



CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 31, 2017

SPEEDING THROUGH THE INTERSECTION

Camera detects over 18,000 University Drive speed violations in seven-month period

MUSCATINE, Iowa – For the City of Muscatine, it is primarily about safety and secondarily about a funding source for public safety programs. For the State of Iowa, in particular the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT), it is about control. In a nutshell, that is the dispute between the two entities in regards to the Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) system currently being used in Muscatine.

IDOT ordered the City of Muscatine to remove the ATE equipment at the Highway 61-University Drive intersection in 2015 after a year-long review of Muscatine's 2014 ATE report. That order was appealed by the City of Muscatine.

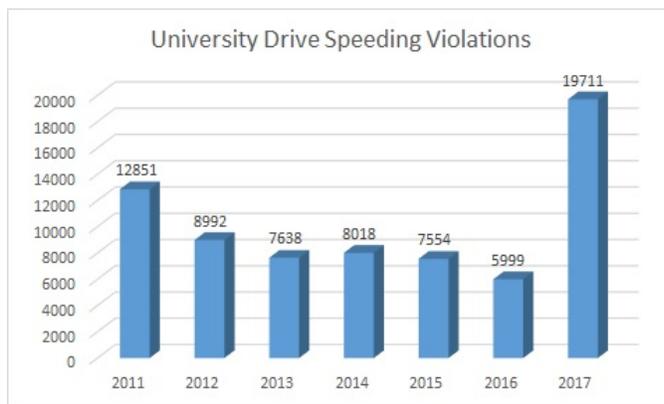
The ATE camera system at the intersection remained active during the initial appeal process. Once an Iowa District Court judge in Polk County ruled that IDOT had the authority to order the removal of ATE cameras if they do not improve road safety, the system's ability to issue citations was deactivated but the camera remained active for data gathering purposes. The appeal process continues.

The camera in question watches the westbound approach to the City, an approach that early studies indicated had a high frequency of speeding. The system was approved by IDOT, installed per IDOT's site plan, and completed with IDOT installing the signage and establishing



CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

the transition zones in the approach to Muscatine. IDOT staff fully supported the installation at the time.



Since the April 25, 2017, court ruling, the camera has recorded 3.65 million passes over the seven month period (May 1- November 30) with 18,578 speed violations (56 mph and above). By comparison, that seven month speed violation total is a 300% increase over the entire 2016 calendar year (5,999 speed

violations at the intersection) and nearly double the eight month total of 2011 (12,851 speed violations).

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out why there was a huge jump in speeding violations.

Unless the Muscatine Police Department physically mans the intersection to record excessive speeds and write citations, there are no consequences to drivers who do not slow down entering the City. The ATE cameras create a force multiplier which means the cameras allow the Police Department to provide better coverage to the entire city rather than focusing their time and efforts on one location. The cameras work and work well as the data clearly shows.

The deployment of ATE systems was the best answer to control speeding and reduce accidents on the primary highway systems in and around Muscatine. IDOT agreed at first.



CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

Local officials and engineers with IDOT and the City of Muscatine knew that the design of the Highway 61 bypass created a conduit for speeding. During a review of accident data along with speed and red light surveys in 2010, City officials determined several locations where ATE cameras would help with speed enforcement and accident reduction. Working with Gatso, USA, a vender of automated traffic enforcement camera systems, and with IDOT, a system was designed and implemented that met IDOT guidelines.

The Highway 61-University Drive intersection sits at the eastern end of the main corridor to the east side business district. A high frequency of speeding was noted at the intersection which also sits at the end of the transition zone from a 55 mph zone to a 45 mph zone. With plans for future development in the area, speed enforcement and accident reduction are vital for employees and customers who travel through the area.

Speed enforcement at the intersection was succeeding as the number of speed violations has decreased each year from 12,851 in the last eight months of 2011 to 5,999 during the 2016 calendar year. In the first four months of 2017, when the camera was still active, 1,133 speed violations were recorded indicating a trend that would have seen the fewest speed violations in the eight year history of the ATE camera system.

