

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: August 12, 2013

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Gerry F. Miller *Gerry Miller for* Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No: 13-06-0556
Council File No. 13-0002-S99

SUBJECT: Resolution (Krekorian - Zine) to support AB 612 (Nazarian), which would extend yellow light intervals on traffic signals by one second at automated enforcement system (photo red light) intersections.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Note & File.

SUMMARY

On June 18, 2013, the Resolution (Krekorian - Zine) was introduced to support AB 612 (Nazarian), which would extend yellow light intervals on traffic signals by one second at photo red light intersections and would require courts to dismiss citations occurring at intersections where local agencies have not designated these yellow light intervals. The only photo red light intersections in the City are operated by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro). If AB 612 is enacted, the City can maintain the current traffic signal timings which would result in the Metro photo red light tickets not being enforceable.

BACKGROUND

Existing state law authorizes local government agencies, in cooperation with local law enforcement, to install automated traffic enforcement systems (photo red light) at intersections. The California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) requires local agencies to establish minimum yellow light intervals on traffic signals. The MUTCD specifies that a yellow light interval should have a minimum duration of three seconds and a maximum duration of six seconds, with longer intervals reserved for use at intersections with higher speed approaches.

AB 612 would require local agencies to add one second to MUTCD specified yellow light interval times at photo red light intersections. The bill would also require courts to dismiss traffic citations issued at photo red light intersections that do not comply with AB 612.

Supporters of AB 612 state that photo red light intersections increase the potential for traffic accidents. They cite several studies which have concluded that increasing the yellow light interval time would mitigate this issue. AB 612 is sponsored by Safer Streets LA and is supported by various other organizations including the Automobile Club of Southern California.

Opponents of the bill include the California Police Chiefs Association, the City and County of San Francisco, the League of California Cities, and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro).

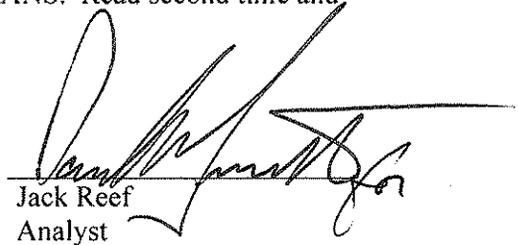
On July 25, 2013, the Metro Board voted 12-1 to oppose AB 612. City representatives Mayor Eric Garcetti, Councilmember Mike Bonin and director Jackie Dupont-Walker supported the position and Councilmember Paul Krekorian opposed the position. Metro states that extending yellow light intervals by one second on traffic signals at photo red light intersections could result in significant delays for both bus and train transit systems. Metro advises that the one-second addition to yellow light intervals at photo red light intersections would create a domino effect throughout the entire corridor and serious disruptions to the operation of their transit system. This could wreak havoc on traffic signal synchronization and require re-timing of the transit system at potentially great expense. Further, Metro states that extending yellow light intervals by one second could encourage motorists to enter intersections later into the yellow light interval which may lead to more traffic accidents.

The California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC) of the California Department of Transportation will be reviewing timing issues related to yellow light intervals at photo red light intersections in August. Without a report from the CTCDC relative to this topic, the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) is concerned that passage of AB 612 could significantly impact the City's traffic signal system which was a recently completed project spanning more than two decades and involving hundreds of millions of dollars.

This Office received a transmittal from LADOT, dated August 2, 2013, which recommends that the City not support AB 612 if Metro's continued use of photo red light enforcement is desired. As the City suspended its photo red light program, AB 612 would only apply to Metro busway (Orange Line) and light rail crossings that are currently utilizing photo red light enforcement. If Metro wishes to continue to use photo red light enforcement under AB 612, it would require re-timing of the City's entire traffic signal network and will increase Metro transit travel times and/or reduce synchronization for motorists. The re-timing would require 1-2 years of work and additional LADOT resources.

BILL STATUS

07/08/13	In committee: Hearing postponed by committee.
06/25/13	In committee: Set, second hearing. Hearing canceled at the request of the author.
06/18/13	In committee: Set, first hearing. Hearing canceled at the request of the author.
05/23/13	Referred to Com. on T. & H..
05/09/13	In Senate. Read first time. To Com. on RLS. for assignment.
05/09/13	Read third time. Passed. Ordered to the Senate
04/22/13	In committee: Set, first hearing. Hearing canceled at the request of author.
03/19/13	Referred to Com. on TRANS. From committee chair, with author's amendments: Amend, and re-refer to Com. on TRANS. Read second time and amended.
02/20/13	Read first time. To print.


Jack Reef
Analyst

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state, or federal governmental body or agency must have been adopted in form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, in 2009, CBS Los Angeles found that intersections with automated traffic enforcement tend to increase the number of accidents rather than decrease them; and

WHEREAS, studies presented by Safer Streets LA has showed that adding one second to yellow light signal times provides motorists with adequate time to either stop before reaching the intersection or allows them to pass completely through the intersection before the light turns red; and

WHEREAS, a study performed by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) showed that when yellow light interval durations were extended by one second, there was a 40% reduction in intersection accidents; and

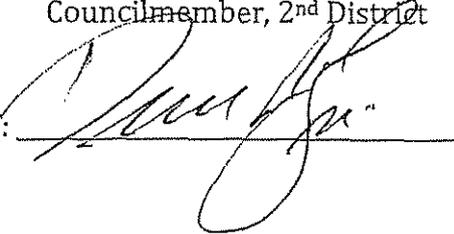
WHEREAS, other states, such as Ohio, Georgia, and New Jersey, have enacted laws mandating longer yellow light signal intervals which have resulted in a significant reduction in red light violations and associated intersections accidents; and

WHEREAS, studies have consistently shown that increasing the yellow light interval improves safety by decreasing the potential of traffic accidents; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian introduced AB 612, which would require that yellow light signal intervals be lengthened by one second at intersections with automated traffic enforcement systems in place.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2013-2014 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for AB 612, which requires that yellow light intervals be extended by one second, at intersections equipped with automated enforcement systems.

PRESENTED BY: 
PAUL KREKORIAN
Councilmember, 2nd District

SECONDED BY: 

JUN 18 2013