

# S A F E T Y F O C U S

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*This issue features actions you can take to support National Stop on Red Week, a behind-the-scenes look at how law enforcement officers review red light running photographs, a snapshot of AAA Foundation's 2008 "Traffic Safety Culture Index," a new report showing how speed cameras reduce crashes as well as save time, and an update of photo enforcement legislation from around the country.*

## Voice your support for safer streets

As part of National Stop on Red Week, this year the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running is encouraging all traffic safety supporters to make your voices heard. Beginning in mid-July, go to our website and send a message asking the federal government to lead the way in condemning aggressive driving and promoting automated enforcement as one way to improve traffic safety.

Go to [www.stopredlightrunning.com](http://www.stopredlightrunning.com) and sign the following statement:

"I support safe driving and enforcement to ensure that people stop for red lights and do not speed. The federal government should be leading the way by encouraging states to adopt automated enforcement laws to help police crack down on aggressive driving."

The letters will be compiled by the

National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running and presented to federal officials and the new President of the United States in 2009.

*Go to page 4 for suggestions on how to observe National Stop on Red Week. And look in the August issue of Ladies Home Journal for a red light running article, which will feature a link to our website's message to federal officials.*



**2008  
NATIONAL  
STOP ON RED  
WEEK  
AUG. 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>**  
[www.stopredlightrunning.com](http://www.stopredlightrunning.com)

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*The article below provides an inside look at the process used by law enforcement officers to sort through red light violations captured on camera. It is reprinted with permission of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, St. Louis, Missouri.*

## To ticket — or not?

By Elisa Crouch  
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH  
May 26, 2008

On the video, the violation is obvious: A silver Lexus plows through a red light at Olive Boulevard and Interstate 270.

Creve Coeur police Lt. William Funkhouser, nursing a cup of coffee, watches the images on his computer, then re-examines two photos snapped by red light cameras. He then hits the “reject” button, throwing out the violation.

One of the cameras failed to capture the Lexus before it crossed the stop line. Instead, it snapped the photo the moment after it crossed. “I insist that the vehicle be at or before the line,” Funkhouser said. “I’m going to reject this, although it’s a good violation.”

Every day, police officers in dozens of area cities sort through hundreds of red light violations and weed out many of them. A Post-Dispatch reporter spent time at three departments — Arnold, Creve Coeur and Florissant — to see how the system works. The amount of slack that officers give drivers varies by department. But bad weather, funeral processions, mismatched vehicle information, dirty camera lenses — all are common reasons for rejection.

“What would an officer on the scene do?” Funkhouser said, watching video of a silver BMW running a red light at Ladue and Emerson roads. He hit “accept.”

If an emergency vehicle needs to get through the intersection, prompting a driver to run a red light, the ticket should be thrown out, say area officers who vet the violations. When vehicles come to a rolling stop to turn right on red, those typically also get rejected, even though the driver is violating the law. (By law, drivers must come to a complete stop before turning right on red.)

Red light cameras snap photos automatically when they sense a vehicle might run a light. The cameras must photograph the vehicle in front of the stop line after the light turns, and then in the middle of the intersection.

Even with photo proof, getting a ticket isn’t automatic.

To start, the company that owns the cameras first sorts through violations to weed out those that wouldn’t pass muster. Then it’s up to police — usually traffic officers — to examine them.

It’s not unusual for camera equipment to malfunction and for video footage to fail. The cameras work so quickly that some capture the yellow afterglow from the yellow light at the very moment the light turns red. In Florissant, those get thrown out.

“It’s not a violation of the letter of the law,” said Florissant police Lt. Dennis Cordia, looking at violation photos containing the yellow afterglow from his office computer. “It’s not a violation until it’s a solid red.”

Cordia then watched video of a blue Cadillac blowing through an intersection nine seconds after the light turned. He looked over images of a Chrysler Sebring turning right on red without slowing down. In both cases, he accepted the evidence as violations.

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## To ticket — or not?

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But then he watched a Dodge pickup slow to turn right on red.

“I wouldn’t issue that,” said Cordia, watching the video again. “Does he come to 100 percent complete stop? Probably not. But we wouldn’t issue it, and a judge would probably throw it out.”

Some critics of red light cameras say the vetting process isn’t good enough. Cameras perched above the intersection can provide a flawed perspective, they say, and don’t meet the standards of a police officer.

