TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA

Town Council Regular Meeting
Agenda Item 5.a.

Agenda Item: **Ordinance 26-O-01 to amend Chapter 42 (MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAFFIC), Article II (Administration and Enforcement), Division 3 (Enforcement), to add thereto a new section 42-65 entitled "Establishment of photo-monitoring systems to enforce traffic light signals" (rescheduled from January 27, 2026)**

Meeting Date: February 3, 2026

Category: General

Prepared by: Steve Pihonak, Chief of Police, Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney

Description:
This ordinance utilizes the enabling authority contained in Code of Virginia 15.2-968.1 to establish a photo-monitoring system to enforce traffic light signals.

Background/Timing Impact:
Virginia Code § 15.2-968.1 authorizes cities, counties, and towns to enact ordinances permitting the use of photo-monitoring systems ("red-light cameras") to enforce compliance with traffic light signals at designated intersections. Adoption of this ordinance provides the legal foundation for the Town to implement automated red-light enforcement to improve safety and support the Town's strategic goal of fostering a Secure and Interconnected Community.

The addition of red-light camera enforcement directly supports the Town's success measure of reducing motor vehicle accidents to promote the safe movement of pedestrians, cyclists, and other active transportation users. Red-light violations are a significant cause of angle collisions, among the most severe crash types. Automated enforcement is a proven tool for improving intersection safety and enhancing driver compliance with traffic signals.

Implementing red-light camera enforcement provides several public-safety and operational benefits:

- **Reduction in intersection crashes:** Use of automated enforcement has been shown to significantly decrease red-light running and related collisions.
- **Improved driver behavior:** The presence and visibility of cameras create a consistent, predictable enforcement environment that encourages voluntary compliance.

- **Efficient use of police resources:** By automating enforcement at high-risk

intersections, sworn officers can be reassigned to higher-priority calls and proactive community policing.

Virginia Code § 15.2-968.1 establishes specific requirements and safeguards, all of which are incorporated into the proposed ordinance. Key elements include:

- **Signage Requirements**: Clear signage must be installed at each monitored intersection.
- **Sworn Officer Review**: Every potential violation must be inspected, verified, and affirmed by a sworn Herndon Police Officer prior to issuance.

- **Intersection Limits**:
  - Generally, localities may install cameras at one intersection per 10,000 residents.
  - For localities in Planning District 8 (including the Town of Herndon), the limit is 10 intersections or one per 10,000 residents, whichever is greater.

- **Council Authorization Required**: The Town Council must adopt an ordinance before any system may be deployed.
- **Traffic Safety Study**: Each proposed location must undergo a traffic engineering safety analysis to justify installation.
- **Private Operation Permitted**: A private vendor may own, maintain, and operate the system under contract with the Town.

- **Civil Penalty Process**:
  - Citations are civil—not criminal—and are issued to the registered owner of the vehicle.
  - No points are assessed to a driver's record and violations do not affect insurance.

- **Data Purging**: All data must be purged within 60 days after collection of the civil penalty, ensuring strong privacy protections.
- **Annual Certification**: The system must undergo annual certification confirming compliance with Code requirements.
- **Public Awareness**: A public education campaign is required prior to implementation.

The implementation of a traffic light signal violation monitoring system is currently recommended in drafts of the Roadway Safety Action Plan, and was mentioned in several community comments. It is likely that the plan will recommend adoption of the applicable code and deployment of such systems at High Injury Intersections.

Timing Impact:
The initial step is to adopt this ordinance authorizing the photo-monitoring system. Staff will then proceed to complete the required traffic engineering studies and procure a

contractor to operate the program.

Strategic Focus Area:
Secure and Interconnected Community
Good Governance

Fiscal Impact:
The Town is required to complete an engineering study in advance of deploying a traffic light signal violation monitoring system. Staff estimates fiscal burden prior to system installation is as follows:

- $10,000 for an engineering study per location
- $1,000-$3,000 for potential installation of safety improvements required per location prior to deployment of a traffic light signal violation monitoring system

The Town is also required to deliver a public awareness program for the system.

It is expected the Town's selected contractor would guarantee a cost-neutral or better program structure following installation of required safety measures. This ensures that implementation, operation, and maintenance of the red-light camera system will not create a financial deficit to the Town.

Legal Impact:
Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, Town Council approval is required to amend the Town Code.

Staff Recommendation/Next Steps:
Staff recommends adoption of the ordinance as proposed.

Attachments:
1. Ordinance (Proposed)