



Joseph M. Ferguson  
Inspector General

## OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL *City of Chicago*

740 N. Sedgwick Street, Suite 200  
Chicago, Illinois 60654  
Telephone: (773) 478-7799  
Fax: (773) 478-3949

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**CONTACT:** (773) 478-0534  
Rachel Leven

### **OIG Releases Review of the City's Red Light Camera Program Management**

At the request of the Mayor and the City Council, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) has completed a review of the City of Chicago Red-Light Camera (RLC) program. The primary objectives of the review were to,

- develop an understanding of and evaluate historical management of the RLC program,
- examine whether historical and current vendors and camera systems operate in accordance with applicable contract provisions, and
- examine and make recommendations respecting current CDOT and vendor policies, procedures, and standards for timely identification and redressment of violation anomalies and other problems in the future.

Our review found that the City's management of the RLC program with its former vendor, Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc., was fundamentally deficient. Specifically, CDOT failed to request and review reports and data from Redflex that would likely have revealed enforcement anomalies as they occurred. CDOT also failed to fully exercise and enforce the terms of the City's contract with Redflex, which required Redflex to evaluate data and identify any anomalies in RLC system activity.

CDOT analyzed enforcement anomalies identified by the *Chicago Tribune* at 12 intersections. OIG found that CDOT's conclusions for three of the intersections were sufficiently consistent with source documentation and available records. The absence of complete City and vendor historical program records and data make a conclusive determination for other historical anomalies very difficult and in many instances likely impossible. OIG notes in its report that it did not work with or review the work of Grant Thornton LLP or participate in the City's recent review of citations.

OIG's report describes CDOT's findings at the three intersections:

- **At the intersection of 119th and Halsted**, the trigger speed for approaching vehicles dropped from 15 mph to as low as 5 mph for a period of approximately 7 weeks in 2011. This drop resulted in 1,618 additional citations that would not have been issued had the trigger speed remained at 15 mph.

- **At the Kimball-Lincoln-McCormick intersection**, the detector in the right turn lane was largely non-functional for several years. Using the RLC enforcement data for the intersection under the new vendor as a baseline, the “spike” periods identified by the *Tribune* may reasonably be understood as the brief periods—usually only a few days or a week—when the detector in the right lane was working properly. OIG estimates that the broken system may have failed to identify as many as 45,444 violations over a four-and-a-half year period.
- **At the Halsted-Fullerton-Lincoln intersection**, one of the traffic signal poles was damaged late on August 1 or early on August 2, 2012, and, as a result, the traffic signals mounted on that pole were reported as not being visible to drivers the next day. The end of the two-day enforcement anomaly appears to coincide with CDOT’s August 3rd repair of the damaged pole.

OIG concludes that unannounced changes to RLC enforcement parameters, such as occurred at 119<sup>th</sup> and Halsted, whether intentional or not, foster an appearance of unfairness in the program. Moreover, under-enforcement of violations, whether known or unknown, impairs achievement of the program’s public safety objectives. The result is an undermining of public confidence in the reliability and motives of the RLC program which is needless and likely avoidable through better contract and program management. Such management should include, among other things, routine monitoring and analysis of violation data and standardizing and documenting procedures for managing the RLC vendor.

Finally, OIG reviewed the City’s policies and procedures related to yellow light timing to determine if signal timing could have been a contributing factor in the enforcement anomalies. Based on interviews of CDOT staff and a review of CDOT maintenance records, OIG concluded that the change in yellow light time did not contribute to the anomalies in citation data. However, OIG recommended that CDOT restore a prior hard 3.0 second yellow light threshold for violations in order to assure clarity and consistency in the application of the publicly stated program parameters. In its response, CDOT states that it is returning to previous rules.

“In this review as well as OIG’s previous audit of red-light camera placement, we found that the City has historically been seriously deficient in meeting its duty to actively manage this public safety program, one which directly affects the entire City,” said Inspector General Joseph Ferguson. “Outsourcing to the private sector need not and should not be an occasion for benign neglect to actively manage important government functions such as the RLC program. It remains the duty of public officials to ensure that programs serve their mission and purpose, and vendors abide by their contract terms. OIG is encouraged by CDOT’s response to our latest conclusions, which we believe signals an awareness of and meaningful commitment to its program and contract management responsibilities.”

The report and CDOT’s response are available on OIG’s website: <https://bit.ly/redlightcamsreview>

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