State/Local Issue

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Problem Identification:

In 2014 the City of Virginia Beach experienced an increase of fatality crashes involving a pedestrian or bicyclist by 90% from the previous year. We identified a problem of crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists due to the higher likelihood of injury due to lack of safety and protection versus a vehicle, as well as seeing a large spike in deaths involving this susceptible group. We looked at improving our results in key areas with higher pedestrian and bicycle usage, including the oceanfront/resort area and Town Center.

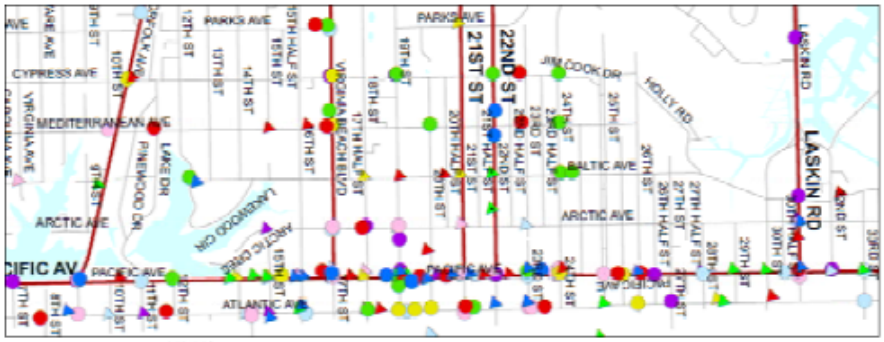
The City of Virginia Beach is a popular destination for travelers, especially with a welcoming beach environment and ample warm weather days. The boardwalk at the city's oceanfront is an attractive destination for bicyclists and pedestrians creating a law enforcement challenge of managing their safety. Elsewhere in the city, bicycle enthusiasts take to the roadways, and the city's thriving Town Center brings in crowds for the nightlife.

We used data provided by our department's Fatal Crash Logs, Planning and Analysis, as well as the crash statistics provided by the Virginia Highway Safety Office to evaluate the safety of bicycles and pedestrians in the city. In reviewing these statistics, it showed a major spike in local fatalities, and a slight increase in statewide fatalities. Additional data and research was utilized from the city Bikeways and Trails Advisory Committee (BTAC) reviewing the resort area crash report documenting crashes from 2008 through 2014.

While data suggested crashes involving pedestrians and bicycles had experienced a slight decline in overall crashes, the resulting percentage of fatalities rose sharply.

Year	Percent Fatalities of Total Crashes
2012	2.2%
2013	0.4%
2014	5.2%

Crashes - 7th St. to 33rd St. from Atlantic Ave. to Baltic Ave. 2008 - 2014 (7 Yrs.)



BTAC map indicating locations of recent crashes

Policy:

It is the policy of the Virginia Beach Police Department to fairly and adequately enforce all violations of criminal and traffic law. As such, policy on enforcement of pedestrian and bicyclist violations is directed under General Order 12.01, Traffic Law Enforcement. Additionally, Planned Patrols are guided by policy and are used to combat problems that have been previously identified.

11.08 Planned Patrols

"Documentation of planned patrol strategies is necessary on a continuing basis in order to ensure that the most effective patrol plans are implemented when crime patterns are detected. The following procedure should be utilized when initiating a planned patrol.

Before planned patrol strategies can be developed or implemented, the nature and extent of the particular problem must be identified. Field officers, or their supervisors, may identify a problem or these problems may be identified by the Precinct Crime Analyst(s) or the Crime Analysis Unit (CAU). Once problems are identified, they should be communicated to all commands via COMPSTAT. In all cases, the problem(s) identified must be related to an area of responsibility for, or shared with, the Virginia Beach Police Department. It must be emphasized that the initial identification of a problem must be as complete as possible with respect to details, description, and facts and the planned patrol response clearly supported in the same manner."

12.01 Traffic Law Enforcement

"The enforcement of traffic laws as established by the Code of Virginia and the Municipal Code of the City of Virginia Beach is the responsibility of all Virginia Beach Police Officers. Officers are vested with the enforcement of traffic codes for the purpose of gaining voluntary compliance in furtherance of enhancing traffic safety in the City of Virginia Beach."

