

The Pueblo Chieftain

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Eye of the law won't be ready until summer



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/BRYAN KELSEN -- Motorists do their best to negotiate the intersection at Thatcher and Prairie avenues on Wednesday. The South Side intersection is one of the locations where the city plans to install a camera designed to video drivers that run red lights.

By **JEFF TUCKER**
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

The cameras the city plans to use to catch people running red lights won't be operational until summer.

Pepper Whittlef, traffic engineer for the city, said the city's contractor, American Traffic Solutions, is working with the city to design the installation process for the red light cameras, and that is expected to take about three months.

The city will begin construction for the cameras in April and that won't be complete until late May, she said.

There will be a monthlong warning period after that, pushing the first actual tickets issued because of the cameras to June. "We don't want to start the full ticketing until we're sure that all of the bugs are worked out," Whittlef said. While ATS and the city work on designing the installation process for the cameras, the police department is determining what set of conditions must exist in the photographs before citations are issued and is developing a process by which officers will review the citations.

The municipal court also is working on how it will process payments and hear cases on the tickets.

The city also had to adjust where it will put the first cameras, Whittlef said.

The city originally had targeted the intersections at Dillon Drive and Colorado 47, and at U.S. 50 West and Elizabeth Street.

But those intersections would not work because the Colorado Department of Transportation maintains the signals there and its policies prohibit the cameras.

Instead, CDOT worked with the city and ATS to find two other locations where the cameras are

allowed. One is at the U.S. 50 Bypass at Norwood Avenue on the East Side and the second is at Thatcher and Prairie avenues on the South Side.

In a memo from Whittlef to the Pueblo City Council, Whittlef said the cameras at Norwood and U.S. 50 Bypass would focus on east- and westbound traffic on the highway.

She said that about 22 percent of the accidents at that intersection involve broadside collisions, suggesting people are running the red light there.

The cameras will watch the westbound traffic at Thatcher and Prairie.

Whittlef said about 42 percent of the accidents at that intersection are broadside or accidents involving turning vehicles and preliminary indications are that most of the red light runners are traveling westbound.

City staff will assess how effective the cameras are at reducing red light violations and accidents before making any recommendation to expand the program.