



# MEMORANDUM

## LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

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**To:** Ald. Scott Spiker  
**From:** Tea B. Norfolk, Legislative Reference Bureau  
**Date:** January 12, 2023  
**Subject:** Proactive Time

This memo is in response to your request for information relating to “proactive time” in law enforcement.

In general, proactive policing in law enforcement parlance is defined as a strategy to prevent crime, reduce crime, improve the relationship between the police department and the community served, and is used in contrast to reactive policing, wherein law enforcement responds to calls for service from residents. There are numerous publications related to proactive policing.

The most common traditional metrics for measuring police performance include crime rates, the number of arrests and fines issued, clearance rates, call for service response times, and surveys of public opinion. Proactive time is a newer metric, growing out of the contemporary policing movement emphasizing community-oriented policing.

According to a 2017 report by the National Academy of Sciences, there is evidence that a number of proactive policing practices are successful in reducing crime and disorder, at least in short term, and that most of these strategies do not harm communities’ attitudes toward police.

According to a 2019 article by Tarah Hodgkinson, et. al. in Crime Science Journal, *Beyond crime rates and community surveys: a new approach to police accountability and performance measurement*,

Traditional police metrics... place relatively little emphasis on crime prevention and other practices that can enhance community safety.... Ironically, excluding these activities from the metrics used to assess police organizational performance penalizes police organizations that are working proactively to prevent crime and enhance community safety.

A performance metric, according to performance measurement standards outlined by the Center for Results, has three components: (1) a quantity, (2) the thing being measured, and (3) a time period. Proactive time is measuring patrol capacity, service levels, and time spent responding to calls for service.

A 2012 Michigan State University study conducted for the Office of Community Oriented Police Services, the U.S. Department of Justice, The International Association of Chiefs

of Police suggests that officers should devote one-third of their time to calls for service, one-third to proactive patrol time, and one-third to administrative activity. The Police Allocation Manual developed by Northwestern University Traffic Institute, meanwhile, suggests 20 minutes out of each hour be dedicated to proactive time (called “unobligated time”).

A 2012 article in The San Diego Union-Tribune refers to a report on Chula Vista police, stating the department is short on proactive time. The article states, “An independent review conducted this year found that the police department’s patrol officers have about 22 percent of ‘proactive time’ available, compared with the 40 percent recommended by law enforcement experts.” The report cited was conducted by the Matrix Consulting Group. Multiple other cities have also hired the Matrix Consulting Group, which provides similar recommendations using the proactive time metric.

In 2019, the City of Madison contracted Etico Solutions, Inc. for a patrol staffing study. The Etico study also uses the proactive time metric, recommending that officers spend 28 to 30 minutes each hour on reactive activity. The Mayor, Common Council, and Madison Police Department have recognized a 30/30 split (minutes per hour) between proactive and reactive time as being an appropriate goal for patrol staffing.

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