Speed Awareness

Problem Identification:

In Virginia Beach, 28% of serious injury crashes in 2014 were speed related, and 17% of fatal crashes investigated found speed to be a factor. This information is generated from the Fatal Crash Team's fatal and serious crash logs that are maintained by Special Operations indicate that a speed related crash problem exists in our jurisdiction. In 2015, the Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD) sought to reduce the number of speed related crashes resulting in a serious injury or fatality, through active speed enforcement throughout the City of Virginia Beach. With a notable increase in traffic around the expanding Town Center Area of the city and the historical data related to Shore Drive, these two geographic locations quickly became target areas for traffic enforcement. An evaluation of historical speed related crashes, speed related traffic complaints, and evening work commute, Special Operations officers determined the target enforcement times would be between the hours of 1700 and 0300.

Citizens can express their concerns about traffic related problems, to include speeding, in their neighborhood. This is done through a variety of means such as community meetings, online, or by contacting the nearest precinct. VBPD Special Operations and the individual precincts are charged with determining if the complaints are isolated or consistent occurrences, and if there are specified times during which the speeding occurs. A tool that we use to determine if the complaints are isolated or consistent is a "Speed Trailer," which is a portable sign equipped with a number of features. The sign utilizes radar to capture speeds, which is then displayed for the driver to see. Speeds are recorded and are saved. The use of the Speed Trailer can confirm or dispel that we have a problem resulting from speeding. Additionally the trailer helps us localize times when the problem is most prevalent. It was deployed in five neighborhoods during the past year, for two weeks in each neighborhood. As a result, the Department worked 38 speed complaints originating from citizen input, issuing 300 traffic related citations.

Traffic safety meetings are coordinated with the City's Traffic Engineering Division throughout the year, which involves representatives from each precinct of the police department, Planning and Analysis, and Traffic Engineering. During these meetings, topics are addressed through a number of sources that involve various traffic related issues. Such issues include speed related problems in localized areas that warrant police enforcement response, as well as larger speed issues that are evaluated by Traffic Engineering to determine if changes in roadway management are required such as speed limit changes or installation of new signage or traffic lights.

As required by VBPD General Order 12.06, Selective Enforcement, we conducted a review of traffic crashes and enforcement, and determined that one of the significant problems in the city is speed. The Deputy Chief of Operations maintains this plan making speed enforcement a priority.

Speed Awareness

Policy:

12.01 Traffic Law Enforcement

"Accidents resulting from excessive speeds may cause a great deal of property damage, serious injury or death. The enforcement objective of the Virginia Beach Police Department is to establish and charge speeding violations, which are either too fast for road conditions or in excess of posted speed limits."

12.03 RADAR Operations

"Only officers who have successfully completed a departmentally approved police RADAR operator-training course shall operate RADAR. Only officers who have successfully completed a departmentally approved police LIDAR operator-training course shall operate LIDAR. RADAR and LIDAR units shall be set up, tested, operated, and maintained in accordance with the departmental speed measurement training provided during basic RADAR or LIDAR training and recertification classes."

12.06 Selective Enforcement

"The Virginia Beach Police Department is committed to promoting traffic safety to the residents of and visitors to the City of Virginia Beach. This commitment requires the department to work cooperatively with other city, state and federal agencies in promoting traffic safety, and addressing traffic law enforcement needs. In furtherance of this commitment, the Deputy Chief - Operations or his/her designee will formulate and maintain a selective enforcement plan, which will summarize the traffic enforcement priorities of the Virginia Beach Police Department. At a minimum, the Traffic Enforcement Priority Plan will consider or be based on:

- *A compilation and review of traffic collisions*
- *A compilation and review of enforcement activities*
- *A comparison of collision data and enforcement activities*
- *Traffic volume and conditions*

The plan will be disseminated to the various components of the operations division for action. Such actions should include:

- *The implementation of selective enforcement techniques such as:*
    - *Planned patrols*
    - *Geographic/temporal assignment of personnel*
    - *Directed Traffic Patrols both overt and covert*
    - *Stationary Observation*
    - *Traffic Safety Checkpoints*
- *Placement of new or temporary signage*
- *Use of roadside Dynamic Message Boards"*

