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Institute: Loop 101 cameras reduced speeding

Brian Powell, Tribune

A national organization today released its own independent study of Scottsdale's Loop 101 photo enforcement trial program, concluding the speed cameras had a major impact in reducing speeding.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found mean speeds for all vehicles declined from 70 mph before the cameras were in place to 63 mph when the cameras were turned on.

Speeds then returned to 69 mph when the trial program ended. The speed limit on the 8-mile freeway stretch is 65 mph.

The institute is an Arlington, Va.-based nonprofit organization funded by the country's largest automobile insurers.

The report also found before the cameras were put in place, 15 percent of drivers were traveling more than 75 mph. Once the cameras were up and running, it said the number of violators dropped to between 1 percent and 2 percent,.

Anne McCartt, institute senior vice president for research, said the data collection and polling was done separately from the study released by an Arizona State University professor last year that also concluded speeds were reduced.

"We think that our study shows ... that speed cameras are a really good supplement to traditional speed enforcement," McCartt said. "In Scottsdale, when the cameras were there, speeds were down and when the cameras were off, speeds went up."

Scottsdale is the first American city to place fixed photo enforcement speed cameras along a freeway.

ASU professor Simon Washington's preliminary findings concluded the average speed dropped nearly 10 mph through the enforcement zone, with fewer overall crashes and a reduction in the severity of vehicle crashes.

The institute's report did not study crash data because of the short duration of the trial program, which ran from January to October 2006.

The Loop 101 camera program was reactivated in February 2007.