Special Enforcement Practices: Bicycle and Pedestrians (CALEA 61.1.5 L)

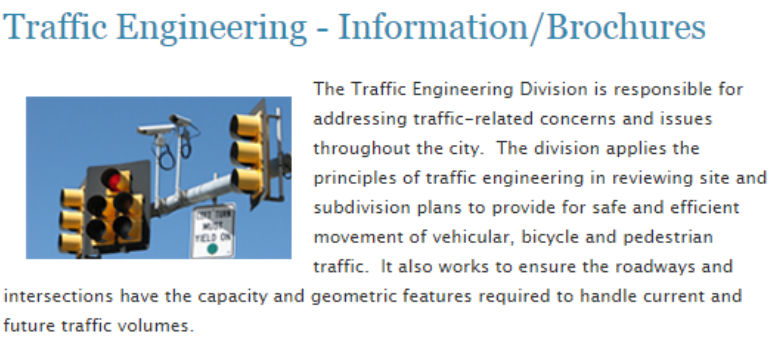
"Police Officers should control bicycle and pedestrian traffic so as to minimize their interference with and exposure to vehicular traffic.

Enforcement action should be taken against bicyclists and pedestrians who recklessly disregard traffic laws and / or create a hazard to themselves and others.

Bicyclists who operate in a careless and reckless manner upon the public streets and roads should be cited, as could any other vehicle operator.

Pedestrians or bicyclists involved in traffic crashes should be charged if it is found, upon investigation that they are at fault."

Additional policy exists for other departments, such as Traffic Engineering having written guidance that is utilized in ensuring bicycle and pedestrian safety is maintained while allowing for enforcement efforts. This screenshot is taken directly from the Virginia Beach Traffic Engineering website, and indicates their goal of providing safe means of traffic flow.


Traffic Engineering - Information/Brochures

The Traffic Engineering Division is responsible for addressing traffic-related concerns and issues throughout the city. The division applies the principles of traffic engineering in reviewing site and subdivision plans to provide for safe and efficient movement of vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. It also works to ensure the roadways and intersections have the capacity and geometric features required to handle current and future traffic volumes.

Excerpt from Traffic Engineering website

Planning:

The Virginia Beach Police Department is committed to ensuring bicycle and pedestrian safety by encouraging enforcement efforts as well as working with the community to foster safer areas for travel. As a part of the planning process, Special Operations officers conducted a number of saturation patrols to combat and address violations and safety issues of bicyclists and pedestrians. These patrols focused on enforcement of the laws, and follow-up efforts targeted education.

The City of Virginia Beach's Department of Public Works has been integral with capital improvements to both existing and future infrastructure improvements. The City Council annually makes developments in the capital improvement category to assist with the improvement of infrastructure as well as establishing priorities. A priority that has been identified and continues to be addressed with every project is the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians. As such, the amount of usable land determines how a roadway is constructed with a separate bike and pedestrian path off the road. New construction of the roadways often includes a multi-use bike and walking path away from travel lanes, or a wide sidewalk that allows for safe, bi-directional movement. Extensions of Nimmo Parkway, completed in late 2014, and the Lesner Bridge replacement, ongoing during 2015, are two such examples of where a large multi-use path has been and will be implemented, respectively.

Due to prior crashes resulting in injury and death, certain areas were targeted for increased enforcement efforts. Shore Drive has been a historically dangerous road for pedestrians and bicyclists to navigate, and changes to the speed limit and infrastructure have been ongoing. Increasing enforcement was a logical decision to combat the issue and increase safety. Additionally, due to the overwhelming numbers of tourists and pedestrians, oceanfront enforcement was made a priority as well. As such, the department conducted a number of planned patrols that occurred in our target areas. There were a total of eleven planned patrols during 2015 that were authored by precinct personnel that

occurred in our target areas. The source of these patrols ranged from citizen complaints to traffic activity. These were in addition to the saturation patrols conducted by Special Operations personnel.