April Sitter of Richmond Heights recently received a ticket for running a red light at Manchester Avenue and Kingshighway in St. Louis. A truck in front of her blocked her view, she said in an interview.

“In the picture, it looks like I was way in the wrong,” she said. “But I couldn’t see over the truck. If a cop was there watching, I really feel I wouldn’t have gotten a ticket.”

### CLEAR-CUT CASES

In Arnold, it’s not unusual for officers to review 200 violations in one day. It’s also common for a dozen or more of these not to make the cut. Anything that doesn’t make it a strong, clear-cut case, police get rid of, Lt. William Bonsack said inside his department office.

He then logged into the system and began reviewing 179 possible violations he and traffic officers would review that day. First up: a 1993 Grand Marquis running a red light at Highway 141 and Astra Way, and a Dodge Dakota pickup running a red light at Jeffco Boulevard near Rockport Heights Elementary School. He accepted those.

The next was a blue van going through the intersection two seconds after the light turned red. But there was no video attached. Bonsack rejected it.

“That’s one of those where I know the guy’s in the wrong, but that’s how we operate,” he said. “We give them the benefit of the doubt.”

The number of tickets each department throws out varies month to month. On average, Funkhouser of Creve Coeur said his department throws out about 20 percent. In other departments, the percentage can be higher or lower, depending on weather conditions and how well the cameras are functioning.

“We want to make sure every violation we put through is a clear-cut violation that no one could argue,” Funkhouser said.

## “Notable quotes”

*“I work in a field where we are delighted to see a 5 percent or 10 percent effect. If you show me a device that reduces injury crashes by 25 percent or 30 percent, I see that as a tremendous benefit.”*

Richard Retting, senior transportation engineer for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, commenting on studies showing that red light cameras have led to a reduction of nearly 30 percent in the number of red light running crashes that involve injuries. Read the entire article, “Blinded by the Light: Is There Confusion Surrounding Red Light Enforcement?” by Louise Smyth, In *Traffic Technology International’s* June/July 2008 issue.

## How You Can Help Promote National Stop On Red Week August 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008

- Make intersection safety part of any National Night Out activities planned for your community. *National Night Out is Tuesday, Aug. 5<sup>th</sup> this year.*
- Urge your local police to conduct red light running enforcement sweeps and hold a press conference to announce the results.

- Ask your local city council to approve a proclamation in support of National Stop on Red Week.
- Encourage family and friends to wear red ribbons and tie them to vehicle antennas for the duration of National Stop on Red Week.



Photo of a billboard in City of Abilene, Texas, in May 2008.

- If your city has red light cameras near school zones, ask the city if school children could paint designs on the camera poles.
- Ask local banks or businesses with scrolling message lightboards to display Stop on Red Week safety messages.
- Motivate drivers to sign a pledge to stop running red lights. Deliver the pledges to local city or police officials during a press event.
- Urge local newspapers, TV and radio stations to report the national and local human and financial costs of red light running crashes.

Please drop us an email at [info@stopredlightrunning.com](mailto:info@stopredlightrunning.com) and let us know how your locality plans to observe Stop on Red Week.

## Florida Legislature Adjourns Without Red Light Camera Legislation

The Florida Legislature adjourned May 2 without passing the Mark Wandall Traffic Safety Act, which would allow local governments to establish red light camera programs and impose a \$125 fine against the owner of the vehicles photographed running the red light.

In giving us an update of the status of red light camera programs in the state, Melissa Wandall, a **STOP! Red Light Running Coalition of Florida** founder whose husband was killed by a red light runner, said, "In Florida, a number of cities and counties have taken it upon themselves to implement programs since red light running continues to be rampant in our state. They are tired of waiting for the legislature to act. I think it is time we all ask our legislators to remember why they were elected into office in the first place — to protect their constituents. This next year we, the Coalition, will push this legislation once again, and we will hold our legislators accountable for passing and implementing the Mark Wandall Safety Act." See *page 7 for legislation details*.

*Below is an article from the coalition's homepage at [floridastopsonred.org](http://floridastopsonred.org).*

### **We need your help to keep Florida Safe Against Red Light Runners!**

Despite the significant efforts of many people and organizations across the state and an unprecedented 85% statewide public support for legislation, the 2008 legislature, once again, could not get its act together and agree on and pass red light camera standards.

