

TOWN OF NEWTOWN

POLICE DEPARTMENT

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Traffic Safety and Enforcement Strategy is to document a specific plan of action, as well as to identify the resources necessary to reduce the number and severity of traffic accidents, and to increase the public's satisfaction with the traffic conditions in the Town of Newtown. The key objective will be to make the roadways of Newtown safer for our residents, thus increasing the quality of life in our community. Community surveys and other key performance indicators will measure this. This document will serve to identify current strategies in place and future planned strategies. It is not a document that will deal with the engineering aspects of transportation safety. Since this document is a police strategy and planning guide, components of the plan of action will include enforcement and education principles, thereby allowing the public and officers to better understand the direction of this agency addressing the complexities of traffic safety in the new millennium.

II. BACKGROUND:

Dating back to 1972, the Newtown Police Department enjoyed the reputation of being very traffic oriented and a very safe community from the dangers of injuries and deaths from traffic accidents. Our officers were encouraged to participate in proactive traffic enforcement and we found that it was an effective tool for saving lives, preventing injuries, and preventing crime. Intensive traffic enforcement efforts have the spin-off benefits in the reduction of common street crimes and increased apprehension of criminal offenders.

Over the past several years, traffic, traffic congestion and complaints of traffic violations on our thoroughfares and in our neighborhoods have become more common within our community. It appears that each year the community has become increasingly dissatisfied with the level of traffic, traffic congestion, speeding, aggressive driving and other traffic issues. Our own community survey conducted in conjunction with the Department's 5 Year Strategic Plan, has showed a high level of concern for these issues.

The Newtown Police Commission, which is the Town of Newtown's Legal Traffic Authority, have remained vigilant in its duties to manage the traffic roadway system to the extent possible, and encourage the other town planning agencies, to work cohesively in developing a safe but prudent road networked system. It has remained the driving force behind the Police Department's efforts and strategies to reduce traffic congestion, traffic accidents, aggressive driving, speeding and a myriad of traffic safety concerns.

III. PRESENT PHILOSOPHY AND FUTURE TRENDS

To identify a comprehensive traffic enforcement strategy, you must classify the components of the Town's traffic woes. The Community Survey conducted in 2006 combined with the frequency of calls and letters to the Town of Newtown (The Police Department, The Police Commission and The

First Selectman's Office), have generated enough interest that improving traffic and community safety should be one the most important priorities for town government.

Over several years now, this agency has begun to lay the foundation for shifting necessary resources to improved traffic management and enforcement. As evidence the following steps have been taken to meet the differing needs of the community:

- IMPLEMENTATION OF AND TRAINING OF A COMMERCIAL TRUCK ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
- CONTINUING AND ONGOING DUI ENFORCEMENT THROUGH GRANTS
- PURCHASE OF AND ONGOING UTILIZATION OF SPEED TRAILER
- IMPLEMENTATION OF A REGIONAL TRAFFIC SQUAD
- IMPLEMENTATION OF A TOWN-WIDE ENHANCED TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVE MAY-JUNE 2006
- IMPLEMENTATION OF UNDERAGE DRINKING INITIATIVES
- IMPLEMENTATION OF MOTORCYCLE UNIT TO ENHANCE TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVES
- IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD SAFETY SEAT INSPECTIONS BY HIGHLY TRAINED POLICE CHILD SAFETY TECHNICIANS
- IMPLEMENTATION OF AND TRAINING FOR AN ACCIDENT RECONSTRUCTION TEAM
- PARTICIPATION IN SEVERAL LARGE LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AND PLANS
- PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL AREA TRAFFIC CALMING COMMITTEE
- PARTICIPATION AND USE OF SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT GRANTS

To this end, this agency is focusing on innovative and contemporary methods to control and manage traffic, and reduce the potential for traffic accidents and injuries. Over the past two budgetary cycles, this agency has requested and received extra monies for additional personnel that will be used to implement a traffic enforcement unit. The implementation of this unit will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

Since 1999, Newtown has taken advantage of numerous traffic related grants, procuring over \$400,000, which enhanced our efforts tremendously. These grants have yielded an additional 5,200 man-hours in various enforcement projects and added to the department, the necessary tools and equipment of traffic enforcers.

