

# **County of Santa Clara**

Office of the County Executive  
70 West Hedding Street, East Wing 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
San Jose, CA 95110  
www.sccgov.org



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Gwendolyn Mitchell/Laurel Anderson  
Office of Public Affairs  
(408) 299-5119

Masoud Akbarzadeh  
Roads & Airports Department  
(408) 494-1336

## **County of Santa Clara To Step Up Traffic Safety Efforts** *New Traffic Safety Equipment Will Target School Zones & Expressways*

**SAN JOSE, CALIF.** – In an effort to combat speeding in school zones and running red lights on County expressways, today the County of Santa Clara Roads & Airports Department announced that it will be working to increase public awareness of the importance of observing traffic regulations as well as bringing in new equipment to help with enforcement. During the course of the year the Roads and Airports Department will install eight electronic driver speed display signs in the vicinity of four schools and 240 Red Light Enforcement Indicators (also known as “Rat” boxes) at the top 30 high-incidence County expressway intersections. The electronic speed display signs indicate the actual speed of an approaching vehicle and are effective in encouraging motorists to slow down in school zones. Rat boxes are electronic devices that enable police to identify red light runners from the far side of an intersection and quickly and safely pursue, stop and cite the violators.

“Many collisions could be avoided if motorists would comply with traffic signals,” said Michael Murdter, County of Santa Clara Director of Roads & Airports. “The County’s goal is to make streets and roadways safer and to reduce the number of red light related collisions, which often cause severe injuries and deaths.”

Motor vehicle crashes are one of the leading causes of death in Santa Clara County. The estimated annual cost of collision-related injuries and deaths exceeds \$500 million. The County Roads & Airports Department is now using a combination of automobile monitoring technology, law enforcement and public education to address this problem. The electronic speed display signs will be posted in combination with

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standard speed limit signage, typically 25 mph in school zones, to reestablish awareness of the school zone speed limit. Studies demonstrate these signs are effective in achieving a five to seven miles per hour speed reduction.

“We are also posting red light violation advisory signs at various locations along County-maintained expressways to educate the public and deter them from running red lights,” Murdter continued. “We believe if motorists are aware that the minimum fine for red light violations is \$336, they will be less likely to speed through intersections as signals are changing to red.”

The Red Light Enforcement Indicators (aka Rat boxes) – so called because they “rat” on offenders – feature a small Light-Emitting Diode (LED) that faces opposite the traffic light; the LED illuminates when the traffic light cycles to red. Officers can position for stakeout in a place where they can see the limit line and the Rat box simultaneously. With this device, an officer no longer has to follow an offender through a red light to issue a ticket; he or she will already be on the far side of the intersection.

The electronic speed display signs and Rat boxes are being purchased as part of a \$156,320 grant provided by the California Office of Traffic Safety. The County’s goal is to eventually equip every major intersection on County maintained expressways with Rat boxes.

“Getting better tools such as this for the County of Santa Clara is going to save more lives,” said Sunne Wright McPeak, Secretary of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, which oversees the Office of Traffic Safety. “Speed display signs are easily seen by oncoming drivers which prompt drivers to naturally reduce their speed.”

The Santa Clara County Roads and Airports Department will work with law enforcement agencies through this OTS-funded Traffic Safety Campaign. More information is available at the Department’s website at [www.CountyRoads.org](http://www.CountyRoads.org).