

Austin PD and Texas DPS Partnership



Austin City Council Work Session
April 18, 2023

Agenda

- Background
- How the APD/DPS Partnership Works
- Collaboration & Transparency
- Data-Driven Approach
 - Traffic Safety
 - Violent Crime
- Initial Results
- Questions & Answers

Background

- APD currently has more than 300 vacant officer positions. The department has fewer officers now than it did 15 years ago. Historic staffing shortages, combined with a rapidly growing city, have created an unprecedented challenge.
- High vacancy rates and recruiting challenges are national issues affecting departments around the country, state, and in our region. Departments are competing with each other for talent.
- Decreased staffing levels have led to longer response times to high priority calls and longer wait times for lower priority calls.

How the Partnership Works

- The partnership with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) is a valuable and innovative measure to increase public safety while strong efforts to build back and build up the department are underway.
- Close collaboration includes daily calls between Chief Chacon and DPS Regional Director Vincent Luciano.
- Each has jurisdiction over respective departments, but are in close alignment on how to carry out the joint operation. Both agencies are subject to the same state and federal training and reporting requirements.

How the Partnership Works

- Two-fold objective:
 - Assist Austin PD with traffic enforcement, officer backup, and priority call response. Texas DPS is targeting aggressive driving, reckless driving, racing, and other hazardous traffic violations.
 - Reduce violent and gun-related crime. Violent crimes include shootings, assaults, robberies, gang activity, and other felonies.
- Data driven and people centered.

Collaboration & Transparency

- Texas DPS is supporting the public safety mission of the Austin Police Department.
- Texas DPS operates under state law and its own policies; many align with APD policy and/or City policy. DPS's operating procedure is to defer to the local district or county attorney's prosecutorial practices.
- APD will continue to report weekly on the results of the partnership, including number of arrests and traffic stops.

Collaboration & Transparency

- On Mental Health calls, APD trained Crisis Intervention Officers will respond to assist Texas DPS.
- Texas DPS has been provided an Austin Resource Guide to assist them on calls. Information includes: Sobering Center, Austin's Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH), Caritas of Austin, Lifeworks Street Outreach for Youth, Veteran resources, and other important community partners.
- Calls for service such as domestic violence, traffic fatalities, sexual assaults, homicides, and other major investigations will continue to be handled by APD. Texas DPS helps secure the scene when necessary until APD can arrive. APD maintains overall control and handles the investigation and follow-up.

Data-Driven Approach: Traffic Safety

- DPS officers patrol major roadways that traffic analysis has identified as locations where speeding, reckless driving, DWIs, injury crashes and traffic fatalities are most prevalent.
 - Areas include U.S. Hwy. 183, MoPac, and I-35 near downtown.
 - This is a specific area of policing that has been understaffed and is expected to reduce both traffic-related injuries and death.
- In the first two weeks of the partnership, DPS conducted 4,016 traffic stops with a focus on intervention. In most of these stops, Troopers issued verbal or written warnings. Tickets were issued in only approximately 25% of stops.
- APD and DPS are held to the same federal reporting standards regarding traffic stop data. APD requested demographic information about DPS traffic stops and will provide it when it's made available.

Data-Driven Approach: Violent Crime

- DPS officers deploy daily to areas where the highest number of calls for assistance involving violence originate.
- DPS officers patrol these areas, serving as a crime deterrent, and are available to respond quickly when crimes are committed or when calls for assistance come in.
- Texas DPS is partnering with APD Violent Crime Investigative Units – mainly homicide and aggravated assault detectives – to reduce gun crime, respond to new incidents, resolve active cases, and proactively target crime in areas experiencing an increase in violent crime.

Initial Results are Promising

Compared to the same week last year:

- Decrease in violent crimes citywide
 - In the first week, there was a 25% decrease (67/89).
 - In the second week, there was a 31% decrease (68/124).
- Decrease in violent crimes in areas of DPS deployment
 - In the first week, there was a 58% decrease.
 - In the second week, there was a 49% decrease.
- Decrease in calls for service
 - In the first week there was a 15% decrease.
 - In the second week, there was a 12% decrease.

Improved Response Times

Compared to the same week last year:

- Reduced response times to emergency calls for assistance in deployment areas
 - Decreased by nearly 2 minutes in the first week.
 - Decreased by 1 minute and 33 seconds in the second week.
- Reduced response times to urgent calls for assistance in deployment areas
 - Decreased by more than 7 minutes in the first week.
 - Decreased by 5 minutes and 26 seconds in the second week.
- Reduced response times to emergency and urgent calls throughout the city
 - Urgent decreased by 52 seconds in week 1 and 49 seconds in week 2.
 - Emergency decreased by 23 seconds in week 1 and 15 seconds in week 2.

Questions & Answers