



walkBoston

Cambridge City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

May 2, 2002

To the Honorable, The City Council:

Walk Boston, a 400 member pedestrian advocacy organization, would like to urge you to reconsider the Council vote taken against photo enforcement of red-light running.

Red light running is a significant public safety issue for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, and enforcement of the laws has been very difficult.

According to the *Cambridge Chronicle*, city councilors raised two concerns: privacy and possible financial impacts on low-income car owners.

Driving a car on public roads is potentially a dangerous and disruptive activity. For this reason, our society has accepted that violations of the rules of the road should be documented. Vehicle owners and drivers are obliged to carry identification, and violations are identified and recorded in various ways. Parking tickets, for example, indicate where and when vehicles have been at a particular place. On the Massachusetts Turnpike, the license plates of vehicles whose drivers apparently have not paid the toll are photographed. Motorists are also observed and stopped, of course, for moving violations, and these violations are also recorded.

Red-light running is a more serious offense than, for example, failing to pay a toll, as it is a behavior that is responsible for collisions—about 260,000 a year, according to the *ITE Journal*, with about 750 fatalities, many thousands more injuries, and considerable property damage. Electronic enforcement has been used successfully in municipalities throughout the country to cut down on red-light running. Many municipalities have used this technology with great success, and it has resulted in significantly changed behavior, and widespread community support.

Fairfax County, Virginia, for example, found a 40% reduction in red-light running after a year of using cameras. Before the cameras were installed, 75% of residents polled favored using cameras; a year after installation, 84% supported them.

The Massachusetts legislation pending in the General Court is crafted to avoid unnecessary intrusion. (The California law, in contrast, involves identifying the driver of a vehicle, and this has given rise to protests in some communities). The penalty for red-light running as stated in the legislation, similar to other states where it has been successful, is quite low: a \$50 maximum fine, with no insurance penalty, as it is not recorded as a moving violation.

For violations in the category of photo enforcement (parking tickets, for example), our laws hold car owners—not the driver-- responsible. This does not, in our view, place an undue burden on the vehicle owner, who is required to take some responsibility for his/her vehicle.

Red-light running is a matter of public safety. Making our streets safe for all people—adults and children on foot, people riding bicycles, and motorists—should be a high priority. Please reconsider your position.

Very truly yours,

Ted Hamann, Chair, Legislative Committee, Walk Boston

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CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
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S-148

Communication #8

A communication was received from Walk Boston, urging the City Council to reconsider the vote taken on a council order regarding photo enforcement of red-light running.

In City Council May 13, 2002

**REFERRED TO PUBLIC
SAFETY COMMITTEE.**