The legislative session is closed and there are still no statewide red light camera standards. We heard a common drum beat from so many of you in the cities and counties that the legislature continues to rob the municipalities of resources needed to support their vital services, like public safety. As a result, we fully expect that more and more cities will follow the lead of the dozen or more Florida cities that have opted to move forward with red light camera programs, fed up with a lack of leadership out of the legislature, which has stymied red light legislation for over 10 years while hundreds of innocent Floridians have died in red light running collisions and thousands more have been injured and perhaps billions of dollars wasted on needless traffic collisions.



Perhaps a tidal wave of cities moving forward with red light cameras on their own, using common sense, and determining their own local public safety priorities, will spur the state legislature to action. Either way, red light cameras are here to stay and over 300 cities across the USA have made them work to save lives. We should all thank Melissa Wandall, President of the Stop Red Light Running Coalition of Florida, for her determined efforts this session. She traveled to the legislature countless times on her own time and her own dime (and with her young daughter) to push for passage of this measure. We feel badly for her as she continues to be victimized by the legislature, year after year, following the loss of her husband. Let's not let his sad passing be for naught.

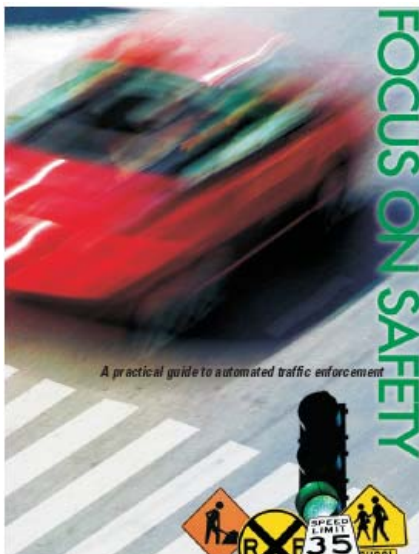
In addition to directly contacting your State Senator and State Representative, visit <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/redlight/> to add your name to a petition sent to legislators. Go to [www.faithandfreedom.org](http://www.faithandfreedom.org) (click on the traffic light) to view a video about the STOP! Red Light Running Coalition of Florida put together by the Center for Faith and Freedom.

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# Helpful Information from IIHS

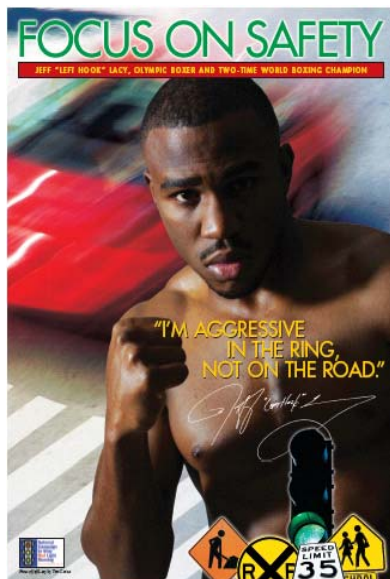
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- For a list of the more than 300 communities using red light and/or speed cameras, go to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's webpage: [http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/auto\\_enforce\\_cities.html](http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/auto_enforce_cities.html).
  - For information on states' penalties for red light running, including traditional and photo enforcement: [http://www.iihs.org/laws/automated\\_enforcement.aspx](http://www.iihs.org/laws/automated_enforcement.aspx).
- 



**Focus on Safety: A practical guide to automated traffic enforcement** is a comprehensive resource to help state legislators and local policymakers, law enforcement officers, highway safety advocates and community groups design, operate, and support effective photo enforcement programs.

The guide is available from the Campaign for \$9 a copy, or it can be downloaded in PDF format from the Campaign website at [www.stopredlightrunning.com](http://www.stopredlightrunning.com).



Order our **latest poster** of Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy, a former Olympic boxer and IBF Super Middleweight champion. To request a poster, please contact the Campaign at 202-828-9100 or by email at [info@stopredlightrunning.com](mailto:info@stopredlightrunning.com).

Include your name, email, mailing address and how many you would like. The posters are free, but we ask that those requesting posters pay the shipping charges, which are minimal.

