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L.A. Council votes to drop red-light camera program

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The City Council voted unanimously Wednesday to halt Los Angeles' controversial red-light camera program, which has ticketed more than 180,000 motorists since beginning in 2004. The program will officially end July 31.

The action followed a similar vote last month by the city Police Commission, which sought to drop the 32-camera program in part because of the difficulty in collecting fines.

Unlike moving citations issued directly by police officers, red-light camera tickets, along with photographs of the alleged offense, are mailed to the registered owner of the vehicle cited in the violation.

That has limited the Los Angeles County Superior Court system's willingness to aggressively enforce collections for the city and 32 other photo enforcement programs in Los Angeles County, officials said.

The City Council vote comes after this week's surprising revelation that authorities cannot force ticketed red-light camera violators to pay the fine. For a variety of reasons, including the way the law was written, Los Angeles officials said the fines were essentially "voluntary" and that there are virtually no tangible consequences for those who refuse to pay.

Legal questions about how intensively the city can enforce red-light camera tickets have been circulating at City Hall for months, and some officials have been publicly decrying the problem for some time.

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-- Ari Bloomekatz at Los Angeles City Hall

Photo: A red-light camera is posted at La Brea Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard. Credit: Glenn Koenig / Los Angeles Times

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