Newtown, because of its unique geographical location (between 2 major thoroughfares), and because it sits between several urban centers (Bridgeport, New Haven, Danbury, Waterbury) and because of its tremendous growth potential, has experienced an unprecedented traffic volume expansion along all roads in Newtown. All studies conducted regarding Newtown's and the region's growth, portray a consistent upward trend thereby stretching the roadway infrastructure beyond its capacity in many instances.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL AND TOWN TRANSPORTATION GOALS

According to statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, traffic crashes-the majority of which are caused by moving traffic violations-kill more than 41,000 people in the United States every year, injure another 3.4 million and cause a societal loss of \$150 billion annually.

It is clear that members of our community believe that traffic and transportation issues are the responsibility of local, regional and state government. Our staff, The Newtown Police Commission and the Office of First Selectman, believes that traffic issues, however, are more than a town or regional agenda; it is a neighborhood issue that has an impact on the day-to-day, moment-to-moment quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Surveys in community after community cite increased traffic enforcement as resident's number-one priority, and road rage/aggressive driving as one of their worst fears. Our community survey concluded the same fears and priorities as other community surveys. Communities support traffic enforcement when it is done with courtesy and professionalism. Police agencies that do not respond to community uncertainties, will not be successful and maintain the professional image that is demanded.

The department's goals as re-affirmed and outlined in the 5 Year Strategic Plan-as adopted by the Police Commission in 2007 cite the following:

1. To achieve voluntary compliance with the law
2. To protect life and property against crime
3. To facilitate the safe and rapid movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic through the community
4. To improve the quality of life enjoyed by the citizen's of Newtown by reducing crime and the fear of crime in the community.

In addition the Town of Newtown Plan of Conservation and Development as (POCD) adopted in 2004 list several goals for the Town of Newtown relating to Transportation:

1. Alleviate areas of congestion and address safety concerns.
2. Achieve the appropriate functional classification of roads in Newtown.

Each goal needs a unique strategy. Many of these goals, require a strategy that is bold and yet fluid to confront the problem. To this end, the implementation of a Traffic Unit within Newtown has been identified as the number one agency priority and one of the highest agency priorities because its primary mission will be to focus on the stated goals and objectives of the organization as it relates to transportation safety concerns. The unit will in turn be another resource in the Department's problem solving efforts. The Traffic Unit is to be considered an additional squad of officers that can be mobilized for tactical purposes by the line services. It will be our true enforcement arm within our agency confronting the issues and helping to achieve our goals.

As a Department, we have adopted a generalist approach to community policing. This agency views traffic enforcement as part of their daily duties and responsibilities. Accordingly, the Traffic Unit will be recognized as the main traffic enforcement section of the Town and will readily respond to the requests of patrol for specialized selective enforcement.

This document will prove to be the strategy by which those decisions are made. It is a living document and will be improved as technologies and approaches are refined and/or developed. Without a specific strategy or approach to dealing with the traffic problems, our residents' frustration levels will increase and the potential for accidents or vehicle related crimes will increase as well. Additionally, public confidence will erode and dissatisfaction will increase.

V. STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this document is to ensure the safety of pedestrians, as well as bicycle and vehicular traffic in the Town of Newtown. The objectives are listed below:

1. To achieve voluntary compliance with the law through
 - Enhanced enforcement whereby a specialized traffic unit is implemented utilizing marked, unmarked vehicles and non-traditional vehicles, highly trained and motivated officers, and targeting times and locations of persistent offenses.
 - An enhanced presence in the community whereby regional traffic officers combine to saturate local areas of concerns targeting locations where persistent traffic offenses occur.
2. To improve quality of life issues through police traffic services, by or thru:
 - Maintaining current enforcement initiatives developed to target commercial trucks, all terrain vehicles and aggressive motor vehicle operation or adding new initiatives as community or neighborhood concerns change.
 - Criminal interdiction as a by-product of efficient traffic enforcement.
3. To improve the public and official perception of the advantages of police traffic services in crime control, collision and injury management, through:
 - Public outreach whereby officers meet with neighborhoods, schools, businesses, and churches experiencing policing issues and develop a targeted solution.
 - A proactive approach to traffic enforcement
 - Traffic related performance measures for enforcement personnel where officers assigned to specialized duties are assessed on the impact to the community and neighborhood
 - Partnership development with neighboring communities and other state agencies.
4. To use state of the art management and training techniques, technology, research, innovation, information and evaluation to enhance the quality of police traffic services, through:
 - Collision analysis thereby officers will have a better understanding of the dynamics of traffic collisions.

