

AI-Powered Traffic Cameras Are Coming to the U.S. Creating Privacy Concerns

January 26, 2025 - Artificial intelligence-driven traffic cameras, already in use in the United Kingdom and Australia, are set to expand their reach into the United States, raising significant privacy and oversight questions for American drivers.

In both the U.K. and Australia, these AI-powered cameras developed by Australian company Acusensus, have been widely deployed to catch various traffic violations. Unlike traditional cameras, which focus on speed or red-light infractions, these advanced systems capture high-resolution images of every vehicle that passes. High resolution images taken by the cameras not only capture the passing car and its license plate, but also capture the driver & passengers and what they are doing. Thies images are then analyzed with AI to detect behaviors like texting while driving or failing to wear a seatbelt. In the U.K., nearly half of the countryâ€™s police forces have trialed this technology, while in Australia, its implementation has fueled debates about privacy and surveillance.

The system's effectiveness is undeniable, with significant increases in detected violations. In Australia, it has led to dramatic spikes in citations for mobile phone and seatbelt violations. However, these results come at the expense of greater intrusion into the lives of everyday citizens, as every passing vehicle is monitored and photographed.

The system is now being tested in the United States, with pilot programs in Georgia and North Carolina. Unlike the overseas approach of mailing tickets post-violation, the U.S. model integrates real-time notifications, enabling nearby officers to stop drivers immediately after violations are detected. Proponents argue that this method encourages immediate behavior changes, but critics see it as an expansion of constant surveillance with potential for abuse.

Privacy advocates are particularly concerned about how these systems store and manage data. While Acusensus claims that no data is retained if no violation is detected, the responsibility for oversight often falls to local governments. This lack of standardized regulation is creating fears that sensitive driver information could be mishandled or misused. Skeptics argue that without robust oversight, promises to delete data are meaningless.

The ramifications for drivers are significant. If fully implemented, these systems could lead to pervasive monitoring of daily commutes, eroding personal privacy in the name of public safety. The potential for misuse by law enforcement or third-party vendors adds another layer of concern. Critics warn that the technology could become a revenue-generating tool rather than a genuine safety measure, as seen in past controversies over red-light and speed cameras.

Without stringent regulations, the promise of safer roads could come at the cost of losing control over personal privacy in public spaces. For American drivers, the arrival of AI-driven traffic cameras may soon force them to confront these unsettling questions firsthand.

by Jim Malmberg

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