

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

=====

**Assessing the Needs and Establishing
A Bike Patrol for Missouri City Police Department**

=====

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**

=====

**By
Refugio Salinas**

**Missouri City Police Department
Missouri City, Texas
July, 2004**

ABSTRACT

This research paper will look at whether or not the creation of a bike patrol will benefit the Missouri City police and the citizens of Missouri City. The development of a bike patrol can be tailored to meet the needs of the community. A bike unit is cost effective and can provide coverage in areas where traditional patrol vehicles are limited.

The research paper will identify the needs and benefits on why there might be a need for a bike patrol unit in Missouri City. The research material was gathered from Law Enforcement articles, journals and a survey conducted among some agencies that have a bike patrol unit.

A survey conducted among police departments who have a bike patrol unit, determined that funding was one of the main obstacles in the creation of a bike patrol unit. All the responding agencies were very happy with their bike units and recommended that departments who did not have a bike patrol unit, to start one.

It was concluded that cities having a bike patrol unit have realized the effectiveness of utilizing their services to patrol their neighborhoods and commercial sectors in their cities. The implementation of a bike patrol unit has become a necessity and would definitely be beneficial for the city and its citizens.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Review of Literature	2
Methodology	5
Findings	6
Conclusions	9
References	11

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, as the automobile became more and more dependable, and highways improved, it became easier and more attractive for people to live in Missouri City, while working in nearby Houston. Gradually, Missouri City has evolved into a city of commuters, which is sometimes aptly called a “bedroom community,” a city where citizens live in safe and pleasant surroundings, but drive back and forth each day to work. Currently, Missouri City has approximately 60,000 people. The city is anticipating significant population growths from new residential subdivisions and commercial development that is under construction throughout the city and in the city’s extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ). Empirically, this trend is supported by the proposed ten year annexation plan, which will add approximately 6,000 citizens by the year 2005. By the year 2010, the population will increase to 85,000 (city homepage). In spite of this major growth, there still remains a closeness and openness between the police department and its citizens. To stay close and remain receptive to the citizens’ needs, concerns, and fears, we must be able to continue providing them with the necessary police services.

The purpose of this research paper is to examine an alternative method of providing the citizens with the same level of services with fewer resources. More specifically will the creation of a bike patrol benefit the Missouri city police in continuing to interact with the citizens in the community? The development of a bike patrol can be tailored to meet the needs of the community. With community growth currently on the rise, it will provide a feeling of security to potential customers and business owners along with the residents of the community.

A bike patrol is cost effective and can provide coverage in areas where traditional patrol vehicles are limited. Parks, alleys and parking lots are just a few areas where they can be utilized. In addition to patrol functions, the bike patrol will be a valuable asset during special events sponsored by the city. The information in this resource project will be gathered from police articles, journals and a survey conducted among surrounding police departments that have a bike patrols unit.

The intended outcome of this research paper is to provide the police administration with relevant information to assist them in making a sound decision on creating a bike patrol unit for Missouri city. The research paper will identify the needs and benefits on why there might be a need for a bike patrol unit in Missouri City.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In researching, bike patrols in law enforcement, it is necessary to review a brief history of community policing. An analogy has been made between the once insurmountable Berlin Wall and the invisible barrier that separates many police departments from the citizens they service. This analogy certainly seems fitting in many respects. For one, the Berlin Wall divided a whole nation into two separate nations, just as the "Professional Model," of policing has done to American Policing. Secondly, through the efforts of great leaders and the will of the people, the walls came down. This is the "cornerstone," of the philosophy of "Community policing," to tear down the once insurmountable barriers between the

police and the citizens they service (Spaulding 2002). Effective community policing must have a positive impact on reducing crime, helping to reduce fear of crime and enhancing the quality of life in the community. There are many tools that can be implemented in community policing. This research paper will only focus only on the use of bike patrols, as a tool to enhance interaction between the community of Missouri City and the police department.

