

# **CITY OF ALBANY**



## **PHOTO RED LIGHT REPORT TO LEGISLATURE Process and Outcome Evaluation**

**FEBRUARY 2025**



# PHOTO RED LIGHT REPORT TO LEGISLATURE Process and Outcome Evaluation

## *Executive Summary*

- **Milestones**
  - February/March 2005 – Begin awareness campaign with surveys/community input – 62% support or strongly support cameras
  - February 2007 – Video surveys at potential intersections
  - September 1, 2007 – Warning letters
  - December 20, 2007 – Began issuing red light citations
  - July 11, 2022 – Inductions loops replaced by radar
  - April 8, 2024 – Signed contract to include speed and additional approaches
  - November 15, 2024 – Speed enforcement warning letters for 30 days
  - December 16, 2024 – Began issue speed citations
- **Number of Camera Systems** – Two approaches at Queen Avenue/Geary Street
- **Facts – Citations at Queen Avenue/Geary Street**
  - 2003-2007 average of 10 red light citations per year
  - 2008 – 1119 citations issued (over 8500% increase from high of 13 in 2004)
  - 2013-2024 – 10-year average of 567 citations issued per year.
- **Facts – Traffic Collisions at Queen Avenue/Geary Street**
  - No significant impact: 0, 1, 2, or 3 collisions each year for disregarding Red-Amber-Green from 2003 to 2023.
- **Conclusion** – Red light cameras appear to be maintaining safety for the City of Albany at the enforced intersection.
- **Vendor** – Verra Mobility
- **Project Manager** – Captain Buck Pearce
- **Reports** – A copy of the full report can be obtained by contacting the Project Manager at 541-917-3209 or by email at buck.pearce@albanyoregon.gov

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to comply with ORS 810.434 and provide the Oregon State Legislature with a process and outcome evaluation for the City of Albany Photo Red Light Program.

## **BACKGROUND**

On February 26, 2007, the City of Albany entered into an agreement with Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. (now Verra Mobility) for Red Light Photo Enforcement Services. Based on traffic accidents, citations and community input, the first intersection selected was Queen Avenue and Geary Street. This intersection ranked in the top ten intersections that the citizens of Albany identified as a traffic safety concern. Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. coordinated a video survey to validate safety concerns and the location's suitability for installing red light cameras. The video survey showed that there were 96 red light violations in a 12-hour span on February 26, 2007.

The red light cameras at Queen Avenue and Geary Street have been operational for 185 months. The Albany Police Department began authorizing warning letters on September 1, 2007. The warning period ended on December 19, 2007, and the Albany Police Department began authorizing citations on December 20, 2007. On July 11, 2022, Redflex changed its detection method from induction loops to radar while the City of Albany modified the intersection. On December 16, 2024, the City of Albany began enforcing speed at the location. Construction is currently underway for red light and speed enforcement at a second location: North Albany Road and West Thornton Lake Drive.

## **THE EFFECT OF THE USE OF CAMERAS ON TRAFFIC SAFETY**

Two sets of data assist in measuring red light camera effectiveness: citation data and crash data. Citation data measures the degree of driver behavior modification. Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) crash data for a "Driver who Disregarded a Traffic Signal" specifically measures crashes as a result of running red lights.

Currently, citation data points to maintaining the status quo for safety at this intersection. Figure 1 shows historical citation data for calendar years 2003 through 2024. From 2003 to 2007, the average number of citations issued for running a red light each year was 10, with a high of 13 citations in 2004 and a low of seven citations in 2006. In 2008, the Albany Police Department issued 1119 citations for running red lights using the red light cameras at this intersection; over an 8500 percent increase from 2004, the year with the highest citations for the previous five years. This dramatic increase gives a clear picture of the true red light running problem that existed at the intersection. From 2013 to 2016, citations appeared to plateau. However, in 2017 there was an anomaly when citations doubled from 518 to 1038 from the previous year. This spike in citations corresponds to the same time that Redflex increased the sensitivity of the induction loops at the intersection in preparation for the possibility of adding a speed enforcement capability. The result of the sensitivity increase was a quadrupling in detections (1408 in 2016 to 6044 in 2017) but also a tenfold increase in officer rejections for "Safe Turn on Red" (201 in 2016 to 2233 in 2017). In 2018, the number of citations issued was down to 352 as the Police Department worked with Redflex to adjust detection algorithms. Last year, there were only 789 citations issued.

