

Wilmington, Delaware
~~April 4, 2024~~
April 18, 2024

#0408

Sponsor:

Council
Member
Darby

WHEREAS, Title 21, §4101(d) of the Delaware State Code sets forth the ability for governing bodies of any city or county to “to install and operate traffic light signal violation monitoring systems” and to enforce monetary penalties on the owners of motor vehicles for failure to comply with traffic light signals; and

WHEREAS, the Wilmington City Council’s 2022-2025 Strategic Plan goal of fostering a “Stabilized Wilmington” prioritizes enforcement of City Code in the interests of public safety and welfare; and

WHEREAS, at the national level, there has been a decline in the number of communities that have red light camera safety programs, from 556 communities in 2012 to 336, as of September 2023. Multiple surveys carried out by the American Automobile Association (AAA) showed a decrease in support for red light camera safety programs nationally from 70% in 2012 to 43% in 2019; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown mixed results on the impact of red-light camera programs on accident prevention. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety showed fewer traffic accidents in Arlington, Virginia, as part of a red-light camera safety program in 2014. However, a 2017 Case Western University study regarding the removal of a red-light camera safety program in Houston, Texas, did not lead to a decrease in the total number of vehicular accidents, though there were fewer injury crashes. Congressional Research Service (CRS) studies have made similar findings. The Case Western study was cited by Texas Governor Greg Abbott as cause for removing red-light safety programs from the state in 2019; and

WHEREAS, Miami, FL and Rochester, NY, among others, have explicitly ended their red-light camera safety programs, citing to inequities in the demographics of red-light camera ticket recipients; and

WHEREAS, a ProPublica report on ticketing in Chicago, showed that those residing in majority-Black and Latino zip codes were twice as likely to receive a red-light camera ticket than the White population. The evidence gathered in the report suggested that the placement of cameras at intersections in less densely populated neighborhoods contributed to a higher rate of ticketing. These intersections tended to be in majority-Black neighborhoods in Chicago, near industrial areas or major highways; and

WHEREAS, a report by the City of Wilmington Traffic Light Signal Violation Monitoring System (henceforth, “TLVMS”) for Fiscal Year 2022 listed the following two intersections with red-light cameras that had the most ‘straight-thru’ violations and the most accidents:

- 1) Intersection of W. 4th Street and N. Jackson Street – 29 crashes, 1494 ‘straight-thru’ violations
- 2) Intersection of 2nd Street and Adams Street – 26 crashes, 3756 ‘straight-thru’ violations

The locations of these intersections are in majority-Black and Latino neighborhoods in the City. They also serve as exit areas or underpasses to I-95, with multi-lane, multi-directional streets; and

WHEREAS, the intersection of W. 4th Street and N. Jackson Street saw 13 angled crashes between 2011 and 2015 prior to the installation of red-light cameras compared with 15 angled crashes between 2021 and 2022 when cameras were present. The intersection of 2nd Street and Adams Street saw 27 angled crashes between 2011 and 2015, and 21 angled crashes in 2021 and 2022; in both timeframes there was a red-light camera; and

WHEREAS, the City collected upwards of \$4.3 million in revenue from 56,000-plus red-light ticket citations in FY2022, with a net program surplus around \$2 million. The FY2024 budget projects \$3.8 million in revenue, with expenses to maintain the program increasing by 2% each year until FY2028. 18% of the City’s delinquent collections come from red-light violations. The City has commissioned a Fines and Fees Taskforce (adopted in Resolution 22-069) that will submit a report to Council by March 31, 2024 regarding fines and levies sanctioned across the city, including red-light camera data; and

WHEREAS, given the significant decrease in the usage of red-light camera programs across the nation, the declining public support for such programs, and the similar infrastructure and demographic profiles of populations living near Wilmington’s I-95 roadways to communities like Chicago that have found patterns of inequity in ticketing, a conscientious assessment of the outcomes and impacts of our current red-light program is warranted. The Wilmington City Council deems it necessary and proper to request a comprehensive assessment of the impact of red-light camera tickets on safety and equity for residents of the City; and

WHEREAS, assessing the equity of our transportation and infrastructure policy is in alignment with national priorities. A White House fact sheet on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 includes a stated goal of “advancing equity and racial justice throughout our economy,” with respect to transportation and infrastructure projects “to ensure communities of color get a fair shot at The American Dream.”

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON, that this Legislative body supports a professional third-party assessment of the safety and equity impacts of red-light tickets in Wilmington by December 31, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Legislative body remains committed to both the public safety and social inequity concerns for all residents. The Council of the City of Wilmington urges the Administration to commission a professional consultant to assess the safety and equity impacts of the City's red light ticket program by December 31, 2024 to better inform traffic enforcement policy for the benefit of all residents.

Passed by City Council,

ATTEST: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: Nationally, the use of red-light camera programs has declined, along with public support of such programs, due to concerns about disparate impacts on minority communities. This Resolution urges the Administration to make the necessary budgetary appropriations to commission a professional consultant to assess the safety and equity impacts of the City's red light ticket program by December 31, 2024.