red light cameras

make communities safer, some people continue to resist them. Rather than feeling angry at the sight of cameras going off, red light runners should thank their lucky stars they're alive to pay their tickets.

For a copy of "Effects of red light camera enforcement on fatal crashes in large US cities" by W. Hu et al., write: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 1005 N. Glebe Rd., Arlington, Va. 22201, or email publications@ihs.org.

CITY USES CAMERAS AS SAFETY TOOL, NOT MONEYSMAKER

If the purpose of red light cameras is to raise cash from unsuspecting drivers, officials in Springfield, Mo., did everything wrong.

Before even switching on their cameras in June 2007, traffic engineers reduced red light running by changing the length of yellow lights to make signals consistent across the city. The launch of the cameras was preceded by a major education campaign urging drivers to "respect red," and once cameras were installed their locations were clearly marked. Officials put the cameras at intersections with the biggest traffic volumes to get the message to the greatest number of drivers, though those intersections weren't necessarily where the most violations occurred.

So what happened with that easy money for the budget? Two years and eight months after the cameras were switched on, the program was \$33,000 in the red.

Fortunately for the city, making money was never the goal. Improving safety was, and by that measure, the cameras were a success. City officials say their data show red light running crashes decreased both at camera-equipped intersections and city-wide. Citations fell 36 percent to an average of 1.05 a day per camera.

Springfield traffic engineer Jason Haynes says the fact that the program didn't make money helped to maintain community support. Another plus was that the vendor operating Springfield's cameras had no vested interest in busting drivers. Instead of paying the company per violation, Springfield paid a flat fee for each camera.

The biggest key to the program's success, says Earl Newman, who recently retired as Springfield's assistant director of public works, is that the city first did all it could from a traffic engineering standpoint to reduce red light running. That meant fixing the yellow timing problem, which the city discovered as it was preparing to install the cameras. The problem stemmed from the fact that some intersections were controlled by the state and others by the city, and the state signals had longer yellow times. There was rampant red light running at the city intersections, perhaps because drivers used to state roads weren't expecting the lights to change so quickly.

Springfield and the state transportation department

worked out a compromise, lengthening the yellow phase at many signals and shortening it slightly at others. Only after giving drivers months to get used to the new times did the city switch on the cameras, which led to a further reduction in red light running.

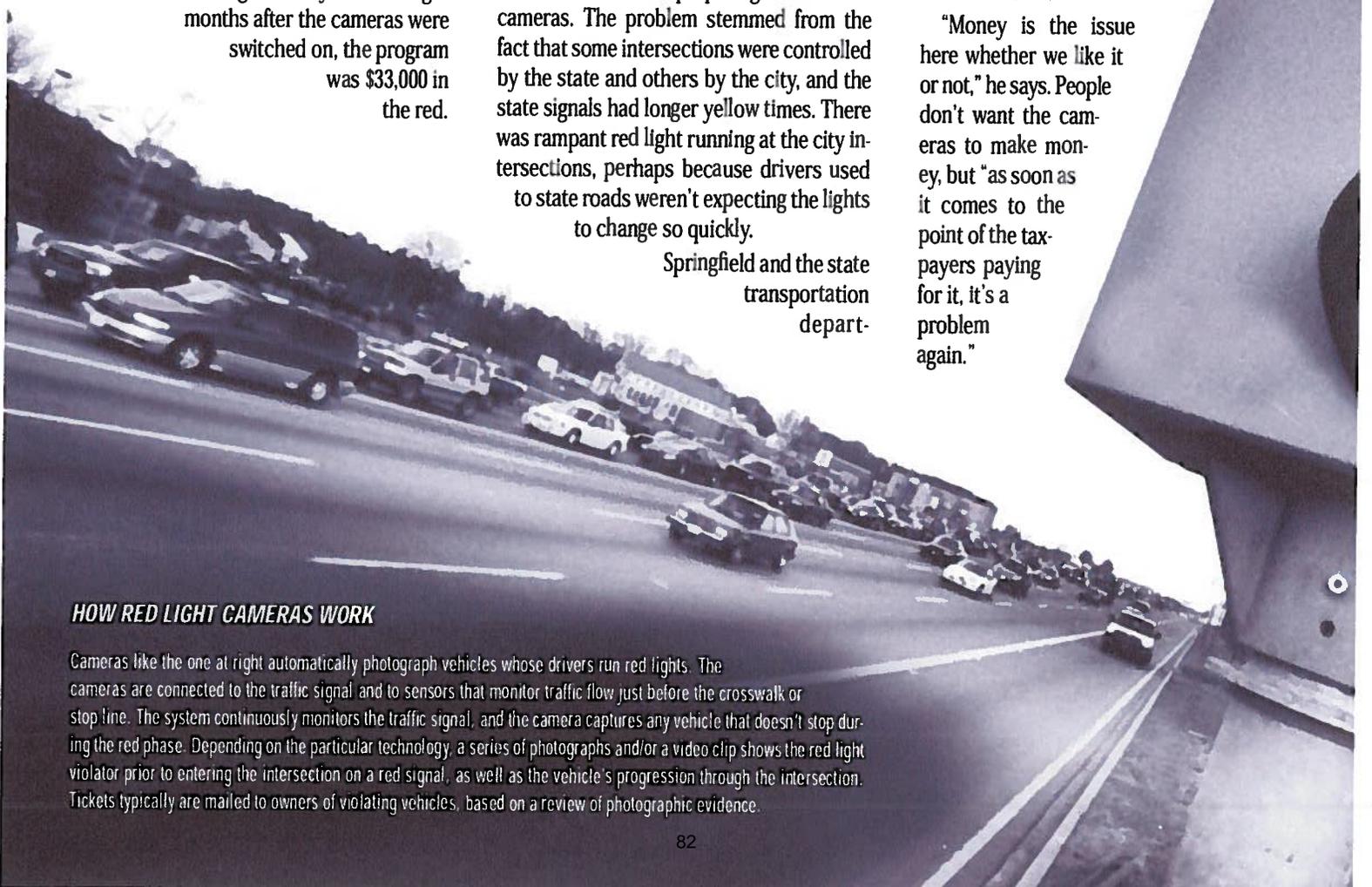
City surveys showed high support for red light cameras, but the program had determined opponents. A legal challenge brought the program to a halt last March, when the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that Springfield's administrative hearing process for contested citations was inadequate.

