



Auckland Matters

The AA's Auckland infrastructure issues newsletter

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GUIDING LIFE'S JOURNEYS FOR OVER 110 YEARS.

New Zealand Automobile Association



ISSUE 5: RED LIGHT CAMERAS

From the policy team



This edition of Auckland Matters brings a road safety perspective to the transport infrastructure discussion, focusing on red light running and what can be done to address it.

For many years now, the AA has been at the forefront of calls to step up the deployment of red light cameras, particularly in Auckland where the need is greatest.

Each year, hundreds are injured as a result of red light running and, on average, two lives are lost. While that's far fewer casualties than the number caused by speed- and alcohol-related crashes, it's still too many.

Used correctly, red light cameras are a highly affordable, highly effective way to bring these numbers down.

This is an issue that our Members, and the wider public, feel very strongly about. It's also an issue that central government has dragged the chain on, despite strong statements of commitment in the past.

We're pleased to see that red light cameras are now coming back onto the agenda for the Transport Agency and Auckland Transport. Our message is simple: take action, and the public will be right behind you.

Barney Irvine,
Principal Advisor- Infrastructure

Introduction: An easy win for road safety

When it comes to red light running, motorists aren't just willing to accept greater enforcement – they're crying out for it. Red light cameras provide an opportunity to save lives, reduce costs, and build public support for the broader road safety programme, and that's an opportunity that shouldn't be passed up.

The latest survey of Auckland AA Members confirms 90% support for increasing the roll-out of red light cameras. Even those that admit to having run red lights themselves (around a quarter) are strongly in favour of more enforcement.

What's needed is a comprehensive strategy to guide all areas of automated enforcement over the coming years, backed up by clear and transparent communication

of the objectives and outcomes.

Red light cameras won't be the right solution at all dangerous intersections, and simply having more isn't always the answer.

They need to be considered alongside other treatments (some bigger, some smaller) based on what will best reduce risk. After all, the goal is – and must always be – to improve safety, not issue tickets.

The case for red light cameras

+ 300+

The number of injuries each year caused by red light running



2

The number of deaths each year as a result of red light running



\$43.mn

The average annual social cost of red light running crashes



69%

The average reduction in red light running crashes at trial sites in Auckland

BCR 8.2

The benefit cost ratio of an Auckland red light camera trial (\$8.20 of safety benefits for every \$1.00 invested)

Policy context

In 2013, the Government committed to a genuine national programme for red light cameras, with officials indicating that between 26 and 30 new-technology cameras could be needed at high-risk intersections throughout New Zealand (12 to 14 of those in Auckland).

But, since then, only three new cameras have been introduced, two in Auckland and one in Wellington. That brings the national total to eight (seven in Auckland,

one in Wellington).

Recently, however, the Transport Agency has begun to revisit red light cameras as part of a wider review of high-risk intersections, while Auckland Transport is looking seriously at what can be done locally to address red light running.

The AA is calling for at least 10 new cameras to be installed in Auckland, and a further 10 in other main centres around New Zealand.

What our Auckland Members are telling us

In late 2015, we ran an on-line survey of Auckland AA Members to better understand their views on red light running and the use of red light cameras as a deterrent. The response rate was around twice that of most AA Member surveys, underlining the depth of sentiment around this issue.

Here's what they told us:

1 Red light running is rife

Auckland AA Members perceive red light running to be extremely common. Over 80% report witnessing red light running once a week or more, while 20% report seeing it every time they travel. Red light running, they believe, has become very much a part of Auckland's driving culture.

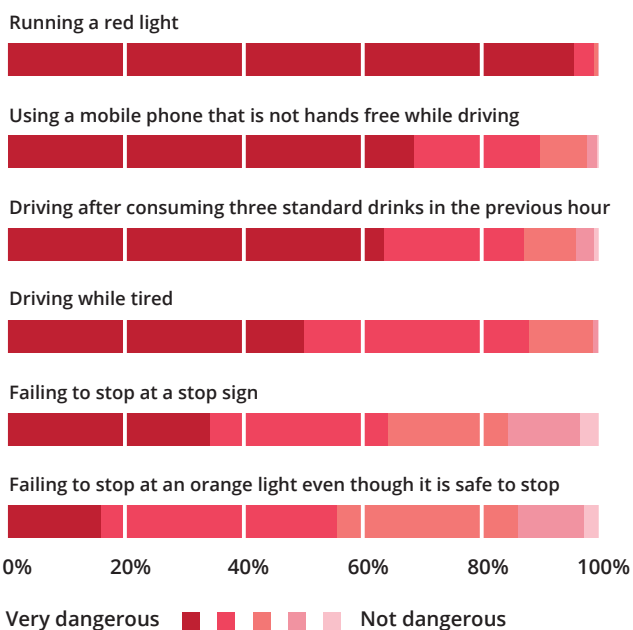
"In Auckland in particular, red light running is an epidemic!"
- AA Member

