

EMBARGOED UNTIL
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MEDIA CONTACT
Becky Mowbray
504-301-8608

**OIG RECOMMENDS THE CITY ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR THE
TRAFFIC CAMERA SAFETY PROGRAM (TCSP)**

The City of New Orleans Office of Inspector General (OIG) concluded the City did not monitor the Traffic Camera Safety Program (Program) appropriately or handle emerging issues with the program due to a flawed management and reporting structure.

In the early days of the Program, which operates traffic cameras throughout the city, the Department of Public Works (DPW) was the lead agency. In 2010, an ordinance change redirected this responsibility to the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD).

The OIG found, in practice, the Program lacked effective oversight. The City heavily relied on a contractor, American Traffic Solutions (ATS, now called Verra Mobility), to manage the Program. The OIG recommends the City maintain ownership of the program and clearly assign responsibilities to administer the TCSP to a specific department. Such responsibilities should include: monitoring all program operations, including setting policies, identifying and resolving problems, and strengthening the program as a public safety tool.

Important issues within the program were overlooked because no one was accountable for addressing them. The OIG found the City collected more than \$730,000 in overpayments on traffic camera tickets from when the first cameras were activated in 2008 until January 2019. The City should have refunded these funds to vehicle owners or transferred it to the State under the Louisiana Uniform Unclaimed Property Act. Instead, the money sat in city bank accounts, and program officials were unaware of the issue because no one was responsible for reading the report on overpayments. Had the City had monitored overpayments on camera tickets, it could have proactively refunded money to vehicle owners.

Similarly, the TCSP periodically issued illegal tickets when schools were not in session because no one was responsible for confirming that school locations and calendars were accurate.

The impact of these management failures fell on members of the public, who had to figure out that there was a problem and ask the City for a refund on an overpaid camera ticket or an improper school zone ticket. Forcing private citizens to police the program undermined public confidence in the traffic camera program.

The OIG also identified problems with police officer ticket reviews. NOPD exceeded the legal timeframe for processing tickets and sometimes issued tickets beyond the legal deadlines. Meanwhile, officers frequently reviewed individual violations more quickly than allowed by internal policies, calling into question the quality of the review process.

Inspector General Derry Harper stated: “Our evaluation of the TCSP identified several areas of concern in the administration of the program that should be immediately addressed. Most of these issues can be resolved by designating which agency or department is responsible for overall operations of the TCSP.”

In the report, the OIG also commented on the City’s decision in February 2019 to change the school zone speed thresholds for issuing tickets without informing the public of the transition. This comment is outlined as an Additional Area of Concern.

The City of New Orleans both accepted and partially accepted all report recommendations and has represented to the OIG they have already begun implementing them.

Inspector General Derry Harper is available for interviews on Wednesday, Jan. 29, and Thursday, Jan. 30.