Do Cameras Cost Lives?

By Greg Mauz, NMA Texas Activist

Ticket camera proponents all proclaim, "Cameras save lives." According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), cameras not only "save lives," they also "significantly reduce" angle crashes and all traffic signal intersection crashes/injuries.

Many localized studies, such as those performed in North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. dispute this claim. My research suggests that ticket cameras actually increase crashes, injuries, and fatalities. There is now enough data to analyze the safety impact of ticket cameras on a national basis.

By the end of 2000, about 40 cities were operating red-light cameras. That number has grown to over 100 cities. Analysis of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics suggests that ticket cameras cause an increase in both injuries and fatalities.

In Chart One, traffic signal related crashes are examined. By comparing the period from 1996 to 2000 (i.e. before cameras became widespread) and 2000 to 2005 (i.e. when cameras were widespread), we find that there was almost no reduction in crashes (0.4 percent) and only a modest decrease in injury crashes (4.2 percent).

CHART ONE - Traffic Signal Related Crashes

	1996 - 2000	2001 - 2005	Change
All Crashes	6,685,000	6,659,000	-0.4%
Injury Crashes	2,432,000	2,329,000	-4.2%

CHART TWO - All US Traffic Crash Injuries

1996 - 2000	2001 - 2005	Change
16,448,000	14,336,000	-12.8%

These improvements pale in comparison to the overall trend seen in traffic crash injuries (see Chart Two), which have declined by 12.8 percent.

This is the case despite IIHS's claim that the cameras would "significantly reduce" all

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The Next 25 Years

by John Holevoet, Director of Development

Some of you reading this have been with the NMA from the very beginning, even before we were called the NMA. We're humbled by your continued confidence in us. Of course, we're glad to have support from those of you who've joined more recently too. We definitely need your help as we prepare for the next 25 years. The future can hold many victories for motorists, but not without people like you! Here is what we have in store for the coming year.

Representative Michael Capuano has again introduced legislation that would regulate the use of black boxes. We'll be calling on you to write your legislators and key committee members to ensure that this important bill moves forward and that it gets the consideration it deserves.

We will continue to promote and support any state legislation that prohibits the use of ticket cameras. As a backup, we will support federal legislation that places strict standards on its use with a focus on removing the financial incentives currently in place. As we have seen in the past, once the money dries up, these "important safety devices" seem to lose their supporters on city councils and in state legislatures.

During the NMA's first 25 years, it spurred the nation to repeal the ridiculous 55-mph Maximum Speed Limit. We had other successes as well, but new challenges have arisen that have the potential to be far worse affronts to drivers' rights. Both black boxes and photo enforcement are examples of how new technologies can be used to control and monitor our driving.

Black boxes can spawn technology that will monitor your speed continuously, and remotely relay this information to the police or private contractors who will then issue tickets. Red-light cameras allow municipalities to cash in on dangerous intersections, while ignoring simple fixes that could make the roads safer for everyone. Finally, speed cameras give governments the ability to enforce speed limits 24/7, including those speed limits that are set unfairly low without regard for proper engineering standards. (The vast majority!)

These are just a few of the challenges we're prepared to face in the coming years. To help us protect you and other motorists from this invasive technology, please contribute to our legislative efforts. Without your support, we cannot make much-needed progress on these issues. ■

Do Cameras Cost Lives?

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crashes. The trend illustrated by these charts is no surprise. Red-light-camera studies in North Carolina, Arizona, and Australia have all shown increases in crashes and injuries at camera sites while non-camera sites experienced decreases. This suggests that positive historical safety trends are actually being stymied by the presence and proliferation of ticket cameras.

Chart Three reveals that during the five years of camera use, there were 412 more fatal crashes than during the five years prior to camera installation. Cameras were supposed to "significantly reduce" all traffic-signal-related injuries and fatalities, but these show otherwise.

