



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**THROUGH:** Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager *J.G.*  
Bruce Mills, Interim Assistant City Manager *BM*

**FROM:** Joe Chacon, Police Chief *J.C.*  
Austin Police Department

**DATE:** April 13, 2023

**SUBJECT:** **Austin Police Department/Texas Department of Public Safety Joint Operation Update**

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The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the status and progress of the joint operation by the Austin Police Department (APD) and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS).

In the first two weeks of operation, the partnership has yielded meaningful impact – with significant decreases in violent crime, response times and calls for service.

APD currently has over 300 vacant officer positions and this unprecedented staffing challenge has led to longer wait times in response to calls for assistance, more traffic injuries and fatalities, and an increase in gun crime. The fact is, we have fewer officers now than we had 15 years ago.

**The partnership with DPS is a valuable and innovative measure to increase public safety while efforts to build back and build up the police department are underway.**

APD and DPS are collaborating closely - APD Chief Chacon and Vincent Luciano, DPS Regional Director for Central Texas, speak every day about the joint operation. Each has jurisdiction over their respective departments, and the two departments are in alignment on how to carry out this operation to ensure public safety.

**DPS officers are assisting with traffic enforcement, but also deploy daily to areas where the highest number of calls for assistance involving violence originate.** Troopers also patrol major roadways that traffic analysis has identified as locations where speeding, reckless driving, DWIs, injury crashes and

traffic fatalities are most prevalent. These areas include U.S. Hwy. 183, MoPac, and I-35 near downtown. This is a specific area of policing that has been understaffed, and we expect this part of the joint operation will reduce both traffic-related injuries and deaths. Since the beginning of the joint operation, DPS has conducted 4,016 traffic stops with a focus on interventions and warnings, writing tickets in only about 25% of these instances. The City has requested demographic information about these stops and will provide that information when it is available.

**Determining areas of the city – in real time – that are experiencing the highest rates of calls for assistance involving violence is an example of the data-driven tactics employed by this partnership.**

DPS troopers provide traffic patrol in these areas, but also serve as a crime deterrent and are available to respond quickly when a crime is committed. The initial results are encouraging.

**The average number of violent crimes in a week in Austin was 89 last year.** Violent crimes include aggravated assault, murder, sexual assault and robbery. **In the first week of the APD/DPS partnership, the number of violent crimes was 67 – a 25 percent decrease.**

**In the first week of DPS deployment, in the areas where DPS troopers were specifically deployed due to a high volume of calls for assistance, APD recorded a 58 percent reduction in violent crime.**

- Calls for emergency assistance dropped by 27 percent in these areas and 15 percent citywide.
- Urgent calls for assistance decreased by 28 percent in these areas and 17 percent citywide.
- Additionally, APD average response times to calls for emergency assistance in these areas, previously as high as 9 minutes and 30 seconds, were reduced by almost 2 minutes in some areas.
- APD average response times to urgent calls for assistance in these areas, previously as high as 19 minutes and 11 seconds, were reduced by over 7 minutes in some areas.
- Citywide APD average response times to calls for emergency assistance were reduced by 23 seconds, and average response times to urgent calls for assistance were reduced by 52 seconds.

Deploying DPS to specific areas of the city where calls for assistance involving violence are highest is currently proving successful. APD will continue to track these numbers and anticipate a continued trend of decreasing violent crime rates, though numbers may vary week-to-week. In situations where DPS is the first on scene of crime or crime-in-progress, DPS has been gaining control of and securing the scene and awaiting APD arrival so APD can be the lead on investigations.

It is important to note that in cases of misdemeanor offenses where APD typically issues a citation rather than making an arrest, DPS is following suit. The agency's operating procedure is to defer to the local district or county attorney's prosecutorial practices. Also, DPS is following APD's practice related to marijuana possession. APD does not generally take enforcement action for small amounts of marijuana. Enforcement action is generally only taken if related to a more serious crime. DPS is not focused on immigration issues – only criminal and traffic issues.

Additional important details include:

- APD will continue to be the lead agency for calls regarding domestic violence, traffic fatalities, sexual assaults, homicides, and other major investigations. Texas DPS will help secure the scene when necessary, until APD arrives. APD will maintain overall control and handle the investigation.
- APD will remain the lead agency on all mental health calls using APD Crisis Intervention Officers.
- Among other resources, APD has provided DPS an Austin Resource Guide to assist them on calls. The resource guide includes information on Austin's Sobering Center, Austin's Resource Center for the Homeless, Salvation Army, Caritas of Austin, Lifeworks Street Outreach for Youth, Veteran resources, and other important community partners.

To date, the joint operation has resulted in:

- 728 total APD assists
- 96 felony arrests
- 63 misdemeanor arrests
- 62 felony warrants served
- 54 misdemeanor warrants served
- 289 pounds of methamphetamine seized
- 200 grams of cocaine seized
- 40 grams of heroin seized
- 9 pounds of marijuana seized
- 25 handguns seized
- 2 shotguns/rifles seized
- 16 stolen vehicles recovered
- 4,016 total traffic stops
- 18 welfare checks conducted
- 6 mental health referrals made

We will provide regular updates to the Mayor and City Council as well as to the public. We look forward to providing a briefing to Council and answering any questions next week at the April 18 Council Work Session.