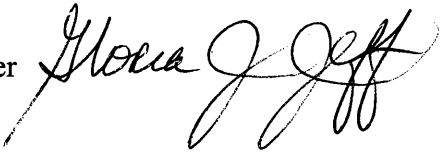


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: March 30, 2007

To: The Honorable City Council
C/o City Clerk, Room 395, City Hall
Attention: Honorable Wendy Greuel, Transportation Committee

From: Gloria J. Jeff, General Manager
Department of Transportation 

Subject: **EVALUATION OF DRIVECAM VIDEO SYSTEM FOR THE CITY'S
TRANSIT FLEET (06-1529)**

The City Council, at its meeting on June 30, 2006, approved a motion (Parks-Greuel) directing the Department of Transportation (LADOT) to evaluate the DriveCam Video System, which has been tested by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro), and to consider pursuing this technology as a pilot program for City transit services(06-1529).

The DriveCam system is designed to improve transit operator behavior and reduce transit accidents by way of a small video recorder mounted on the windshield of a bus. The device records what an operator sees and hears as well as the area directly behind the operator in the interior of a bus. Department staff reviewed the findings of Metro's initial demonstration, the pilot expansion, and the expansion of the system to the Orange Line vehicles. As a result of the demonstration Metro has experienced a downward trend in both accidents and accident severity at its Division 3 San Gabriel Valley facility.

In 2005, the Department also began demonstrating the DriveCam system on DASH vehicles through one of its service contractors. The use of the system has since expanded to now include the entire Community DASH and Cityride fleet of vehicles (219 vehicles in total). Similar to Metro's initial demonstration, the DriveCam system is provided free of charge to the City. The two service contractors providing the Community DASH and Cityride services have assumed the full costs for the system. Their experiences, which are similar to those of Metro, have shown the DriveCam system to be an invaluable tool in reducing accidents, improving driver behavior, and reducing liability costs. The Department intends on pursuing the installation of DriveCam on the two programs that do not currently have this system, Commuter Express and DASH Downtown, as part of the new contracts that will be established.

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council receive and file this report as no Council action is required at this time.

BACKGROUND

The DriveCam system is a proprietary video system that consists of a small video recorder mounted on the front windshield of a transit vehicle. The device records images and sounds into a digital looping memory buffer, which captures what the operator of the transit vehicle sees and hears directly in front of the vehicle and within the interior of the vehicle behind the operator. The system can be triggered either by forward or lateral g-forces, caused by an accident, hard acceleration, sudden stops or hard turns, or manually by the vehicle's operator. When the device is triggered, a red light is illuminated which lets the operator know that the preceding 10 seconds and the subsequent 10 seconds have been saved to the memory of the device. This system is designed to improve driving behavior, decrease accident rates and ultimately reduce Workers' Compensation and public liability/property damage costs.

The video event files captured by the DriveCam system are downloaded daily. DriveCam's HindSight 20/20 software collects and organizes driving events, allows for viewing of events, logs events to specific operators, and can be viewed frame by frame. In August of 2005, Metro entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DriveCam to provide a free demonstration of their system. The initial results of the demonstration were so successful, resulting in a drop in both accidents and accident severity at their Division 3 San Gabriel Valley facility, that Metro asked to extend the demonstration to all vehicles at the Division. In June of 2006, Metro purchased 220 DriveCam systems, along with spare units, for its buses at Division 3 in order to demonstrate long-term improvement and cost savings before considering fleet wide implementation of this or a similar type of system. In February of 2007, Metro also purchased additional systems for its Orange Line vehicles.

DISCUSSION

The City Council, at its meeting on June 30, 2006, approved a Motion (Parks-Greuel) directing the Department to evaluate Metro's DriveCam Video System pilot program and determine whether this is a pilot that the Department should pursue for the City's transit fleet (CF 06-1529). The DriveCam system has proven to be of value to Metro by reducing accidents and reducing accident severity. In addition, the system has provided a tool for incident investigation, which assists with commendations, counseling, and disciplinary action, if necessary.

Currently, the Department has the DriveCam system installed on all of its 146 Community DASH vehicles and on all 73 vehicles in the Cityride program (219 total vehicles). The system was installed free of charge to the City by the contractors that operate these services, MV Transportation and Veolia Transportation. Both contractors arrived at their decision to install the DriveCam system at their expense because of the potential cost savings to each firm, as these firms are directly responsible for the ongoing training of operators and insuring the City against damage caused to or by the City-owned transit fleet. All of the Department's transit contracts contain language that holds the City harmless in the event of accidents and/or incidents involving the operation and maintenance of transit service. In addition, the contractors receive insurance premium discounts for having the DriveCam system in place.

The only concern that was mentioned as part of the evaluation of the DriveCam system by LADOT's transit contractors was from bus operators. There are some operators that feel this system is an invasion of privacy and infringes on their rights as negotiated under their established collective bargaining agreement. As part of Metro's launching of the DriveCam system, staff briefed the union representing operators union and received their support before prior to the demonstration. This issue has not reduced the effectiveness of the system.

There are two City transit programs that do not currently have the DriveCam system, the Commuter Express and DASH Downtown programs. Despite possible financial benefits, the Downtown DASH contractor (First Transit) and the Commuter Express contractor (Veolia Transportation) have chosen not to install DriveCam on these vehicles. This is due largely because these contracts are nearing the end of their terms and it was felt that the investment into the system for these fleets was not cost-effective. The Commuter Express contract will expire on January 31, 2008 and the DASH Downtown contract will expire on December 31, 2008. The Department will develop provisions in the upcoming Request for Proposals (RFPs) for the Commuter Express and DASH Downtown services to encourage installation and use of the DriveCam system or a similar system as part of the contractor's overall operator safety program.

The Department has also begun the installation of security cameras on its latest model transit vehicle for purposes of passenger safety and security, which the contractors are mandated to use. The difference between these cameras and the DriveCam system is that the DriveCam system is focused on operator driving behavior, while the safety/security cameras operate continuously and capture images of all activities that transpire on a vehicle (crime, vandalism, suspicious behavior, etc.) throughout the day.

Conclusion

The Department supports innovative programs such as the DriveCam program, which improve operator behavior and reduces accidents. Metro's experience with the DriveCam system has been very positive at their Division 3 San Gabriel Valley Sector facility, where they report a downward trend in accidents and accident severity.

The Department's contractors have had much the same favorable experience as Metro with the DriveCam system. Over half of the Department's transit fleet, 219 vehicles in total, currently utilizes the DriveCam system. The two LADOT contractors, MV and Veolia Transportation, that have installed this system have done so at their own expense and suggest that the system "pays for itself" through reductions in accidents, property damage and insurance premiums. The Department will include language in upcoming RFPs for the Commuter Express and DASH Downtown services that encourages the installation of the DriveCam system or a similar system as part of the contractor's overall operator safety program.

IMPACT ON THE BUDGET

This report is informational only. Therefore, there is no impact on the Budget.