

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee Members
FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager
DATE: May 7, 2025
TITLE: DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL REPEAL OF THE CITY'S RED-LIGHT CAMERA ORDINANCE.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends the Mayor and Commission to consider continuing the Red-Light Camera Program.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the February 3, 2025 City Commission Meeting, at the request of Commissioner Alex Fernandez, the Mayor and City Commission approved a dual referral (C4 E) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee ("PSNQLC") and the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee ("FERC") to discuss the potential repeal of the City's Red-Light Camera Ordinance.

ANALYSIS

The Red-Light Camera (RLC) program has demonstrated its efficacy as a significant enforcement tool, contributing substantially to traffic safety and public welfare. Revenues derived from program violations directly benefit critical state-level initiatives, notably the Health Emergency Medical Services Trust Fund (\$10.00 per violation) and the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund (\$3.00 per violation) among others which during the 2024 reporting period received \$49,300.00 and \$14,790.00 respectively.

The Department currently allocates one police officer and one RLC examiner to process Notice of Violations and Uniform Traffic Citations. In addition, the Office of the City Clerk allocates one Code Violation Clerk. Discontinuing the RLC program would necessitate reallocating the costs of these three (3) positions from the RLC Fund to the General Fund to cover the cost of personnel, which for Fiscal Year (FY 2025) is approximately \$457,000 including applicable benefits based on the adopted budget, potentially impacting funding availability for other essential City services.

Additionally, the City Attorney's Office is currently evaluating contractual terms to determine possible financial implications associated with premature contract termination.

Should the City repeal the Red-Light Camera program, significant public safety implications could arise, including:

1. **Increase in Red-Light Violations** – Studies have shown that red light cameras serve as effective deterrents against red-light running violations. Without these devices, some drivers may feel emboldened to take more risks, leading to increased violations.
2. **Rise in Intersection Crashes** – Red-light running substantially contribute to severe T-bone (side-impact) collisions. Removing automated enforcement could increase the occurrence of such crashes, subsequently increasing injury and fatality rates.

3. **Potential Decrease in Rear-End Collisions** – Some critics argue that red light cameras increase rear-end collisions because drivers may brake suddenly to avoid a ticket. However, these crashes are generally less severe than T-bone collisions.
4. **Loss of Traffic Law Enforcement** – Without cameras, law enforcement would have to rely solely on in-person policing to catch violators. This may lead to inconsistent and reduced enforcement coverage, thereby diminishing overall traffic safety.
5. **Public Perception of Safety** – The presence of cameras gives drivers and pedestrians a sense of security. Removing these devices could lead to concerns about reckless driving at intersections.
6. **Potential Increase in Hit-and-Run Incidents** – Studies suggest that automated enforcement reduces hit-and-run incidents at intersections. If cameras are removed, these incidents may rise.
7. **Financial Impact** – The termination of the RLD program could lead to funding gaps unless alternative funding mechanisms are identified. Furthermore, repealing the program may include penalties for early termination, as determined by ongoing review.

While red-light cameras have its critics, evidence strongly supports its effectiveness in solving numerous hit and run crash and traffic homicide investigations among others as well as reducing severe traffic accidents. If repealed, the City of Miami Beach would need to pursue alternative enforcement strategies to uphold public safety standards.

Lastly, as the City is actively pursuing legislation advocating speed and block-the-box camera enforcement, repealing the RLC program would prove counterproductive and undermine the City's broader traffic safety objectives.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

During the last reporting cycle, the City received \$369,750 from the Red-Light Camera program. City funds received are directly allocated to cover the costs of running the program itself. Additionally, there are a total of three (3) positions funded from the Red-Light Camera Fund with two positions housed in the Police Department and the third in the Office of the City Clerk. As a result, if the positions are to be funded while the program is repealed, reallocating the related costs into the General Fund will have a negative fiscal impact.

Further financial impacts, including penalties associated with early contract termination, are yet to be determined.

CONCLUSION

The Administration strongly supports the Red-Light Camera program and believes the City should make every effort to continue the program. This position is supported by a comprehensive 2018 study by Florida International University's Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering presented to the City Manager's Office, affirming significant reductions in intersection crashes attributed to red-light camera enforcement. Maintaining this program also aligns with the City's broader goal aimed at enhancing overall traffic safety and community wellbeing.

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Police/Finance

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Alex Fernandez

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Repeal of Red-Light Camera Ordinance