



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2015

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

Mike Claffey, CDOT

312.744.0707

Michael.Claffey@cityofchicago.org

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES REFORMS TO RED LIGHT CAMERA PROGRAM

*Ordinance would authorize independent comprehensive review of the program,
codifies reforms announced in March*

As part of a continued effort to reform the red light camera enforcement program, City Council approved a substitute ordinance, co-sponsored by Aldermen Anthony Beale, Tom Tunney and Walter Burnett, Jr., containing the reforms announced in March when the city shut down 50 red light enforcement cameras that have a very low number of or no serious crashes.

"Red light enforcement cameras reduce some of the most dangerous crashes and allow our police officers to focus on preventing and fighting crime – not writing traffic violations. I remain committed to making additional reforms to enhance public trust while maintaining this life saving program," said Mayor Emanuel. "Over the past few months, I heard your concerns about the program and announced reforms designed to seek public input and further improve safety, and we are building on those reforms today."

The ordinance introduced today contains additional reforms to the program to enhance community input and public safety, including:

- Requiring a public community meeting before red light cameras are removed, moved or added. These meetings will serve to explain how the program works, provide the traffic crash data that is used in deciding whether to remove or install a camera and to solicit public feedback. For example, four of the cameras that were recommended for removal in 2013 by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) were kept in place at the community's request because they wanted to keep the enhanced safety benefits that the red light cameras brought to their neighborhood.
- Accelerating the installation of pedestrian countdown timers at all remaining red light camera intersections without timers. Out of 149 intersections that have a red-light camera, only nine still do not have pedestrian timers installed yet, but the process will be complete by June 1.
- Instituting payment plan reforms that lower the down payment requirements and allow greater flexibility for motorists who are experiencing financial hardship

In addition, the ordinance would authorize the CDOT Commissioner to engage an outside academic team to conduct a comprehensive review of the red light camera program's policies, effectiveness

and efficiency. While the outside team has not yet been selected, CDOT plans to engage a team of local and national academics with expertise in traffic engineering, traffic safety and transportation policy. The team will be tasked with reviewing national best practices for automated enforcement across the country; applying the latest research in safety engineering and behavioral science; analyzing crash data and trends in violations; soliciting feedback from a broad array of stakeholders; and using these findings to recommend changes to policies and protocols to improve the effectiveness of the program. Examples of the program elements the academics will review include: the criteria for removal or placement of cameras, camera locations, the overall size of the camera system, and analysis of camera performance.

"I welcome reforms that further improve the red light camera program and am proud to have worked on them," said Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr. "The ordinance we've passed today contains meaningful reforms to the program, which helps to keep our residents safe."

"The red light camera program is an essential safety tool," said Alderman Tunney. "While the program is still a work in progress, the reforms we've passed today are another step in the right direction."

"As we reform the red light camera program, I've been a staunch advocate for the installation of pedestrian countdown clocks and the inclusion of community input in the process," said Alderman Anthony Beale. "I'm pleased to work with the Mayor and my colleagues to enact these reforms, and look forward to continuing that work and implementing continued reforms."

This review is in line with the types of reforms recommended in the Inspector General's report on the management of the program, and will build on the reforms already instituted by the City and commended by the IG. The administration and CDOT will keep the IG apprised of reforms suggested by the academic team.

"Traffic safety is a top priority for CDOT, and we believe that we can strengthen our efforts to save lives and reduce the number of crashes in Chicago by engaging the public, traffic safety experts, and continuing to make reforms to the program," said CDOT Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld.

The City's automated enforcement programs are only one part of the "toolbox" CDOT uses to enhance traffic safety for all Chicagoans, including:

- Pedestrian refuge islands in crosswalks
- Safety zone signage and street stencils
- High-visibility crosswalk markings
- Speed feedback signs
- Speed humps
- Traffic signal improvements
- Curb and ramp improvements
- Pedestrian countdown timers
- Leading pedestrian intervals
- In-street "Stop for Pedestrians" signs
- Bike and Pedestrian Safety Ambassadors
- Targeted enforcement events with Chicago Police

Since taking office, Mayor Emanuel has instituted a series of reforms to the red light camera enforcement program, including firing the original vendor, removing 82 cameras at 41 intersections in response to a review of crash data, working with the Inspector General to review the program, strengthening management oversight, using improved technology and adding more public transparency. All of the cameras in the program were installed prior to 2011, and Mayor Emanuel has never added a new camera to the program. In fact, the Mayor has reduced the red light camera program by 20 percent by removing cameras in locations that have a very low number of or no serious crashes.

###