

## Miriam Lens

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**From:** Lawrence Johmann  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 16, 2013 4:55 PM  
**To:** List-Mayor-Council  
**Cc:** CityClerk  
**Subject:** Consideration of the Red-Light Cameras

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of City Council,

At the risk of wasting my time and becoming a community pariah, I thought I would encourage you to reconsider your majority position on the red light camera issue. I believe abolishing the program is the wrong approach.

The red light camera technology is an excellent law enforcement tool. It is always vigilant; it does not make mistakes; and it does not discriminate. It identifies all those violating the stop on red law regardless of race, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, overall appearance or time of day.

What has everyone upset is not how the technology works, but how it is being implemented. And I will be the first to argue that it is being implemented egregiously. Specifically, it is a despicable practice to program a short yellow signal with what is then followed by a "gotcha" ticket the instant the light turns red. Also, fining someone \$500 for a right-on-red "California stop" is unconscionable. This amount is grossly incommensurate with the violation. (The greater violation here is of the public's trust when 4/5 of the fine is supposedly an administrative fee. Even at a fully-loaded rate of \$100/hr, it is outrageous to suggest that some bureaucrat is spending 4-hrs administering the ticket. But I don't wish to digress.)

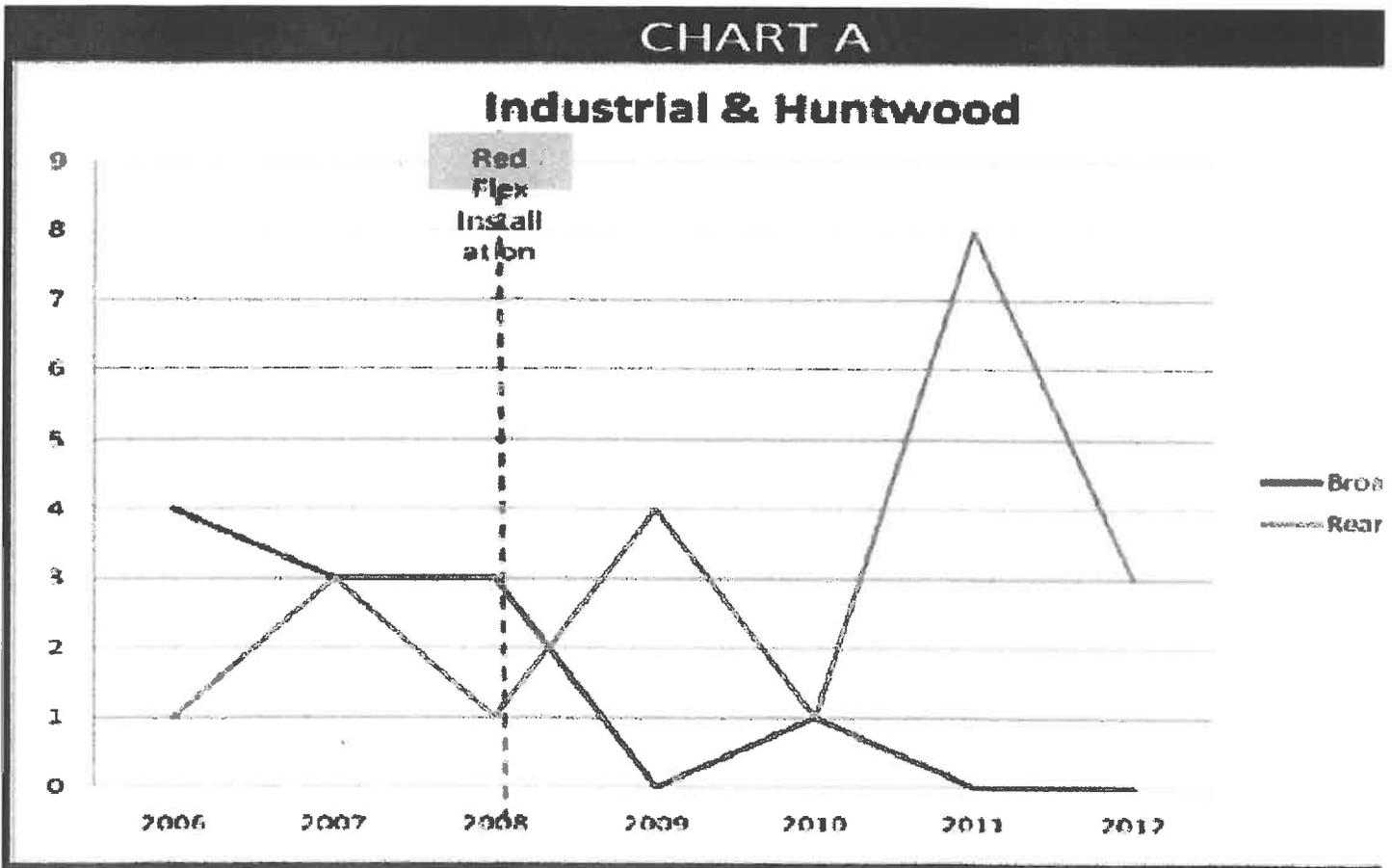
As a result of the public's disdain for the program, the push to eliminate the cameras is primarily being supported by the argument that they reduce safety. This argument appears to be bolstered by the two subject staff reports. However, I do not believe that the information provided by these reports accurately reflects this at all.

