

Please make public who authored the report, their qualifications in conducting social data research, if they were objective (or if they are activists and/or had experiences that may have led to implicit bias), why it appears that no literature review was conducted, and why there is no discussion of evidence-based policing. The report seems seriously flawed. It appears that five years of data have been lumped together, when an analysis of year-over-year trends would be more useful in making meaningful recommendations.

I don't understand the logic in scheduling a forum soliciting the public's view of traffic enforcement long after the PAC has already issued a report and recommendations.

I find troubling the implication/allegation by the PAC (along with elected officials, activists, and the various task forces, commissions, committees and boards) that our department, one of the best in the country, is systemically biased. If these various groups chose to work collegially with the police department instead of treating them like an enemy who is lying in wait to do something in bad faith, we wouldn't be in the position of having a dwindling department as crime is rising.

Traffic stops, and policing in general, are far more complicated than what can be explained by data sets. Important explanatory factors exist within the context of every stop that are not measurable. The PAC fails to understand or take this into account. I trust and respect the Montgomery County Police Department and appreciate their efforts and sacrifices to keep county residents safe. I am grateful for the men and women of the department who are willing to risk so much for all of us, even those who make sweeping negative generalizations about them, and I am pained that the PAC and others in our community take them for granted.

The mission of traffic enforcement by police is to make roadways safer. What do you think effective traffic enforcement looks like?

Effective traffic enforcement is when police pull over drivers according to the laws of the traffic article that the officers have sworn to uphold in order to keep motorists, pedestrians and the county in general safe. It looks like drivers who obey the law and if they don't, respectfully accept the consequences. It looks like a jurisdiction in which officers and drivers treat each other with courtesy. Effective law enforcement does not look like a county where mandates are made by county and state elected officials, task forces, advisory commissions and boards, all comprised of and/or supported by anti-police activists, and who all have different visions and recommendations about how police should behave. That is counterproductive and not in the best interest of Montgomery County residents.

If someone is driving erratically, I don't want an officer to have to think twice about how stopping them will be perceived by the PAC, PAB or ACC if a bad outcome occurs from a good-faith initiative to remove a suspected impaired driver off the street. I question if those bodies made up of lay people understand that one has to look at the totality and the legality of the situation as it occurs in real-time, not make judgements in hindsight.

What do you think racially-equitable enforcement should look like?

The ELEFA study shows exactly what racially equitable enforcement looks like. In reviews of 50 random body-worn camera traffic stops, ELEFA found that overwhelmingly, the officer acted professionally and without bias. This was conveniently and suspiciously left out of the PAC report. The ELEFA concluded, "Most officers were courteous and friendly while handling calls for service and traffic stops. The community members reporting incidents were ethnically and racially diverse. Few arrests were observed

during the BWC audits. In general, there were no indications of racial bias in the BWC incidents observed.”

Both policing and traffic safety (Vision Zero) experts have long recognized that traffic stops can’t be benchmarked against census data. For example, 64% of all traffic stops are for male drivers. By the PAC’s logic, that would mean that police are systemically discriminating against men. While disparities could be driven by racial bias, other factors may also play a role. In considering no plausible factors other than racial bias, the PAC’s report is skewed.

There is some evidence that when the police traffic enforcement is focused only on serious traffic offenses safety is improved more than with a program of many low-level stops -- and it reduces racial disparities in traffic stops. In your personal experience, were you pulled over for minor violations? Did minor violations lead to longer questions, additional citations, even searches or arrest?

I have been pulled over for minor violations. They did not lead to longer questions, additional citations, even searches or arrest.

A Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs article (<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/does-traffic-enforcement-reduce-crime>) directly contradicts the premise of your question. The abstract states: “In 1948, a book by Richard Holcomb entitled ‘Police Patrol’ stated that ‘Many criminals that would have otherwise escaped have been arrested because they violated a traffic law and were arrested by an alert officer.’ The same is true today. Criminals travel to and from crime scenes, and they carry evidence of crimes in the cars they occupy. Further, they are not inclined to obey traffic laws. This means that effective traffic law enforcement can be a means of detecting crime, intercepting fleeing criminals, and preventing crime.”

The PAC neglects to include this important contextual factor in its report, recommending that officers simply look the other way. The PAC is willing to sacrifice the safety of county residents in order to tie officers’ hands, thereby giving the advantage to criminals.

The PAC inexplicably uses the fact that 144 illegal guns were seized over three years as a reason to eliminate pretextual stops. I view that as precisely the reason to continue pretextual stops. Had one of those 144 guns been used against you or your family, you might have a different perspective. If anyone has a complaint about being stopped, that’s exactly why we have body-worn camera footage. The PAC’s stated willingness to leave 144 illegal guns in circulation is not acceptable.