The success of the ATE system in Muscatine ran into a roadblock in December 2013 when an IDOT commission created the 1,000 foot rule (a speed transition zone must be at least 1,000 feet before an intersection). During the original planning and construction of the ATE system in 2011, the City of Muscatine wanted the transition speed signs placed as close as possible to the city limit signs which would provide drivers a longer opportunity to slow down. IDOT decided against the City's request and placed the signs 830 feet from the intersection.



CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

Although IDOT created the speed transition zone and placed the original signs, they opted not to move the signs after the creation of the new rule and failed to respond to two 2014 inquiries by Chief of Police Brett Tarkington about the sign location and relocation.

Instead, IDOT staff used the City of Muscatine ATE report filed on April 29, 2014, as the basis for their May 17, 2015, order instructing Muscatine to permanently remove the ATE equipment at that intersection. IDOT concluded that the 2014 report showed crashes at the intersection had increased (actually the number of accidents only increased by one), there were a high number of speed violations (but the downward trend in speed violations was not noted), and the camera was within the new 1,000 foot rule, a rule not in effect when IDOT established the transition zone and placed the signs.

In their appeal of the IDOT order, Muscatine officials stressed that the conclusions by IDOT staff were in error if the intent was to accurately reflect success of the system as indicated in the 2014 report. Speeding violations actually decreased (31 percent since 2011) and motor vehicle crashes were reduced 27 percent (a 78 percent reduction in personal injury crashes). Further, the City stated, the system was designed along IDOT guidelines, approved by IDOT, and signage installed by IDOT.

What may be the consequences if Muscatine loses its appeal of the IDOT order?

Many suggest that the City of Muscatine's appeal of the IDOT order has more to do with lost income from speeding fines than anything else. City officials are quick to point out that this is not true. The City stated in their appeal of the IDOT order that the City clearly has a vested interest in the safety and well-being of its citizens and its law enforcement officers at those intersections.



CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

Fines from the citations are allocated to Public Safety where they were used to benefit the entire Muscatine community. Without those funds, some programs may end or money may be diverted from other programs or new fees may have to be created by the City Council to offset the lost revenue. That is a policy decision for the City Council.

With no consequences for speeding through the intersection, speeds have continued to climb as vehicles enter the city which poses a greater risk for drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.

The 18,578 violations were for speeds of 56 mph and above with the highest recorded speed coming in at 94 mph. Another 463,908 were recorded at moving through the intersection between 46 and 55 mph, still over the legal speed limit of 45 mph but not at the level where a citation would be issued.

Experience, however, has taught the Muscatine Police Department that all events cannot be transferred into violations. Assistant Police Chief Phil Sargent noted that some of the reasons include the plate cannot be read in the photos, the vehicle does not match the license plate registration, the plates are missing, and events such as funerals.

Normally the MPD takes the number of events and reduces them 70 to 80 percent. That would mean that the 15,578 speeding violation events recorded in the seventh month period would expect to be reduce to 14,862 (20 percent) to 13,003 (30 percent) in actual citations issued.

There are seven ATE approaches still operating and issuing violations in the City with the approach at University Drive and Highway 61 currently disabled. As of November 30, 2017, a total of 9,345 citations have been issued in 2017 including 2,091 red light citations and 7,488 speed violations.



CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

The approaches were set up and activated between March and May of 2011. During the last eight months of 2011, 19,755 citations were issued including 1,927 red light violations and 17,828 speed violations. The number of citations continued to fall in each year after the activation with 2016 seeing 13,322 citations issued including 3,062 red light violations and 10,259 speed violations which were an eight percent reduction from 2015.

Data from all eight ATE approaches show reductions in property damage and injury crashes compared to the initial year of the program and before. The data also shows that the number of citations issued decreased since the initial year and before.

The City of Muscatine also has a new tool in its arsenal for combating excessive speeds on city streets that are not primary roadways where IDOT has influence. The mobile ATE vehicle, a Chevy Sonic, will complete its first full year of service in 2017 with locations for the vehicle determined by citizen complaints and requests, input from agency employees after high speed locations, and from city staff. As of November 30, 2017, a total of 2,277 speed violation citations have been issued from the Chevy Sonic which is also used for data collection by the Department of Public Works and the City Traffic Committee.

Safety remains the primary focus of the City of Muscatine and the Muscatine Police Department.