Charts Four and Five deal specifically with red-light-violation (RLV) crash fatalities. National figures are presented up to 2002. After that date, figures could not be confirmed. Florida figures (Chart 4) are presented as control. The Sunshine State ranks third in the USA for number of licensed drivers, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and traffic fatalities. Florida comprises over ten percent of the nation's red-light-violation fatalities and had no red-light cameras until 2006.

Before the proliferation of red-light cameras (1996-1999), national red-light-violation fatalities dropped 11.2 percent. After red-light cameras, fatalities dropped another 2.7 percent to 921. By 2002, about 75 cities employed ticket cameras. Comparing the 1996-1999 period with 2002 results in a 9.2 percent decrease in red-light-violation fatalities. However, Florida, which didn't have ticket cameras, experienced a drop of 18.3 percent, nearly twice the national reduction in RLV fatalities. In fact, if Florida was excluded from the national RLV fatality statistics, there would have been an increase in fatalities, instead of a decrease.

Begrudgingly admitted, but downplayed, is the fact that ticket cameras consistently cause an increase in rear-end collisions. Maurice Hannigan, Vice President of ticket camera manufacturer Affiliated Computer Services (ACS), flippantly described these accidents as a little "bump" in the rear.

Contrary to the picture typically presented in the media, ticket cameras increase rear-end collisions significantly. Research at camera sites has shown increases from 70 to even 180 percent. This occurred at a time during which many non-RLC sites recorded declines in rear-end collisions.

Data from Chart Six paints a dire picture. Rear-end fatalities increased to 980 (12 percent) in the five-year period after ticket cameras. Perhaps even more disturbing is that angle crashes have also increased since ticket cameras were installed in cities across the country (see Chart Seven). These are the more serious crashes that camera proponents say that the devices prevent. Keeping in mind that the vast majority of angle crashes are not RLV crashes, the statistics in Chart Seven still show a ten percent increase in fatal angle crashes in the period after red-light cameras were installed versus the period before they were used.

The statistics speak for themselves. In addition to violating American rights (due process and the ability to face your accuser) and extorting people's money, ticket cameras *do not* save lives. During a period of national ticket camera proliferation, more than 500 people died from the exact type of accidents these devices were supposed to prevent. These people died because of government and corporate greed. It's time to kill the cameras and save human lives. ■

For more detailed charts, visit www.motorists.org/mate.html.

CHART THREE - Traffic Signal Related Fatal Crashes

1996 - 2000 (Pre-RLCs)	2001 - 2005 (Post-RLCs)	Change
14,149	14,561	+2.9%

CHART FOUR - Florida Red-Light Violation Crashes

No RLCs	1996	1999	Change
Fatalites	121	119	-0.2%
No RLCs	**1999**	**2002**	**Change**
Fatalites	119	99	-16.8%
No RLCs	1996 - 1999	2000 - 2002	Change
Avg. Fatalies	125.5	102.6	-18.3%

CHART FIVE - US Red-Light Violation Crashes

No RLCs	1996	1999	Change
Fatalites	1066	947	-11.2%
RLCs In Use	**1999**	**2002**	**Change**
Fatalities	947	921	-2.7%
Mixed	**1996 - 1999**	**2000 - 2002**	**Change**
Avg. Fatalities	1014.5	921	-9.2%

CHART SIX - Vehicle Occupant Rear-End Fatalities

1996 - 2000 (Pre-RLCs)	2001 - 2005 (Post-RLCs)	Change
8,179	9,159	+12%

CHART SEVEN - Angle Crash Fatalities

1996 - 2000 (Pre-RLCs)	2001 - 2005 (Post-RLCs)	Change
22,555	25,001	+10.9%

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

1. Traffic Signal Related Crashes, ALL and Injury Crashes

Year	All	Injury	Year	All	Injury
1996	1295000	489000	2001	1353000	493000
1997	1334000	483000	2002	1356000	476000
1998	1318000	462000	2003	1308000	466000
1999	1347000	493000	2004	1328000	444000
2000	1391000	505000	2005	1314000	450000
Total (96-00):	6685000	2432000			
Total (01-05):	6659000	2329000			
Difference:	-26000	-103000			
Percent Change	-0.40%	-4.20%			
Average Inj. year (96-00)	486400				
Average Inj. year (01-05)	465800				
Difference:	-20600				

