

The Evolution of the Colorado Springs Police Department Motorcycle Unit A Report to the Community



Report to the Community: Motors in the CSPD, Past and Present

Richard W. Myers, Chief of Police

Soon after my arrival in Colorado Springs subsequent to my appointment as police chief in January of 2007, it became highly evident that there was a significant disconnect between the CSPD and the community regarding the purpose, mission, and use of the motorcycle unit. Many in the community were convinced that the mission of the motor officers was to use any methods necessary to find traffic violators and issue tickets for the sole purpose of generating revenue for local government. In contrast, I found department members who were proud of a multi-year pattern of lowering traffic crash rates, serious injuries, and deaths through the use of targeted enforcement using crash data as the primary criteria. Paradoxically, the most commonly heard complaint from residents was speeding in their neighborhoods and a backlog of requests for increased enforcement.

Over time, I learned of the factors that contributed to the public's perception of a revenue-driven strategy for the motorcycle unit. On more than one occasion in past years, department management likely conveyed the unintentional perception that the priority was revenue when making statements such as "they will pay for themselves" if additional motor positions were added. This benign observation about cost/benefit took on greater significance as budget discussions within the political environment magnified the potential of revenue sufficient to offset the expenditures for additional manpower.

The conversation of "revenue" should not be an integral part of the assessment of police resources needed in a community. Police activity is not, and never should, be premised on the goal of generating revenue. In American society, the police are granted unprecedented powers within the social contract, and in return, are expected to use those powers sparingly, fairly, with equal access to all. Enforcement activity for the sole purpose of generating revenue is contrary to the social contract, and outside the ethics of modern policing.

Perhaps the angst surrounding revenue and police enforcement is due to inadequate analysis of the differences between intentional revenue and consequential revenue. Government seeks intentional revenue through such means as property or sales taxes, fees, and cost recovery methods. Fines from enforcement, however, are merely consequences incorporated into the accountability for violations of traffic, civil, or criminal laws. Since enforcement is unpredictable and influenced by countless factors, the consequential revenue from enforcement is impossible to forecast and thus, unreliable as a basis for budgeting. Because public government budgeting requires forecasting on both the expenditure and revenue sides, budget departments must include estimated fine revenue as part of their overall equation. This aspect of public budgeting has only served to contribute to the public perception about police enforcement and revenue.

Over the past few years, the CSPD has strived to strike a balance between sustaining the community's traffic safety through enforcement, while deploying manpower in the most needed manner, given the City's recent reductions in staffing. The number of traffic

violations issued has steadily declined as officer activity has diversified. The Department has provided officers more tools such as written warnings to use in lieu of tickets, to augment the non-enforcement components of “the three E’s” of traffic safety (enforcement, engineering, and education). And, as readers will see in this Report, the duties and assignments of the motor officers has significantly diversified to best use this flexible and valued organizational talent towards the community’s highest needs.

The men and women of the CSPD Motors represent a completely flexible and multi-purpose work team, one that has seen an increasingly complex and critical role within the Department’s overall mission. This Report will provide the community an overview of their history, and a renewed sense of importance and value in their contemporary role.



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In the absence of historical data on the history of the Colorado Springs Police Department Motorcycle Unit, the following information is based on subject matter experts and media accounts.

The Department has used a motorcycle unit throughout its history for a multitude of assignments. The use of a motorcycle during traffic enforcement and while responding to calls for service affords the Motor Officer a considerable amount of mobility/flexibility over a car. Historically, the Motor Unit focused their efforts on speed and red light enforcement throughout the City.

Motor Officers have always been utilized for rapid deployments and special needs; some recent examples included the Castle West fire and the New Life Church incident. On a more regular basis, Motor Officers are deployed to control traffic and secure a scene for the Fire Department during their response to fires and other incidents. Motor Officers assist the Traffic Engineer's Office during the striping of some City streets when vehicles need to be removed from the roadway. The Unit conducts traffic safety presentations to area schools and the military.

