

September 21, 2020

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Seattle City Council  
**From:** Calvin Chow, Analyst  
**Subject:** Council Bill 119897 – Automated Camera Enforcement Legislation

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On September 29, 2020, the City Council will discuss and may act on [Council Bill \(CB\) 119897](#). This legislation would make changes to the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) to be consistent with recent state legislation, which allows the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to enact a pilot program to use automated traffic cameras to enforce “block the box” and transit-lane infractions.

The revised state law ([RCW 46.63.170](#)) allows Seattle to implement a pilot program to use automated cameras to detect the following violations:

- Stopping when traffic obstructed violations (i.e., “block the box”)
- Stopping at intersection or crosswalk violations
- Public transportation only lane violations
- Stopping or traveling in restricted lane violations

Under the state law, only warning notices with no monetary penalty are allowed in 2020, and fines of up to \$75 per infraction are allowed beginning in 2021. After paying for administrative costs, half of the remaining funds are to be remitted to the state’s [Cooper Jones](#) active transportation safety account, which the state uses to fund grant projects or programs for bicycle, pedestrian, and non-motorist safety improvements. The remaining half of the funds may only be used for transportation improvements that support equitable access and mobility for persons with disabilities.

SDOT currently uses automated cameras to enforce red-light and school-zone speed infractions ([SMC 11.50.570](#)). The proposed legislation would expand the use of automated traffic safety cameras to include the new pilot program, consistent with the state authorization. Specific to enforcement of intersection or crosswalk violations, the proposed legislation limits the pilot program to the 20 intersections where SDOT would most like to address safety concerns related to stopping at intersections or crosswalks.

If this legislation passes, SDOT intends to install two cameras at the Spokane Street Swing Bridge to enforce restricted lane operations necessitated by the closure of the West Seattle High Bridge. The cost estimate for installing these cameras is estimated at \$29,000 and would be funded in the West Seattle Bridge Immediate Response CIP project (authorized by [Ordinance 126161](#)).

SDOT anticipates expanding the program to add 10 new locations in 2021 and 12 new locations in 2022. The legislation does not include appropriations for the 2021 or 2022 locations, which will be submitted as part of future proposed budgets.

Citations from cameras are required to be reviewed by a Seattle Police Department (SPD) officer for a ticket to be issued. In 2020, the pilot program can make use of existing officers that are currently funded through the school zone camera program, as COVID-19 has suspended school zone camera enforcement activity. Staffing needs for any expansion of the program in 2021 and 2022 would need to be addressed in subsequent budget proposals. As state law does not authorize monetary penalties until 2021, there are no revenues anticipated with the pilot program in 2020.

Consistent with state law, the proposed legislation requires that SDOT provide a preliminary report on the pilot program to the State Legislature by June 30, 2022 and a final report by January 1, 2023. State authorization for the pilot program expires on June 30, 2023, and the proposed legislation includes the same expiration date.

Traffic enforcement camera deployments, including the existing red-light and school-zone cameras, are excluded from the surveillance ordinance ([SMC 14.18.030.B.3](#)).

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding this legislation.

cc: Dan Eder, Interim Director