

# **AUTOMATED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT**

## **Background**

In 2010, the City of Muscatine awarded the contract for our Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) initiative to Gatso USA. Through accident data as well as speed and red light violation surveys we decided that eight (8) approaches at five intersections would receive the equipment. The system was set up to monitor red light violations as well as speed violations at all five (5) intersections. The intersections selected for the ATE equipment were:

Washington St at Park Ave (north and south approaches)  
Cleveland St at Park Ave (north and south approaches)  
Cedar St at Houser St (east and west approaches)  
University Dr at US Hwy 61 (westbound approach)  
Mulberry Ave at US Hwy 61 (westbound approach)

The ATE equipment was built and installed by Gatso USA at no cost to the City of Muscatine. The City and Gatso USA worked closely with the Iowa Department of Transportation to ensure that the entire construction and sign placements were completed to their requirements. Winter weather delayed the construction process during December and January. Each intersection has speed limit signs and red light signs that clearly advise that photo enforcement equipment is used at those intersections. In addition to those signs, the City elected to put up “traffic laws photo enforced” signs on every corporate limit signs posts on roadways entering Muscatine.

The camera/radar system detects violators and passes the violation information to a Gatso employee who verifies that a violation appears to have occurred and then they create a violation package that includes location information, violation information and vehicle information. This event package is then sent to our department for review. A police officer who has been trained on the system reviews the data and determines if a violation of the city ordinance has actually occurred and if the violation, location and vehicle information matches what is viewed in the photos and video. If everything matches up and a violation has actually occurred then the officer will issue a citation.

The ATE equipment not only detects and documents red light and speed violations but also has other capabilities. The system can be set for license plate recognition

for Amber Alerts or other major crimes that occur close to these intersections. The video that the system archives has been used multiple times as evidence in court for citation issued due to traffic crashes in the area of the ATE equipment.

On March 11, 2011, the Automated Traffic Enforcement equipment was activated at the intersection of Cedar St and Houser St. On March 18, 2011, the Automated Traffic Enforcement equipment was activated at the intersections of US Hwy 61 and Mulberry Ave, US Hwy 61 and University Ave and Park Ave and Cleveland St. Because of property questions and construction delays, the intersection of Washington St and Park Ave wasn't active until May 21, 2011. Each intersection had a warning period of 30 days.

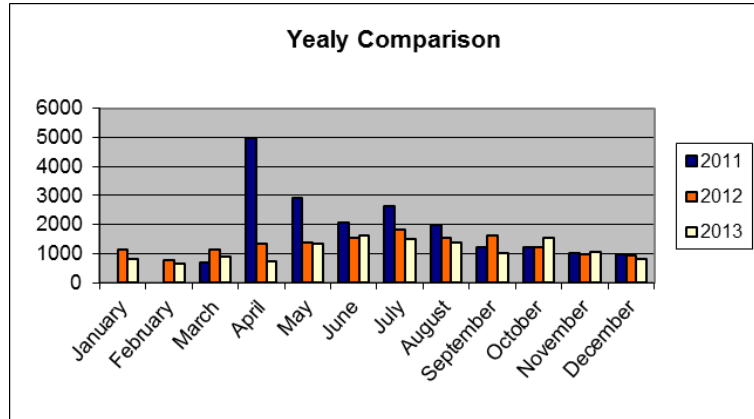
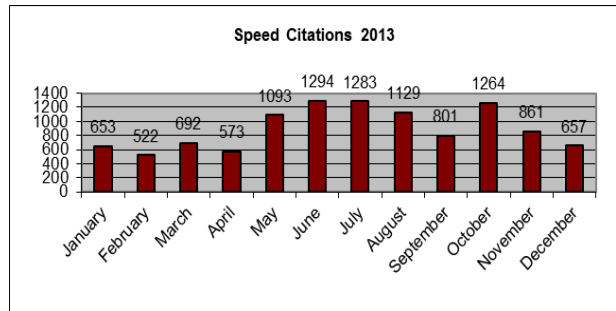
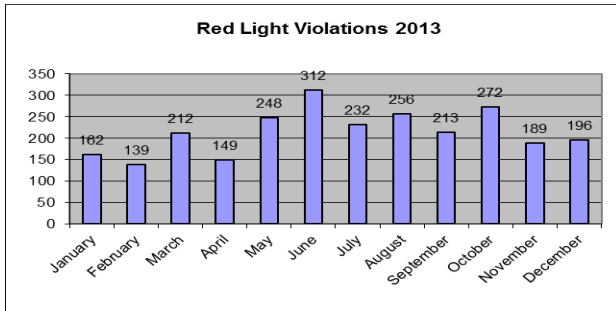
This past year the Iowa State University Institute for Transportation's Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) released a third study that supported the use of Automated Traffic Enforcement. This study, "Improving Traffic Safety Culture in Iowa – Phase 2" was released. The study was a survey of the attitudes and opinions of the citizens of Iowa. The survey found that 55-56.4 % of those surveyed supported the use of ATE equipment for speed enforcement and that 70% supported the use for red light detection and ticketing.

The recommendations from this study were to "pursue increase in automated enforcement to reduce speeding related crashes and other aggressive behaviors, such as red light running." These recommendations mirror the research from 2010 and 2007.

In 2013 we saw an increase in proposed legislation at the state level to ban or severely hinder automated traffic enforcement. These bills did not pass through to become law. However, the Director of the Iowa Department of Transportation submitted "Primary Highway System Automated Traffic Enforcement Guidelines" to the rule making process that appear to severely handicap local government's efforts towards safe roadways and intersections.

## **Current Statistics**

2013 was the second full calendar year with all of the intersections active and recording violations. During 2013 there were a total of 13,369 citations issued. 2580 citations were issued for red light violations and 10822 citations were issued for speed violations. Comparing this data to the violations issued in 2012, there was a 14% (2,093) decrease in citations issued for calendar year 2013.



Since 2011 we have seen a reduction in crashes each year at each intersection where ATE equipment is operating. In 2012 we had a total of 26 motor vehicle crashes at the controlled intersections. In 2013 we had 19 crashes. That is a 27% reduction!

Are the traffic cameras having any effect on the driving habits of area drivers? Looking at the decline in traffic accidents at these intersections as well as a decline in violations tends to make one believe they have. There was a 32% decline in citations from 2011 to 2012 and another 14% decline again in 2013 as well as a continued decrease in motor vehicle crashes.