2 Safety a key concern

Often basing their views on their personal experiences as victims (or near-victims), Auckland AA Members deeply disapprove of red light running, mainly for the risks it poses to other road users.

In their view, red light running is significantly more dangerous than a range of other unsafe driving behaviours, including talking on a mobile phone while behind the wheel and driving after having three drinks in the previous hour.

Rate the following in terms of how dangerous you consider them to be



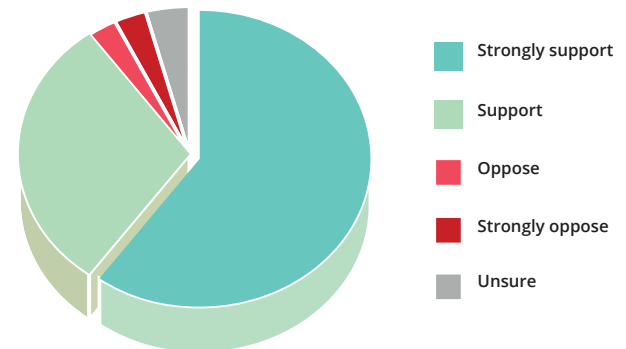
3 Congestion impacts recognised

Respondents also highlighted the impacts on traffic flow of red light running, mainly as a result of cars being forced to delay taking off at green lights to check for potential red light runners.

4 Near-universal support for red light cameras

Consequently, support for the introduction of more red light cameras is nearly universal: 90% are in favour, while only 6% are opposed.

How do you feel about the introduction of more red light cameras?



"If red light cameras help to stop drivers going through a red light and save lives, the introduction of additional red light cameras must be a good thing."

- AA Member

The small minority who are opposed tend to dismiss red light cameras as either a revenue generating tool or a weak deterrent, or believe that other interventions such as driver education should be used in the first instance.

5 AA Members aren't perfect

Despite their disapproval of red light running, Auckland AA Members don't pretend they haven't done it. A quarter of survey respondents admit to having run a red light

themselves. Of those, 5% said they ran a red light in the last week, 37% during the last 12 months, while 58% indicated their last red light running transgression was more than a year ago.

Interestingly, support for an increased roll-out of red light cameras among transgressors is only slightly lower (83%) than among the wider group.

6 Road design also an issue

While lapses in judgement and impatience appear to be the main causes of red light running among Auckland AA Members, many indicate that poor road design – intersection layout and light phasing in particular – is also to blame.

Many therefore believe that intersection design needs to be looked at alongside the deployment of red light cameras, and there were a number of calls for motorists to be allowed to drive through red lights in “safe” circumstances (e.g., at left turns, or when waiting at an intersection in the middle of the night).

“I ran a red light by accident just the other day. I was at an unfamiliar intersection and I went through a green light and then there was another intersection very close to the first one and I simply didn't see the traffic lights”

- AA Member

7 Concerns about cyclists

While respondents are in no doubt that red light running is fundamentally a car issue, cyclists are clearly identified as the second most-frequent transgressors – ahead of trucks, buses and motorcycles.

Many raised concerns that red light cameras would not reduce rule-breaking by cyclists, and they saw this as unsafe and unfair.

A number of respondents who both drive and cycle pointed out that one reason cyclists run red lights is that they sometimes have trouble triggering the sensor to activate the lights to change, which is a source of frustration.

“I see car drivers going through red lights but not in anywhere near the same numbers as I see cyclists... I think motorists who go through red lights are total idiots but I think it is unfair to persecute only one group. Your red light cameras will not reduce the risk of me being mowed down by a cyclist.”