2. All USA Traffic Crash Injuries

Year	Injured	Year	Injured
1996	3483000	2001	3033000
1997	3348000	2002	2926000
1998	3192000	2003	2889000
1999	3236000	2004	2788000
2000	3189000	2005	2700000
Total (96-00):	16448000		
Total (01-05):	14336000		
Difference:	-2,112,000		
Percent Change:	-12.80%		

A Injury Rate per 100M VMT

Year	Rate
1996	140
2000	116
2005	90
Difference	-50
Percent	-36%

B US ALL CRASHES

Year	Crashes
1996	6770000
2004	6181000
Difference	-589000
Percent	-8.70%

3. Traffic Signal Related Fatal Crashes

Year	Fatal Crashes		Year	Fatal Crashes
1996	2812		2001	2925
1997	2900		2002	2922
1998	2849		2003	2867
1999	2803		2004	2897
2000	2785		2005	2950
Total	14149	(+412FC)		14561

+2.90%, +82 FC annually

1996-2000 2830 yr average

2001-2005 2912 yr average

412 FC or 465 more fatalities

4. Florida Dept. of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
Disregard Traffic Signal Fatal Factors, Injury, and VMT

	Year	Fatal Factor	Injury	Year	Fatal Crashes	Injury
	1996	121	7833	2001	93	6969
	1997	126	7640	2002	99	7149
	1998	136	7587	2003	109	6602
	1999	119	7209	2004	96	6341
	2000	116	7109	2005	96	6300
Total		618	37378		493 (-125)	33361 (-4017)

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)=72 Billion more from 1996 to 2005.
All US 96=2.5T to 3T in '05=+20% (+56%) VMT=129 BVMT to 201B
Licensed drivers increased from 12.3 (96) to 15.3 million (2005)
There occurred a -20% decrease in fatal factors (-125) from 96-00 versus
01-05 and a -10.8% decrease of injuries (-4017)
despite 20% more drivers traveling 56% more miles

5. Red Light Violation Fatalities, ALL USA, Federal Hwy. Administration

Year	Fatalities	
1996	1066	2000=40 cities with RLCs
1997	1059	2002=75 cities with RLCs
1998	986	
1999	947	(record low)
2002	921	

4058 (96-99) divided by 4=1014.5 avg yearly vs. 921 (2002)=-9.2%

Florida 96-99 yrly avg=125.5 vs. 102.6 (00-02)=-18.30%

Greatest national fatality declines (-119 or -11.2%) occurred before RLTC proliferation (1996-1999)

Florida, without Red Light Ticket Cameras, scored over 100% better than the national trend (200 cities with RLTCs in 2005). In fact, the national improvement can be almost solely attributed to Florida's -25 less annual RLV fatalities.

6. Vehicle Occupant Rear-end Fatalities

Year	Fatalities	Year	Fatalities
1996	1529	2001	1766
1997	1590	2002	1853
1998	1666	2003	1862
1999	1661	2004	1790
2000	1733	2005	1888
Total	8179	(+980)	9159 (+12%)

1529 (96) to 1888 (05)= +359 or +23%
Before RLCs=1636 avg year fatalities
After RLCs=1832 avg year fatalities

7.Fatal Angle Crashes

Year	Fatal Crashes	96-00 avg
1996	7566	7518
1999	7542	
2000	7447	**02-04 avg**
2002	8388	8334
2003	8356	(+816)
2004	8257	

22555 (96-00) to 25001 (02-04)
is +2446 or +10.9%

There occurred +196 more average annual rear-end fatalities after ticket cams
There occurred +980 more rear-end deaths (01-05) after RLCs (+12%)

Note: Not all of these fatalities occurred at traffic signal intersections. Judging from many sources and statistics, at least 650 extra deaths occurred at traffic signal related sights from 01-05 AFTER serious proliferation of cameras. Also included in Chart 3. The rear-end fatality increase at signals probably exceeds +12%.