	Address or Area	Precinct; Zor	Comma	Contact Office	Start Da	End Dat
TRAF	S. Oliver Dr. Speeding	3rd Pct; 330 Zone	3rd Pct	MPO Bell	2/1/2015	2/28/2015
TRAF	BuzzKiller	3rd Pct; 331 Zone	3rd Pct	Off JH Gooch	2/1/2015	2/28/2015
TRAF	Freeze for the Cheese II-Safe School Bus Stop 3rd Precinct	3rd Pct; 324 Zone	3rd Pct	MPO WF Wallace	3/1/2015	3/31/2015
TRAF	Cambria St Traffic Enforcement	3rd Pct; 324 Zone	3rd Pct	Off Watson	4/17/2015	4/1/3015
TRAF	Parking Town Ctr	3rd Pct; 324 Zone	3rd Pct	MPO Bryk	4/15/2015	4/22/2015
TRAF	Town Center Bike Partol Memorial Weekend	3rd Pct; 324 Zone	3rd Pct	MPO Frederick	5/23/2015	5/25/2015
TRAF	Reckless Driving Passing School Buses on Bonney Rd	3rd Pct; 324 Zone	3rd Pct	MPO Frederick	5/1/2015	5/31/2015
TRAF	East Stratford Road Parking	3rd Pct; 330 Zone	3rd Pct	Sgt Wilburn	8/20/2015	8/31/2015
TRAF	Operation School Zone	2nd Pct; 221 Zone	2nd Pct	MPO Cunniff	9/8/2015	10/30/2015
TRAF	Reckless Driving Passing School Buses 3rd Precinct	3rd Pct; 331 Zone	3rd Pct	MPO JV Macapbore	10/7/2015	10/21/2015
TRAF	Speeding on Broad Bay Road	2nd Pct; 220 Zone	2nd Pct	MPO LaClaire	11/18/2015	12/17/2015

Excerpt from 2015 Department Planned Patrol Log

Q Can the City post a sign in the crosswalk at James Madison & Courthouse Dr. reminding drivers it's a law to stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk? This is the second time in one day two different drivers sped through as I was crossing the street.

A This issue was recently brought to City Manager Jim Spore's attention via "Ask Jim". As a result: (1) He asked Public Works to research the feasibility of placing state-approved crosswalk signs in the middle of the streets throughout the Municipal Center; (2) Our Police Department said they will make time, as best as they possibly can, to include enforcement for this activity in their routine patrol

An excerpt from May 2015 Beam indicating city's dedication to safety

In an effort to continue to address the safety of motorists throughout the city, members of special operations attend bi-monthly meetings in conjunction with traffic engineering. These meetings often address issues requiring attention implementing new crosswalks or adding traffic lights to assist in safe crossings for bicyclists and pedestrians. In 2015, meetings addressed pedestrian safety via the discussions involving the installation of roadway signs at crosswalks that draw attention to drivers to stop for pedestrians in sidewalks. Additional meetings have discussed the alteration of the speed limit to Pacific Avenue from 35MPH to 25MPH due to the high volume of pedestrian and bicyclists attempting to cross. While these safety efforts have not been put into place yet, the research indicates a willingness to continue to provide safe means of travel to bicycles and pedestrians.

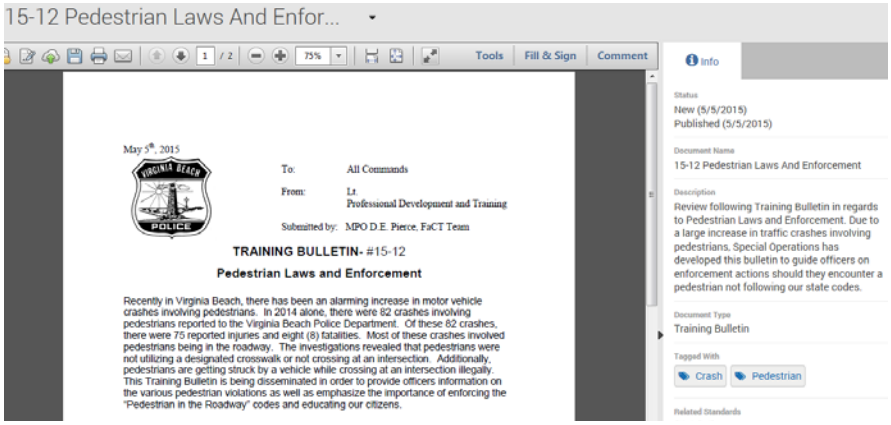
At this time, the Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan does not specifically address bicyclists and pedestrians in the same fashion as it does for other categories such as distracted driving, occupant protection, etc. However, bicyclist and pedestrian safety is included in nearly every section as one of many facets to consider when addressing overall roadway safety. As such, our agency supports the SHSP by making all of the other facets a priority with the end goal of lowering incidents involving bicycles and pedestrians as well.