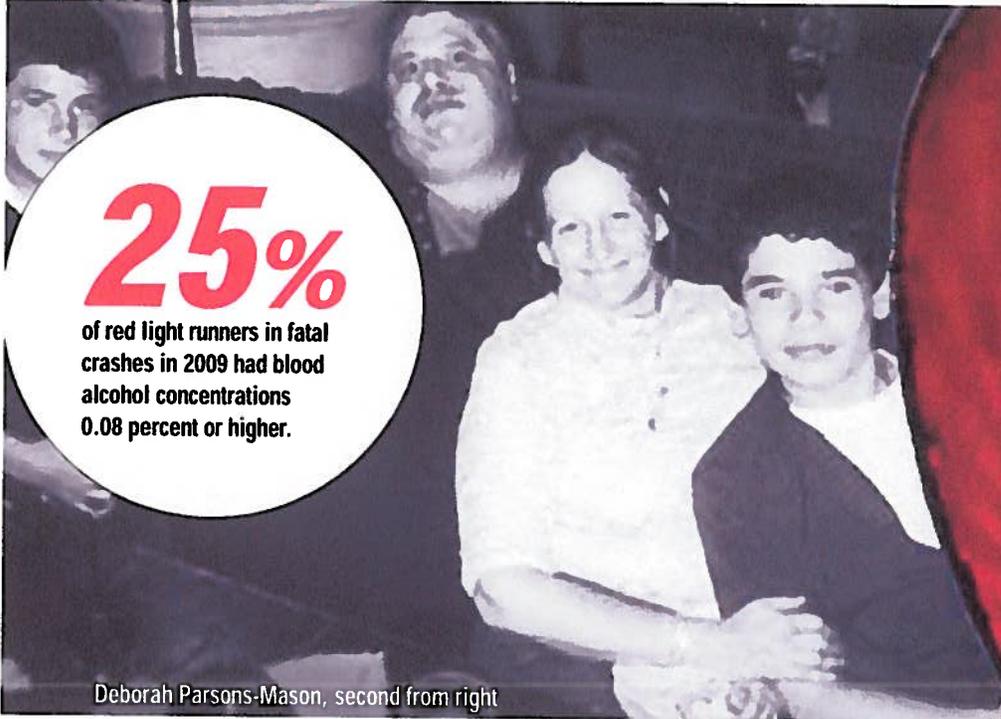
Haynes says the city's lawyers have come up with a fix and that a new contract for cameras is in the works. But Newman says he's not sure whether the program has much of a future now that violations have fallen so low. Too few citations could mean the red light cameras won't pay for themselves.

"Money is the issue here whether we like it or not," he says. People don't want the cameras to make money, but "as soon as it comes to the point of the taxpayers paying for it, it's a problem again."

HOW RED LIGHT CAMERAS WORK

Cameras like the one at right automatically photograph vehicles whose drivers run red lights. The cameras are connected to the traffic signal and to sensors that monitor traffic flow just before the crosswalk or stop line. The system continuously monitors the traffic signal, and the camera captures any vehicle that doesn't stop during the red phase. Depending on the particular technology, a series of photographs and/or a video clip shows the red light violator prior to entering the intersection on a red signal, as well as the vehicle's progression through the intersection. Tickets typically are mailed to owners of violating vehicles, based on a review of photographic evidence.





25%

of red light runners in fatal crashes in 2009 had blood alcohol concentrations 0.08 percent or higher.

Deborah Parsons-Mason, second from right

DEBORAH PARSONS-MASON, 47 **SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA**

Deborah Parsons-Mason worried about walking in her San Jose neighborhood, especially on weekend nights when the nearby bars were full. Drunk driving was a problem in the area, and the family had seen cars totaled just outside their window. The 47-year-old mother warned her 4 kids to use extra caution crossing the street.

