



HOUSE BILL 287: Red Light Cameras/Hope Mills & Spring Lake.

2017-2018 General Assembly

Committee:	House State and Local Government II. If favorable, re-refer to Transportation. If favorable, re-refer to Finance	Date:	March 21, 2017
Introduced by:	Reps. Lucas, Szoka, W. Richardson, Floyd	Prepared by:	Cindy Avrette
Analysis of:	First Edition		Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 287 authorizes the Town of Hope Mills to use cameras to identify and penalize persons who violate the red light statute, and it makes changes to the Town of Spring Lake's existing authorization to use red light cameras. Both Towns are located in Cumberland County. The City of Fayetteville currently has this authority.*

CURRENT LAW: G.S. 160A-300.1 authorizes more than 20 municipalities¹ to use traffic control photographic systems to enforce the State law² prohibiting a driver from entering an intersection when a traffic light is emitting a steady red signal. The camera must meet standards set by the Department of Transportation, and appropriate warning signs must be conspicuously posted not more than 300 feet from the location of the red light camera system. The duration of the yellow light change interval at the intersection where a camera is used must be no less than the yellow light change interval duration specified on the traffic signal plan of record signed and sealed by a professional engineer and must be in compliance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

S.L. 2007-341³ amended G.S. 160A-300.1 to address constitutional issues raised by the North Carolina Court of Appeals in *Shavitz v. City of High Point*, 177 N.C. App. 465 (2006). Under G.S. 160A-300.1, as amended by S.L. 2007-341, a violation detected by a red light camera is a noncriminal violation for which a civil penalty of \$75 is assessed; no points or insurance points are assigned to the owner or driver of the vehicle. The owner of the vehicle must either pay the civil penalty or challenge⁴ the assessment within 30 days after the date the citation is served or mailed. If the owner fails to respond to the citation within the time allowed, the civil penalty is increased to \$100 and the right to contest the citation is forfeited.

The clear proceeds of the penalty must be paid to the local school board, subject only to deductions for the costs of producing and mailing citation notices to the vehicle owners, and those costs cannot exceed 10% of the civil penalty assessed. A municipality may assess a collection assistance fee, not to exceed 20% of the civil penalty assessed, if the civil penalty has not been paid within 30 days after a second notice.

¹ Cities of Albemarle, Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Greenville, High Point, Locust, Lumberton, Newton, Rocky Mount, and Wilmington; the Towns of Chapel Hill, Cornelius, Huntersville, Matthews, Nags Head, Pineville, and Spring Lake; and to the municipalities in Union County.

² G.S. 20-158.

³ The changes made to G.S. 160A-300.1 by S.L. 2007-341 apply to the Cities of Albemarle, Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Greenville, Locust, and Rocky Mount, and to the municipalities in Union County.

⁴ A municipality is required to establish a nonjudicial administrative hearing process to allow the citation and penalty to be contested.

Karen Cochrane-Brown
Director



Legislative Analysis
Division
919-733-2578

House Bill 287

Page 2

BILL ANALYSIS: House Bill 287 would amend the existing local authority for the Town of Spring Lake to use a red light camera system to include the changes made by S.L. 2007-341 and it would authorize the Town of Hope Mills to use a red light camera system, consistent with the law as amended by S.L. 2007-341.

In addition to the general authority granted to these two towns under G.S. 160A-300.1, as amended by S.L. 2007-341, the bill would do the following⁵:

- Provide that the Towns of Hope Mills and Spring Lake may enter into a contract with a contractor for the lease, lease purchase, or purchase of a traffic control photographic system. They may enter into only one contract, and the duration of the contract may be for no more than 60 months. After the period specified in the contract has expired, the system shall either be the property of the town, or the system shall be removed and returned to the contractor.
- Increase the civil penalty for an initial citation from \$75 to \$100. The bill would not change the \$100 penalty that would normally apply upon a second notice of the violation. Thus, the civil penalty amount would not increase if it remains unpaid after 30 days.
- Authorize the Towns of Hope Mills and Spring Lake to enter into an interlocal agreement with the Cumberland County School Board to carry out the purposes of the Act. The agreement may include provisions on sharing the cost of operating the red light camera system. The 2006 Court of Appeals decision⁶ held that the deduction of the operating costs from the proceeds of the civil penalty was a violation of Article IX, Section 7 of the State Constitution, which requires the clear proceeds of a penalty be remitted to the county school board. However, the school board may voluntarily agree, through an interlocal agreement, to pay all or a portion of the operating costs of the system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The act becomes effective July 1, 2017, except for the increase in the penalty, which becomes effective October 1, 2017.

Giles Perry substantially contributed to this summary.

⁵ The General Assembly has similar legislation that incorporates these changes for the following cities: Fayetteville, S.L. 2014-84, and Greenville, S.L. 2016-64.

⁶ The City of High Point filed a Petition for Discretionary Review with the North Carolina Supreme Court, but the Court denied the petition on June 28, 2007.