

By Jessica Brown
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MASON – This suburban city is considering following the lead of Springdale and Butler County by installing a video monitoring system that could help prevent traffic jams.

Some may be familiar with such a system from the movie "The Italian Job," in which the main characters hacked into Los Angeles' computerized traffic system to create a traffic mess that helped them pull off a heist.

In Mason, the intent is much less clandestine.

"We just want to manage the traffic," said Councilman Tony Bradburn.

Bradburn wants to hire TEC Engineering Inc., a Springdale-based traffic engineering firm.

The company would install surveillance cameras at strategic intersections and wire the traffic signals to a company office.

Workers there would monitor the traffic flow and adjust signals to alleviate backups.

It would cost about \$5,000 to install each camera plus a monthly monitoring fee.

Mason, a city of more than 28,000 people, is one of several communities in Greater Cincinnati to consider these types of high-tech systems to ease gridlock.

"I think it's becoming more of a viable option as communities real-

Mason's 10 busiest intersections

Data represents traffic counts during a 24-hour period. This study was done between May and October 2003:

1) Tylersville Road and U.S. 42 - 81,791 vehicles.

2) Western Row and Mason-Montgomery roads - 75,018.

4) Tylersville and Mason-Montgomery roads - 71,050.

5) Socialville-Fosters and Mason-Montgomery roads - 69,569.

6) Mason-Montgomery Road and Main Street (U. S. 42) - 55,828.

7) Ohio 741, Kings Mills Road and Parkside Drive - 55,328.

8) Tylersville and Snider Roads - 53,044.

9) U.S. 42 and Ohio 741 - 49,036.

10) Western Row Road and U.S. 42 - 43,864.

*Source:
 City Engineer's Office*

ize the cost of doing this is less expensive than making major roadway improvements," said TEC project manager Aaron Littman.

Springdale hired TEC in 1996 to ease congestion around Tri-County Mall. About 100,000 cars a day traveled the roads there during the peak holiday shopping season. The city pays a monthly \$3,000 monitoring fee.

Mason already has three traffic cameras, but they aren't connected to a central monitoring system. TEC installed a test camera at Kings Island Drive and Western Row Road a few months ago.

Two other cameras, purchased with state grants, monitor Mason-Montgomery Road, one at Main Street and one at Tylersville Road.

Bradburn will meet Monday with Mason's safety committee to discuss the proposal.

Bradburn's proposal comes amid growing traffic concerns here due to population growth, retail development and seasonal tourism traffic from the Beach Waterpark, Paramount's Kings Island and international sports tournaments.

Great Wolf Lodge, an indoor water park and resort, is also expected to open by the end of the year, potentially bringing hundreds of thousands more visitors to the region.

"There are several times during the year when traffic is really backed up because of a huge influx of cars," Bradburn said. "Kings Mill Road - that's a mess in the summer."

The city's population grew 27 percent from 22,016 to 27,958 between 2000 and 2004, according to the U.S. Census.

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