In 1987, the modern Motor Unit was formed with funding received through a Federal grant. The Unit was staffed with one sergeant and six officers, all assigned to ride motorcycles. The Federal grant allowed the formation of the Unit to focus on speeding and other driving violations on local highways. The core mission of the Unit was the enforcement of traffic laws along Interstate 25, specifically in the areas around Fillmore and Woodmen. Both of these sites were chosen due to the high traffic volumes, crash rates and traffic violation rates. Crash rates in these areas decreased drastically after the implementation of the Motor Unit. In a six month period, accidents decreased 64% at Woodmen and I-25 and 36% at Fillmore and I-25 compared to crash rates in 1986.

When the grant ended in 1990, the Department added four additional officers to the Unit and the team began working general traffic enforcement throughout the City. The Motor Unit was centralized within the Department and their efforts directed toward traffic enforcement and traffic crash investigations. In 1991, an additional officer was added to the Unit bringing it to 11 officers and one sergeant.

In 1996, the Unit was decentralized and three officers were assigned to Gold Hill; four officers were assigned to Sand Creek; and four officers were assigned to Falcon. The lone sergeant was still responsible for supervising the Motor Officers even though they were decentralized.

Due to the results of an intersection safety study in 1999, City Council approved nine additional Motor Officer positions and Council defined the duties of those officers. Eleven of the Motor Officers were assigned to the Neighborhood Traffic Unit and were responsible for conducting traffic enforcement throughout the City. The remaining nine Motor Unit Officers were assigned as Intersection Safety Officers and they were responsible for conducting red light enforcement at intersections. Some Council members expressed the ability to cover the expense of this staffing increase with an anticipated increase in fines collected in Municipal Court.

Due to the success of the Motor Unit in the reduction of traffic accidents in 1999, City Council voted to increase Motor Unit staffing to a total of three sergeants and 26 officers to be utilized at the three Area Commands. There were 10 Neighborhood Traffic Enforcement Officers assigned to conduct enforcement in neighborhoods with traffic complaints and 16 Intersection Safety Officers continuing to conduct traffic enforcement at intersections. Council again increased the Motor Unit staffing believing that the increasing revenue generated by Municipal traffic fines would cover the increased expense.



The Neighborhood Speeding Program (NSP) started in 2003 supported by the Colorado Springs City Council with the goal of reducing speeders in Colorado Springs neighborhoods. This program reduced the speed limit in residential areas to 25 MPH. It also increased fines for speeding to \$10 per mile per hour over the speed limit. This speeding program emphasized the three “Es” of traffic safety: education, enforcement, and engineering. City Council funded the program with increased ticket fine revenue offsetting the increased expense. The funding initially covered special overtime for speed enforcement in neighborhoods and school zones, radar equipment for speed enforcement and portable electronic speed signs for neighborhoods.

After the initial year, subsequent yearly funding was provided for neighborhood traffic enforcement overtime. Much of the overtime was shared between Motor Officers and Patrol Officers. Officers would conduct traffic enforcement in area neighborhoods based on complaints received by the Department.

In 2005, the Colorado Springs Police Department finished construction of the Stetson Hills Division substation. One Motor Sergeant was added and the Motor Unit was divided amongst the four Divisions. At this time, the focus on enforcement was generalized and there weren’t any specific Neighborhood Traffic Officers or Intersection Safety Officers. All Motor Officers were assigned to conduct traffic enforcement in their respective Divisions and to focus their efforts on the Top 25 Accident locations, neighborhood complaints and traffic accidents.

In 2009, the funding for the Neighborhood Speeding Program was re-allocated to cover overtime expenditures in the Violent Crimes Section. There has not been overtime money assigned to the Motor Unit for traffic enforcement since.

In mid-2007, the Department was reorganized to provide additional staff and supervisors in Patrol and for the new Community Impact Team (COMMIT). Two of the Motor’s sergeants were reassigned to other duties and the Unit went from being assigned to the four Patrol Divisions to being assigned as a North and South team under the supervision of the remaining two sergeants. The two sergeants and 24 officers retained their enforcement priorities. The Unit coordination was centralized under the Specialized Enforcement Division even though the individual officers remained at the Patrol Division stations.