Speed Awareness

Planning:

The VBPD Traffic Safety Unit (TSU) was formed with the goal of specializing and focusing on traffic enforcement. While each precinct will work within their assigned boundaries to conduct saturation and directed patrols; TSU in particular, will respond and conduct stationary and moving RADAR enforcement as well as LIDAR enforcement throughout the city. Additionally, TSU will conduct numerous roving saturation patrols on a daily basis and focus their efforts on a specific timeframe in a particular area.

As a city-wide Special Operations traffic enforcement unit, TSU is used to cover a large number of enforcement areas. After a serious speed related crash involving injuries, TSU officers will spend time during the following weeks in that area enforcing speed limits. Additional resources are provided by the individual precincts, many of which often have an officer designated as a traffic officer in the precinct to address traffic complaints.

The department also utilizes a full-time motorcycle unit to address traffic safety issues, often in areas where the use of a police vehicle is impractical. The motor unit has a unique advantage to operate in areas where decreased visibility, traffic congestion, and highway design limit enforcement by officers in vehicles. Additionally, motor officers work primarily during daytime hours in order to enforce school zone speed violations as well as rush hour traffic. The assignment of motor officers to daytime patrol provides a wider time frame of coverage, as TSU and Fatal Crash Team (FACT) officers work primarily during nighttime hours.

TSU and FACT officers work adjusted patrol hours to better accomplish their mission. A Wednesday schedule of 0800-1800 allows for focus on daytime traffic issues. On Thursday through Saturday, officers work a schedule from 1700-0300 to focus more time to address traffic related to nighttime activities. In studying many speed related serious and fatal crashes, it was determined a large number occur during evening hours. This is why officers are assigned in enforcement activities during these hours to address speeding issues before they become a crash problem. These hours are the standard work schedule, however many officers work additional hours on grant funded overtime during both day and nighttime hours to provide for week-long enforcement efforts.

Grant funding is provided by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to departments that apply and have demonstrated the primary transportation goal of reducing death and serious injuries resulting from traffic crashes. Part of our planning process is to apply for traffic enforcement grants from the DMV, and to utilize this money for the enforcement of speed violations.

In review of statistical crash data as well as overall population growth, we determined a number of areas to focus more traffic enforcement efforts. These areas included the growing area of Town Center, the

tourist popular Oceanfront/Resort area, and Shore Drive, which has had a number of fatal and serious injury crashes over recent years.

New variable speed signs for school zones

When problems are identified from citizen complaints, saturation patrols are conducted by the TSU or precinct officers and the statistics are analyzed by the unit's Sergeant and Lieutenant. Traffic safety complaints that are addressed by officers are documented on a form (PD-137) to include the amount of time spent addressing the complaint and the enforcement action taken during the designated timeframe. A PD-137 is a police department form that is used to document and enforce traffic safety concerns that have been identified. After completion of an enforcement period that has been documented on a PD-137, it will be submitted to the TSU supervisor to review the efforts, their successes, and to determine what additional follow up may be required. This follow up could be additional enforcement, new or altered signage, or partnering with an outside agency such as traffic engineering for roadway modifications. PD-137s are forwarded to and maintained by a Special Operations Lieutenant. Additionally, the TSU supervisor monitors saturation patrols and ensures that enforcement efforts are focused in various locations across the entire city. The supervisor is aware of time spent in areas needing more enforcement activities.

Members from each precinct, Special Operations, and the Office of Planning and Analysis attend bi-monthly meetings with the Traffic Engineering Division to discuss traffic related matters. The purpose of these meetings is to relate complaints from the community regarding traffic engineering deficiencies, to make recommendations for traffic engineering studies, and to share information regarding crash and enforcement data.

