

Executive Summary

Context of This Report

Viewed from a historical context, the relationship between law enforcement agencies and minority communities has been problematic. From the perspective of minority communities, law enforcement agencies throughout our history were all too often employed as a mechanism to control and suppress the democratic aspirations of marginalized communities. Law enforcement agencies reflected the pervasive racial and ethnic prejudice of American society, and did so with the full authority and weight of the criminal justice system.

Nationally, we are witnessing the inevitable social tension and strain associated with transitioning from law enforcement as a method of controlling minority communities, to law enforcement that collaborates with minority communities as full participants in our society. Communities agree to standards for lawful conduct. Communities determine the consequences for breach of lawful conduct. Communities grant law enforcement authority to enforce standards of conduct. Communities articulate the acceptable methods by which authority is exercised. Thus, in a very real sense, law enforcement is the community's mechanism to enforce its own standards. Significant discontinuity between the community's sanctioned methods and law enforcement's utilized methods raises serious concerns about the legitimacy of particular law enforcement methods.

It is within this context that the Task Force has been called upon to review Urbana's traffic stop statistics. The Task Force acknowledges that Urbana Police Department is generally reputed to be a good example of a law enforcement agency that is committed to serving all elements of its community. Notwithstanding that reputation, the Department's traffic stop data reveal a pattern of stopping minorities at a higher rate than their proportion in the population. These patterns raise several critical questions that bear directly upon the legitimacy of the Department's traffic enforcement methods from the perspective of the minority community and the Urbana community as a whole. This report attempts to explore some of the questions raised by the data from a community perspective.


As a final note, the Task Force is sensitive to the recent tragic encounters between law enforcement and minority citizens which culminated in the deaths of Kiwane Carrington in Champaign, Illinois, Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in Brooklyn, New York. The Task Force seeks to learn from the IDOT data to positively contribute to the improvement of community-police relations in Urbana so that we might avoid similarly tragic encounters in our community.


Terminology


We will be using the following terms as described:


Summary of Comments on Task Force Report


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 Number: 1 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:03:05 PM
I would like to suggest to change "problematic" to "difficult"

 Number: 2 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:15:29 PM
I would like to add:
"knowing that many other organizations, may share similar behavior..."

 Number: 3 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:30:13 PM
I think this entire paragraph could express accountability from both groups as that Law enforcement should be conscience about being sensitive to different cultures. At the same time, the community need to be accountable about their actions.

 Number: 4 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:33:03 PM
The Task Force has been called to study the disproportion of the statistical result on traffic stops. In my opinion this other, difficult relations with the law enforcement and the community can be addressed but it is not the main focus.



 Number: 5 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:35:34 PM
I don't know why these events that are not related with traffic stop need to be addressed. Please a clarify.

effect on crime rates. We find that the benefits of engaging in these practices must be measured and weighed against the negative impacts that such practices make in the community. Insofar as hot-spot policing continues to be used, and we recognize that there are benefits in doing so, we urge the Police Department to do additional targeted community engagement to minimize the negative experiences that many African-American drivers have due to the resulting increased number of traffic stops that occur from the practice.

As part of our discussions with the Police Department regarding different types of policing, we found that traffic stops were not tracked as to type, whether hot-spot policing, specific traffic details, or other sorts of engagements. While we recommend in this report several additional kinds of information the Police Department should be collecting and reviewing to improve police procedures, the Department has already instituted a procedure to collect traffic stop type as part of their regular collection of traffic stop data due to our discussions with them.

Summary of Recommendations

There are detailed recommendations at the end of this report. This is a high-level summary of some of the key recommendations.

- The Police Department should continue and expand the programs it has already initiated during the existence of the Task Force, particularly trainings on implicit bias, the collection and monitoring of additional traffic stop data (beyond IDOT requirements) to help eliminate disparities, and reviews of traffic stops with officers to assess the motivations, efficacy, and results of traffic stops.
- A statistician should be enlisted to continue the review of traffic stop statistics on an annual basis to find any trends and identify biases that may exist.
- Crime statistics should be regularly reviewed to assure that any differences in police tactics are justified by significant reductions in crime rate as compared to the negative impact such tactics have on the communities where they are used.
- Police Department policies should be reviewed to be sure that ticketing for traffic stops is done proportionally, across race or ethnicity, where traffic stops are disproportional due to specific police procedures. 
- The City Council should review the disproportional economic impacts of citations for traffic violations and examine changes that might ameliorate those impacts. For example, fines for different traffic violations should be reviewed with an eye toward reducing fines that disproportionately impact the African-American and Latino communities.
- The Police Department should  gage with the communities affected by disparate traffic stops, both to help educate the community on traffic stop expectations and how community members can help to reduce the number of traffic stops and citations, as well as to help educate officers on the experiences of the communities affected by disparate numbers of traffic stops.

Number: 1 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:39:11 PM

In my opinion community safety should be the priority so, if it is proportional we will create another issue base of race and safety.

