

## **SPEAK UP FOR SAFETY**

As pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers, State College residents are endangered by drivers frequently going through red lights. Police Chief Tom King reports that State College has a significant pedestrian population in the Borough that results in tens of thousands of crossings at signalized intersections nearly every day. The Borough's couple million visitors annually also result in an inordinate amount of additional vehicular traffic intermixing with heavy pedestrian traffic during the many special events in State College each year.

The problem is of particular concern, but not limited to, the North Atherton Street/Park Avenue intersection. Some other intersections of concern include Atherton Street/College Avenue and Atherton Street/Beaver Avenue.

Local police departments' use of red light cameras to record vehicles going through a red traffic signal and to ticket offenders can lead to more consistent enforcement of violations that will result in reduced violations, thus fewer crashes and fewer injuries.

The law approved by the General Assembly allows red light cameras in municipalities in or near Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. We ask for expansion of that legislation to any county that currently meets the requirements, which include a population of 20,000 or more, an accredited police department, local ordinance authorization, and use only at PennDOT-approved intersections.

### **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

1. Write to our state legislators:

- \* Hon. Scott Conklin, 325 Irvis Office Bldg, PO Box 202077, Harrisburg, PA 17120-2077; email [sconklin@pahouse.net](mailto:sconklin@pahouse.net); fax 717-780-4764.
- \* Hon. Kerry A. Benninghoff, 152 Main Capitol Bldg, PO Box 20217, Harrisburg, PA 17120-2171; email [kbenning@pahousegop.com](mailto:kbenning@pahousegop.com); fax 717-260-6528.
- \* Senator Jake Corman, Senate Box 203034, Room: 281 Main Capitol, Harrisburg, PA 17120-3034; email [corman@pasen.gov](mailto:corman@pasen.gov); fax 717-772-3146.

2. Send a letter to the editor of *The Centre Daily Times* ([cdtletters@centredaily.com](mailto:cdtletters@centredaily.com)), *Voices* ([oped@voicesweb.org](mailto:oped@voicesweb.org)), and/or *The Gazette* ([editor@centrecountygazette.com](mailto:editor@centrecountygazette.com)).

3. Talk to your friends and neighbors living in the Borough or crossing signalized Borough intersections, encouraging them to do the same.

### **TALKING POINTS FOR YOUR USE:**

1. Drivers often run red lights in State College.
2. Like other communities, local police do not have the staff necessary to consistently monitor dangerous signalized intersections.
3. Crashes resulting in injuries occur each year at many of the Borough's signalized intersections because of drivers failing to stop for a red signal.
4. State College's infrastructure is comparable to that of other communities that are currently authorized to use red light cameras.
5. State College Council, administration, and police advocate red light camera installation.
6. On event weekends (e.g., football, Arts Festival) State College becomes 3rd largest Pennsylvania municipality, exacerbating traffic problems.
7. State College residents, many of whom walk to town and/or campus daily, want and deserve to be safe.
8. We're asking only that existing legislation be amended, not for new legislation.

(See reverse for *Why Red Light Cameras?* and *Aspects of the Legislation*)

## WHY RED LIGHT CAMERAS?

The Pennsylvania General Assembly must approve red light cameras for use in any municipality. A few years ago when the legislature approved cameras for Philadelphia (including some suburban areas) and Pittsburgh, State College lobbied unsuccessfully to include additional larger municipalities as well.

1. It's ineffective and inappropriate to provide red light cameras and any other public safety initiatives to only the greater Philadelphia area and Pittsburgh.
2. State College Borough is similar to 3rd class cities in population and infrastructure.
3. The red light camera was piloted in the City of Philadelphia for only about two years and based on this pilot, the General Assembly approved the red light camera technology for four counties adjacent to Philadelphia that have a population of 20,000 or more, have a police department that is accredited, and the local municipality authorizes the install of the cameras.
4. Red light violations are a serious problem in most areas, not just in large urban areas.
5. Philadelphia reports that installation of red light cameras has dramatically reduced red light violations and crashes. International studies indicate that cameras generally reduce red light violations by 40 to 50 percent.

## ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT LEGISLATION

1. Requires the passage of an ordinance by the Municipality.
2. May only be used at intersections approved by PennDOT.
3. The owner of the vehicle shall be liable for the penalty imposed.
4. PENALTY - \$100 unless a lesser amount is set by ordinance.
5. No points are assessed for this violation nor is it part of the vehicle owner's driving record.
6. Violations cannot be used by insurance companies to increase insurance rates.
7. No frontal view of a vehicle in violation shall be recorded, only rear view.
8. Unless authorized by court order, the red light cameras shall not be used to conduct any surveillance other than for red light violations.
9. Recorded images are NOT public record and not subject to the Right to Know Law.
10. Recorded images shall be destroyed within 30 days of the final disposition of the event.
11. Defenses to Prosecution:
  - A. Owner provides an affidavit stating he/she was not the driver at the time of the violation.
  - B. Vehicle had been reported stolen at the time of the violation.
  - C. Proof that the person was not the owner of the vehicle at the time of the violation.
12. Signs Required - A sign advising motorists in advance of the intersection that Automated Red Light Enforcement is in place is required.
13. Police officers in the Municipality where the violation occurs shall evaluate the evidence and issue all violations.
14. Included with the violation notice shall be a copy of the recorded image, image of the vehicle registration plate, date and time of violation, and information of how to resolve the violation.
15. Violation notices shall be issued within 30 days of identifying the registered owner of the vehicle.
16. Violation notices shall be mailed by first class mail.
17. Person who receives a violation is entitled to a hearing to challenge the propriety of the violation.
18. The hearing is before a hearing officer appointed by the Municipality.
19. Duration of the signal's yellow light interval shall be in conformance with the signal permit issued by PennDOT.
20. Revenue from this program shall not exceed 5% of the Municipality's budget.

*Information provided by the College Heights Association in collaboration with State College Police Chief Thomas King.*