



IDOT TRAFFIC STOP DATA TASK FORCE

CITY OF URBANA
HUMAN RELATIONS OFFICE
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Urbana, IL 61801

LAUREL LUNT PRUSSING
MAYOR

PUBLIC COMMENT COVER PAGE

**THE ATTACHED IS PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE
“PRELIMINARY REPORT” PUBLISHED ON 07/06/2015
BY THE URBANA IDOT TRAFFIC STOP DATA TASK FORCE**

Comments Submitted by:	Durl Kruse
Date Received:	August 12, 2015

TASK FORCE INFORMATION:

The I.D.O.T. Traffic Stop Data Task Force was established by Urbana City Council Resolution NO. 2014-01-002.

The Task Force is charged with identifying and studying any racial disparities that may exist in local traffic stop data supplied annually to the City by the Illinois Department of Transportation (I.D.O.T.), and attempting to find the source and cause of any disparity. The Task Force is directed to examine multiple aspects of the traffic stop data, including race, driver age, residence, stop time, stop location, the reason for the stop, vehicle age, and any other information the Task Force finds to be useful. The Task Force will also look beyond traffic stop data to consider census and unemployment data, high school graduation rates, and incarceration statistics from the September 2013 study of the Champaign County justice system.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE TASK FORCE:

On the web, visit <http://urbanaininois.us/boards/idot-traffic-stop-data-task-force>; or

Contact the Urbana Human Relations Office by mail to: 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois 61801-3336; by email to acweck@urbanaininois.us; by telephone to (217) 384-2455; or by fax to: (217) 328-8288.

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Subject: Public Comment
Date: Wednesday, August 12, 2015 8:55:18 PM

Dear Members of the Traffic Stop Task Force,

On July 15, 2015 the Mayor submitted the following as public comment:

"First, it is important to put in context why police are in certain neighborhoods more than others. As your report indicates, this is a factor in increased investigative traffic stops."

" Urbana Police are responding to calls for help from the public. The raw IDOT statistics indicate African-Americans are more likely to be stopped in traffic. However, the report should include that African-Americans are even more likely to be victims of crime. Although they are 17% of the census population, they are 40% of the victims of crime. The disparity in crime victims by race is twice the disparity in traffic stops."

"If traffic stops in themselves are contributing to a mistrust of police in the African-American community, we need to have a public discussion of ways to improve the situation."

The Mayor raises several excellent points that merit further public discussion and response by the Task Force.

1. On the surface it makes perfectly good sense that more policing would be directed to neighborhoods where it appears more crime is occurring. But I would be very cautious and careful not to draw premature conclusions without asking exactly what type of "crimes" we are talking about and how communities of color might be policed differently. Everyone recognizes the decades long War on Drugs has influenced both the public's perception and law enforcement's approach to fighting certain types of crimes in certain ways in certain neighborhoods. There are many recent books written on this subject, two I would mention are ***The New Jim Crow*** by Michelle Alexander and ***Follow the Scream*** by Johann Hari. They clearly document how badly constructed drug laws and racially biased policing have resulted in a criminal justice system that has incarcerated literally hundreds of thousands of citizens of color with little or no benefit to reducing crime or improving the safety of our communities.

As an example of this, the Task Force report indicates that the investigative traffic stop is a real and intentional tactic used by the UPD to fight crime, but that it likely has also contributed to traffic stop racial disparities and inequitable financial and emotional impacts within the African-American community. Knowing this to be the case, as the mayor suggests, we need to have a public discussion of ways to improve the situation. Therefore, a beginning point might be for the Task Force and community to ask the right questions: "Is the continued use of the investigative traffic stop as currently constituted and implemented, consistent and acceptable with our community values of policing?" "Is the investigative stop actually achieving the desired results in reducing crime and making all neighborhoods safer?" "Would modifying the use of the investigative stop and combining it with other policing tactics be more effective in reducing crime and increasing neighborhood safety without causing the negative consequences cited in the Traffic Stop report?" "How can traffic stop data, in particular the investigative stop, be accurately collected and regularly reviewed for the purpose of determining its effectiveness and impact on all racial groups in upcoming years?"

Detailed studies by non-law enforcement experts such as (Epps, Maynard-Moody, and Haiden-Markel) and others suggest that just such a public discussion is overdue and necessary. They conclude that the general and broad use of the investigative stop based solely upon officer discretion without specific parameters or constraints defining reasonable suspicion as being directly linked to observable criminal activity has created some profound unintended consequences that actually hurt good policing efforts and negatively impact police/community relations.

Indeed a discussion of the use and effectiveness of the investigative traffic stop as a crime fighting tool in Urbana is long overdue.

2. Between the years of 2004-2013 IDOT data shows that African American drivers composed on average 33% of all the traffic stops conducted in Urbana. If the crime figure given by the Mayor is correct, that African American's constitute 40% of the victims of crimes, these two numbers are alarming, but one is not double the other (2.35 vs 1.94).

Hopefully the Task Force will not only stress in its recommendations how the financial and social impact of these racial disparities can be addressed by the city council, but also and most importantly the critical need to address the source of the problem, namely to track, monitor and review the use of the investigative stop by race on a regular basis to determine if it is an effective policing tool and to insure that it is being implemented equitably and fairly in our community regardless of the race of the driver.

Thank you,
Durl Kruse