



Agenda Item #: _____

Staff Report

City of Manhattan Beach

TO: Honorable Mayor Ward and Members of the City Council

THROUGH: Geoff Dolan, City Manager

FROM: Rod Uyeda, Chief of Police
Derrick Abell, Lieutenant

DATE: May 2, 2006

SUBJECT: Update of City Council Work Plan Items Regarding Traffic and Bicycle Safety Awareness.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council RECEIVE AND FILE this update of the Police Department's progress on City Council Work Plan items regarding Traffic and Bicycle Safety Awareness.

FISCAL IMPLICATION:

There are no fiscal implications associated with staff's recommendations.

BACKGROUND:

In June 2005, the City Council decided on 28 items to focus on during the fiscal years of 2005 – 2007. Two of these items, Traffic and Bicycle Safety Awareness, were programs that the police department was asked to address. As the police department has been under new leadership since January 9, 2006, staff felt it timely to inform the City Council of the direction the police department will be taking on these two items.

DISCUSSION:

Residents of Manhattan Beach completed a City-wide survey and "traffic issues" were identified as the #1 concern. As part of the City Council Work Plan, staff was asked to present information on the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) "toolbox," the limited use of speed humps in school areas and photo red light technology. In September 2005, the City Council reviewed the NTMP "toolbox" and decided against the use of speed humps. In March 2006, the City Council reviewed information presented on photo red light technology and decided against the use of this technology to mitigate traffic problems.

The remaining Work Plan item was to enhance neighborhood traffic enforcement and to look for opportunities to expand outreach and public awareness of the NTMP "toolbox." The following are steps the police department will be taking to address this Work Plan item.

Neighborhood Traffic Enforcement

1. The entire police department is being reminded that traffic is the #1 concern to residents. Historically, the emphasis on traffic enforcement has rested primarily with the Traffic Bureau and Patrol's traffic enforcement has not been critically monitored. Increased scrutiny of Patrol's efforts in the area of traffic enforcement will increase the police department's awareness of the importance of traffic enforcement to our residents.
2. The two Patrol lieutenants have been designated as Service Area Commanders and are responsible for solving problems in their areas. Lieutenant Andy Harrod has been assigned the area east of Sepulveda and Lieutenant Tony DiGenova has been assigned the area west of Sepulveda. These two lieutenants will work with Traffic Lieutenant Derrick Abell to ensure reported and known traffic problems in neighborhoods are being addressed through directed enforcement efforts.
3. The Area Traffic Officer program will be rejuvenated. In 2000, the Area Traffic Officer program was established to create an on-going working relationship between the Department's Traffic Team and the residents in an effort to solve traffic-related issues. In the past few years, the number of calls to the Area Traffic Officers has drastically diminished to the point of being non-existent. Through the Neighborhood Watch program and media, residents will be reminded of the program so that current traffic problems can be dealt with in a timely manner.
4. Implementation of Traffic Citation Warnings: Instead of officers just verbally warning drivers of a traffic violation, officers will have the discretion to issue a warning citation in hopes of strengthening driver awareness of the law. Warning citations shall be tracked in the police department's Records Management System and can be queried for drivers who have received a warning citation. Officers will be encouraged to issue real traffic citations to persons who have already been issued a warning citation.
5. Enhanced Radar Enforcement: More Patrol officers will be trained in the use of radar. Catching speeders is one of the more difficult things for officers to successfully complete due to the amount of time it takes to "pace" a potential speeder. This is even more difficult on residential streets. By having more radar-trained officers and issuing more speed-related citations, it is hopeful that speed problems in neighborhoods will diminish.
6. Increase the Number of Enforcement Checkpoints: There will be additional traffic checkpoints to target seatbelt use, baby and child car seat use, driver's license compliance and drunken driving detection. Checkpoints add to the awareness of these issues and have a strong effect on ensuring compliance with the law.
7. Increase the involvement of police department volunteers to monitor traffic problems: Volunteers can covertly monitor reported traffic problems to ensure police department resources are being utilized at critical spots. It often takes hours to monitor an area for a suspected speeding problem or drivers failing to stop for stop signs. By utilizing citizen volunteers, an officer can concentrate on a known problem area while another reported problem area is being measured.

