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September 23, 2009



**VENTURA COUNTY
GRAND JURY**

Ventura County Grand Jury
800 S. Victoria Avenue, L#3751
Ventura, CA 93009

City Council
Christy Weir, Mayor
Bill Fulton, Deputy Mayor
Neal Andrews, Councilmember
Brian Brennan, Councilmember
James L. Monahan, Councilmember
Carl E. Morehouse, Councilmember
Edward W. Summers, Councilmember

RE: Grand Jury Report "Cars on Camera – Red Light Camera Enforcement"

Greetings:

The following is the City of San Buenaventura's response to the Ventura County Grand Jury's Final Report entitled "Cars on Camera – Red Light Camera Enforcement."

Findings

The City of San Buenaventura agrees with the following Grand Jury findings: F-19, F-20, F-21, F-22, F-23, F-24, F-25, F-26, F-27, F-28, F-29, F-30, F-31, F-32, F-35 (first sentence), F-37, F-38 and F-40. The City is unable to agree or disagree with the following Grand Jury findings: F-33, F-34, F-35 (second sentence), F-36 and F-39.

Recommendations

R-01 – This recommendation has been implemented.

The report found that all of the intersections the Grand Jury reviewed in the City of Ventura met or exceeded the State of California required yellow interval clearance times. The report questioned, however, the yellow timing at the intersection of Thompson Boulevard and California Street. The issue raised is that the yellow time for California Street at Thompson Boulevard is not the same as at adjacent intersections. There are specific engineering reasons for this, such as a different pedestrian environment and unique traffic conditions within the intersections in the downtown core area, different approach speeds, and Caltrans approval process.

The yellow phase is calculated so that there is sufficient time for a vehicle to travel the safe stopping distance needed by a reasonable driver and enter the intersection before it turns red. The Grand Jury used the posted speed limit to

“determine” required yellow times for each location. This is not the City’s standard method. The yellow intervals in Ventura are based on the 85th percentile speed. This provides a more realistic yellow phase because it is based on actual vehicle speeds. The use of posted speed limits for determining yellow intervals is only used on prima facie speed local streets where there is no speed survey required.

In the interest of being responsive to the Grand Jury’s concern, however, the City implemented a longer yellow time for northbound and southbound vehicles on California Street for a 30-day trial period. The yellow time was increased; taking time from the through green phase. During the 30-day trial period the City observed the location on several occasions and noticed that the traffic queue on the ramp during morning peak periods occasionally extended further back toward the freeway mainline. Staff also received a few complaints about the new timing. In order to make the timing change permanent, the City is consulting with Caltrans to make sure the new timing does not impact freeway and ramp safety. If Caltrans concurs, and the City makes an increase in yellow time permanent, the City will also have to review and probably change all of the signal timing along Thompson Boulevard.

R-02 – The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but it is anticipated that it will be implemented in the future.

The City is currently working with Caltrans on a project to relocate the California Street offramp to Oak Street. The project is in the City’s Capital Improvement Program Plan and is partially funded by State grant funds.

R-03 – This recommendation was previously implemented.

The City is fully aware of, and always considers, traffic engineering and conventional enforcement methods to decrease red light running. In fact, the City’s Transportation Manager was involved in the publishing of two reports on the subject through the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

R-04 -- This recommendation was previously implemented.

The Ventura Police Department will continue to enforce red light traffic violations through a combination of RLCs and officer enforcement.

R-05 – This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

The City reviewed the State Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) regarding the recommended signage. According to the MUTCD, the

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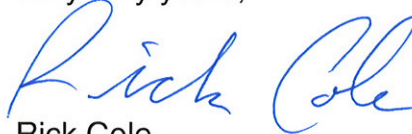
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sign recommended by the Grand Jury (Red Light Violation \$___ Minimum Fine) “may be used in advance of signalized intersections . . .” The City already has placed advance signs at each of the approaches to the automated enforcement locations. The additional signs are not recommended because they would add unnecessary sign clutter, present additional information that needs to be processed by the driver, and would have to be changed out every year because the fines change according to State set bail.

Thank you for your attention to the above. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



Rick Cole
City Manager
City of San Buenaventura

/ahv

cc: Honorable Kevin J. McGee, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, Ventura County
P.O. Box 6489
Ventura, CA 93006

Mayor Christy Weir