

Village focuses on catching red light runners

Gatso USA will supply equipment

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By John K. Ryan, Staff Writer

In an effort to minimize traffic accidents that cause cars to be T-boned, the Homewood Police Department is looking to install red light traffic cameras at busy intersections.

The cameras are only activated when a car passes through an intersection during a red light. The camera then takes a photo of the car's position during the red light and of the vehicle's license plate.

The cameras also record other data such as the speed at which the vehicle passed through the intersection. Police can then issue a citation and fine to the vehicle owner.

The village board recently approved the village entering into contract negotiations with Gatso USA, a Massachusetts-based company, to provide the cameras and enforcement services.

Four companies bid on supplying the village with the red light camera equipment.

Police Chief Larry Burnson said key to choosing Gatso was it did not charge monthly maintenance fees. The other three companies did.

Instead, Gatso charges a certain amount of money for each transaction, depending on the outcome of the violation. If Homewood police approve the violation, the fee would be \$30. If a photo sent to the police department is not approved, the village would still pay \$15 for processing. The village would receive \$70 of the typical \$100 fine for running a red light for each citation paid, according to Gatso's proposal.

Another important feature was the camera's ability to be used for Amber Alerts. The cameras can seek specific license plate numbers passing through an intersection to help track down abductors or bank robbers.

Burnson said the cameras' main function would be to reduce accidents. He mentioned the intersections of Ridge Road and Halsted Street, and 183rd Street and Governors Highway as two likely spots for the cameras.

"Those two have the peak number of red light runners. We're also looking at 183rd and Harwood Avenue as a likely target too," Burnson said. All sites for the cameras will be determined in the next few weeks by the police department and Gatso, USA.

Most of the intersections involved are state roads, which may cause a delay in the permitting process. Currently the Illinois Department of Transportation is taking about 15 weeks to issue permits for the cameras, said Paul Bazzano, vice president of sales for Gatso USA.

"In the meantime, we'll do engineering studies," he said. "Once we have the permits, it's only a couple of weeks to install the equipment."

Burnson said there will be a 30-day trial period when the cameras are first installed. "We'll send only warnings out at first," he said.

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