



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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M E M O R A N D U M

April 6, 1978

TO: County Council

FROM: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director, Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: Police Department Compact Vehicle Evaluation, dated
February 15, 1978

1. Pursuant to Council request in Resolution No. 8-1418, FY 78 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight, the following review of subject compact vehicles evaluation is submitted.

2. During FY 78, the Police Department tested sixteen compact vehicles. Eight were assigned to the districts to be used as fleet patrol vehicles and eight were assigned to the personal patrol vehicle program. The vehicles were driven an excess of 70,000 miles with evaluations made in the following areas:

a) Performance - acceleration, handling, braking (under various road conditions), steering, maneuverability, backing and cornering.

b) Safety and comfort - visibility, interior (seats, prisoner transporting, equipment location).

c) Economy - primarily fuel economy. Valid data on maintenance costs could not be developed because the test vehicles were new and the test period was limited. However, data from another jurisdiction was available (see paragraph 4c below). Another sub-category under Economy was preventable accidents. The test results in this area were inconclusive.

3. The test vehicles were Chevrolet Novas with the following added features: four barrel carburetor, tilt steering wheel for easier egress, bucket seats and larger wheels.

4. Test conclusions.

a) The test indicated that police officers do accept smaller vehicle (111 inch wheel base) with performance capabilities similar to the test models.

b) Bucket seats and tilt steering wheels were rated very high.

c) Fuel economy of the compact vehicle compared to the present intermediate police vehicles (1977 models) was 10.2 mpg vs. 8.2 mpg. An indication of possible operating cost savings (fuel and maintenance) can be determined from the results of a more comprehensive test of compact vehicles by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Their test results showed the operating cost per mile for compacts was \$.081, while for intermediates it was \$.118, a 31% savings.

d) The single major concern of nearly every police officer participating in the test was the potential hazard in transporting prisoners because of the bucket seats. The Department will be addressing this problem, as remedies are available--such as the use of a bench seat or a screen between the front and rear seats. Other improvements recommended by the officers conducting the evaluation were: front doors which open wider, replace engine monitoring lights with gauges, remote control mirror on right side, larger inside rear view mirror, and more ceiling insulation to eliminate siren noise. These will be addressed in future vehicle specifications.

5. The test results were conclusive enough that the Chief Administrative Officer has decided that all replacement and additional vehicles for FY 79, to include Police, Fire and Rescue and the Sheriff's Departments, and all new acquisitions for the PPV program, will be compacts.

6. A copy of the Police Department Compact Vehicle Evaluation is available in the Office of Legislative Oversight.

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cc: Chief Administrative Officer
Director, Department of Police
Mr. McDonell