Toward the end of 2008, the Motor Unit became centrally located at the CSPD Police Operations Center. This provided for consistent and coordinated leadership, and a unity of mission and priorities. While the historic mission of the Motor Officers was traffic safety and enforcement, their current mission has changed considerably. Due to a stronger emphasis on crime and an overall reduction in police resources, the Motor Unit has expanded their mission to include:

- Responding to Calls for Service and Cover Calls
- Criminal/Traffic Enforcement in Identified Hot Spot Areas

- 2010 – Development of the Motor Impact Team (A highly flexible, deployable team of officers who work directly with COMMIT and Patrol in higher crime areas identified through crime analysis)
- School Zone Traffic Enforcement
- Traffic Enforcement in Top 60 Traffic Crash Locations
- DUI Enforcement
 - Grant-funded DUI Checkpoints
 - DUI Saturation Patrols
- Interstate 25 Enforcement and Drug Interdiction
- Neighborhood Traffic Complaints
- Red Light/Stop Sign Violations
- Construction Zone Enforcement
- Seatbelt Enforcement
- Speeding Enforcement
- VIP and Military Escorts
 - President, Vice-President, Secretary of Defense, etc.
 - Large number of motorcade escorts during election year
 - Multiple returning troop and Fallen Soldier escorts
- Traffic/Criminal Enforcement in City Parks
- Motor Carrier Enforcement and Inspections
 - The Motor Carrier Safety Unit was disbanded during budget reductions
- Regular assistance with the Tactical Enforcement Unit and Metro VNI
 - The Specialized Enforcement Division attempts to be as self sufficient as possible to limit the impact on patrol
- Major Accident Response Team Members
- Special Events
 - Motor Officers are utilized during special events due to their mobility and flexibility, and with considerable cost savings.

At the beginning of 2010, the Motor Unit was staffed with two sergeants and 24 officers. During the year, two officers have retired from the Unit. With the implementation of the Photo Enforcement Program these two positions have been reallocated to the Municipal Security Unit at Municipal Court to establish a full time staff focusing their efforts on the Photo Enforcement Program.

The current mission of the Motor Unit is:

- ▶ **THE MOTOR UNIT PROVIDES SUPPORT TO THE COLORADO SPRINGS POLICE DEPARTMENT AND THE CITY THROUGH A COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY POLICING PARTNERSHIPS FOCUSED ON ENHANCING PUBLIC SAFETY, REDUCING TRAFFIC CRASHES, ENFORCING TRAFFIC LAWS, EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY, RECOMMENDING TRAFFIC ENGINEERING CHANGES, AND PROVIDING SPECIALIZED ASSISTANCE WHENEVER AND WHEREVER IT IS NEEDED.**



CSPD Statistical Data:

OVERALL TICKET DATA for CSPD from 2006 - 2010

VIOLATION	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	CHANGE 2006 to 2010
Speeding	41,833	35,930	30,525	23,107	23,199	-44.55%
Seat Belt	3,089	3,659	3,998	4,254	3,338	+7.5%
Child Restraint	450	469	556	684	605	+25.6%
DUI	2,112	2,221	2,592	2,530	2,043	-3.26%

The above numbers show a significant decrease in speeding violations while seat belt violations and DUI arrests increased in 2009. In August 2007, CSPD reorganized the Department's sworn assets due to budgetary concerns as well as limited manpower conducting patrol functions. Twenty four accident investigators and four school zone enforcement officers were assimilated back into patrol and their prior primary responsibilities were distributed among Patrol as well as Motor Officers. This had an impact on the number of speeding violations that were cited in subsequent years. Additionally, in 2009 the Motor Officers were tasked with an increasing responsibility to assist Patrol with calls for service and criminal activity. This did not affect the

