



Red light cameras bringing in the bucks

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PORT RICHEY - It may be tiny, but it's generating big bucks for the city of Port Richey. A camera, focused on the southbound lanes of U.S. 19 and Ridge Road has been capturing video of cars going through the red light.

In slightly more than two months of operation, the camera has helped the police department issue 772 tickets. At \$125.00 per ticket, that's more than \$95,000.00 in revenue so far.



This red light camera is ringing up the tickets, but some say they think it's illegal.

But Port Richey Police Chief Dave Brown says the camera has nothing to do with generating money.

"The concept is to make you a better driver, reduce crashes and reduce fatalities," he explained.

Brown says that has indeed occurred, but there could be legal challenges. Jason Melton, a criminal defense attorney says the system has its limits.

"It has no idea who the driver is," Melton said.

Although the city of Port Richey provides forms for car owners who claim they were not behind the wheel, there may still be problems. "What this does is effectively take away a large burden of proof. (It) effectively takes away due process rights for individuals," said Melton.

He points out no one can cross-examine a camera in court. Chief Brown maintains as long as the camera cuts the number of accidents at the city's most dangerous intersection, the camera will keep rolling.

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