

PHOTO RADAR

2011 ODOT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2007 Legislature specified the use and reporting requirements for municipal Photo Radar Programs in operation. In addition to individual cities reporting directly, it requires the Oregon Department of Transportation to review all submitted reports and provide an executive summary focusing on the process and outcome evaluations for cities using Photo Radar programs in Oregon by March 1 of each regular legislative session.

The cities of Beaverton, Medford, Milwaukie and Portland operate Photo Radar Programs.

This executive summary of the cities' reports was prepared by ODOT as required under ORS 810.438. It summarizes the cities' evaluations of their Photo Radar programs. Copies of the cities' reports will be submitted to the legislature directly from each city as required under statute.

PROCESS AND OUTCOME EVALUATION – Photo Radar Programs

What is the effect of the use of the cameras on traffic safety?

Beaverton has been successfully operating a photo radar program since 1995 with a single photo radar equipped van. They report that a second Photo Radar van was added in 2004. The program has been very successful in reducing speeds in Beaverton neighborhoods. Beaverton is in its 16th year of operation and is still seeing reductions in average speeds where photo radar is in use. A very high percentage of violators (78%) are not residents of the city (similar to the issues experienced with the Photo Red Light Program). This issue is hampering the ability to reduce the instance of speeding for both programs as public outreach information releases are distributed in and around the city of Beaverton.

Medford reports that they are currently operating two photo radar vans within the city. Additionally, they report that overall crashes are down as compared to 2009. There is a noted deterrent effect noted after placing the vans in specific problem areas. In many cases, after deployment, the citizen complaints of speeding and crashes decrease.

Milwaukie received authority to operate Photo Radar in 2007. It has been in operation since March 27th, 2008. They report that total crashes have decreased from 168 per year (2007) to 132 per year (2010). Nearly 50% of the violations captured are thrown out due to process reviews consistent with all other cities operating these programs.

Portland has been operating a photo radar van since it was allowed by the 1995 Legislature. Speeding drivers represent nearly half of the fatal and serious injury crashes in the City of Portland. Based on the daily traffic in and around the city and the small number of photo radar vans available, there is no way to make a statistical connection between the vans use and crash reductions that are speed-related. When used in areas that have a demonstrated traffic problem (such as school zones), a visible reduction in average travel speeds is noted. Portland reports that their Photo Radar program was one of five chosen nationally to be reviewed in a study done by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP). It was selected based on its longevity, continued success and continued public support.

What is the degree of public acceptance?

Beaverton reports that 67% of its citizens support the Photo Radar program use on residential streets while 80% support the use in School Zones. Their challenge is to reach those who do not reside but travel through the city regularly as 78% of those cited using Photo Radar do not live in the city. 22% of Beaverton's citations are dismissed through the certificate of innocence filing. A certificate of innocence is may be submitted by the owner of a vehicle swearing that the owner was not the driver of the vehicle at

the time of the citation. The owner must submit a photocopy of his or her driver license. Jurisdictions who receive these certificates must dismiss the citation.

Medford reports that citizen acceptance of Photo Radar programs has grown since its inception in 2002. They believe they are operating in a very fair, open manner. They have received very few if any complaints regarding the program. Twenty-five percent of the total citations issued were dismissed based on the certificate of innocence requirements as discussed above.

Milwaukie reports that they have strong public acceptance of photo radar as reported through seven different city neighborhood associations. In January 2011, the City of Milwaukie conducted a review of the photo radar program with their Public Safety Advisory Committee. The committee voted unanimously to continue its support of the photo radar program.

Portland has conducted several public opinion surveys over the years and all have indicated strong public support. The Chief of Police has convened several community meetings across Portland in past years where police programs were rated and Photo Radar again received a favorable rating.

What is the process of administration for the use of the cameras?

The process of administration for all agencies participating is virtually the same as the requirements are spelled out clearly in the statute. In all jurisdictions, 20-25% of the violations captured are thrown out based on police officer review of minimum standards and statute requirements. Of those that result in an issued citation, another 18-25% are dismissed based on the conformance to the certificate of innocence process in statute. These numbers clearly reflect that the process and statute requirements are being followed by the agencies participating.

Beaverton: Their administrative process is contained on pages 9-10 of their Photo Radar report.

Medford: Their administrative process is contained on page 1 and 2 of their Photo Radar report.

Milwaukie: Their administrative process is contained on page 5-7 of their Photo Radar report.

Portland: Their administrative process is contained on pages 2 of their Photo Radar report.

Summary:

It appears from these reports and various conversations with each city that they are very cautious in following both the spirit and letter of Oregon law as it relates to the operation of Photo Radar programs.

The Photo Radar program has been in operation in Oregon for 16 years. It appears to have a positive impact on reducing average speeds within the communities in which it is used. With high public acceptance and safety benefits of reduced speeds in school zones, residential and other roadways, it appears to make a positive impact on the safety of the communities in which it is used.

Because of the limited number of photo radar vans in operation, it is impossible to make a direct correlation between crash reduction and the use of the systems. Unlike photo red light cameras which are 24/7 monitoring operations, these vans are moved to different locations within a jurisdiction and not allowed to be in any location more than four hours making it difficult to identify speed and crash reductions over a long-term time frame.