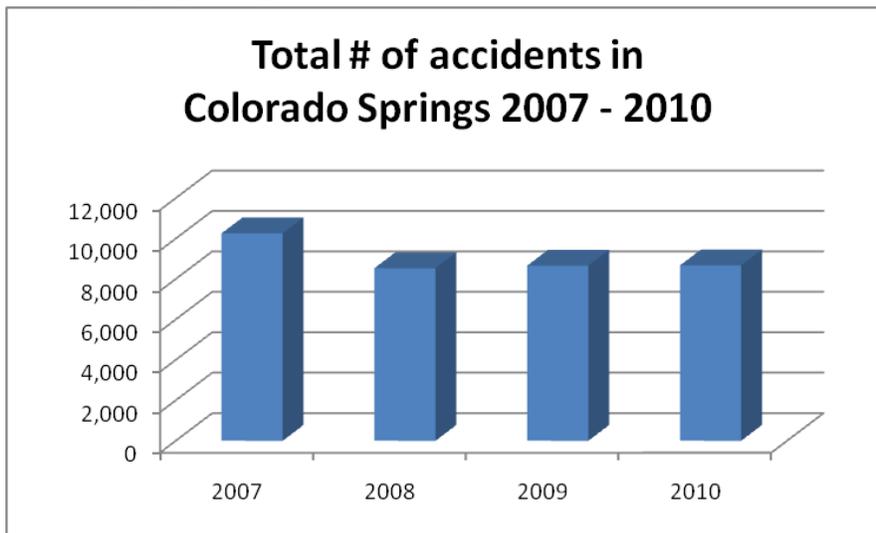
enforcement related to occupant protection and DUI enforcement; the Department still assigns DUI specialists at each Patrol Division. Additionally, the Motors unit has increasingly assisted with DUI patrols in the Downtown entertainment district.

OVERALL REVENUE DATA for CSPD from 2006 - 2010

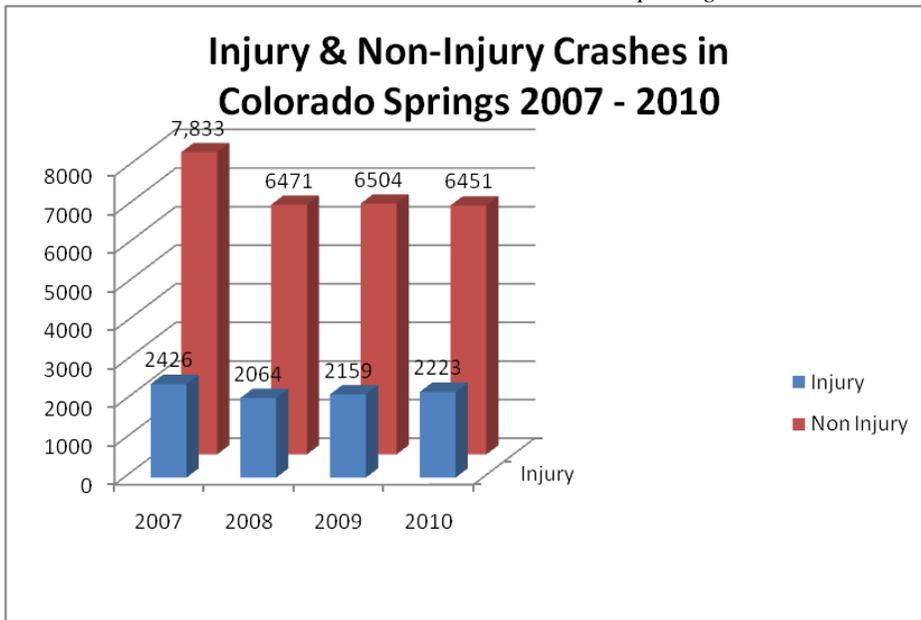
REVENUE	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Traffic	\$7,186,223	\$6,140,601	\$5,519,391	\$4,075,532	\$4,204,251
Parking	\$711,492	\$599,198	\$819,935	\$908,073	\$929,654

REVENUE DATA OBTAINED FROM MUNICIPAL COURT

2010 TRAFFIC CRASH DATA



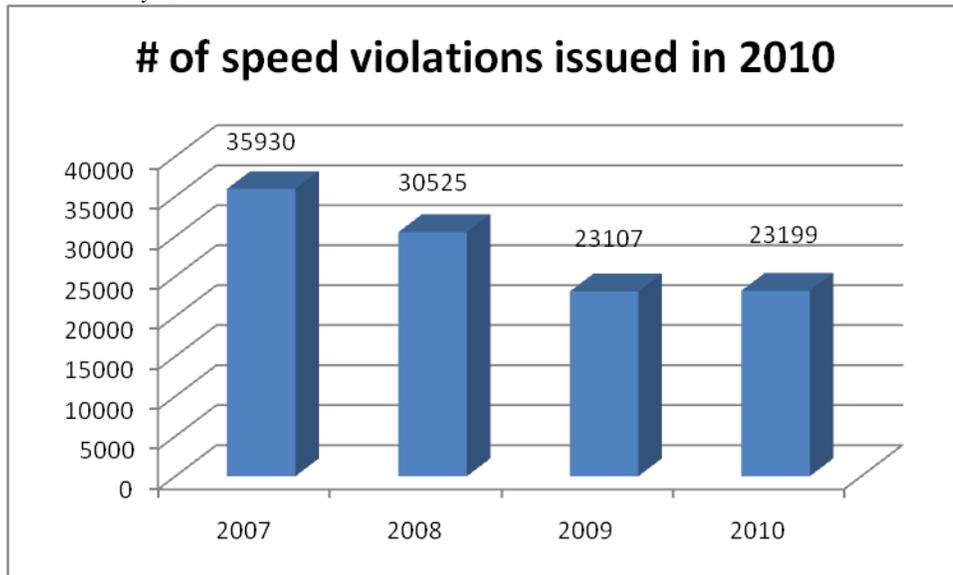
There is a decrease in accident numbers in 2008/2009 due to "cold reporting".



