

# Police look at pros and cons of dash cameras in Halton

By David Lea  
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Police discussed the pros and the challenges of using dash cameras at the Halton Regional Police Service board meeting (Thursday) Aug. 4.

Inspector Derek Davis of the Halton police Office of Continuous Improvement and Strategic Management noted, from May 2015 to June 2016, a pilot project examined the cameras potential.

The project saw three Halton police vehicles equipped with the dash cams.

The officers involved were required to wear microphones so both the officer and the person they were interacting with could be heard in the video.

Our big objectives, like a lot of other agencies, we want to increase transparency. It is great to be able to show others what police do at a call, said Davis.

It is also there to gather evidence and to record use of force or other critical incidents.

Davis also said the dash camera videos could be used in police training.

The system used by Halton police features one front-facing camera and one backseat camera, which captures video of any prisoners being held in the vehicle.

The camera can be activated manually, but is also triggered when the police vehicle's sirens are activated or if a collision is registered.

Davis noted that while officers can turn off the camera or mute its audio (something that is only permitted under specific circumstances) they do not have the ability to delete footage.

During the presentation to the board, Davis showed dash camera video of an impaired driver who was stopped in Oakville.

The video shows the officer having to repeatedly knock on the window of a vehicle before its driver finally rolls it down.

The driver can barely speak, is unable to answer the officer's questions and is soon arrested.

The driver was later found to have twice the legal limit of alcohol in his system and pled guilty to impaired driving and other charges.

That's a great example of where the camera can really provide great assistance. Imagine no video and trying to explain all that multitude of interaction and observation and all the things you saw in the video in a court case, said Davis.

You can see how challenging that would be for a police officer to testify and paint that picture with words.

Davis also spoke about how the cameras were used to enforce the rules of the road and showed another video taken in Halton of traffic violations in local neighbourhoods.

The video shows car after car not stopping at stop signs in residential neighbourhoods in fact, not even slowing down.

After one vehicle is stopped, its driver is adamant he came to a complete stop at the sign.

The video shows otherwise.

Some people are just good people that really believe they stopped. The video shows a bit of a different story, said Davis.

One Halton officer noted when residents challenge him about the ticket he invites them to watch the video.

He said not a single resident has taken the ticket to court after seeing the traffic violation for themselves.

Despite the advantages, Davis said the cameras are not perfect.

There are still major questions that need to be resolved concerning the storage and retention of data from the cameras.

Davis said preparing a specific video for court is also a lot of work, particularly when that video needs to be vetted for third-party information and privacy concerns.

The impact on the officers who use the cameras was also discussed.

The hardware for the dash camera system alone costs approximately \$7,000-\$8,000 per vehicle.

There are additional costs for installing and maintaining the system and for the training of officers in its use, among other things.

It is unclear at this time if Halton police will request funds from the board for additional dash cameras during the fall budget process.



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Notice is hereby given in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Act, S.O. 2001, and Town of Halton Hills By-law 2008-0020 regarding the following temporary road closure for the purpose of the following community event: **Georgetown Rock n Roll Classics** Main Street from Church St. to James St., Friday, August 26th, 2016, 11:00 AM - 12:30 AM (Saturday, August 27th). Organized by: Georgetown B.I.A.

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