In addition to the Traffic Priority Plan, the VBPD Special Operations command receives statistical data from the Office of Planning and Analysis. This information is processed by the command and provided as monthly summaries for presentation to the various organizational components commanding officers at the COMPSTAT meetings. The summaries contain information regarding the location and numbers of crashes, alcohol related crashes, and DUI arrests within the City of Virginia Beach, depicted or controlled by precinct geographical boundaries. Of particular importance are any fatal crashes which occurred during the months. These fatal crash reports include whether speed was a factor in the crash. From the information presented, Operations Division commanding officers direct the efforts of uniformed personnel toward addressing identified areas of need. Officers continue to work the areas that were

identified as problems. As a result of saturating an area with officers, we increase the overall presence of the police. As prescribed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Data-Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS), criminal behavior can be deterred through traffic enforcement. Additionally, saturating an area increases the number of citizen contacts which in turn leads to criminal arrests.

The VBPD supports the 2012-2016 Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) as it relates to speed with its goal to reduce the overall number of injuries and deaths as they pertain to speed related crashes. We support the plan by enforcing all traffic laws; specifically speed related traffic offenses. This is done by selectively monitoring traffic crash locations, enforcement activities, and traffic conditions to determine the best location(s) for enforcement to best address public safety. Additionally we enforce traffic laws in areas where data indicates a larger number of speed related crashes. Per the SHSP, as seen below, our city reports a high number of fatal and serious injury crashes related to speed.

Objectives

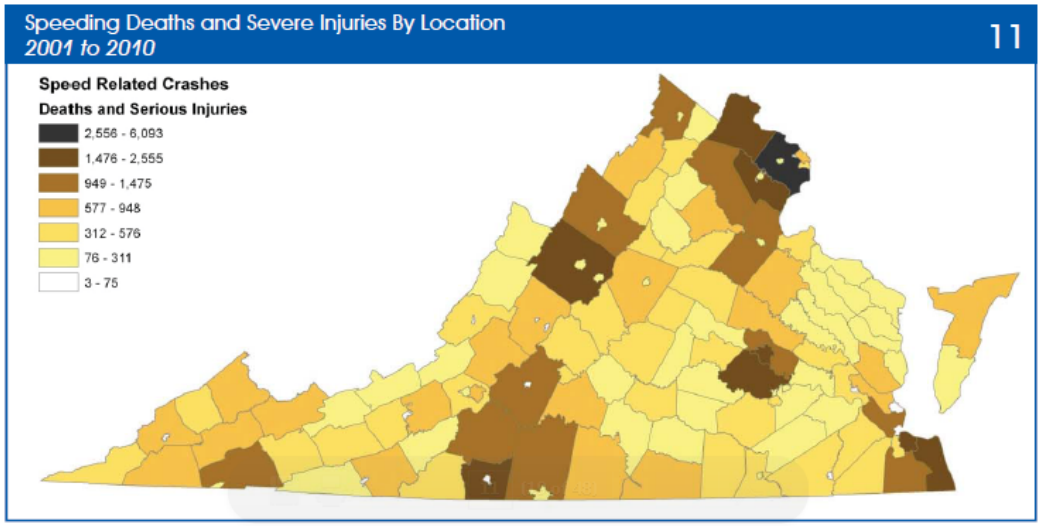
To address the speeding problem, the SHSP includes the following objectives using 2010 data as a baseline:

- Reduce deaths by three percent each year from 294 in 2010 to 245 by 2016 (Figure 14).
- Reduce severe injuries by three percent each year from 3,997 in 2010 to 3,329 by 2016 (Figure 14).

2.5 Enhance the education of police officers on the need for speed enforcement. (DMV)

2.6 Provide grant funding for speed enforcement in areas where data indicate a speed problem. (DMV)

Six counties in Virginia, including Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Henry, Augusta, and Chesterfield had the highest number of speed-related deaths and severe injury crashes (Figure 11). Three cities, Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Richmond, also reported high numbers of this type of crash.