Of importance to the overall safety of bicyclists throughout the City, is an ordinance that allows for bicycles to be operated on any City sidewalk except those at Town Center and the Resort area. How this

affects the planning purposes for us is that bicycles are afforded a safer place to operate without being on the roads as often. While this is not a new ordinance, it remains important, as it provides for a safer travel zone instead of being on the roadways.

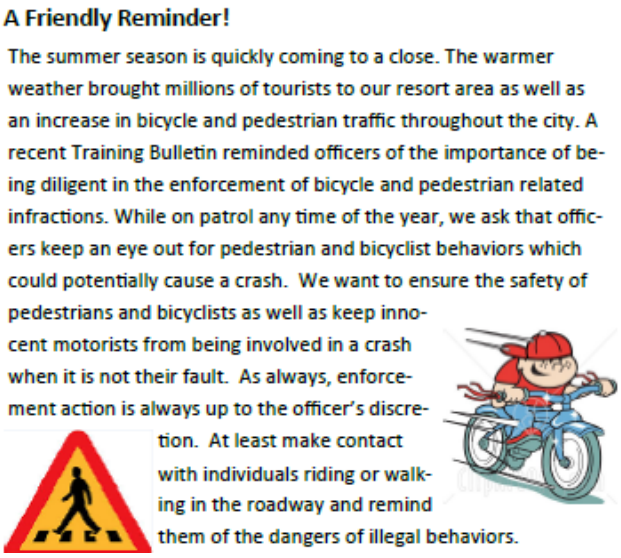
Training:

During 2015, 100% of department officers received training on pedestrian laws and enforcement. A training bulletin published through PowerDMS online training was reviewed by all members of the department as a refresher in order to reinforce the enforcement of pedestrian laws. This bulletin served as one aspect in the efforts to reduce pedestrian related fatalities by ensuring broad and consistent knowledge to be used to educate and enforce the laws. The training bulletin was submitted by Fatal Crash Team members partly in response to the high number of pedestrian related crashes.



Screenshot of PowerDMS training module

The VBPD's 2nd Precinct Oceanfront Community Oriented Policing (OCOP) squad is dedicated to serving the resort area of the city, operating primarily on bicycles, ATV, and on foot. Due to the overwhelming influx of tourists, as well as locals, during the summer who fill the streets as bicyclists and pedestrians, it is necessary for these officers to remain abreast and vigilant in enforcement of laws that are in place for the safety of these individuals. In 2015, 32 officers were dedicated as assigned officers to the OCOP squad. Each of these officers attended department training directed at police responsibilities and enforcement efforts at the oceanfront. During this training, strong attention was given to ensuring all officers had a working knowledge of current bicycle and pedestrian laws, and were encouraged to enforce these laws. With the high concentration of bicyclists and pedestrians in the resort area, this training leads to increased enforcement and a safer operating area.



A Friendly Reminder!

The summer season is quickly coming to a close. The warmer weather brought millions of tourists to our resort area as well as an increase in bicycle and pedestrian traffic throughout the city. A recent Training Bulletin reminded officers of the importance of being diligent in the enforcement of bicycle and pedestrian related infractions. While on patrol any time of the year, we ask that officers keep an eye out for pedestrian and bicyclist behaviors which could potentially cause a crash. We want to ensure the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists as well as keep innocent motorists from being involved in a crash when it is not their fault. As always, enforcement action is always up to the officer's discretion. At least make contact with individuals riding or walking in the roadway and remind them of the dangers of illegal behaviors.

2015 Traffic Safety Bulletin with information directed to patrol officers

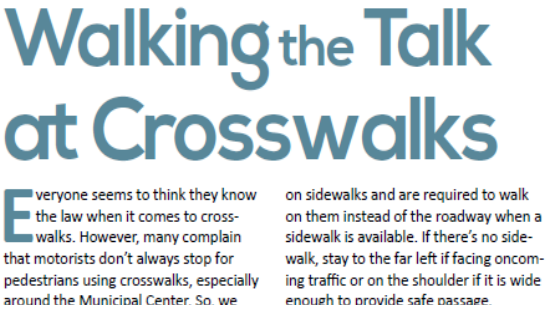
State/Local Issue

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Four officers assigned to Special Operations were selected to attend an advanced crash school during 2015. During the extensive training, a portion of the class was devoted to responding to and reviewing scenes of pedestrian involved crashes. These officers learned some of the fundamental aspects of crash reconstruction relating to speed and throw formulas for pedestrian and bicycle crashes. This training enables officers to better understand the dynamics of pedestrian crashes, which in turn allows for a more complete investigation that may help for future understanding of crash causation.