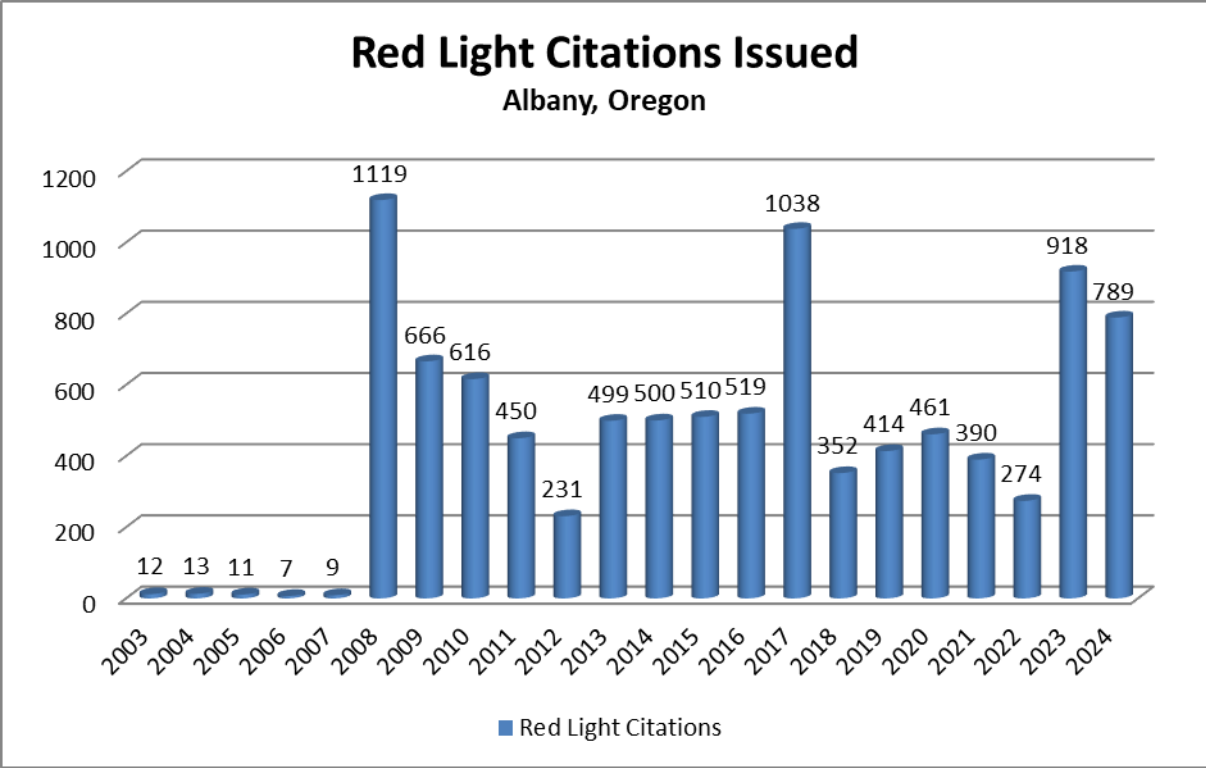


Figure 1. Red light citations issued from 2003 through 2024.

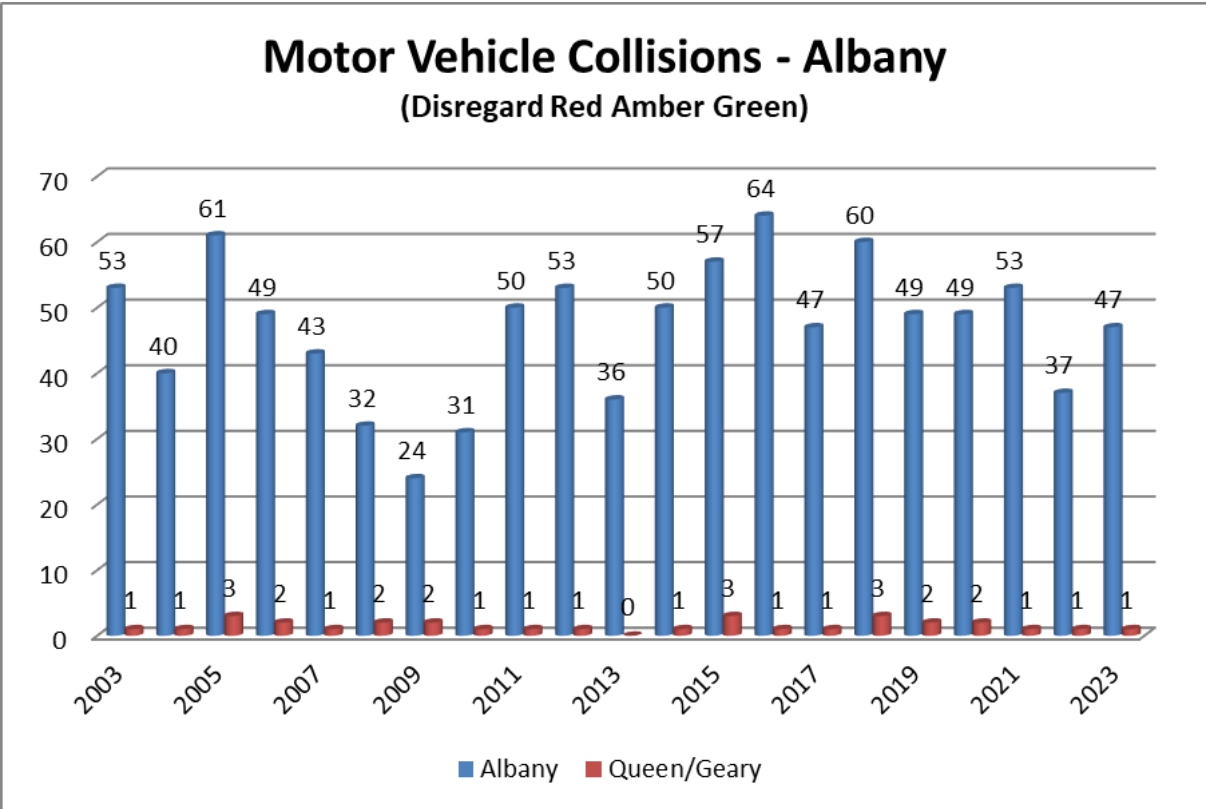


Figure 2. ODOT crash data for disregarding a traffic signal.