Speed Awareness

Training:

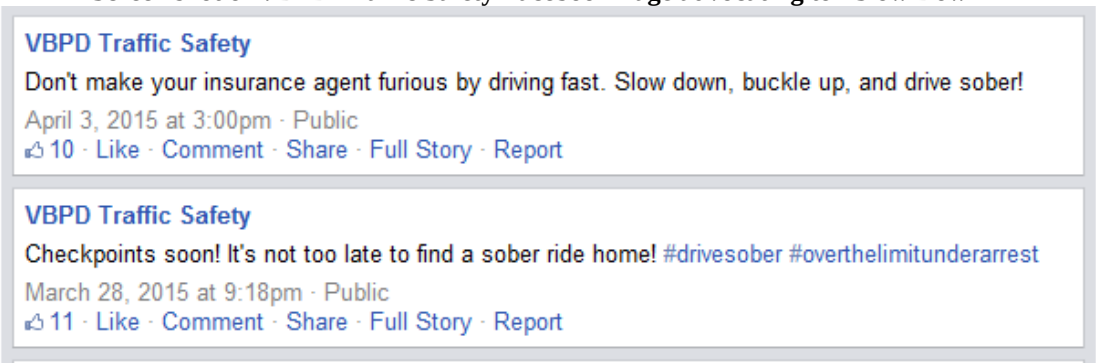
Throughout 2015 The Virginia Beach Police Department provided a variety of speed enforcement related training to the department. Additional training related to the speed problem that we sought to address in the form of crash investigation training. The training is as follows:

- Total number of officers on the Department trained in radar: 431 officers.
- The total number of officers on the Department trained in LIDAR: 21 officers.
- New RADAR operators: 23 officers.
- New LIDAR operators: 4 officers.
- Number of RADAR operators who received recertification: 157 officers.
- Number of LIDAR operators who received recertification: 7 officers.
- New Radar Training Officers: 28 officers.
- Basic Crash School: 7 officers, which includes basic speed measurements for crash investigation.
- Advanced Crash School: 4 officers, which includes additional speed measurements for crash investigation.
- Crash Data Retrieval Technician: 4 officers, which includes reviewing vehicle data from crashes.

Public Information & Education:

The VBPD TSU instituted a traffic safety lecture tailored for local military commands and civic organizations. During these safety lectures, consequences of speeding, impaired driving, and distracted driving were outlined. During 2015, there were a total of 5,888 citizens reached through 33 lectures. These lectures are designed to educate and inform various members, especially from the military, who often come from differing states that have varying laws. The goal of the lectures is deterrence through education. Additionally, the lectures allow for a more personal and informal opportunity to ask questions of an officer.

Screen shot of VBPD Traffic Safety Facebook Page advocating to "Slow Down"



Speed Awareness

The use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Pintrest by police departments has grown rapidly in recent years, and the VBPD Traffic Safety Unit is no exception. In 2015 a number of posts were made to increase public awareness for the presence of officers conducting traffic enforcement, as well as to remind the public of potential dangers of excessive speed while driving.

The Speed Monitoring Trailer is used to increase public awareness. The trailer is used in highly visible locations to indicate the speed of the passing motorists as well as collect data from the vehicles driven in that area. This trailer provides immediate feedback to drivers on their current speed and has the ability to slow down drivers without police enforcement.

The VBPD coordinates its efforts with the City's Traffic Engineering Department to update the traffic safety message boards throughout the city. The message boards are utilized to increase public awareness in a variety of areas including speeding, impaired driving, and occupant protection. One of these message boards is located on General Booth Boulevard headed into the Oceanfront/Resort area, which was one of the identified targeted areas, and was frequently used to remind travelers to watch their speed. Two additional message boards are located on Shore Drive; which was another of our identified problem areas.

One of seven message boards used in the city for traffic safety announcements.

The VBPD collaborates closely with the traffic engineers. The engineers make determinations about the assigned speed limits for the roads maintained in the city. VBPD has worked closely with the traffic engineers to have the speed limits reduced on certain roads where we have determined speed to be a frequent causal factor. In 2014, a speed, alcohol, and unrestrained occupant related crash involving multiple fatalities brought the issue to the forefront for an area known as Sandbridge. The event, while tragic, brought the dangers of excessive speed to the public. The VBPD worked with local news agencies to inform the public of traffic safety concerns and efforts to combat them. In 2015 efforts have continued to address speed related issues in the Oceanfront area and determining whether a reduction in the speed limit on Pacific Avenue is a viable option.