Motorists' survey findings:

## ***It's wrong to intentionally run a red light, but ok to speed up to get through a yellow?***

A new report issued by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that American motorists think it is unacceptable to run a red light on purpose but okay to speed up to get through a yellow light.

Questions related to red light running and speeding were among those asked as part of the AAA's 2008 "Traffic Safety Culture Index." More than 2,500 U.S. adults participated in the telephone survey, which found that American motorists blame other motorists for unsafe driving, despite the fact many admit to doing the same dangerous practices themselves.



Among the report's highlights:

- Three out of four motorists think they are more careful than other drivers.
- Over seven out of ten motorists rated red light running as a serious problem, yet over half of those same individuals admitted to speeding up to get through yellow lights, and 5 percent even admitted to having run a red light on purpose in the past month.
- When asked to rate how acceptable a variety of driving behaviors were, respondents said speeding up to get through a yellow light and speeding on the highway were the most acceptable items listed. Behaviors rated as least acceptable were not wearing a seatbelt and running a red light on purpose. Other driving behaviors listed included speeding in neighborhoods, driving with a BAC just above the legal limit, driving while sleepy, driving with an expired license, and talking on a cell phone while driving.
- Nearly three out of every four motorists rated speeding as a serious problem, yet 40 percent of those same individuals admitted to driving 15 mph or more over the speed limit on the highway within the past month, and 14 percent admitted to having driven 15 mph or more over the limit on a neighborhood street.
- The American public has no clue as to the number of traffic deaths each year. When asked for their best estimate for last year's traffic fatalities, one in four respondents said they didn't know; 21 percent guessed fewer than 10,000 and 23 percent estimated traffic fatalities to be over 100,000. Only one in five respondents estimated the number to be between 20,000 to 80,000. The actual total has been between 39,000 and 45,000 since 1990, with 42,642 reported in 2006.

As Foundation president and CEO, J. Peter Kissinger said in his organization's May newsletter, "The AAA Foundation took on our 'safety culture' initiative because motorists, citizens and society in general are too complacent regarding the public crisis associated with motor vehicle crashes. One death should be unacceptable; so, why aren't we outraged at one death every thirteen minutes?"

The full report "2008 Traffic Safety Culture Index" is available online at <http://www.aaafoundation.org/>.

# Legislative Update — June 2008

*If there is legislation pending in your state that is not listed here, please contact the Campaign at (202)828-9100 or [info@stopredlightrunning.com](mailto:info@stopredlightrunning.com).*

## **RED LIGHT RUNNING SAFETY CAMERAS**

**ALABAMA: HB 24** (Bentley), introduced 2/05/08, is a re-filing of the Alabama Class 4 Municipality Red Light Safety Act; would give Tuscaloosa and Gadsden the authority to install red light cameras. Indefinitely postponed.

**FLORIDA:** As filed in December 2007, **SB 816** (Bennett) and **HB 351** (Reagan), referred to as the Mark Wandall Traffic Safety Act, would allow local governments to establish red light camera programs and impose a \$125 fine against the owner of the vehicles photographed running the red light. On 3/11/08, the Senate Transportation Committee passed an amended SB 816 reducing the penalty from a \$125 fine to a \$60 violation for the first three citations. Cities and counties would collect about \$30 of the fine, with the remainder going to a variety of state trust funds. The fine rose to \$125 for a fourth violation, with \$65 of that directed to hospital trauma centers. Both bills died when the 2008 legislative session ended 05/02/08. *See page 5 for more information.*

**GEORGIA: HB 77** (Loudermilk), puts more restrictions on the use of red light cameras by local governments, which must get permits from the Georgia Department of Transportation to put up cameras. Localities with existing programs have until Jan. 2010 to obtain the permits. Cities are required to provide the DOT with annual reports on the devices, and local governments are prohibited from decreasing the duration of traffic lights' amber time. Also, "no portion of any civil monetary penalty collected through the use of such devices may be paid to the manufacturer or vendor of the traffic-control signal monitoring devices." Compensation would be based on the value of the equipment and not on the number of citations issued or the revenue generated. The bill passed the Senate 3/20/08, passed the House 3/28/08, and was signed by the governor 5/14/08.