Currently ODOT crash data for disregarding a traffic signal is available through 2023 and is shown in Figure 2. Crash data for this intersection has remained constant at zero, one, two, or three crashes each year since 2003. The safety impact of the program and Queen Avenue and Geary Street appears to be neutral in terms of vehicle collisions. The citywide impact of having a single intersection enforced also appears to be neutral. This will be monitored to see whether or not there is an impact of adding a second intersection.

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN AND DEGREE OF PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THE USE OF CAMERAS**

As part of a media campaign, the City of Albany provided public service announcements for local television and radio. The *Albany Democrat-Herald* newspaper also published a number of articles leading up to and during implementation. In February 2005 and March 2005, the City of Albany Red Light Photo Enforcement Workgroup sent out a survey to the citizens of Albany. The results found that 62 percent of Albany residents “support” or “strongly support” the implementation of a red light enforcement program. Citizens were also presented with the opportunity to identify the most dangerous intersections and express opinions in favor of or against the program. No additional surveys have been conducted since 2005.

In anticipation of adding speed enforcement and a second enforced intersection, the Albany Police Department reached out to citizens to assist with developing a list of frequently asked questions. These then became part of the public information campaign along with video of flagrant violations and information about warning periods. The primary method of disseminating the information was to use social media in both English and Spanish.

### **PROCESS OF ADMINISTRATION OF THE USE OF CAMERAS**

Red light citations are issued after a multistep process agreed upon by the Albany Municipal Court, the Albany Police Department, and Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. and in compliance with applicable Oregon Revised Statutes.

The red light camera system is connected to the traffic signal. The camera is activated only after the traffic signal turns red. Sensors in the street detect violations, causing the cameras to take pictures and save a 12 second video clip. This information is then encrypted to ensure that it is not tampered with. The vendor downloads violation data on a daily basis. At this point, the vendor takes up to five business days to determine if the violation data meets strict quality control standards. These standards include checking for a clear image of the driver’s face, a clear image of the license plate, a clear image of the red light before the vehicle passes the stop line and after the vehicle passes the stop line, and a gender match with the registered owner of the vehicle. Attached are Customer Management Reports from 2019 and 2020 showing violations and the reason violations were rejected.

The vendor presents the violations that have passed the quality control standards to the Albany Police Department for officer authorization. Officers use a secure website to review violation images and a 12 second video of the violation. Officers will also compare violation data to

Department of Motor Vehicle data. If the officer determines that a violation has occurred, the officer will authorize a citation. If not, the officer will reject the violation. This takes place within three business days of receiving the violation from the vendor.

The vendor will mail the citation on or before the tenth business day. Included in the mailing is the citation, a Certificate of Innocence or Affidavit of Non-Liability in the case of a business, and information explaining how the defendant can view the violation images and video online and a respond-by date.

A Certificate of Innocence is a document that will be included in the mailing of the citation, which will allow the registered owner to fill out stating that he/she was not the driver of the vehicle at the time of the violation. The registered owner will mail the completed Certificate of Innocence to the Albany Municipal Court who will dismiss the original citation. The Court will then forward the Certificate of Innocence to the Albany Police Department, who will compare the violation images to the registered owner's driver's license photograph to determine if a match exists. If the police determine that the registered owner was the driver, they will forward the Certificate of Innocence to the vendor to reissue the citation within ten (10) days of receipt of the form. The citation will contain a new citation number, date of issue and respond-by date. If the police determine that the registered owner was not the driver, no further action will be taken, since the citation was already dismissed by the court. The registered owner is not required to identify the person operating the vehicle.

When a citation is issued in the name of a "business" an Affidavit of Non-Liability is included with the citation. This form will give the registered owner the opportunity to identify who was operating the vehicle at the time of the violation. The Albany Municipal Court will receive the Affidavit of Non-Liability, dismiss the original citation against the registered owner and forward the Affidavit to the Police Department. The police will forward the Affidavit to the vendor together with a cover memorandum directing that the citation be reissued to the named driver. The vendor will update the record to reflect the name and address of the driver as shown on the Affidavit of Non-Liability and process the new citation.

Defendants may also pursue traditional methods to have the citation dismissed. They may plead not guilty, have a court trial and be found not guilty by a judge.

## **CONCLUSION**

Red light cameras appear to be maintaining the status quo for traffic safety at the intersection where they are currently installed. The Albany Police Department will continue to closely monitor and evaluate future data in order to determine its overall impact on improving traffic safety for our community.