- Enhancing the Newtown Police Department's traffic safety relationship with the media by publicizing the results and the efforts of our organization; and by publicizing upcoming initiatives.
 - Exploring and securing alternative funding sources.
5. To be proactive in identifying and adjusting to traffic safety issues and their relationship to other policing issues, through:
- Data management.
 - Community involvement.
 - Intra-agency cooperation and information sharing.
 - Internal and external education and training.

VI. THE ENFORCEMENT PHILOSOPHY OF THE NEWTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT

Generalist Approach-Patrol

To achieve long-term results in reducing the traffic violations and accidents that occur, the Police Department takes a generalist approach to traffic enforcement. This simply means that, in addition to general traffic enforcement, patrol officers shall focus their enforcement efforts in a manner designed to eliminate and/or reduce traffic safety problems within their community policing sectors. The patrol officer is also responsible for identifying hazardous conditions that contribute to traffic problems, such as a poorly marked roadway, improper placement of signs, signals cycling too fast or too slow or a speed zone that needs to be improved. Upon identifying these hazards, the officer will notify DPW so that steps can be taken to correct the problem in a timely manner. The generalist approach is the responsibility of everyone. Officers receive basic training in traffic enforcement procedures, enhanced DUI enforcement and radar training.

Specialist Approach-Traffic Unit

The Traffic Unit is responsible for the specialist approach to traffic issues. The unit is a resource to patrol and their services are deployed to problem areas that have been identified as problems by patrol, statistical analysis and by the community. The Traffic Unit's function is to provide selective enforcement to problem areas with the goal being the reduction of collisions and/or violations in that area. They do this through enforcement and educational programs. Traffic Officers can receive advanced training in traffic enforcement procedures such as:

- Radar use
- Accident Investigations (Basic, Intermediate, Advanced)
- Accident Reconstruction
- Child Safety Seat Use Commercial Enforcement
- DUI Enforcement
- Seat belt enforcement

Directed Enforcement-Regional, Traffic Unit, Patrol

Directed enforcement, or problem oriented policing, has been proven to be a more effective way of reducing problems. Identified problem areas are subject to a variety of policing initiatives, sometimes unique to the neighborhood, to resolve the concerns of the area. Officers are expected to provide a di-

rected enforcement effort to those areas whenever possible during their patrol shift. They will be supported and supplemented by the Traffic Unit and Regional Traffic Officers whenever possible.

Methods include many of the following components:

1. Targeting known problem areas identified through crime and accident analysis
2. Officers' observations and knowledge of problem areas
3. Prompt response to public complaints and review of accident data profiles
4. Town-wide inspection for roadway and other defects with accident causing potential
5. DUI Enforcement
6. Educational programs
7. Radar Trailer, radar enforcement, and other identified strategies
8. Seatbelt Checkpoints
9. Car Seat Checkpoints
10. Aggressive compliance enforcement toward accident causing violations, such as:
 - High visibility saturation enforcement (equipment and other minor infractions)
 - Radar enforcement
 - Pedestrian violation enforcement "Stings" utilizing "decoys" as pedestrians
 - Seatbelt compliance enforcement campaigns

The selective enforcement components are tools available to the Police Department to help respond to complaints about traffic issues. For instance, when an area is identified as having a speeding vehicle problem, the Department may elect to deploy the radar trailers. These components prove to slow people down by making them aware of their speed. On occasion, a patrol officer or motor officer further down the road may be included who will cite the offender if they do not slow down. This reduces the complacency that a driver may feel if they thought that the radar trailer could not hold them accountable for their speeds. Most of the speeding vehicle complaints come from residents who live in the area and want enforcement action to slow traffic down. After the radar trailer is deployed and the area is still suffering from a speed problem, then motor officers and patrol work the area with radar and cite the violators.