Public Information and Education:

In 2012, the Bicycle Safety Task Force was created by Mayor William Sessoms to guide the efforts of improving bicycle safety and the public's education of roadway safety aspects for bicyclists. This Task Force remains relevant to efforts conducted in 2015 since new roadways continue to improve upon access and resources promoting bicycle safety. The Task Force also utilizes a website to provide pertinent information on safety, local trails, and links to outside sites.

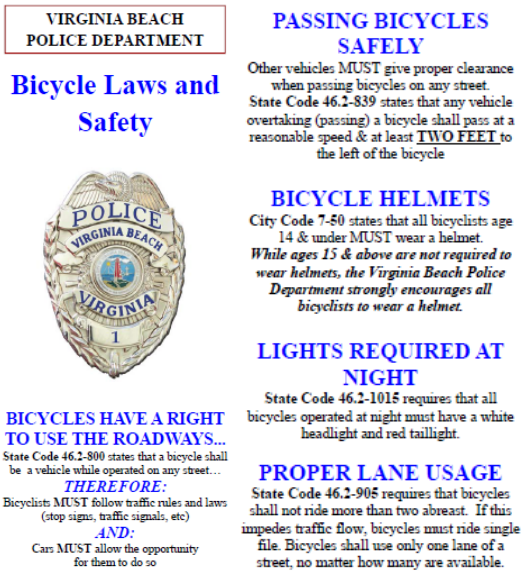

Walking the Talk at Crosswalks

Everyone seems to think they know the law when it comes to crosswalks. However, many complain that motorists don't always stop for pedestrians using crosswalks, especially around the Municipal Center. So, we

on sidewalks and are required to walk on them instead of the roadway when a sidewalk is available. If there's no sidewalk, stay to the far left if facing oncoming traffic or on the shoulder if it is wide enough to provide safe passage.

Information released in city newsletter

In partnership with the Virginia Beach International Student Outreach Program (VBISOP), an organization designed to provide resources and safety information to exchange students, members of the 2nd Precinct participate annually in events aimed at improving personal and bicycle safety for exchange students. In 2015, Sergeant Geluso, along with MPO's Pantak, Walblay, Mantoni, and Everett attended and facilitated meetings on police related matters. Specifically, these officers provided invaluable bicycle safety measures for students who rely on this mode of transportation while in our city. This program was successful in reaching approximately 200 students.


VIRGINIA BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

Bicycle Laws and Safety

BICYCLES HAVE A RIGHT TO USE THE ROADWAYS...
State Code 46.2-800 states that a bicycle shall be a vehicle while operated on any street…
THEREFORE:
Bicyclists MUST follow traffic rules and laws (stop signs, traffic signals, etc)
AND:
Cars MUST allow the opportunity for them to do so

PASSING BICYCLES SAFELY
Other vehicles MUST give proper clearance when passing bicycles on any street.
State Code 46.2-839 states that any vehicle overtaking (passing) a bicycle shall pass at a reasonable speed & at least TWO FEET to the left of the bicycle

BICYCLE HELMETS
City Code 7-50 states that all bicyclists age 14 & under MUST wear a helmet.
While ages 15 & above are not required to wear helmets, the Virginia Beach Police Department strongly encourages all bicyclists to wear a helmet.

LIGHTS REQUIRED AT NIGHT
State Code 46.2-1015 requires that all bicycles operated at night must have a white headlight and red taillight.

PROPER LANE USAGE
State Code 46.2-905 requires that bicycles shall not ride more than two abreast. If this impedes traffic flow, bicycles must ride single file. Bicycles shall use only one lane of a street, no matter how many are available.