But on a Friday 6 days before Christmas 2008, Parsons-Mason would have had her mind on other things. She had just been out shopping, and her mother was flying in the next day.

That night, Parsons-Mason walked to the corner store with her 14-year-old son, Jimmy, to buy some candy bars. On the way home, a pickup truck blew through a red light, striking Parsons-Mason in the crosswalk. As her horrified son watched, she was thrown in the air, landing in her next-door neighbor's driveway. Her husband and her other son heard the crash from inside the house and ran outside to see what had happened.

The driver, Gilberto Vasquez Reyes, 63, had a blood alcohol concentration of 0.21 percent, more than 2 1/2 times the legal limit. He pleaded no contest to vehicular manslaughter but died 5 days before sentencing. He was facing 4 to 6 years in prison.

Parsons-Mason worked as a cashier at Lucky supermarket and was heavily involved in her children's schooling, says her sister Kimberly Sabino. During their own childhood in southern California, Debi, the oldest of 3 girls, was like a second mother, says Sabino, who was the youngest and 5 years her junior.

Two years on, the family's grief is still raw. Jimmy constantly replays that night in his head, wishing he had seen the truck coming and pushed his mother out of harm's way, says Parsons-Mason's mother, Diane Courtney.

Sabino says it's hard for her to accept that Reyes, who had several prior convictions for driving under the influence, didn't face a more serious charge than manslaughter. "She wasn't just hit. She was slammed into," Sabino says.

"The way my sister was killed was murder."

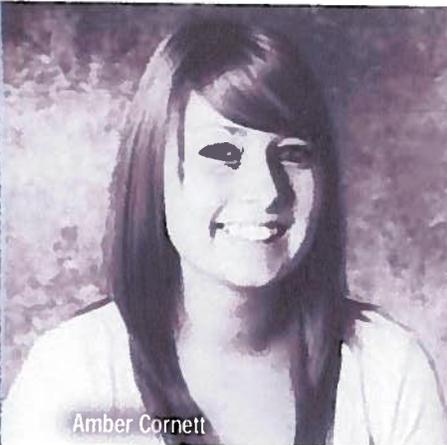


Deborah Parsons-Mason

COMMON THREAD BINDS CRASHES DESPITE DIFFERENT STORY LINES

A comment by Institute president Adrian Lund

The fatal crashes described on these pages are all different, but they have one thing in common: Someone ran a red light. The circumstances of a particular crash may point to a deeper cause, so it's tempting to seek a deeper solution. After all, we know that red means stop. We learned that long before we learned to drive. If people disobey red lights, or simply fail to see them, we assume there's a reason. It must be because they drank too much or they're fiddling with their cellphones or they're inexperienced or reckless drivers. All those things may be true, and many of the underlying causes can and should be addressed. But we can prevent many red light running crashes, regardless of the circumstances, by using cameras to enforce the law. The fact is that the threat of a ticket makes everyone drive more carefully. The data prove it.



Amber Cornett

AMBER CORNETT, 16 BETHEL TOWNSHIP, OHIO

On Nov. 22, 2008, Amber Cornett dutifully called her parents to tell them she was on her way home after spending the night at a friend's house and going out for breakfast.

Cornett was belted in the front seat when the 2003 Chevrolet Cavalier her friend was driving was broadsided by a pickup truck at an intersection in rural Bethel Township in Clark County, Ohio. She was killed just 6 days before her 17th birthday.

Cornett's friend told police she thought she had a green light. The driver and the passenger of the other vehicle insisted their light was green. A third girl who was in the Cavalier's back seat and was injured in the crash couldn't recall approaching the intersection. Police were unable to determine fault and didn't file charges.

"All we really got was no answers," says Mack Cornett, Amber's father. The daughter he lost was "every parent's dream," Cornett says. She was a good student and made friends easily. "I know she was looking forward to getting the chance to get out on her own."

On tribute pages on the web, friends remember Amber's effervescent personality. They lament that she'll never meet their new boyfriends and confide that they can't bear to delete her number from their cellphones.

Mack Cornett has his own way of remembering: The 46-year-old machinist manager keeps in his Bible a picture of Amber with a big smile, taken the summer before she died. Cornett says he's disappointed that neither driver has reached out to say they're sorry. He would be inclined to forgive.

"People run lights. I don't think the majority of people who run them mean to run them. They have distractions," he says.

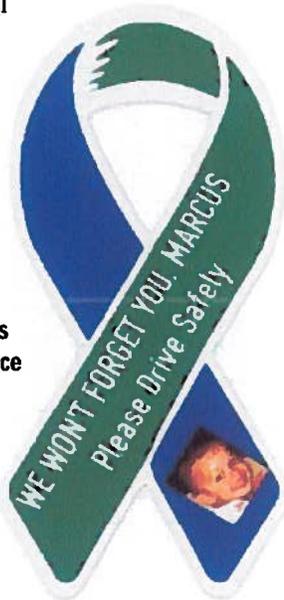
"How many times have you done something and you got away with it? You look down, you look at your watch, you turn the knob on the stereo, you laugh at a joke — you miss the light."

STATUS REPORT

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One family's
remembrance



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