



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager
Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager

DATE: May 1, 2023

SUBJECT: **Austin Police Department/Texas Department of Public Safety Joint Partnership – Week Four Update and Response to Council Questions**

As a follow-up to the April 13, 2023, memo and April 18, 2023, Council Work Session, the purpose of this memorandum is to respond to Council and community feedback about the partnership between APD and DPS.

The goal for the partnership is to be responsive to Austinites who are concerned about their safety and call 9-1-1, to reduce violent crime, to keep people safe, and reduce fatalities and injuries on our roads.

DPS resources are supplementing APD in areas of the city with the highest number of calls for assistance and with the highest number of serious injury and fatal crashes. Evidence-based policing strategies that will help meet the goals and objectives of this partnership include:

- Focused patrols of areas with high 911 calls for assistance, specifically calls in response to violent crimes
- High visibility of law enforcement in areas where a significant number of serious injury and fatal crashes occur

In keeping with our promise to be transparent, we are including data (below) on the partnership's progress in April.

While we are encouraged by the data, we hear your questions and concerns. If there are unintended consequences to our approach, we must address them immediately. We want to ensure Austinites have no reason to fear that they'll be racially profiled or targeted by this effort. This continuing collaboration with DPS requires transparency and accountability.

APD will publicly issue more detailed information about types of crimes, crime levels, numbers of calls for service, and response times, as well as historic data for comparison, before the May 22, 2023, Public Safety Committee meeting. We have asked DPS, the District Attorney's Office, the County Attorney's Office and the Justice of the Peace for Precinct Five for specific data that they can access so that we may build out a comprehensive report that will be updated regularly. Thereafter, APD will provide regular briefings on the partnership at subsequent Public Safety Committee meetings.

APD is dedicated to innovative, meaningful engagement that builds mutual trust and respect between our police officers and members of the community. We understand the community's concerns about this new partnership and will be engaging with constituents in each sector. Members of Council are invited and encouraged to assist with these engagements alongside APD executive staff. We will also continue connecting with residents through our Neighborhood Liaisons in APD's Office of Community Liaison and District Representatives who support the community through regular engagement, public education initiatives and providing information on available resources.

This is a dynamic partnership aimed at improving safety for all Austin residents and visitors, and we are committed to ensuring the initiative is meeting our goals of reducing incidents of violent crime, decreasing traffic fatalities and responding to our community when they call for our help. Until we can fill the significant number of vacant officer positions, we believe this partnership will remain a vital strategy in meeting those goals and keeping our city safe in a way that reflects Austin's values.

City of Austin APD/DPS Partnership: April 2023 Data

Austin is divided into nine sectors, eight of which are critically understaffed. Calls for service change constantly and affect where DPS works on a weekly basis. As of the fourth week of the partnership, DPS has now worked in all eight of the critically understaffed sectors. This data-driven approach is the most effective way to positively impact public safety in areas of the city with high calls for assistance.

Violent Crime:

The number of violent crimes decreased citywide. There were 92 violent crimes citywide, which is:

- Approximately 12% lower compared to the same week last year
- Approximately 28% lower compared to the week before the partnership began this year

Serious Injury Crashes and Traffic Fatalities:

Austin has experienced record numbers of traffic fatalities over the last several years with 122 individual fatalities in 2022 and 32 individual fatalities year to date. In addition to those killed, many more have experienced serious injuries because of preventable crashes on our roadways. The continued and expanded enforcement through this partnership is a critical component in helping Austin reach stated goals and objectives through Vision Zero.

The expansion of coverage has allowed DPS to monitor multiple high-speed roadways and major intersections across the city where data shows there have been high numbers of injury crashes and traffic fatalities. DPS is currently providing traffic enforcement assistance on major highways within Austin including IH35, 183, Mopac, 71, and 290. DPS has also begun providing additional traffic enforcement assistance on roadways throughout the city where collisions or excessive speeding frequently occur. Examples include roadways in the vicinity of:

- RM 2222 and Loop 360
- South Congress and South First between 290 and Slaughter Lane
- West William Cannon and Slaughter Lane
- Along Southwest Parkway

DPS will shift to other key areas as necessary to address traffic safety issues. APD will provide more detailed information regarding traffic violations, including speeding, reckless driving, DWIs, serious injury crashes, and traffic fatalities during the May 22, 2023, Special Called Public Safety Committee meeting.

911 Calls:

911 emergency calls for assistance have declined. There were 612 emergency calls for assistance throughout the city which is:

- Approximately 17% fewer emergency calls for assistance compared to the same week last year
- Approximately 12% fewer emergency calls for assistance compared to the week before the partnership began this year

911 Response Times:

Response times to these 911 emergency calls continue to decline. Response times throughout the city averaged 8 minutes and 45 seconds which is:

- 32 seconds faster (a 6% reduction) than the same week in 2022
- 1 minute and 15 seconds faster (a 13% reduction) than the week before the partnership began this year

Demographic Data:

Consistent with state and federal requirements, both APD and DPS provide traffic stop data reports on an annual basis that include an analysis of the racial demographic breakdown of each agency's motor vehicle stops. Like APD, DPS is committed to preventing racial profiling; even the perception of it undermines the public's trust.

Colonel Steven C. McCraw, Executive Director of Texas Department of Public Safety has committed to attending both the May 2, 2023, City Council Work Session and the special called Public Safety Committee meeting on May 22, 2023, to respond to questions about the data gathered and the partnership with DPS.

xc: Joseph Chacon, Chief of Police