Department pamphlet available for distribution to the public

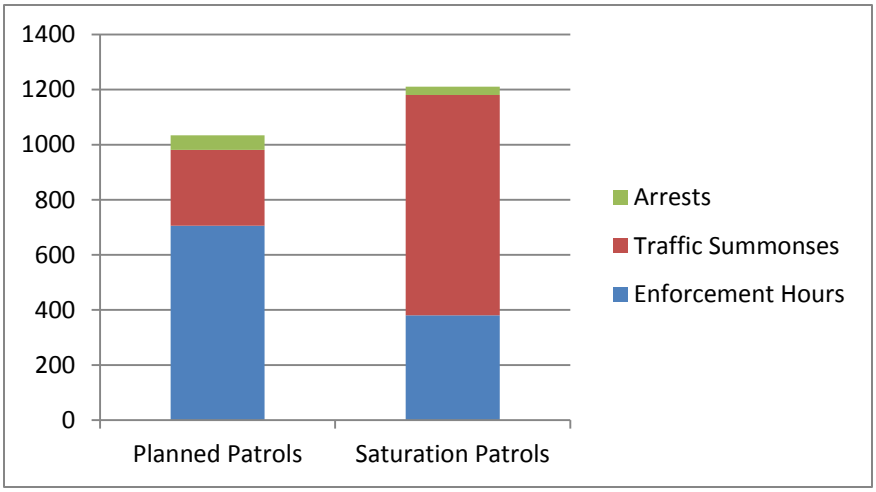
The department uses pamphlets distributed to community groups, schools, and at each of the precincts in order to provide current information and answers to common questions concerning laws affecting bicycles and pedestrians. The pamphlets are informative to both bicyclists and motorists as it provides basic information required for both modes of transportation to safely operate together on the roads.

A bicycle rodeo was conducted by officers in the 2nd Precinct in partnership with the Oceanfront Library to

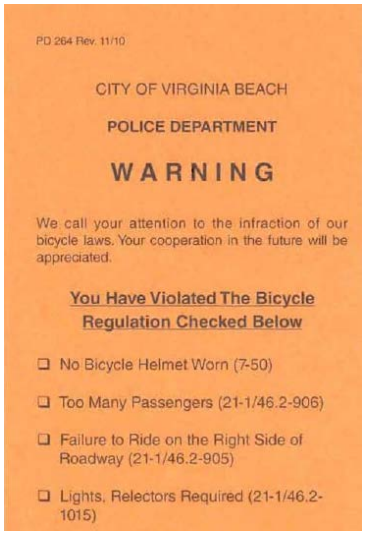
reach youth bicycle riders. The goal of the program was to educate our younger riders to prepare them for safe habits as they grow up, as well as to show a positive police interaction to the rest of the bicycle community. On June 20th, 2015, another bicycle rodeo was conducted at the Pembroke Mall for children ages 5-12. Approximately 100 attendees were provided instruction from six officers from the 3rd Precinct on general bike safety, rules of the road, the proper fitting of helmets, and were offered a bike safety inspection.

Due to the high volume of pedestrians in and around the municipal center during daytime operations, Sergeant Brandt, the Traffic Safety Unit supervisor, coordinated the release of information through the City of Virginia Beach employee newsletter detailing some of the more common rules of the road. This information is directed at and reaches an important portion of the public who frequently travel in this pedestrian dense area.

Enforcement:



Regular duty time is split between a multitude of tasks during a shift. Officers are expected to devote available time to enforcement of traffic laws to include those involving bicycles and pedestrians. A number of planned patrols from the precinct officers, as well as traffic enforcement complaints provided by citizens, directly identified issues relating to bicycle and pedestrian safety. This significant effort resulted in 706 hours of enforcement time, 275 traffic summonses were issued, and 53 arrests were made. This is in conjunction with the saturation patrols conducted by Special Operations officers that totaled 380.5 enforcement hours including many of our target areas as well as residential and school zone areas where bicycle and pedestrian use is high. This enforcement effort resulted in 800 traffic summonses and 30 arrests.


PD 264 Rev. 11/10

CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH

POLICE DEPARTMENT

WARNING

We call your attention to the infraction of our bicycle laws. Your cooperation in the future will be appreciated.