Enforcement:

In 2015, VBPD utilized 4,268 hours of grant funded enforcement. While these grants are labeled for DUI and Seatbelt enforcement, officers issue a large number of citations for speed as seen in the chart

below. When not actively assigned to other calls for service, precinct officers are encouraged to perform traffic enforcement activities during their shift. Officers also conduct saturation and planned patrols in areas where problems were specifically identified. General Orders identify the expectation of the Department's traffic enforcement, and specifically refers to speed enforcement.

	Amount Funded	Hours	Vehicles	DUI	Speeding	Seatbelt	Child Restraint	Criminal Arrests	Other Summonses
DUI Enforcement	$64,232	1,876	2,184	198	348	190	16	99	606
Seatbelt Enforcement	$52,000	2,392	4,316	13	1,143	1,602	67	82	1,442

Captured output statistics for 2015 include the following:

- Total of 9,516 speeding citations.
- Targeted enforcement areas:
  - Shore Drive area: 904 speed citations.
  - Town Center area: 132 speed citations.
- Speeding citations during targeted enforcement times
  - Thursday 1700-0300 = 601
  - Friday 1700-0300 = 926
  - Saturday 1700-0300 = 957
  - Total = 2,484

Virginia Beach Police Department Speeding Summonses By Month 2015

Month	Total
January	1,033
February	672
March	931
April	914
May	732
June	750
July	740
August	830
September	718
October	877
November	700
December	619
Total:	9,516

The Virginia Beach Police Department does not keep track of warnings issued to drivers who have been stopped by officers but do not receive a summons. Therefore it is unknown the total number of contacts made in target areas or during the target times as it relates to speed related issues. However, a review of information obtained from out Computer Aided Dispatch System (CADS) indicates that there were a total of 75,962 traffic stops initiated during 2015, which indicates that 12.5% of traffic stops led to a citation for speeding in 2015. It is also of note that Virginia Beach does not utilize automated speed enforcement measures.

Officers Aicher and Gayhart utilizing LIDAR

Traffic Safety officers conducted a large number of saturation patrols with the objective of increasing the number of officers in a geographical area for a period of time to enhance officer visibility of enforcement efforts. These patrols were conducted in various areas of the city and there were a total of 162 such patrols. There were a total of 1,610 traffic summonses issued, 713 of which were

for speed offenses, which was 44% of all citations. It is also of note that 35 saturation patrols were conducted on Shore Drive, 24 patrols in the Oceanfront/resort area, and 11 patrols in Town Center.

Outcomes:

In 2015, we responded to four fatal crashes that were deemed to be speed related, as well as seven serious injury crashes that were speed related. While the number of fatality crashes remained the same as those in 2014, the number of serious injury crashes was reduced by nearly 50%. While a combination of factors are likely involved, it is positive to see a reduction in the serious injuries that are speed related as it may indicate our efforts in prevention and enforcement have had results. Additionally, none of the fatalities and only one of the serious injury crashes occurred in our targeted enforcement areas (Shore Drive).

We firsthand saw the benefits of DDACTS through saturation patrols conducted in our targeted enforcement areas, as we yielded a number of criminal arrests in the form of 103 misdemeanor and 19 felony charges. While patrols are directed toward traffic safety efforts, affecting criminal arrests is a positive outcome for the department, community, and for the goal of reducing crime and the fear of crime.

MPO Worthing receiving John T. Hanna award

Semi-annually in the 2015 calendar year, the Fatal Crash Team generated a Traffic Safety Bulletin. Within the bulletin, top performers in speed enforcement are identified for their hard work. In 2015, MPO Nate Worthing was the recipient of the John T. Hanna award for Outstanding Achievement in Law Enforcement Initiatives. This award is in part for MPO Worthing's efforts in traffic enforcement as well as his dedication to military safety lectures.