

Morristown Police Department

ROGER OVERHOLT
Chief of Police



September 2, 2008

Automated light and speed enforcement information

The primary reason for managing traffic light and speed enforcement is safety. The Morristown Police Department strives to comprehensively manage traffic enforcement which involves engineering, enforcement, and education. Automated light and speed enforcement are important elements in this process and can be an effective countermeasure to preventing crashes. Advantages to automated enforcement have been documented by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and include:

- *High Rate of Detection*-Automated Enforcement Units (AEU) can detect and record multiple violations per minute. This can provide a strong deterrent effect by increasing drivers' perceived likelihood of being cited for a violation.
- *Physical Safety of AEU and Motorists*-AEU can operate at locations where roadside traffic stops are dangerous or infeasible and where traffic conditions are unsafe for police vehicles to enter the traffic stream and stop suspected violators.
- *Fairness of Operation*-Violations are recorded for all vehicles violating traffic light laws or exceeding the enforcement speed threshold.
- *Efficient Use of Resources*-AEU can enhance the influence of limited traffic enforcement staff and resources.

The NHTSA cites studies done in Charlotte, NC and Scottsdale, AZ concerning the effects of Automated Speed Enforcement. At 14 enforced sites in North Carolina, the proportion of vehicles traveling more than 10 mph above the speed limit decreased by 55 percent from 2000 to 2003. Traffic crashes were reduced an estimated 12 percent at enforced sites (Cunningham, Hummer & Moon, 2005). Six fixed-cameras operating in Scottsdale, AZ within a 6.5 mile stretch caused a mean speed reduction of 9 mph and resulted in a 50 percent reduction in crashes. When enforcement was suspended at the end

of the test period, the rate of detected speeding violations increased by 836 percent (Washington, Shin, & Van Shalkwyk, 2007).

According to the NHTSA, courts have consistently rejected Constitutional challenges resulting from procedural and substantive issues that critics of automated enforcement have raised by ruling that automated enforcement is consistent with US and state constitutions. In fact, the Office of the Attorney General of the State of Tennessee issued an opinion in 2001.

Issue: The Attorney General's Office was tasked with determining whether, pursuant to inherent police power, a city had authority to enact ordinances allowing photo-enforcement.

The Attorney General's opinion concluded that the use of photo-enforcement did not conflict with any State statute. In a footnote, the opinion noted photo-enforcement has "generally been viewed as a permissible exercise of State and local government police power which is not violative of Federal or State constitutional provisions". {Opinion No. 01-004, 2001 Tenn. AG LEXIS 6 (2001)} (Available at <http://tn.gov/attorneygeneral/op/2001/OP/OP4.pdf>)

Local statistics bear much the same result. In Kingsport, TN six intersections have had automated red light enforcement since March 2006. The resulting data show that, while rear end collisions increased by 17 percent, total crashes have been reduced 8 percent and angle crashes (T-bone crashes) have been reduced 66 percent.

The Knoxville Police Department installed a full digital and video enforcement program in November 2005. Their 2007 analysis of the program revealed that angle crashes were reduced by 45 percent.

In Morristown, five intersections have identified as having high traffic volume and have been slated for AEU. These intersections are all located on major routes, which based upon monthly traffic crash analyses, have high incidents of traffic crashes. AEU will decrease risk to officers and increase compliance with traffic laws. AEU will also reduce the need for officers to monitor these intersections and will allow for other policing activities.

Current traffic counts along these routes on an average day in 2008 are as follows:

East Morris Blvd. @ Haun Drive	26,099
US 25E @ College Square Mall (25E approach only)	19,715
East Morris Blvd. @ Cumberland Ave.	45,254
West Morris Blvd. @ West AJ Hwy.	61,531
West AJ Hwy. @ Hwy 160	42,213