CONNECTICUT
City of Hartford: Operation Safe Streets

▶AT-A-GLANCE

▶Project Characteristics
Deterrence
Cooperative
Collaborative

▶Program Areas
Police Traffic Services

▶Targeted Populations
Young Adults

▶Type of Jurisdiction
City

▶Jurisdiction Size
100,000

▶Funding
402 Funds: $17,150.00
City of Hartford Funds: 100 percent reimbursed

▶Contact
Captain Michael Fallon
Hartford Police Department
50 Jennings Road
Hartford, CT 06120
(860) 522-4888 ext. 6401

Problem Identification

Over the last year, "cruising" activity on the Berlin Turnpike (Rt. 5 and 15) has increased. Cruising involves reckless driving, spinning wheels and wheelies, racing, , and improper/hazardous operation. Hundreds of motoring enthusiasts attend cruising activities, which occur regularly on Friday and Saturday nights. Motorcyclists often take part as well, either together with motorists or independently. This illegal activity is further exacerbated by alcohol use before or during the event. It accentuates the ever-present hazards and the potential for serious mishaps.

When cruising incidents increased, Hartford Police Department (HPD) took steps to proactively restore order and maintain safe passage for motorists and pedestrians traveling on the turnpike. HPD's aggressive and effective enforcement efforts greatly reduced the amount of activity on the turnpike. Unfortunately, these efforts have displaced much of the activity from the turnpike to city neighborhoods. Cruising now occurs primarily in the city's South Meadows and downtown neighborhoods. However, underground organizers use the internet, police scanners, and the Nextel phone network to counter police initiatives and move the activity from neighborhood to neighborhood to avoid police action. Cruising activity often occurs during peak call for service times, causing dispatchers to redeploy critical resources to the affected areas to maintain order and public safety.

Goals and Objectives

City of Hartford's Operation Safe Streets traffic enforcement initiative seeks to reduce or eliminate hazardous motor vehicle operation and the hazardous conditions caused by cruising. The project's objectives are to:

- Identify specific times and areas affected by cruising;
- Use lawful, proven, and effective tactics when policing these areas;
- Arrest offenders for offenses, such as speeding, reckless driving, racing, drinking alcoholic beverages while driving, driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, hazardous moving violations, and non-compliance with safety belt laws; and
- Coordinate enforcement efforts and collaborate with neighborhood police departments to track and address displacement factors in the city.

Strategies and Activities

City of Hartford's Operation Safe Streets traffic enforcement initiative implemented the following strategies and related activities to achieve its goals:

- Created enforcement teams consisting of at least one supervisor, three officers, and one HPD dispatcher
- Assigned personnel to enforcement teams on an overtime and task specific basis
- Employed the HPD's dispatcher to staff and monitor an information channel to facilitate quicker license/registration checks and ordering tow trucks, as needed, without impacting normal police operations
- Gave HPD project director the authority to request increases or decreases in manpower as needed depending on the situation, the officers, and public safety (for example, holiday weekends, inclement weather, and special event nights)
- Held enforcement team personnel strictly accountable for their productivity and statistical activity indicators documentation for each deployment
- Deployed motor vehicle enforcement teams to identified neighborhoods on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and special days during shifts between 2100 through 0400 hours, as determined based on cruising activity patterns
- Used the following tactics: laser/speed enforcement; safety checkpoints (safety belts, equipment); intersection/mechanical signal monitoring; omni-presence patrols; visual observation/probable cause stops, marked and unmarked police vehicles

Results

City of Hartford's Operation Safe Streets traffic enforcement initiative significantly reduced racing and cruising activity. There has been some displacement of activity to Wednesday and Thursday nights and sporadic nights on holiday weekends, beginning late in the evening and continuing into the early morning hours. Although cruising activity often occurs during peak "call for service" times, HPD was able to issue the following violations to persons involved in cruising and racing activities in the city of Hartford:

- 555 infractions
- 24 summonses
- 225 written warnings