You Have Violated The Bicycle Regulation Checked Below

- ❑ No Bicycle Helmet Worn (7-50)
- ❑ Too Many Passengers (21-1/46.2-906)
- ❑ Failure to Ride on the Right Side of Roadway (21-1/46.2-905)
- ❑ Lights, Relectors Required (21-1/46.2-1015)

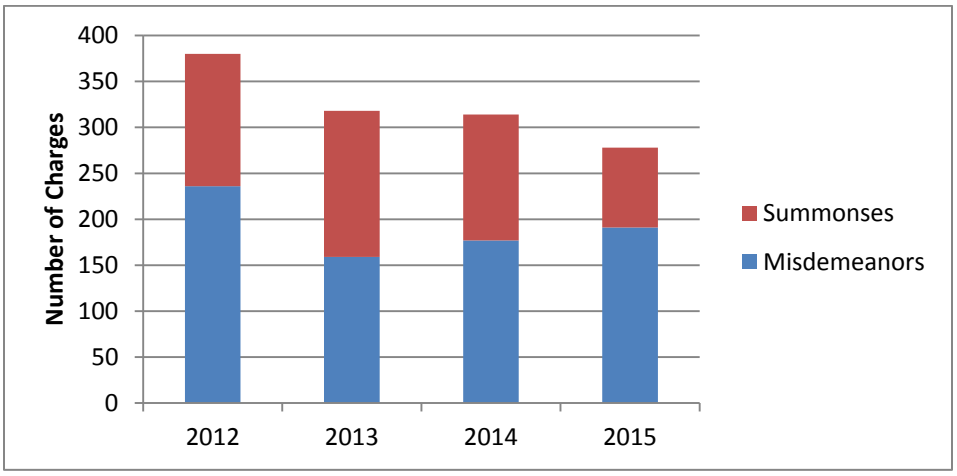
Bicycle warning card

While enforcement of all traffic laws is a priority of our department, many bicycle and pedestrian laws are not as heavily enforced by way of summons or arrest. Frequently, officers who come into contact

with minor violations or certain safety violations will stop and address the issue, but may choose to release the individual on a warning. VBPD does not track warnings given, however a tool our officers use is a warning card issued to a bicyclist for the violation that occurred. The warning card serves to remind the violator of their actions while still promoting safety

Since 2012, there has been a decline in overall charges involving bicycles and pedestrians. As the following graph depicts, this decline has been mainly in the traffic summonses issued versus the misdemeanor violations. While it is often viewed that a decrease in enforcement output indicates less work being completed, these numbers show that the more serious misdemeanors are still addressed, and there may be more warnings issued instead of traffic summonses in order to gain voluntary compliance.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Related Charges by Year



Outcomes:

In the calendar year of 2015 we saw a reduction in deaths of pedestrians and bicyclists by 40% from ten in 2014 to six in 2015. Through the course of investigation, it was determined that each of these crashes was the fault of the bicyclist or pedestrian, having either disobeyed the available pedestrian signal or using the roadway improperly. Additionally, two of these fatalities indicated that the victim was under the influence of alcohol.

Despite the decline in citations issued to bicyclists and pedestrians, a result of large saturation patrols in the areas conducted yielded positive results including a large number of arrests. In the saturated areas, 103

Officers patrol the oceanfront on bicycles

misdemeanor arrests were made along with 19 felony arrests. Our target areas that were a major focus of the saturations and planned patrols were not considered high crime areas of our city. However, increasing police presence likely improved the department's visibility to the public, and the resulting arrests made in these areas continued to keep our crime rate as one of the lowest in the nation.

In Virginia Beach in 2015, bicycle and pedestrian crashes each accounted for 18% of all fatality crashes (3 of 16 total). In 2014, pedestrian crashes accounted for 33% of all fatalities (8 of 24 total) and bicycle fatalities represented 8% (2 of 24 total). As it pertains to bicyclists and pedestrians, our goal is to reduce the number involved in fatal crashes to zero, which can be achieved as we reduce our overall fatal crashes.

Kenneth R. Buechner, Paul K. Lynch and Eric S. Beaver—These officers were recognized for hosting a kids' bike rodeo on June 6. The rodeo was held in conjunction with Virginia Beach Public Library, the EMS Bike Team, and the Virginia Beach Fire Department. The event included a safety lecture on local laws, safe practices, and skills competitions. The day ended with a parade ride with uniformed officers and rescue personnel on 8th Street. The Police Benevolent Association sponsored the event, providing prizes of lights, stickers and helmets together with some department pens, pencils and lanyards.

Recognition was provided to officers on behalf of the department for efforts in promoting bike safety. Officers Buechner, Lynch, and Beaver were awarded department "Class Act" awards for their involvement in the 2nd precinct bicycle rodeo. These awards are given to officers for actions including displaying "initiative in the fostering of an innovative, valuable or successful program in the area of community affairs."