



MEMORANDUM

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

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To: Ald. Michael J. Murphy
From: Tea Norfolk, Legislative Fiscal Analyst – Lead
Date: April 15, 2019
Subject: Success Stories in Other Jurisdictions: Reducing Reckless Driving

This memo is in response to your request for information regarding cities that have faced problems similar to Milwaukee with respect to carjacking and reckless driving and have seen some improvement. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conducted a study of countermeasures employed to reduce speeding in Philadelphia, PA. In addition to this in-depth case study, NHTSA has conducted various national and international studies on reckless driving, which contain brief examples of reduction in reckless driving in other cities. The first part of this memo contains information about Philadelphia specifically. The second part of this memo contains examples from other cities and national and international studies.

Philadelphia

According to NHTSA, speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. Researchers developed and pilot-tested a program in Philadelphia called *Drive CarePhilly -- Heed the Speed*, a neighborhood-based combination of enforcement, education, and engineering designed to reduce vehicle speeds to benefit pedestrian safety.

The study involved four steps:

1. Selecting a test jurisdiction sufficiently large to support a crash-based evaluation.
2. Working with the City to determine where to apply interventions.
3. Selecting and developing countermeasures.
4. Implementing and evaluating the program.

The Philadelphia Streets Department planned a safe-driving campaign that mainly targeted reducing speeding. Efforts focused on engineering countermeasures in six target police districts, as well as elsewhere if speeding had been highlighted by a

resident complaint or if notice was received from another City agency. The engineering program consisted of the following elements:

1. Verifying that speed limit signs were accurate and in place where needed.
2. Installing *DriveCarePhilly* 25 mph speed limit signs with a secondary message of *Watch Children* in the six target police districts.
3. Installing *DriveCarePhilly* 25 mph speed limit signs with a secondary message of *Heed the Speed* in six target police districts.
4. Installing plain 25 mph speed limit signs with a secondary *Heed the Speed* message.
5. Installing 42 sets of solid-sheet three-dimensional road markings in three police districts.

The study attempted to increase speed enforcement in six selected police districts by purchasing 24 Speed Tracker units that were installed and calibrated in four police cars in each of six police districts. Trained officers used the Speed Tracker-equipped vehicles. Two problems arose: (1) vehicles equipped with Speed Tracker units became disabled when those vehicles were involved in crashes, and (2) trained officers were not always available to use the equipped vehicles. Personnel shortages and the problem with maintaining the units in district vehicles failed to meet an expected increase in enforcement. To counterbalance these problems, funding was increased to provide 300 hours of overtime enforcement.

Additionally, speeds were measured by pneumatic counters and radar traffic counters. Crash data was accessed from the Philadelphia Police crash records. The Police Department has a crash tracking system that can geocode crashes to create “pin maps” of pedestrian crashes.

The project had no budget for paid media. Publicity was primarily in the form of presentations conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and media generated out of press releases.

The only real change in issued speeding citations that can be attributed to this project was a dramatic increase in citations in one of the districts for the third quarter of 2009, when the project used paid overtime for enforcement.

Of the 24 measurement locations, 17 showed some form of speed reduction after the official start of the countermeasure deployment in July 2008. Many sites showed substantial increases in the percentage of vehicles traveling the speed limit or less, and

many showed decreases in average speeds. Six of the seven roadways with 3-D materials showed speed reduction. Overall, there was at least some speed reduction in the test districts. In particular, the 3-D locations consistently showed reduced speeds after countermeasure deployment.

The test districts did not show a reduced frequency of crashes relative to the implementation of the *Drive CarePhilly-Heed the Speed* program. The results suggest any program aimed at meaningfully reducing fatalities would need to involve citywide treatment.

A survey conducted at driver licensing centers showed little awareness of the project's media, education, engineering, or enforcement efforts. Only one licensing center showed an increase in awareness of police activities. However, that center was not near any of the target districts – it was near an intersection where a separate speed enforcement initiative was underway. There were no meaningful changes in perceived strictness of police enforcement or perceptions of reduced speeds in neighborhoods.

Other Jurisdictions

Albuquerque, NM. The Safe Streets program involved saturation patrols, follow-up patrols, freeway speed enforcement, and sobriety checkpoints. The program was developed after determining 27 of 33 high-crash locations were in only four general geographic areas, all four were also high-crime areas. The results were as follows: 9% decline in property damage crashes, 18% decline in injury crashes, 20% decline in driving while impaired crashes, 34% decline in fatal crashes, 29% decline in homicides, 17% decline in kidnapping, and 10% decline in assaults.

Indianapolis, IN. The Police Department increased traffic enforcement in eight patrol beats over a six-week period resulting in decreases in burglaries and vehicle thefts. Lower crime also occurred in contiguous beat areas.

National. The effects of maximum speed limits on speeds, crashes, and casualties have been studied extensively over the past 30 years. In 1974, the 55 mph National Maximum Speed Limit (NMSL) was enacted to conserve fuel. Travel decreased, speeds decreased on roads where the speed limit was lowered to 55 mph, and total traffic fatalities decreased by 9,100 from 1973. The slower and more uniform speeds due to the 55 mph limit are judged to have saved between 3,000 and 5,000 lives in 1974. As fuel became plentiful again, travel increased in compliance with the 55 mph speed limit decreased. In 1987 Congress allowed states to raise speed limits to 65 mph on rural

interstate highways, and in 1995, Congress repealed NMSL. Increased speed limits produced increases in speeding and in traffic fatalities.

International. Red-light camera effectiveness has been studied extensively. Summary reviews conclude they increase rear-end crashes, reduce side-impact crashes, and reduce overall injury crashes by as much as 25 percent. Speed cameras have also been studied, though not in the United States. Studies show speed cameras reduce crashes substantially. A British study of speed and red-light cameras found a 33 percent reduction in crashes at camera sites. At speed camera sites, vehicle speeds decreased by 7 percent and the number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit decreased by 32 percent.

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