OVERALL CRASH DATA 2007 - 2010

CRASHES	2007	2008	2009	2010	CHANGE from 2007
FATAL	27	19/22	20/22	21/22	-18.5%
INJURY	2,246	2,055	2,159	2,223	-1%
ALCOHOL INVOLVED	822	906	846	701	-14.7
TOTAL CRASHES	11450	10259	8535	8674	-24.2%

There is a decrease in crash numbers in 2008/2009 due to "cold reporting". "Cold reported" crash reports that are not directly submitted to CSPD cannot be accurately tracked, affecting the number of crash reports documented by CSPD.



Even though speeding violations were down in 2009, other statistical data related to traffic crashes and DUI arrests reflects that CSPD's traffic safety efforts are still impacting the driving habits of the community

Motor Unit Statistical Data:

STATISTICS	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Calls for Service/Cover Calls	1,052	2,319	3,454	3,651	4074
Felony Arrests	82	107	74	191	252
Misdemeanor Arrests	369	417	334	825	1040
Case Reports	30	131	34	75	140
Violations Cited	43,375	46,773	36,754	36,481	35745
DUI Arrests	19	44	32	80	79

The above data is taken from the Motor Unit database. It does not include any statistical data related to the neighborhood traffic overtime (which ended in 2009).

Neighborhood Traffic Overtime Statistical Data:

STATISTICS	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Calls for Service/Cover Calls	14	62	87	3	0
Felony Arrests	14	16	13	0	0
Misdemeanor Arrests	36	54	77	1	0
Case Reports	9	5	7	0	0
Violations Cited	11,139	10,359	6,932	118	0
DUI Arrests	3	11	2	0	0

Note: Neighborhood Traffic Overtime ended in January 2009.

Historically, the Motor Unit was relied upon as one of the Department's only resources for traffic enforcement and education. City Council funded that mission with the expectation that they would at least be a cost-neutral operation. Over the years, the Motor Unit mission has changed. Their primary direction continues to *include* traffic safety and education but it is no longer their only priority. Due to budget cuts and reduced staffing and an increased focus on crime reduction and prevention, Motor Officers are more responsible now for assisting Patrol during their day to day operations and minimizing all other impacts to Patrol that the Motor Unit can influence. The dramatic increase in arrests and calls for service shown on the above charts reflects the changing nature of the work of Motor officers.

Even though the Motor Unit is not a direct report to the Patrol Bureau, it continues to be proactive in its approach to assisting the four Patrol Divisions. With the implementation of the Motor Impact Team, Motor Officers have assisted with saturation patrols in higher crime areas as well as developing leads for criminal investigations. Motor officers act as an arm of the Patrol Bureau without being locked into Divisional boundaries and schedules. They are also minimizing the impact to Patrol operations by taking on more responsibilities when assisting Metro VNI, COMMIT and the Tactical Enforcement Unit during their details. The Motor Unit has one of the most diverse missions of the Department. It has adopted a new enforcement philosophy and the officers have passionately ensured their success with it.

The Motor Unit will continue to be a valuable tool of the Colorado Springs Police Department. It affords the ability to have a traffic enforcement resource that is also able to fulfill day to day Patrol and special operations. CSPD will maintain the Unit in a centralized location in order to continue a unified goal and philosophy, and will continue to deploy its officers in a manner to maximize value to the community.