The nationwide popularity of bicycle police patrols has grown exponentially in the past decade as a natural extension of community policing, as law enforcement agencies realize how effective the bike patrols can be in both reducing crime and raising officer's visibility within the public (Law Enforcement News 24:451). The bike has made its way back into law enforcement, not only as an excellent proactive enforcement tool, but also as a beneficial means of Community Policing. Bikes have some obvious advantages over police units. The most noteworthy is the amount of citizens they enable an officer to come in contact with on a daily basis. It is not unusual for a bike officer to speak with 50 to 100 citizens on a given shift (Martin, J & Blair, and E. 1999).

Police on bikes are the way of the future. They provide the community the benefits of the old beat cop on foot, interacting with the community, and at the same time providing the much-needed mobility to the community. In addition, it allows officers to cover areas that are not accessible to patrol units (Standberg, K.W. 1997).

The first question that will be asked by the police administration is: "Why do we need a bike patrol unit?" Most administrators believe that with the increasing computerization of law enforcement, a bike patrol is a step backward.

Administrators must see facts and needs before they decide on funding a bike patrol unit.

The ratio of police officers on patrol in Missouri City is approximately one officer to every 2000 residents. During the rush hours, the ratio is much higher as citizens commute to and from their place of employment. It is anticipated that by the year 2005, when the city's annexation plan begins, the increase in population and commercial development will again tax the police department's manpower.

In order for our city to benefit from policing on bikes, the program must be tailored to meet the needs of the community. With commercial development currently on the rise, providing a feeling of security to potential consumers is important. The visibility of a bike patrol in "strip malls" will give the consumers and business owners a confident feeling that they are less susceptible to crime. As for the residential sector, it will greatly effect the reduction of crime by its mere presence. Bike patrols can also be used for park patrols, parades and civic events. They are effectively used in large crowds where maneuverability is needed. Last year, 2003, was the first year bicycles were used at the city's annual July 4th festival. The officers, who had previously been trained by their former employers, were given permission to use their own bikes at this event. Because of their low profile and stealth like approach, bikes can also be used as specialized enforcement units targeting areas of high criminal activity. A Neighborhood Response Unit (NRU) could be formed to address the recent outbreak of burglaries, in the city, which are occurring in Lake Olympia, Quail Valley, Hunters Glen and Fondren Park subdivisions.

The police department must seek other methods to better service its community. With a changing economy, budget restrains and limited resources, the department will benefit with the creation of a bike patrol. Today, bike units have many functions and can offer advantages over other modes of providing public safety services. The most obvious is the cost effectiveness of bikes verses a squad car. The annual maintenance fee of one bike is approximately \$200.00 dollars. While the average patrol cost is approximately \$25,000 dollars and its annual maintenance fee is about \$3,500.00 dollars, (Woods, T. 2002). Others advantages, the response time is quicker in urban and congested area. Bicycles can go places that a patrol vehicle cannot get to, and a foot officer won't reach in time. Bike patrol is also silent and stealthy. At the same time, the bike officer is visible and accessible to the community (Mroz, R.2001). The incorporation of a bike patrol into community - policing concept will open a floodgate of information. The officer will come intimately familiar with the community. The officer will quickly learn who lives, works and plays in the neighborhoods. This interaction will help break down some of the barriers between and police.

There are some disadvantages in having a bike patrol. The officers are not able to operate their bikes during inclement weather, e.g., heavy rain, snow and sleet. Officers would be required to work in pairs for safety, visibility and the protection of their equipment (Woods, T. 2002). Also if the officer makes an arrest, he or she must contact a patrol unit to make transfer. This will tie up the unit and keep it from patrolling its area.

METHODOLOGY

In order to conduct this research, a review of law enforcement magazine, articles, journals and a survey of 14 agencies that have a bike patrol unit will be conducted. This survey will consist of ten questions on the approval rating of their bike patrol unit. The law enforcement magazines and articles will focus on the benefits, advantages and disadvantages of having a bike patrol unit.

