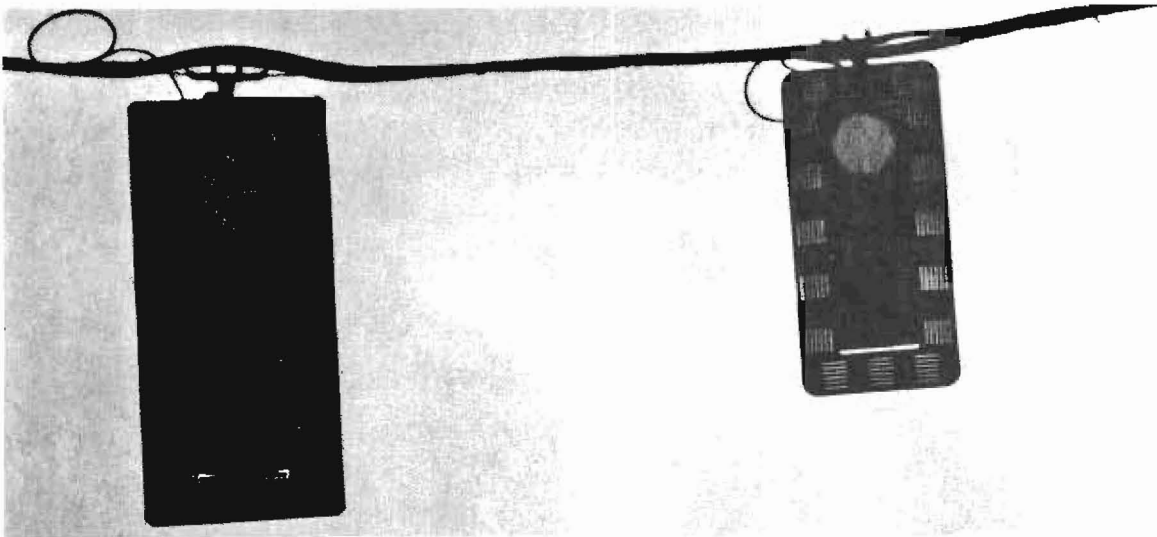


A Closer Look At A Popular Red-Light Camera Study

By Greg Mauz, NMA Texas Activist



Camera promoters everywhere – from a politician in Pennsylvania to an engineer in Lubbock, Texas to the Department of Transportation in California – keep misrepresenting the 2005 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Study as the holy grail of studies proving that red-light ticket cameras reduce crashes and injuries and “saves lives.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. The stated “results” actually show cameras *cause* accidents.

The FHWA is allied with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) and the National Campaign to Stop Red Light Running – a group consisting of three ticket camera companies.

Page one, of the Executive Summary, begins by repeating the same 15-year-old deception that red light running (violation) crashes are a “major safety problem.”

Red light violation crashes have NEVER been a “major safety problem.” The approximately 900 annual fatalities equate to 2 percent of all traffic fatalities nationwide (43,000 annually). The truth is that there remains no honest need for camera enforcement of any kind.

It should be noted that at least four of the seven cities providing data for this study had integrity problems. Clearly-defined before and after data was not documented. Red light violation crashes “could not be identified separately” and were morphed into the much larger group of right-angle crashes.

Camera promoters love to proclaim that right-angle crashes decreased by 25 percent (24.6 percent) while rear-end crashes increased only 15 percent (14.9 percent). These percentages are not supported by other studies that have recorded 70 percent, or larger, increases in rear-end collisions (Australia, NC, Oxnard and VA).

Camera promoters usually fail to report that rear-end injury crashes rose 24 percent while angle injuries only decreased by 15.7 percent. These figures do not account for expensive, long-term, painful whiplash injuries discovered days after the crash.

Additional findings in this study show that the (no camera) control sites recorded a 8.5 percent decrease in right-angle crashes while rear-enders only increased 1.8 percent. The authors’ attempt to credit this

positive (good) result to a “spillover effect” but admit the theory lacked credibility. The phenomenon is a total fabrication of camera promoters. The plain truth is that doing nothing (control sites) consistently trounces RLTC sites in safety improvements (NC, Oxnard, Winnipeg).

Even worse, severe angle crashes increased after red-light ticket camera programs were instituted in two jurisdictions, while the other five showed no decreases.

How far the standard for success has fallen. Camera promoters’ promises began with red-light ticket cameras “saving countless lives.” Then, cameras were going to “significantly reduce” all signal-related crashes and injuries. Later, it became a trade-off between more “minor” rear-end collisions versus fewer “severe” angle crashes. And now they have to resort to spin-doctoring estimated financial crash costs in a desperate attempt to salvage some positive aspect from a totally failed “safety” program.

In the interest of public safety, all ticket camera programs should be dismantled permanently. ■