What can the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) do to help the public view traffic enforcement in a more positive, more effective light?

Not only do I reject the premise that MCPD’s traffic enforcement is viewed negatively, but stating it in that manner brings to light the PAC’s implicit bias against MCPD. As such, the Commission’s credibility is in serious question. The PAC report states that you received written testimony from 70 residents. It also states that many citizens provided highly positive testimony about MCPD traffic enforcement. Out of a county with a population of over one million, I struggle to understand how those numbers make this an issue even worth considering. It seems like the PAC is looking for answers to a problem that does not exist.

We know that certain activist groups speak out negatively on any issue involving police. It's important to recall former Councilmember Craig Rice's comment, "It always frustrates me when I hear people testify on behalf of communities that they haven't talked to nor are they a part of."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the use of automated red-light and speed cameras should be a primary strategy for reducing the number and severity of motor vehicle crashes. Do you want more or fewer cameras in your neighborhood? Do you think they are effective, just revenue collectors, or both? Do you think camera placement is objective?

How could I or any average citizen know if camera placement is objective?

The county's own data shows that having a speed camera has little to do with curbing fatal accidents, and is a way to generate revenue. Police officers enforcing the traffic article is the best way to improve road safety. I don't need more cameras. I need for people to obey the speed limit and to accept the consequences if they don't. Points are much more of a deterrent than merely having to pay fines repeatedly.

Would easy, accessible "data dashboards" (government websites of up-to-date data on a particular subject) make the public feel the department is more transparent about traffic enforcement?

Would a data dashboard overlaying enforcement cameras and accidents make the public feel the department is more transparent about traffic enforcement?

I reject your biased premise that the public feels the department is not transparent. You have not proved that to be the case, yet you act on the idea that it is. I already feel the department is transparent. I have seen them explain issues at meetings of bodies such as yours, and the various committees, commissions, task forces, boards and councils disregard their comments because they don't align with their narrative or agenda.

Would you find it helpful for the MCPD to publish complaint data for each of the county's six police districts?

No. I would like MCPD to be able to do its job. The rally cry for body-worn cameras has been answered (and I suspect it exonerates more officers than it implicates). If someone has a complaint about having been treated unjustly during a traffic stop, or in any other interaction with police, the footage can be reviewed. Again, the PAC makes the assumption that all complaints are valid. Traffic stops by nature are unpleasant; that does not make them unwarranted. A complaint is not valid just by nature of having been filed. If the body-worn camera footage is reviewed and the complaint is found to have been spurious, then the complainant should face consequences.

Do you feel you have been subject to a pretextual stop by the MCPD? (i.e. pulled over for something minor like expired registration, only to have police question you as if you were engaged in more serious crime?)

I was pulled over for allegedly being on my phone while driving. I wasn't and after a respectful discussion, I proceeded with my day. I suspect interactions like that happen hundreds of times a day, but the PAC seems uninterested in acknowledging that. But having followed the interview process and deliberations of the PAC, I find that most of the members have implicit bias against the police and are looking to justify that belief. That's unfortunate and ironic, given their unproven premise that the department is systemically racist.

If you have been searched by officers of the MCPD, did you feel it was justified by the situation? Did the police find anything illegal?

I have not been searched. For anyone who was, it would be shocking if they answered it was justified, whether it truly was or not. The question also dismisses the reality that even if the police didn't find anything illegal, the search could have been legally justified. I wonder if members of the PAC are familiar with constitutional law; have attended a citizens' academy; left their husband, wife, son or daughter to put on a bullet-proof vest and spend an overnight shift riding with an officer (unfortunately, they can't accompany an officer as they approach a vehicle, especially one with tinted windows, not knowing if they will find a gun pointed at their face when the window is rolled down); done simulation exercises involving split-second life or death decisions; or talked to rank-and-file officers about their thoughts, based on real-life experience, on how the PAC's recommendations would impact public safety.

Would you be interested in the MCPD publishing an annual traffic enforcement report?

No. I would prefer that the professional men and women of the Montgomery County Police Department be tasked with doing the jobs that they swore an oath to do, rather than spending inordinate amounts of time writing reports to satisfy boards and activists. When a complaint is waged against an officer, camera footage should be reviewed and an investigation should be held. If the complaint is found to be warranted, consequences should ensue. If the complaint is found to be spurious, consequences should ensue. The hundreds of officers for whom complaints are not filed should spend their time policing, not writing.

Police traffic enforcement is only one aspect of traffic safety. The county continues to improve road design and signage, sidewalks and lights. Still, the number of deaths is rising. Holding police solely responsible for that rise is unreasonable and unfair.

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