**ILLINOIS: HB 5288** (Jefferson), introduced 2/14/08, provides that, in addition to previously designated counties (currently the only counties that can use the technology are in the Chicago and St. Louis areas), red light camera programs would be permitted in Champaign, DeKalb, McLean, Peoria, La Salle, Sangamon, Vermilion, and Winnebago and to municipalities located within those counties. Passed the House 4/03/08 and sent to the Senate Rules Committee 4/08/08. Lost by four votes in the Senate 5/27/08.

**SB 1989** (Harmon), filed 2/07/08, provides that the Illinois Commerce Commission, in cooperation with a local law enforcement agency, may establish in any county or municipality a system for automated enforcement of railroad crossing violations. Provides a civil fine of \$250 for a first violation and a \$500 fine for second or subsequent violations. Amended and passed the State Government and Veterans Affairs Committee 3/13/08; passed the Senate 4/08/08 and sent to the House Rules Committee 4/08/08.

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## Legislative update

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**LOUISIANA: SB 396** (Hebert) provides for parishes and municipalities to use red light and speed cameras throughout the state, effective Aug. 1; stipulates that photos are of the rear license plate and not the driver or any occupants; prohibits local governments from releasing an individual's personal information such as drivers' license numbers, telephone numbers and addresses to private entities. Introduced in the Senate 3/31/08 and referred to Local and Municipal Affairs, which reported it to the Senate floor 5/12/08.

**SB74** (Shepherd) says any conviction based just on the camera-issued ticket will not be forwarded to the state Office of Motor Vehicles, meaning insurance companies can't view the record or use it to increase a driver's auto insurance rates. Approved by Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works 6/02/08 and sent to the House floor for debate.

**MISSISSIPPI: HB 1589** (McBride), a transportation appropriation bill, was amended to create a study committee to determine the "feasibility and desirability" of enacting legislation that would allow states, counties and cities to operate photo enforcement programs at intersections of state highways and county or municipal roads, streets or highways. The committee is to report its findings, including any recommended legislation, by 12/15/08. Signed by the governor 5/10/08. At one point the appropriation bill was amended to forbid automated traffic enforcement, but that amendment was removed.

**MISSOURI: HB 1772** (Jones, Kenny) allows municipalities throughout the state to operate red light camera programs, with civil penalties and court costs not to exceed the amount that would be imposed if the violation was observed by a law enforcement officer. Introduced 1/22/08, referred to Transportation Committee 4/03/08, which passed it 5/06/08. Failed to gain approval before the legislature adjourned 5/16/08.

**HB7316** (Portwood), called the Missouri Universal Red Light Enforcement Act, would require all photo enforcement systems to register with the Missouri transportation department and all participating cities to pay a \$500 fee to the Red Light Enforcement Fund for conducting audits to ensure entity compliance with the provisions of the bill. The bill also would prohibit the use of speed cameras. Introduced in the House 1/09/08; died 5/23/08.

**NEW MEXICO: SB 442** (Sanchez) applies to cities with a population of more than 200,000 (Albuquerque) and would limit all fines, fees and costs of a speeding or red light running violation to a maximum of \$75. Ten percent of the money collected would go to DWI drug court programs and 90 percent would be transferred to the New Mexico finance authority for deposit into the metropolitan court bond guarantee fund. Passed House and Senate 2/14/08. Signed by the governor 3/05/08.

**NEW YORK: A 10948** was introduced 5/08/08 by State Assembly Transportation Committee Chairman David Gantt, a long-time opponent of red light cameras. The bill would allow any county in the state to operate red light cameras (currently they are only permitted in New York City). The proposed legislation says that the only red light camera

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## Legislative update

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systems authorized must use “radar-based down-the-road speed measurement methods in which a photograph is taken coincident to, or as near as possible to, the location of, recorded speed measurements.” The Buffalo News reported 6/03/08 that it appears the only company that uses that kind of system, according to industry executives, is Sensys Traffic, a Swedish company that is distributed by CMA Consulting Services, a small Albany-area firm whose lobbyist is a Gantt friend and former staff member. The bill would also forbid technologies used by rival red light camera vendors. The New York Daily News reported that the bill was tabled by Gantt 6/03/08.

**OHIO: HB30** (McGregor) requires communities using red light or speed limit enforcement cameras to post signs at every community entry point. Introduced 2/20/07, approved by the House 6/27/07 and the Senate 5/21/08; sent to conference committee for concurrence 5/29/08 and sent to the governor 6/05/08.

