



MEMORANDUM

Police Department

DATE: February 24, 2022

TO: Public Safety Advisory Board

FROM: Michael Canfield, Police Captain

SUBJECT: Traffic/Pedestrian Stop Analysis and Reporting

PURPOSE

Receive Research Fellow's final report – Examining Disparities in Mountain View Police Department Stops – and appoint a subcommittee of the Public Safety Advisory Board (PSAB) to explore methods to make policing data more open and accessible to the public.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2020, the City Manager's Office and the Mountain View Police Department (MVPD) partnered with Stanford University and the University of Michigan, as part of a coalition of research institutes working with police departments, to hire Alex Stephenson, a research fellow from the University of California, Berkeley. Mr. Stephenson's charge was to analyze traffic stop data to examine if there were any trends or disparities in the Police Department's contacts with the community.

Mr. Stephenson was assigned to the MVPD and City Manager's Office and given unfettered access to the Police Department's contacts and traffic stop data. He was also granted full access to speak to whomever he wanted in the Department and to go on "ride-alongs" with Officers to provide context for the data he was analyzing.

Mr. Stephenson's research focused on providing insight on the following topics:

- What is the nature of any observed disparities in traffic stops by the MVPD?
- Are any observed disparities indicative of potential bias in the MVPD?
- What information should be collected going forward by the MVPD?

Mr. Stephenson provided presentations on his work and findings during the June 24, 2021 and August 26, 2021 PSAB meetings. He also presented to the MVPDx Police/community engagement program. Mr. Stephenson's final report is included as Attachment 1.

Mr. Stephenson analyzed data from all traffic stops made by MVPD from 2014 to 2020 and examined whether bias was a factor in the decision to stop motorists and the decision to search motorists. This involved conducting a variety of tests against the data to see what conclusions could be drawn. For example, using the "veil of darkness" test, Mr. Stephenson was able to assess potential bias in an Officer's decision to stop motorists. This test looked at traffic stop data in the evenings, before and after Daylight Savings Time, which provided a data-driven review of traffic stops when Officers were able to see the perceived race of a motorist versus similar dates and times where darkness would make that more difficult.

Mr. Stephenson found that there was no clear evidence that MVPD stop decisions were discriminatory, and there was mixed evidence of disparities with regard to the decision to search a car. In his presentation to the PSAB, Mr. Stephenson explained that the term "mixed" evidence meant that "clear conclusions are difficult to draw due to the small number of searches conducted by MVPD over the time frame of interest. Therefore, evaluations of these decisions should be done with caution."

DISCUSSION

The PSAB Fiscal Year 2021-22 Work Plan, adopted by the City Council on September 28, 2021, includes a project to develop and recommend follow-up actions related to Mr. Stephenson's traffic stop analysis, with a focus on the MVPD's implementation of the California Senate Bill 953, Racial and Identity Profiling Act (RIPA), and exploring methods to make policing data more open and accessible to the public.

The RIPA mandates that California law enforcement agencies collect the following data when a detention is made:

- Date, time, and duration of the stop;
- Location of the stop;
- Perceived race or ethnicity of the person stopped;
- Perceived gender of the person stopped;
- Person stopped perceived to be LGBTQ;
- Perceived age of the person stopped;
- Person stopped has limited or no English fluency;
- Perceived or known disability of the person stopped;

- Reason for the stop;
- Stop made in response to a call for service; and
- Actions taken by the Officer during the stop.

Beyond what is required, the MVPD has added the following questions on which to gather data and report:

- When did you perceive the person's race or ethnicity?
- When did you perceive the person's gender?
- Prior to the stop, did you believe that there might be a mental health issue?

The RIPA requires that the data collected be provided to the California State Department of Justice quarterly, among other requirements. The MVPD began collecting the RIPA data on December 1, 2021, in advance of the January 1, 2022 deadline, and will provide the first quarterly data submission to the State on April 1, 2022.

In addition, the MVPD is reviewing software solutions for more open data. The Department has also started a project to collect and examine quantitative and qualitative information about Police contacts with the public to better understand community sentiment about Police service delivery. Mr. Stephenson will continue to work with the MVPD to advise on and assist with data review and reporting.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the PSAB create a subcommittee to provide input on the analysis of the RIPA data and to develop recommendations on how to share this information with the public. The work of the subcommittee could include:

- Review MVPD's process for collecting and submitting RIPA data to the State.
- Review and provide input on the data generated from RIPA stops.
- Review and provide input on community sentiment data collected by the MVPD.
- Explore and develop recommendations on ways to make MVPD data more open and available to the public.
- Advise the MVPD on ways to partner with the community to determine additional data sharing that may be useful in the future.
- Provide updates and recommendations to the PSAB for consideration.

MC-ASR/HM/1/POL/611-02-24-22M

Attachment: 1. Assessing Disparities in MVPD Stops