8. Increase Radar Speed Trailer and Message Board Deployment: The use of these items will increase, at the discretion of the Service Area Commanders and Traffic Lieutenant, when direct enforcement is not available or desirable. These items bring added awareness to traffic problems occurring in the area and will often be followed by direct enforcement should measuring devices indicate a traffic problem.
9. Address the Failure of Parked Vehicles Curbing Their Tires: Many streets in Manhattan Beach are steeply inclined. The police department has noticed that an increasing number of parked vehicles do not have their wheels curbed, which is against the law and a serious danger to the community. In the past five years, there were over a dozen documented collisions caused by “roll away” vehicles due to brake failure, transmission failure or neglecting to apply the emergency brake. The potential for serious injury from these types of collisions, especially near the beach and in neighborhoods, is too high to ignore. A public awareness campaign regarding this issue will be implemented, along with a warning period before parking citations will be issued for this violation.

The other Work Plan item that the police department was asked to address was Bicycle Safety Awareness. Also a part of this item was for City staff to consider the creation of a Safety Awareness Campaign targeted at pedestrians, skateboarders and rollerbladers. The police department was also directed to consider grant opportunities. In December 2005, the City Council was advised that there were no current grant opportunities available. Subsequent to that report, an Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) grant was received by the Manhattan Beach Unified School District and some of the funds were directed towards bicycle safety.

The following are steps that will be taken to address this Work Plan item:

Bicycle Safety Awareness

The Police Department Traffic Bureau is working in cooperation with the Manhattan Beach Unified School District to promote bicycle safety for children. The police department has identified a bicycle safety program vendor (Safe Moves) to present a bicycle rodeo for Manhattan Beach school children (grades three through five). The bicycle rodeo is scheduled for Saturday, May 13, 2006, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Grandview Elementary School. The bicycle rodeo will provide children with the necessary skills to make good decisions when riding a bicycle. A bicycle information flyer has also been developed that will be distributed to all of the Manhattan Beach elementary schools. The flyer includes information about when and where the event will take place and also includes information about the laws that apply to bicyclists. The bicycle rodeo will be funded with grant money from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the Manhattan Beach Unified School District.

In addition, an educational pamphlet is also being developed to educate bicyclists about local and state laws and also to remind them of the dangers associated with bicycle riding near pedestrians who are walking or running. Bicyclists will also be reminded to walk their bicycles on the bike path in front of the Manhattan Beach Pier during the busy summer months.

Skateboarders/Rollerbladers Safety Awareness

The number of skateboarders and rollerbladers in Manhattan Beach has increased over the years. Skateboarders and rollerbladers often ride on or across City benches, hand rails in front of businesses, and in parking structures and other public areas. In an effort to reduce injuries and damage to City and business property, a press release was disseminated to the public on February 10, 2006. A period of enforcement followed, and instances of illegal skateboarding diminished in the downtown area. An educational flyer is also being developed that will include information about local/state laws and safety equipment, which includes helmet requirements for juveniles on bicycles, scooters, skateboards and roller skates. It is scheduled to be distributed during spring 2006.

Pedestrian Safety Awareness

The Police Department Traffic Bureau has identified a number of crosswalks around the City where enforcement is required to reduce traffic collisions involving pedestrians. Pedestrian “Sting” operations have been implemented to enforce laws that require motorists to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks. Motorists that do not stop for pedestrians are cited. This contact provides an opportunity to educate motorists about the laws regarding pedestrians and the importance of yielding to pedestrians in a crosswalk. In March 2006, a “Sting” operation resulted in 19 motorists being cited in various parts of the city.

Pedestrians are also required to cross at crosswalks or signal-controlled intersections. Traffic officers have also directed Patrol programs that focused on pedestrians failing to yield to on-coming traffic outside of crosswalks and walking against a “no walk” sign at a signal-controlled intersection. In the past 18 months, “Sting” operations resulted in 46 pedestrians being cited for these violations.

CONCLUSION:

The police department will continue to focus on traffic issues in the City and be very responsive to residents and businesses who report traffic problems. The police department will also continue to work with City staff to evaluate traffic mitigation tools to ensure that our community is safe and receiving the best service possible.

Attachments: (not available electronically)