The data and analysis presented in the staff reports are confusing and apparently unscientific. In the March 5th staff report, it is stated that four of the eight red light camera intersections had a decrease in broadside collisions. It lists three and then goes on to contradict itself by stating that one of these same intersections (Santa Clara/Jackson) initially had no change and then had an increase. The April 16th report further convolutes things by indicating that the Industrial/Whipple intersection previously stated in the March 5th report as having an increase in broadside collisions actually had a decrease.

The March 5th report indicates that five of the eight red light camera intersections had an increase in rear-end collisions, while the April 16th report indicates that only four had an increase. Of the four that were specifically listed in both reports, three were the same as those that supposedly had increases in broadside collisions. A proper analysis requires an accounting of other conditions that might influence this concurrent increase, such as greater traffic volume, traffic pattern changes, construction, greater number of inclement

weather days, and so forth. Without a thorough analysis, the conclusions drawn are simply not credible.

For example, the suggestion, as is made by the presentation of Chart A in the March 5th staff report, that a sudden, dramatic, and apparently temporary increase in rear end collisions at the intersection of Industrial and Huntwood years after the installation of a red-light camera was a consequence of the camera and not some other cause(s) is really not plausible. What stands out for me when examining Chart A is not the spike of rear end collisions occurring years later, but the revelation that there has been only one broadside accident since the camera's 2008 installation where there had been at least three every year prior. This is clear and irrefutable evidence of the camera's direct impact on increased safety.



Because of this, I remain unconvinced that the cameras are not having a positive impact. Furthermore, these are not merely traffic safety devices, but law enforcement devices. Prior to the installation of the cameras there was rampant disregard by drivers for continuing into an intersection long after a light had turned red. While this did not always result in accidents, it did promote road rage and grid lock. I for one do not want to see a return to that. These cameras have modified everyone's driving habits for the better.

So, what to do? I suggest immediately modifying the program's operation. Lengthen the yellow light times and perhaps just cite those who enter the intersection a-half-second or more after red. Dramatically reduce the fine for right-on-red violations. If this cannot be done, properly re-engineer the intersections to allow for a right turn yield on red instead. Because these measures will drastically reduce the revenue of the program, immediately propose new take-it-or-leave-it compensation terms with the contractor going forward. Having demonstrated your willingness to break the contract, the

City has great leverage over a company that is desperate not to lose any additional business or suffer anymore bad publicity. If that does not work invite discussion with competing vendors before dismantling the entire system.

The bottom-line is that this is good technology. It should not be abandoned on emotional grounds, or because of lobbying efforts by interests outside of our City, or by what appears to me to be a flawed safety argument presented thus far.

Please do the right thing, and thank you for your consideration and your service.

Respectfully yours,  
Lawrence M. Johmann, P.E.