**TENNESSEE: SB3258** (Burchett) requires motorists to be notified of \$67.50 citations by first class mail. Failure to pay fines within 30 days would result in a second notification being sent via certified mail. Only then could violators be assessed late fees. Signed by the governor 5/19/08; effective 7/01/08.

**SB 3423** (Burchett) prohibits the shortening of yellow signals for the purpose of increasing profits from tickets. Signed by the governor 5/19/08; effective 6/06/08.

### SPEEDING SAFETY CAMERAS

**ARIZONA:** A number of bills aimed at speed cameras died 5/05/08 when they failed to meet deadlines for advancement. They included:

**SB 1470** (Gould) would prohibit speed cameras on state highways and would block Gov. Janet Napolitano’s plans to use photo speed enforcement across the state.

**SCR 1032** (Gould) identical to SB 1470 except not subject to gubernatorial veto; instead would put the issue on the November ballot for voters to decide.

**SCR 1033** (Gould) would only allow a speed camera citation if a vehicle is traveling faster than 85 percent of vehicles on the highway; would also would bypass the governor and go to the voters.

**SB 1505** (Gorman) would require warning signs be placed 600 feet in front of areas where photo speed cameras are in use (state law now requires warning signs posted at least 300 feet ahead). Also, signed statements from law enforcement officers would be required to verify the signs were in place at the time of the violation.

**CALIFORNIA: SB 1325** (Kueh), introduced 2/20/08, authorizes a speed camera pilot program in Beverly Hills to be used in school zones and residential areas with speed limits of 25 mph or less. Referred to Transportation and Housing Committee 2/28/08, where it was passed 4/29/08.

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## Legislative update: Speeding Safety Cameras

*(continued from page 10)*

**COLORADO: HB 1036** (McFadyen) would allow the use of speed cameras in highway work zones. Signed by the Speaker of the House 5/09/08, signed by the Speaker of the Senate 5/12/08 and sent to the governor, who signed it 6/03/08.

**MARYLAND: SB 269** (Miller) and **HB 364**, introduced 1/25/08, would allow state and local law enforcement agencies to use speed cameras on streets with speed limits up to 45 mph, in school zones and near highway construction zones. The bills died in April when the two chambers couldn't agree on how fast motorists would have to be driving before they would be issued tickets or how revenue from the cameras would be distributed.

**SB 963** (Rosapepe), introduced 2/28/08 as the Safer Roads Act of 2008, would allow Prince George's County to use speed cameras on highways as well as school zones and neighborhoods. It would not apply to Interstate 95, Interstate 495, Route 50, or Route 301 in Prince George's County. Bill died when the legislature adjourned 4/07/08.

## Speed Cameras Can Reduce Travel Times

**A** new report by an Arizona State University (ASU) traffic safety expert has found that speed cameras on Loop 101 through Scottsdale, Arizona, may slow drivers down a bit, but motorists save time in the long run because of fewer traffic crashes.

Simon Washington, the ASU engineering professor who authored the report, found that employing the cameras and reducing accidents saved approximately 1,336 vehicle-hours a year when crashes blocked one lane and 45,060 vehicle-hours a year when crashes blocked two lanes.

The Arizona Republic, in a May 14 article about the report, said that Washington calculated that northbound drivers travel the 6.5-mile stretch from Via de Ventura to 56th Street in an average of 10.8 minutes with the speed-enforcement program and an average 10.7 minutes without it.

But the study found that an accident blocking two lanes of Loop 101 would turn the same trip into one taking nearly 32 minutes. And since the speed enforcement program cuts the number of accidents approximately in half, drivers gain time overall.

The final report, which was released in early May 2008, was commissioned by Scottsdale in 2006. The preliminary report, which was released early last year, showed that the mean speed of drivers on the camera-controlled stretch through Scottsdale dropped nearly 9 mph, to 64.4 mph during enforcement from 73.1 mph before enforcement.

The posted speed limit in that part of Loop 101 is 65 mph, and the cameras are set to detect speeding at 76 mph and higher.

The report estimated that the number of accidents dropped by as much as 54 percent compared with the number of crashes expected to have occurred without the program. It also estimated that photo enforcement saved Arizonans \$16.5 million to \$17.1 million a year in medical costs, lost productivity and other costs because of fewer accidents.