



Department of Administration
Intergovernmental Relations Division

Cavalier Johnson
Mayor

Preston D. Cole
Director of Administration

Jordan Primakow
Director of Intergovernmental Relations

Contact: Katie Jaeger, Senior Intergovernmental Relations Manager
414-708-3053 | kajaeg@milwaukee.gov

Overview

Too many drivers are speeding, running red lights, and causing injuries or fatalities on our roads. Yet local governments in Wisconsin are currently prohibited from using one of the most effective tools to address this crisis: Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE). While the City of Milwaukee has been working to redesign streets to prioritize safety over speed, traffic safety cameras have been proven to significantly reduce dangerous driving behaviors nationwide.

As of January 2025, 29 states and Washington, D.C. allow the use of ATE. Across those states, nearly 350 U.S. communities use red-light cameras, and more than 150 use cameras to enforce speed limits. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), 18 additional states are actively working to authorize or expand the use of ATE.

Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) programs have been proven effective at reducing speeding, traffic-related injuries, and fatalities. In urban areas, traffic safety cameras have been shown to reduce injury crashes on principal arterials by up to 47%. Had Milwaukee implemented a comprehensive ATE program in 2023, an estimated 2,543 injuries could have been prevented—out of the 5,412 people injured in traffic crashes in the city that year. Implementing automated traffic safety cameras could significantly advance the city's progress toward achieving its Vision Zero goals.

Additionally, ATE helps restore safe speeds on roadways without requiring direct police intervention, allowing law enforcement to focus on crime prevention and investigation. This technology is not intended to replace the police force, but rather to serve as an additional tool to enhance public safety.

The City of Milwaukee

Milwaukee has experienced significantly higher levels of traffic violence compared to the rest of the state. As noted by UW-Milwaukee Professor Robert Schneider, *"Roadway-related deaths in Milwaukee have increased 86% in recent years, in contrast to statewide deaths. Specifically, statewide data from the WisTransPortal database show that the annual average number of traffic fatalities in the City of Milwaukee increased from 39.0 during 2008–2012 to 72.4 during 2018–2022 (+86%), while the rest of Wisconsin (excluding Milwaukee) decreased from 540.6 to 509.2 (-6%)."*

More recent data from the Wisconsin Policy Forum show a similar trend. From 2010–2012 to 2020–2022, the three-year average of crash fatalities in Milwaukee County increased by 69.9%, while the three-year average in the state's 71 other counties declined by 5.7% during the same period.

A study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) comparing large cities with red-light safety cameras to those without found that the devices reduced the fatal red-light running crash rate by 21%, and the overall rate of fatal crashes at signalized intersections by 14%.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommends Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) as an effective countermeasure to reduce both the frequency and severity of crashes and to maximize safety improvements. The 10th edition of *Countermeasures That Work*, published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), rates ATE as a five-star (highest rating) countermeasure.

To ensure Milwaukee's Traffic Safety Camera program is both effective and equitable, Vision Zero Milwaukee has prioritized the recommendations in the "Automated Enforcement in a New Era" report published by the Governors Highway Safety Association.

- **Prioritizing Safety Over Revenue:** The primary goal of Automated Traffic Enforcement is to change dangerous driving behavior—not to generate revenue. Any fines collected would first support program start-up and maintenance, with remaining funds reinvested into traffic safety initiatives, including traffic enforcement and public safety efforts.
- **Community Engagement and Participation:** Residents will be informed about where traffic safety cameras are being installed and will have opportunities to participate in the planning and implementation process to ensure the program reflects community priorities.
- **Data-Driven Site Selection:** Camera locations will be selected based on data showing a history of crashes, injuries, or fatalities—especially in areas that pose risks to vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, cyclists, and children.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** The program will be launched with clear public communication to ensure drivers are aware of where cameras are located. Policies and data reporting will be shaped with community input and released regularly to build trust and maintain accountability.