

Red light statistics spark more debate on cameras

Officials contest SafeLight benefits

BY CHRIS MCLAUGHLIN
STAFF WRITER

Opponents of Chapel Hill's red light camera program have received their first round of ammunition in the form of hard data.

Local officials say newly released statistics, which measure the number of violations against the cameras' ability to produce ticket-worthy images, show the cameras to be ineffective in most cases.

Out of the 680 violations recorded by the camera at the intersection of U.S. 15-501 and Sage Road, the town issued only 205 tickets, about 30 percent of the violations.

Of the 135 violations recorded at the intersection of Airport Road and Estes Drive, 50 were issued tickets, about 36 percent.

This low percentage is due to the cameras' inability to produce clear images of the violating cars' license plates.

Kumar Neppalli, Chapel Hill's traffic engineer, said these problems have not been addressed properly by Affiliated Computer Services, the company contracted by the town for the program. "We have experienced problems with image quality and customer service," Neppalli said.

Chapel Hill Town Council member Mark Kleinschmidt said he was disappointed with ACS's failure to cooperate with town staff.

"ACS officials don't comply with Chapel Hill values. They don't comply with minimal customer service values," he said. "I don't know what level of patience the Town Council will demonstrate."

Kleinschmidt said that when the new council is in place, he plans to discuss the possibility of ending the town's contract with ACS and getting rid of the red light cameras.

"It looks like the inclination of that discussion will be to end the program," he said.

Mayor Kevin Foy echoed Kleinschmidt's sentiment. "It doesn't seem like there is going to



DTH FILE PHOTO/KATE BLACKMAN

An employee of Fulcher Electric installs one of Chapel Hill's first red light cameras at the intersection of Airport Road and Estes Drive on Aug. 22.

be support for continuing (the program).

Foy said that his reasons for opposing the program hinge mostly on his lack of faith in the cameras' ability to prevent accidents.

"I have not been convinced that this is a safety measure," Foy said.

Kleinschmidt echoed similar sentiments. He said that cameras' low accuracy suggest to potential violators that they have only a one in three chance of getting a ticket if they run a red light.

"This undermines any confidence in the deterrent value of the cameras," Kleinschmidt said.

But Rita Berman, a SafeLight appeals officer, said the presence of the cameras makes people more

aware of their driving habits.

"I think (SafeLight) will be successful if people give the program time to work," Berman said.

Neppalli said the town cannot say yet whether the cameras are indeed an effective safety measure.

"It is too early to decide whether we have positive results or negative results because we don't have enough data to determine that," Neppalli said.

Neppalli and several town officials said the town will need six months to a year of data to determine whether the cameras are effective in preventing accidents.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

UNC tops for black students

BY CAROLINE KORNEGAY
STAFF WRITER

Although UNC did not admit black undergraduates until 1955, it now accommodates the largest percentage of black students among the nation's top universities, according to a recent report.

The statistics, published by the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, listed the 50 highest rated universities, as ranked by U.S. News and World Report, according to their percentage of black undergraduate enrollment.

Officials said that UNC's high ranking is proof of the drive toward a more inclusive campus.

"I think it reaffirms Carolina's commitment to a diverse class," said Terri Houston, director of on-campus recruitment and support for the Office of Minority Affairs.

Edging out Duke and Emory universities, UNC headed up the list with 11.1 percent black enrollment followed by Duke's 10.4 percent and Emory's 9.3 percent.

Houston said UNC has been

successful at recruiting black students in recent years because it is a welcoming place for minority students that has tried to improve the quality of services available to them.

She said there has been negative pressure on black students in the past not to come to UNC, but the Office of Minority Affairs is trying to overcome the myth that UNC is not a good fit for them.

"We have a series of programs designed to bring ... parents and students to campus," she said.

With programs such as the Carolina Covenant, which is designed to help low-income students graduate debt-free in four years, and the University's strong stance behind affirmative action, UNC is staking its claim as a campus with an important focus on diversity, Houston said.

"We're sending a national message that we are committed to identifying and enrolling high-achieving students who are also (a part of a diverse) campus and com-

munity," she said.

Stephen Farmer, senior associate director for the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, said his office always looks to improve diversity on campus.

"I'm pleased to get this publicity, but we're pleased that this publicity represents the truth about Carolina," he said.

Farmer added that the statistics reflect not only that UNC is recruiting minority students, but also that minority students are staying on campus past their freshman year.

Houston said that the University always can do more to improve both recruitment efforts and services offered to minority students but that this ranking shows how far UNC has come.

"I think it's a great step, and it's a great achievement."

Staff writer Jonathan M. Carl contributed to this report. Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

Police look for link in robberies

Carrboro business hit in latest crime

BY TERENCE JORDAN
STAFF WRITER

Carrboro police are investigating the town's third reported armed robbery in November and are exploring a possible link between the crimes.

According to police reports, three men entered the Spinx Oil on West Main Street at 11:55 p.m. with their faces covered and wearing gloves.

Florence Kaha, 63, the store manager and the only employee in the building at the time of the incident, stated in the police report that the men entered the building, came behind the counter and demanded money.

One of the men pointed a black revolver at her and ordered her to get on the floor, reports state.

Carrboro police Lt. Jim Phillips said only one man was observed with a gun.

"After a review of the surveillance tapes, it appears only one man was armed," he said.

Kaha reported hearing one man

say, "We want the money."

She pushed the key to the register toward them, and one of the men, who was wearing a red bandanna over his face, took \$70 out of the register, reports state.

The men then emptied a spare money drawer that contained about \$52. In the police report, Kaha stated that the third man "stayed away from the other two."

After taking the money and the business phone, all three men left the building.

According to reports, a witness saw the men jump the chain link security fence after the incident.

Upon arrival, Carrboro police found the business phone at the base of the fence but no sign of the men. Police took the business' surveillance tape and checked the area for fingerprints but found none.

This instance marks the first time this month that a Carrboro business was the victim of an armed robbery. The previous two armed robberies reported to

Carrboro police in November both occurred on Broad Street.

Spinx Oil is located less than 1 mile away from Broad Street.

There have been dozens of robberies in Carrboro this year, including about 12 armed robberies, said Carrboro police spokeswoman Brenda Goodrich. She characterized the robberies as being "more than you would think."

One armed robbery in particular, which occurred Nov. 1, has several parallels to Monday's incident.

A Carrboro man reported being robbed at his home by two men, both of whom wore hooded sweat-shirts and masks.

Robbery victim Charles Brockwell, 70, also reported that one of the men carried a black handgun, which he used to threaten Brockwell.

The suspects took almost \$1,300 and then fled on foot. Police have yet to capture either of the suspects.

Carrboro police are investigating leads in all cases.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Pre-med? Pre-dental? Pre-professional?



ANTONIO BRAITHWAITE

volunteering in Honduras in 2003.

Antonio is a third-year dental student at UNC and a 2001 graduate of the Department of Nutrition.

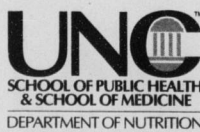
YOU CAN GET THERE FROM HERE.

Antonio Braithwaite completed his prerequisites for dental school while working toward his Bachelor of Science in Public Health in the Department of Nutrition. He's now pursuing a degree in dentistry at Carolina. Antonio recently spent time in Honduras as part of a School of Dentistry community service rotation; while there, he saw "how nutritional habits affect the progression of dental disease in different cultures and countries."

The Department of Nutrition is a great place to prepare for medical school, dental school, or a professional career in health care. If you're looking for a major, contact us for details about the options we offer.

For more information, please contact:

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