VII. PUBLIC EDUCATION:

There is no doubt that education of the public is a critical component of any traffic safety and enforcement scheme. Law enforcement exists to serve the community by preserving the peace, protecting lives and property, and improving the quality of life. To accomplish this, we must communicate with the community we serve. Community policing which this agency adopted many years ago, it not just for responding to criminal issues, but also exists to respond to all community issues. Traffic safety and enforcement efforts should have a positive effect on the community because it relates directly to saving lives, and reducing injuries and property damage. Therefore, we must act in partnership with the community to develop plans, and communicate these plans. Each officer is a liaison with the community and thereby an integral piece of the public education initiative. As part of public education we can deploy/use the following:

- Radar Trailers - These are deployed by police personnel and used as an educational device for drivers.
- Radar Display - This is a trunk-mounted display, deployed by police personnel.

- Radar Loan Program - Radar guns are loaned to community members who operate them on their neighborhood streets. This program educates the user in what speed / violations "look" like. Often times residents report speeding vehicles when the vehicles are not actually traveling that fast. (For example, a citizen reports vehicles on their street traveling at speeds of 50+ mph. When the radar unit is deployed, they find that 50+ is really 35 to 40 mph.) (This is a new initiative not yet approved by the Police Commission or Town of Newtown. Further study is needed to implement this program)
- Bicycle Safety Program - This program is a comprehensive approach to bicycle safety, and employs enforcement and education to promote bicycle safety and reduce accidents and is applicable to all members of the bicycling community,
- Pedestrian Safety Program - This program is a comprehensive approach designed to reduce pedestrian/vehicle collisions. It employs the strategies of education, engineering and enforcement.
- Educational Car Interior Programs- These programs are designed to educate the driver and enforce existing well known law. Two of the most popular programs are the Car Seat Fair and the Seat Belt Checkpoint.
- Drive Safe in Newtown Program-This program, to be run with the implementation of a fully functioning Traffic Unit, will utilize the media to enhance the traffic safety and enforcement efforts of the police. Regular news release will be developed and given to the press for publication. The Department will use banners, billboards, bumper stickers and any other mass media distribution methods available to further get the message to the public.

VIII. FUTURE AND POTENTIAL ENFORCEMENT TRENDS:

As technology advances to greater heights and depths, its ability to assist law enforcement increases. Vehicles and roadway systems are being “driven” by computer technology also known as intelligent technology. Vehicle mapping, GPS, vehicle black-boxes, closed circuit television traffic cameras, traffic speed and volume meters, driver/vehicle identification systems and other intelligent transportation systems will be developed and deployed. This agency is committed to the use of and deployment of advanced intelligent information technology devices provided that the devices meet the goals and objectives of this organization and the community.

IX. MEASURING

The following indicators are to be reviewed:

1. To maintain or reduce the number of fatalities resulting from traffic collisions compared to fatalities in the previous year.
2. To maintain or reduce the number of traffic collisions resulting in injury compared to the number of such collisions occurring in the previous year.
3. To maintain or reduce the number of traffic collisions resulting in property damage compared to the number of such collisions occurring in the previous year.
4. To maintain or reduce complaints from neighborhoods/individuals each year.

Should a significant increase occur, the Operations Bureau will investigate its cause by breaking down the types and locations of the collisions or complaints. If it is an engineering issue, then the information will be forwarded to DPW. If the cause is due to other conditions, more enforcement and/or education will be done to alert the public of the hazardous conditions.

In addition, this effectiveness will also be measured by the community's satisfaction rating using a Customer Satisfaction Public Opinion Survey.

X. STRATEGIC REVIEW

The Traffic Management Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis. The review will assess the success of the elements outlined in this document, along with the need for any revision, deletion or addition of an element. The manager/supervisor assigned this strategy will be responsible for the revision. Input and recommendations should be forwarded up to the Chief of Police for proper review and consideration.

XI. CONCLUSION

The Traffic Safety and Enforcement Strategy is a stratagem of thoughts, ideas, opinions, fact, and circumstances that when combined form a platform and call to action. It should be a living and breathing document that is fluid and flexible to adapt to changing needs, ever-changing resources and attitudes. It of course is a plan of action for everyone to read and understand. The public and Town citizens, The Police Commission, The Newtown Police Department at large, other Town Commissions, and the Political Infrastructure have demanded action and this document highlights the diagram for success. Saving lives, preventing injuries, and improving the quality of life for neighborhoods will be the driving force in our efforts.

Chief Michael K. Kehoe

Approved and Adopted by
The Newtown Police Commission
October 2, 2007