

LONG ISLAND / POLITICS**Nassau County loses speed camera ruling**

An appellate court said Nassau's traffic agency must turn over data from the short-lived school speed camera program.

By Robert Brodsky

robert.brodsky@newsday.com  @BrodskyRobert

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Nassau must disclose records relating to its short-lived school speed camera program after a state appellate court ruled this month that the county's Traffic and Parking Violations Agency was subject to public information laws.

The Feb. 7 ruling by the Appellate Division's Second District reversed a lower-court ruling that found that TPVA was part of the District Court and thus exempt from New York's Freedom of Information Law.

For years, Nassau has rejected FOIL requests to TPVA — which administers traffic, parking and red light camera tickets — arguing that records can be withheld because the agency is part of the judiciary.

The Appellate Division unanimously rejected that argument and ordered records related to the administrative functions of the agency, including the 2014 speed camera program, to be made public. Documents about adjudication of specific cases would remain private, the court ruled.

The case began when Nassau rejected attorney Cory Morris' request for documents associated with the speed camera program, which generated more than 400,000 tickets and \$24 million in revenue from September to November 2014.

"I thought it was important for residents to know where their tax dollars went," Morris said Tuesday.

Morris, of Hauppauge, requested records related to how the camera sites were selected; safety studies associated with the locations; the process for calibrating the devices and the identity of all employees working on the program.

The Appellate Division ordered a State Supreme court justice to review the documents privately and determine if they can be released.

[Court forces Nassau to disclose records](#)

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speed camera program prompted opposition from many residents. They complained that tickets being generated on weekends when school was out, and at locations where required warning signs were not in place. In December 2014, county lawmakers voted unanimously to end the program.

Traffic safety advocates say the TPVA records could be useful in determining how former County Executive Edward Mangano conceived and operated the program.

The court decision also could lead to disclosure of documents related to the county's red light camera program, said Alec Slatky, a policy liaison with AAA Northeast.

"This is a groundbreaking decision for transparency at TPVA," Slatky said.

Morris said the information should also prepare residents if the county were to ever revive the speed camera program.

"If you consider the program deceased, remember it can be turned back on like a light switch," he said.

In November, shortly after her Election Day win, County Executive Laura Curran raised the prospect of reviving the speed cameras, suggesting that to raise revenue "we have to look at all options both old and new." She dropped the idea less than a week later amid objections from county lawmakers.

Suffolk's traffic violation agency, which has rejected TPVA documents requests, citing the judiciary argument, said it was reviewing the decision.

"Transparency is a main goal of the Suffolk County Traffic and Parking Violations Agency and we will consider the criteria set forth in the decision when providing information in response to FOIL requests moving forward," said Suffolk TPVA Executive Director Paul Margiotta.



By Robert Brodsky

robert.brodsky@newsday.com  @BrodskyRobert

Robert Brodsky is a Nassau County political reporter who has worked at Newsday since 2011. He is a Queens College and American University alum.