- AA Member

8 Signposting favoured

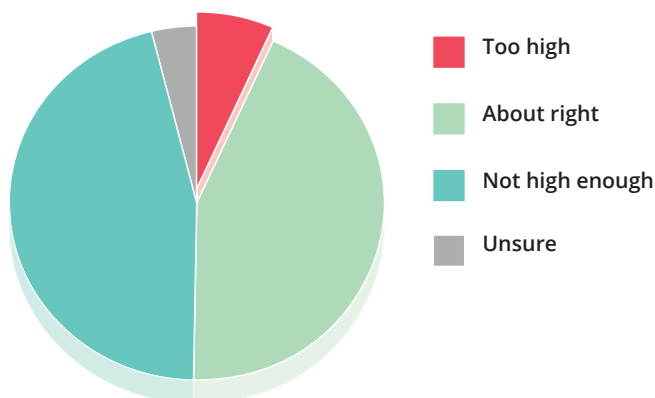
AA Members would prefer red light cameras to be signposted, though by a small margin – 47% say they should be signposted and 43% say they shouldn't.

Those in support argue that if the objective is to improve safety rather than generate revenue, motorists should be made aware of the cameras' presence; many of those against appear to believe that not signposting will lead to motorists being more cautious at all intersections.

9 Level of fines questioned

The gap is also narrow when it comes to increasing fines for red light running versus keeping them at the current level. Overall, 46% believe the fine is not high enough, while 44% consider it to be about right, and 7% believe it is too high.

How do you feel about the \$150 fine for running a red light?



Interestingly, this is an area where there is a clear difference in opinion based on age – older respondents are more likely to think the fine should be higher, while younger respondents more often consider it to be about right.

10 Focus on CBD, arterials and children

When asked where red light cameras should be located, respondents commonly identified intersections in the city centre as well as those on busy arterial roads (e.g., Mt Albert Rd, Great North Rd and St Lukes Rd).

They also want to know that sites selected have a proven safety risk, and that intersections near schools and kindergartens are given the highest priority.

Recommendations

1 Leverage public support

Action on red light running will build public trust and goodwill towards the Government's road safety programme, and stand officials in good stead when it comes to tackling the more contentious road safety issues (like speed).

2 Automated enforcement strategy

The approach to red light cameras so far has been piecemeal and disjointed. What has been missing – and what is required now – is a comprehensive automated enforcement strategy that:

- Sets out a plan for red light camera deployment over the short-medium term
- Coordinates the red light camera roll-out with plans for speed cameras and any other proposed automated enforcement tools
- Identifies opportunities to gain efficiencies – e.g., by deploying dual-purpose red light/speed cameras at high-risk intersections

The strategy must be supported by additional funding through to the delivery stage.

3 Be led by safety

The strategy should also set out a clear methodology to guide decisions about the location and number of red light cameras, based squarely on safety risk. In addition, site performance should be regularly reviewed – any site that failed to reduce accidents or that issued an inordinate number of tickets would constitute a road safety failure, and a different approach would be required.

4 Clarity and transparency

Clarity and transparency around the programme will help officials connect with the public and dampen down any

accusations of revenue gathering.

That means engaging with stakeholders on the methodology and widely sharing all performance data (as officials have done with the speed camera programme).

In our view, it also means that all intersections where red light cameras are deployed should be signposted. As with speed cameras, the AA's position is that safety outcomes and behavioural change are better achieved by fair warning, rather than punishment after the unsafe act has been committed.

5 Not just cameras

Red light cameras are not the only way to reduce red light running – nor will they be appropriate at all intersections. In some cases, large-scale engineering solutions (such as removal of roadside distractions and re-designing intersection layout) will ultimately be required.

In others, smaller interventions could also be considered, such as:

- Incorporating advance queue detectors into the traffic light system, to determine how many cars are waiting at or approaching an intersection (particularly those that are turning)
- Greater investment in monitoring and reviewing traffic signal performance (particularly off peak), to identify opportunities to make the system more responsive and efficient
- Flashing orange traffic lights during low-use periods (e.g., overnight), signalling that motorists can apply the 'Give Way' rules and proceed through the intersection
- Improving cyclist detection by installing sensors in cycle stop-boxes

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