

Report shows crashes decline at intersections with red-light cameras

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Published: 11 September 2011 10:46 PM

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A study meant to end the debate over red-light cameras once and for all might be doing just the opposite.

Texas Transportation Institute researchers in August published the most comprehensive report to date on red-light cameras statewide, showing crashes down virtually across the board in cities ranging from Dallas to [Plano](#) to [Irving](#).

Yet the report, ordered up by state lawmakers in 2007, arrives amid a politically charged backlash that has spread to Texas and beyond.

Both Houston and Los Angeles have voted down the cameras in recent months, while state lawmakers have approved legislation to limit locations at which cameras could be installed.

Houston traffic attorney Paul Kubosh, a central figure behind that city's camera opposition, questions whether the cameras improve safety.

"Red-light cameras have never won an election," Kubosh said. "There's a reason why. If it was about safety, cameras and voting to make the streets less dangerous."

Researchers at the Texas Transportation Institute, part of Texas A&M University, came to a different conclusion.

Their reporting found that red-light-related crashes fell by some 27 percent when comparing the three years before cameras were installed. Total crashes at those intersections, including incidents not related to red-light runners, fell 13 percent.

Most, though not all, cities witnessed declines in red-light-related crashes in the two years after cameras were installed.

Dallas witnessed a 38 percent decline. Crashes at camera-equipped intersections fell 13 percent in [Frisco](#) and 64 percent in [Grand Prairie](#). In [Corpus Christi](#), one of the few cities to see an increase, crashes rose 10 percent.

The institute's study measured some 275 camera-equipped intersections across Texas on a variety of major market routes.

"When cameras are in place, they cause people to drive more cautiously," said Troy Walden, an assistant city manager and the study's author. "The studies have been pretty clear on that."

The report has done little to sway critics, many of whom cite concerns over privacy and profiteering. Broadly, the cameras have generated the same kind of anti-government opposition that has fueled the

In July, the Los Angeles City Council voted unanimously to end its red-light camera program following other cities nationwide rejected the cameras last November.

And Texas lawmakers in June attempted to pass a provision that would have banned the installation unless the state approved. It failed.

Houston has emerged as a key battleground. Voters downed the cameras in a November referendum leading to months of legal wrangling. Last month, Houston's City Council agreed to wind down its camera

"It's not about safety. It's about money, and the public is sick of it," said Kubosh, an outspoken critic of the

That same fierce opposition has not yet materialized in North Texas, where about a dozen North Texas communities in 2003, was the state's first community to install them.

Officials from several North Texas communities said they have encountered little opposition. Elizabeth Ramirez, city manager for Dallas, said crashes at some camera-equipped spots have fallen by as much as two-thirds

"They've performed better than we've anticipated," Ramirez said of the city's 66 cameras.

Plano City Manager Bruce Glasscock said he understood critics' concerns. In the end, he said, the city has more intersections than before.

"Opponents out there say it's a violation of my privacy," Glasscock said. "But the only way you get the cameras is through the law."

The Texas Transportation Institute studied the performance of red-light cameras statewide. Its report compared crash rates at intersections during a three-year period before and after red-light cameras were installed. Crash data

Arlington: down 4 percent

Cedar Hill: down 26 percent

Coppell: down 15 percent

Dallas: down 38 percent

Farmers Branch: down 13 percent

Grand Prairie: down 64 percent

Irving: down 46 percent

McKinney: down 68 percent

North Richland Hills: down 17 percent

Plano: down 32 percent

Richland Hills: no change

Rowlett: down 57 percent

SOURCE: Texas Transportation Institute