



CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNIVERSITY DRIVE CAMERA CLEARED TO CAPTURE IMAGES

Automated Traffic Enforcement camera to go online June 18 at University Drive-US 61

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The City of Muscatine has used Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) cameras at five locations since May 2011 in an effort to deter speeding and red light running. At four of the five permanent locations the cameras were also established to help reduce personal injury and non-personal injury accidents. And they have succeeded in all areas.

The ATE system in Muscatine will soon be back in full force when the camera at the University Drive-US 61 intersection goes online at 12:01 a.m., Monday, June 18. The City of Muscatine, in conjunction with the cities of Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, successfully appealed the Iowa Department of Transportation's (IDOT) ruling that ordered the taking down of ATE cameras at several locations including the one at the University Drive intersection in Muscatine.

The return of the camera system comes following the Iowa Supreme Court's ruling in favor of the municipalities and the Order of Remand issued in Polk County District Court today (June 11).

GATSO, the company that was contracted to install and perform maintenance on the ATE systems in Muscatine, has completed the maintenance and recalibration of the University Drive cameras following their year-long hibernation.



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The camera placement at the University Drive-US 61 intersection was not established to prevent accidents, although that is a positive result, but had a different goal in mind following research conducted by the City of Muscatine in 2009 and 2010.

That research identified eight approaches and five intersections within the City's jurisdiction that presented safety concerns that were raised by the number of drivers violating the law by speeding through or running through the red light at these intersections.

The main concern with the University Drive-US 61 intersection was the speed of drivers on the westbound approach into the city.

"We found that there were a large number of drivers who were exceeding the speed limit by 11 or more miles per hour when they were going through that intersection from the westbound approach," Phil Sargent, assistant police chief, said. "It was a great concern that excessive speed entering a growing business district could result in tragic accidents in that area."

Reducing the speed of vehicles as they approach the intersection was the goal of this camera and a goal that IDOT originally agreed with. That changed four years into the ATE activation when IDOT changed the rules for ATE camera use and ordered the University Drive camera be taken down.

"The change in philosophy was troubling," Sargent said. "We appealed what we believed was an inappropriate and irrational decision," Sargent said.

The appeal challenged IDOT's assessment of the annual ATE report and the new rules which were retroactively enforced. That appeal eventually reached the Iowa District Court for Polk County where the judge ruled against the appeal and ordered the University Drive camera be taken offline.



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Muscatine did take the citation issuing ability of the University Drive camera offline but was allowed to keep the camera in operation for statistical use only by IDOT. Meanwhile, the case went to the Supreme Court of Iowa.

The speeding statistics at the University Drive intersection confirm that the ATE camera was doing what it was intended to do ... slow people down. In the eight months that the camera was in operation at the intersection in 2011 a total of 12,857 speeding violations were processed. In the 12 months of 2016 that number was reduced to 5,999, a 54 percent drop in speed violations.

In the first four months of 2017, when the camera was still in operation, a reduction of 970 speed violations (47 percent) were recorded as opposed to the previous year. However, after the camera was taken offline that number skyrocketed to 18,578 potential speed violations, and that number was just from May through November of 2017.

After hearing arguments from both sides the Supreme Court of Iowa reversed the district court's order by a 6-0 vote stating that IDOT did not have the statutory authority to promulgate the administrative rules dictating placement and continued use of ATE equipment by the Cities.

More information about the ATE system deployed in Muscatine can be found on the City of Muscatine web site on the Police Department page or by clicking [HERE](#).