By comparing articles, journals, statistics, and survey data, it is anticipated that enough data can be presented in support of creating a bike patrol for the City of Missouri City, Texas

FINDINGS

In researching this topic, this researcher conducted a survey among police agencies that had a bike patrol unit. The survey included 10 questions, (see Table I). A total of 14 law enforcement agencies were requested to complete this survey, with (9) agencies, 64% responding. Out of the (9) nine agencies that responded, 1 agency did not have a bike patrol unit. 64% of the departments that responded had a total of 40 to 5,000 sworn personnel. The survey determines that 50% of the responding agencies stated that their bike patrol is only utilized during special functions, e.g., parades, festivals, temporary assignments or special events. They use off duty officers that are trained as bike officers, and they are paid overtime or given comp time. Only 50% of the responding agencies have a full time bike patrol. Those agencies were Victoria, Plano, San Antonio and Houston Police Department. These officers were used to patrol the

downtown areas, outlet malls, neighborhoods and special events. Another question regarding costs was presented. Funding is probably the most important issues of creating a bike patrol unit. 50% of the responding agencies have regular line item budget and also use grant monies for equipment. The other 50% who operate on part-time basics; use overtime, comp time, grants and some of the officers buy their own bikes. All the responding agencies purchase their bikes through grants or city funds. According to Officer Bazany, San Antonio Police Department receives 75% of its bike funding is through grants. No agencies purchase bikes for less than \$400 dollars. In this survey, no agency reported using standard, unmodified bikes, although 37% indicated they used all brands. The most widely used bikes were Raleigh, Trek, Schwinn and Cannondale.

The survey also indicated that 50% of the departments had worked everything from special assignments to standard patrol duties and the other 50% worked only special events. 50% of the agencies worked only the hours needed to complete the special events or assignment. Only two agencies, San Antonio and Houston Police department work around the clock. Most agencies prefer to operate during day or evening shift.

All the responding agencies reported only minor abrasions resulting from, e.g., falling off bikes, muscle strains, etc. None of the agencies reported any serious injuries or time loss.

The survey instrument also determined that the cities that had a part-time bike patrol were very satisfied with the program and wish they could implement a full time unit. Due to manpower and budget cuts, even the larger departments have to cut back. According to Officer Henderson, Houston Police Department

has had to reassign many of their bikes officers to regular patrol duties due to manpower.

Bike Patrol Survey

(Table I)

Agencies	Dept Size	Bike Patrol	Cost-of Operation	Schedule Worked	Type of Assignments	Citizen Satisfaction	Types Injuries	Brand Bike	Recommend Bike Unit
Houston PD	6,000	200	11M	4/3	Park/Downtown Residential, etc & Special Events	Excellent	Minor Abrasions	Schwinn	Yes, very Highly
San Antonio PD	2,000	55	2M	4/3	Parks/Downtown Residential, Special Events	Excellent	Minor Abrasions	All Brands	Yes, very Highly
Victoria PD	80	5	\$300K	5/2	Downtown/Malls	Excellent	Minor Abrasions	All Brands	Yes, very Highly
SugarLand PD	109	45	Unk	Part-Time	Residential Areas Malls & Special Events	Excellent	Minor Abrasions	Raleigh F-500	Yes, very Highly
Rosenberg PD	60	8	Unk	Part-Time	Special Events	Good	Minor Abrasions	All Brands	Yes
Plano PD	327	12	730K	Part-Time	Beat Officers	No Survey	Minor Abrasions	Trek	Yes
Bellaire PD	47	2	102K	4/3	Residential/Hot Spots/Special Events	Excellent	Minor Abrasions	Cannonade	Yes
Mesquite PD	207	17	O/T	Part-Time	Mall District	Excellent	Minor Abrasions	Trek	Yes
Baytown PD	127	No							

