

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Police hail new traffic measures

Edythe Jensen

The Arizona Republic

Oct. 15, 2007 12:00 AM

CHANDLER - Police are responding to fewer intersection accidents since the city expanded photo traffic enforcement and installed 64 speed-reader boards this summer, according to traffic Officer Seth Tyler

There are no statistics yet from the camera-equipped intersections that generate traffic citations for speeders and red-light runners. But Tyler said officers have noticed significant reductions in intersection accidents, and he said it's likely because motorists are slowing down and stopping on yellow to avoid citations and fines.

"Most of the accidents I investigate are at intersections. A lot of them have serious injuries or fatalities," Tyler said.

The city recently studied the effectiveness of speed-reader boards that weren't tied to photo enforcement to see if drivers heeded flashing light warnings when there was no citation threat.

Transportation engineer Mike Mah said the study on a stretch of Hunt Highway showed that the average speed for 85 percent of the traffic near two speed readers dropped from 57 to 53 mph. The speed limit is 45, but police have said during public meetings that they rarely cite drivers traveling less than 11 miles above the limit.

By the end of the year, 12 intersections will have photo red-light and speed enforcement, and all will have multiple speed-reader boards. The reader boards are up and flashing, including several at intersections not equipped with enforcement cameras. So far, six intersections are equipped with both speed and red-light cameras, and five have red-light cameras only.

Councilman Jeff Weninger proposed the speed readers to give motorists time to slow down before they're caught on camera and cited. The 64 lighted boards cost \$295,587 and display the speeds of oncoming vehicles. They flash when the speed is above the limit, but many motorists have questioned their accuracy.

Tyler said one reader board near Hamilton High School showed he was going 65 mph when he had just pulled out of a driveway.

"My speedometer said I was going 5 miles an hour, and mine was the only vehicle on the road," Tyler said.

Some who get citations from speed cameras complained the reader boards showed lower speeds, Tyler said. The speed cameras are activated by sensors beneath the pavement that have been tested to stand up as evidence in court, he said. The reader boards are courtesy warnings and not connected to enforcement.

Mah said the readers have been adjusted by the manufacturer, Information Display Company of Portland, Ore., and appear to be accurate. Even if the speed readers aren't accurate for all vehicles, "they make you look at your speedometer," Weninger said.

#