Number: 2 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:40:21 PM

I will suggest to add:
"continue"

The Task Force began to recognize that there were different kinds of stops and that some types of stops would be more likely to increase the racial disparity. In response the Police Department changed the data collection for IDOT to include the type of stop being conducted. The additional data collected now includes a breakdown of stop type into the following categories; Traffic (identified traffic issues), Patrol (for target patrol/hot spot policing), Community Caregiving stops. The data collection has begun and it should yield insight into what types of stops contribute to the overall racial disparity.

One member of the subcommittee participated in a ride-along. A traffic stop that occurred during the ride-along led to some interesting conclusions about police procedure and how we should view some of the traffic stop data that we collect. The driver, an African-American woman, was stopped for a non-functioning headlight. When asked, the driver was unable to produce proof of insurance. The officer asked the driver if she had a smart phone and if so, whether she could research her last insurance payment as proof. The driver was able to do so, showing the officer and avoiding a citation.

While these sorts of interactions are not average, and are done at the officer's discretion, this encounter leads to an interesting view of the "length of stop" data that is collected. In many cases, an especially long traffic stop can indicate a very negative outcome for a driver, because a car is towed or the driver is arrested. However, a longer traffic stop might also indicate a more positive outcome for the driver than otherwise expected: The officer might try to work out solutions that avoid a citation, or might wait with the driver to have someone pick them up instead of towing a vehicle. Conversely, extremely short stops that result in a citation can be cause for concern, particularly ones in the "Community Caregiving" category, as the officer might not be engaging with the driver to an appropriate extent. Data to determine the differences are not currently available.

Meeting With The Chief Of Police

Police Chief Connolly agreed to meet with members of the taskforce to discuss his philosophy about police engagement, the process of changing procedures, and the engagement and collaboration with other police departments and community led groups such as the Champaign County Community Coalition. Chief Connolly was very receptive that Task Force is doing and is looking forward to forthcoming recommendations.

Chief Connolly openly shared his thoughts about the allocation of police officers and community policing should be balanced in order to reduce crime. Chief Connolly requires officers to be more engaged within their communities that they patrol. As a result, the city has seen an increase in neighborhood watch programs. To date the watch programs had increased from 11 to 28.

Chief Connolly also stated that the Department needs to do a better job of deploying social media. Currently there are community engagement programs such as Cop's Corner, Citizen's Police Academy, and other community collaborations. This will

Number: 1 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:44:47 PM
I would like to change "requires" to "encourages".

I attended this meeting and he never required his officer about engagement because that is part of his policy as a Chief.

Number: 2 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:47:51 PM
I would like to add:

"of the Chief's philosophy and the engagement that he and his officers has been doing, the city..."

Number: 3 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:48:26 PM
Urbana Police Department

ensure that community we receive messaging about engagement efforts of the Urbana Police Department. There is also a need to enhance the resources for Non-English speaking in order to communicate about the resources of the Urbana Police Department.

Public Engagement


To date, there has not been sufficient engagement between the Police Department and the public on the topics of police procedures and traffic stops in particular. During the February Town Hall event, it was clear that many members of the community have had interactions with law enforcement that reflect fear, concern, mistrust, frustration, and hopelessness. While this might not be entirely (or even chiefly) due to bad interactions with Urbana officers, even simply being repeatedly subject to routine traffic stops can have significant negative impact, as described in the Community Impact section of this report. Groups like the Champaign Community Coalition and other such citizen-led field teams do provide some engagement with the community, but do not provide the kind of interaction that other modes of communication might offer. There have been some good efforts to engage the public, including programs like the “Cop's Corner” videos. Further social media programs would be beneficial, as well as more educational programs. The major barrier to expansion of these sorts of community engagements appears to be staffing levels and budgetary constraints.

Recommendations

We have collected together the following recommendations based on our examination of current statistics, the community impact of the disparity in traffic stops, our review of current procedures, and a review of existing literature regarding policing and traffic stops.

Continuation and Expansion of Recently Instituted Changes

- The collection of traffic stop “category” data as instituted is a good addition to the data collected by the Police Department. These categories should be reviewed and changed as necessary. In addition to category of stop, additional pieces of data (for example, reason for length of stop) should also be collected.
- Implicit bias trainings and workshops are essential to continue. Officers need to understand that they are subject to biases even if their intentions are pure. Being able to identify those biases and act to mitigate them will result in far less negative impact to the community. Officers should have required ongoing training about how biases affect their policing practices on an annual basis. Such trainings should be provided with compensation and support of the City of Urbana, and should be a required part of officer’s continuing education. They should be elements of an officer’s evaluations and promotion. Some of these training sessions should also be available for the community at large to attend, where members from both the Police Department and the community can participate together.

 Number: 1 Author: G01coral Subject: Sticky Note Date: 8/14/2015 3:50:14 PM
"Currently, the Cop's Corner has been done in English and Spanish but there..."
