

Red Light Cameras Save Lives

By Richard Gerbounka,
Mayor, Linden

As Mayor of Linden, I support Red Light cameras. Being a former police officer, I've experienced firsthand how devastating it is to administer first aid to a critically injured passenger or driver involved in a serious and senseless motor vehicle accident. Worse yet, put yourself in the place of a police officer who has to tell a family that their loved one is dead due to someone running a red light.



Although I can't speak for the entire State of New Jersey, I can speak for Linden. Route 1 & 9 is a 6 lane highway that bisects our city. Four out of five of our safety camera intersections are on that U.S. highway. These intersections were not picked randomly. They were installed only after education, engineering and enforcement failed.

The State of New Jersey reviewed five years of accidents and chose intersections that showed an extremely high rate of serious accidents and fatalities. One unfortunate characteristic that may be unique to Linden is that all left turns on this State Highway are done by cutting across 3 lanes of on-coming traffic. There are no jug handle turn lanes on this roadway. These turns are regulated by a left hand turn arrow signal, which careless drivers violate just as easily as they violate the red traffic light. The results are right angle accidents. These accidents are certified as having a high risk of serious injury to vehicle occupants.

Using proven technology to reduce crashes and save lives should be an option for any municipality that wants to employ these resources.

Our Red Light safety camera program began in August 2010. Since this programs inception, the average red light safety camera violations decreased by 84 percent. Repeat violations are low in Linden also. Our recidivism rate is 12 percent. This means 88 percent of all violators who received a ticket and pay it do not get another violation. This low rate of repeat behavior indicates that the program is working to improve drivers' behavior.

I can speak from personal experience that my behavior has been changed for the better due to this program. Every morn-

ing when I go to my office, I pass a red light safety camera intersection. Before the cameras were installed, I have to confess I pushed the amber signal and sped up to "beat" the red light. Now when the amber light flashes I do what a good driver should—slow down and get ready to stop. What is even more interesting is I react the same way at intersections without red light safety cameras.

The Linden police accident investigation team are trained experts in traffic investigation. They are called out only for fatalities or extremely serious injuries sustained in a motor vehicle accident that may result in death. Before Linden had red light safety cameras, this unit averaged 15 "call outs" per year with a high one year of 24. Since this program has been instituted "call outs" have dramatically declined. In 2013 our accident rate investigation unit was called out six times. And they weren't needed even once on the Route 1 & 9 corridor.

In 2010 Linden experienced two fatalities on this State Highway. In 2011, 2012, and 2013 there were none. These examples prove that this program is working in Linden and why it is important that the State of New Jersey continue this program.

Our traffic laws have been put in place for the safety of the public. Red light cameras help police enforce traffic laws more consistently in more locations than the Linden Police Department or any police agency can do in their community.

To say "no" to red light safety cameras that act as deterrent to dangerous red light running is to say "yes" to drivers that break the law and drive recklessly. That to me, is just not acceptable.

Using proven technology to reduce crashes and save lives should be an option for any municipality that wants to employ these resources.

To naysayers who claim that this program is solely for making money, I suggest this as a good way to get even with us when you drive through Linden. All you have to do is obey our traffic laws—you will not get a ticket—and Linden will have safer streets.

It is that simple. I say "yes" to red light safety cameras. ♪