



Ankin Law Office LLC

Protecting the Rights of Injured Workers

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Does outsourcing maintenance of red light camera systems sacrifice safety?

November 18th, 2011 by Admin - BN



In recent years, many cities have installed red light cameras at intersections. These cameras take photos of drivers running red lights and then tickets are issued based upon the photos. Red light cameras are not particularly popular with motorists and, based upon the results of numerous studies, some have questioned the safety of these systems.

We've addressed this issue before. In one post, we discussed the [debate over red light cameras](#) and, as we explained in another [post](#), the City of Los Angeles has considered abandoning the use of red light cameras for safety reasons.

Now, new issues are being raised regarding the wisdom of outsourcing of red light camera systems. The concern is that when municipalities outsource the management of the traffic camera systems, safety concerns go out the window. This is because some contracts with outside vendors provide for a revenue sharing system based on per ticket violations, and thus the argument is made that profits take precedence over safety concerns and accuracy in issuing tickets.

The basis for this concern is explained more fully in this [Boston.com article](#):

As many as 700 communities, with a combined total of more than 60 million people, outsource their street and highway camera systems, the report found.

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While vendors capture violations, police or other local officials approve which violations are issued tickets. Some contracts penalize cities if they don't approve enough tickets, effectively setting a ticket quota, the report said. That can undermine the authority of local officials to decide when to issue tickets, it said.

"Automated traffic ticketing tends to be governed by contracts that focus more on profits than safety," said Phineas Baxandall, the report's co-author.

This latest development adds to the debate about red light cameras and whether they provide any benefit aside from convenience for municipalities and the generation of revenues. And, as discussed in prior blog posts, there are legitimate concerns regarding the efficacy and safety of red light cameras, given that there is conflicting data as to whether these cameras actually save lives or negatively affect motorist's driving habits.

Unfortunately, despite this mounting evidence, municipalities continue to install these problematic systems, thus placing profits ahead of safety. Perhaps one day, after even more studies have been conducted regarding this issue, this troubling trend will reverse and red light traffic cameras will no longer be the norm.

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