The research material involved Law Enforcement Journals, magazines and material from the Internet. Bike patrol is a public relation tool that can be used to break down barriers with citizens. Since the creation of bike patrols, they have become a valuable asset in law enforcement. They give the officers a greater range of mobility than a patrol car. They also can enter many areas inaccessible to cars, respond quickly even in the tightest traffic jams, and provide a safe unobtrusive presence in crowds (Hicks, Gary p.2) those advantages, along with the bike patrol officer's dedication to community education and policing, make the bike patrol a well-respected and integral part of a police department, Cornell University Police Department. The departments surveyed, believe that the advantages out weight the disadvantages of having a bike patrol unit. There

three main disadvantages pointed out by all the agencies were cases of extreme weather conditions when the bike officers were unable to ride or in arrest situations when the bike officers has to call a patrol unit to make transport. The last disadvantage, bike officers have to ride in pairs, where a patrol unit can operate solo. They believe that the advantages out weight the disadvantages.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research paper is to recommend the needs to create a bike patrol unit for the City of Missouri City, Texas. For the past several years, the level of growth and commercial business has steadily increased in Missouri City. The city is anticipating a significant population growth from new subdivisions and areas that it anticipates to annex. To stay close and remain receptive to the needs concerns, and fears of our citizens we must be able to continue providing them with the necessary police services. The visibility of a bike patrol in “strip malls”, will give business owners and consumers a confident feeling that they are less susceptible to crimes. This would definitely reduce the number of shoplifters and thefts in our strip centers. As for the residential sectors, it will greatly effect the reduction of crime by its mere presence. Bike officers would be especially effective when assigned to problem areas, e.g., rash of burglaries in Hunters Glen subdivisions and our city parks, to enforce city ordinances. Bike officers would also be available to participate in community relations programs, such as bicycle safety presentations to schools or groups in the community. To this date, there has been no attempt to plan on how the department is going to address these issues. Other cities have realized the

effectiveness of utilizing bike patrols to patrol their neighborhoods and commercial sectors of their cities.

All of the agencies that responded to the survey were planning to expand their bike patrol units or keeping it at the same level. In order for Missouri City to benefit from a bike patrol, the program must be tailored to meet the needs of the community. Due to the economy, a full time unit, at this time, is not realistic. So the city needs to look into funding a part-time unit. There are funds, grants and other resources that can be obtained to start and outfit a bike patrol unit. In an effort to enhance our overall operational effectiveness and enrich our own community relations, the author believes it would be advantageous for Missouri City Police Department to formally implement a bike patrol unit.

There are many reasons for implementing a bike patrol. There are often many obstacles, internal and external that must be overcome before the bike patrol can hit the streets. Decisions must be made as to the best way to incorporate bike units into the command structure. Once in place, the bike unit will prove itself an effective tool for accomplishing the purpose it was created for. The implementation of a bike patrol unit would definitely be beneficial for the city of Missouri City and its citizens.

REFERENCES

- Hicks, Gary, University of Michigan Department of Public Safety. Available online: <http://www.lpmba.org/newsletter-0308-casestudies.htm> p.2.
- Missouri City Homepage: available online: <http://www.ci.mocity.tx.us/> (p. 1-2)
- Standberg, K.W. Bike Patrols. *Law Enforcement Technology* 24 (1997): 36-38 to 82.
- Martin, Joe & Blair, E. (Eds.) (2002). *The Complete Guide to Police Cycling*. Northbrook, IL: Caliber Press, Inc.
- Mroz, Mike, Cops on Bike. *The Law Enforcement Magazine* 25 (2001): 41-45.
- Spaulding, Michael A. (2003) *Community Policing: Past, Present, and Future*. Available online: <http://www.marcpl.jhu.edu/journal/policing.html>.
- Woods, Tom, Starting a Bike Patrol: the Administrative Issue of Beginning and Running a Successful Bike Patrol 50 (April 2002): 78-80, 82-85.