



IDOT TRAFFIC STOP DATA TASK FORCE

CITY OF URBANA
HUMAN RELATIONS OFFICE
400 South Vine Street
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:	Esther Patt
Date Received:	September 28, 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.

From: Esther Patt [<mailto:estherpatt@hotmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2015 11:26 AM
To: !HRO
Subject: Comment on IDOT Traffic Stop Data

I thank the Task Force members for their very thorough review of the subject of racial profiling as well as of the traffic stop data for the City of Urbana and for their thoughtful recommendations. In my opinion, these are the four most important areas for improvement of police-community relations:

1. Hot spot policing should be determined by central command and not be conducted at the discretion of individual officers. Especially because the racial disparities in stops were often found during these hot spot checks, removing individual discretion about where to conduct the stops could reduce the disparity and would definitely demonstrate to the community a desire by the Urbana Police Department to ensure that decisions about traffic stops are based on sound criteria rather than a response to any racial bias.
2. The "day fine" proposal to base the amount of a fine on the driver's daily income rather than having a fixed fine that applies to all people regardless of income is a wonderful idea that I hope the Urbana City Council will adopt.
3. The most important recommendation is that police and city officials recognize that the public perceives a racial bias and regardless of any statistical analysis of traffic stop data in any one year, disparity in traffic stops is an important community relations issue. The fact that people believe the police are profiling African American drivers should inspire officials to work to ensure that doesn't happen. Too often, discussion of the topic only inspires defensiveness. It's important to prove to the community that officials take community concerns seriously and are taking steps to eliminate any unintended disparities in the treatment of African American people in Urbana.
4. I wish to add the strong recommendation that the Urbana Police Department end the practice of "consent searches." The data collected by Urbana police every year show that African Americans are more than twice as likely as Caucasians to be asked to consent to a search of their vehicles because an officer was suspicious but had no probable cause to search. Yet, every year, the data show that Caucasian drivers asked to consent to a search have a much higher rate of being found with contraband than African American drivers. In 2012, for example, 7 Caucasian drivers and 6 African American drivers were asked to consent to a search. Three of the 7 Caucasian drivers were found to have contraband; 5 of the 6 African American drivers consented to the search and no contraband was found in any of their cars.

Although the numbers of consent searches each year are small, they evidence a biased perspective by some officers who evidently, are suspicious of innocent African American drivers more often than they are suspicious of innocent Caucasian drivers. The impact on the community is that each year, more African American drivers and their friends and family have reason to believe that Urbana police profile African American drivers. The positive impact on the community of eliminating these searches far outweighs the benefit the department experiences each year from conducting them.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input.

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