



# Metro

August 11, 2011

**TO:** BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**THROUGH:** ARTHUR T. LEAHY   
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**FROM:** PAUL TAYLOR   
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**SUBJECT:** METRO'S PHOTO ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

## ISSUE

In light of the recent action taken by the City of Los Angeles to discontinue its Red Light Photo Enforcement (RLPE) program in the City, and the ensuing media articles surrounding that action, the purpose of this memo is to communicate to the Board staff's plan with regard to the photo enforcement program Metro operates on Blue, Gold and Orange lines.

## DISCUSSION

RLPE is a critical component of Metro's safety measures to mitigate collisions at intersections. Originally, it was implemented to mitigate train versus vehicle accidents at both gated and non-gated crossings. Following the opening of the Orange Line and after experiencing a number of accidents, the program was expanded to deter unsafe behavior on that line. These types of accidents can result in catastrophic consequences, including significant injuries to vehicle operators, persons and employees on a bus or train and significant damage to Metro's assets. The RLPE program has been extremely successful in reducing the number of accidents on both rail and bus lines. For example, on the Blue Line, the number of citations issued has decreased by 61% when the 2010 monthly average number of citations is compared with the 2004 monthly average. On the Orange Line, a similar comparison resulted in a decrease of 38% when the average number of monthly citations is compared between 2007 and 2010.

The sole purpose for implementing a RLPE program at Metro was to enhance safety by achieving a reduction in collisions. The reduction in the number of citations issued over the years has clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of Metro's RLPE program. Lower citation numbers translates to fewer actual red light violations, and that in turn translates to lower accident numbers.

Metro's RLPE citations are issued for moving violations, and therefore are currently not subject to resolution in our transit court. Historically, seventy two percent (72%) of the citations that were issued under Metro's RLPE program were paid. The primary reason citations have been dismissed by the Courts is due to a loophole in the current law that does not require the registered owner of a vehicle to identify the driver in the violation photograph. The City's decision to terminate their RLPE program appears to have been the result of an inability to enforce payment of the fines and we are concerned that such

a decision will have an impact on Metro's RLPE program. Staff is working collaboratively with LASD, County Counsel, and Government Relations staff to develop new legislative language which will provide the Courts the ability to enforce payment of fines for citations issued under Metro's RLPE program. One proposal to close the loophole is to issue citations to the violating vehicle rather than the registered owner; much like the way toll lane violations are handled. Staff is concerned that should the general public believe they can simply ignore the red light cameras and tickets there could be an increase in the numbers of accidents at both gated and non-gated crossings. Therefore, language is being developed for legislative consideration during the current term.

As far as Metro's current RLPE program, staff is taking the actions described below.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will continue the existing RLPE program for the near term pending an evaluation of the impact of the City's decision on Metro's RLPE program and plans to introduce legislation in Sacramento as mentioned above. Staff proposes to evaluate these impacts over the next 90 days by reviewing the following:

- 1- Staff will track the number of citations paid, the number of citations ignored, and the number of citations contested.
- 2- Of the number of citations that were contested, staff will document how many of those were either upheld or dismissed by the Superior Courts on a monthly basis.
- 3- Staff will monitor the rate of violations and accidents at the enforced intersections to determine if there has been an increase in unsafe behavior by motorists.

At the end of the 90-day evaluation period, staff will present its findings and make a recommendation to the Board on whether to continue or abandon Metro's RLPE program. Staff will also provide the latest update on the pending legislation regarding the enforcement of citations.