

Take-Home Vehicle Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Using a police car pool fleet will wear out the vehicles much more quickly than a take-home fleet and will cost one third more.

Take-home vehicles (referred to as “PPV” for Personal Patrol Vehicle) for law enforcement has become an accepted practice in certain jurisdictions over the last half century and used in about 49% of the nation. Regular Police Fleet (RPF) vehicles are pool vehicles, commonly driven around the clock or a majority of the 24-hour day and not assigned to an individual officer or deputy.

The issue for local agencies contemplating a move to a PPV program has always been the initial capital hurdle of the vehicle purchases, which the City overcame in 1994. Our research of reports by agencies evaluating PPV programs indicates a substantial financial savings to local governments after the purchase of the initial fleet. The experience in this community has not been optimum because the City originally bought worn police cars to start the this PPV fleet. Fortunately the City can purchase new police vehicles through the state bid process for close to the price of a used police vehicle.

The studies show improved longevity for each PPV, reduced maintenance costs, and reduced collision rates resulting in fewer collision related Worker Compensation claims. Surveys of citizen satisfaction with the program have been favorable with the focus on increased visibility. There are documented reports of reduced crime due to additional marked police units moving or parked on local streets in this community.

BACKGROUND

A practice for the past twenty years in the central part of the United States is for local governments to provide vehicles for each peace officer who is assigned to patrol, traffic, detectives, and administrative duties. Although PPVs are common in this immediate area (PD, Sheriff, Highway Patrol, Game & Fish, and in-state PD), there are local governments of significant size who do not have the take-home vehicle program. Close to the City, the City of Casper does not have a PPV program and the City Manager, sees it as an employee benefit. However, according to a U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics survey in 2000¹, there were at least 49 per cent of law enforcement agencies in the United States using the PPV program.

Local documentation shows that this City began the PPV program in 1994. At the time, local agencies were purchasing lease return vehicles from outside the state area for seven to ten percent below the cost of a new “police-rated” vehicle. The issues surrounding those purchases and the effect on the PD PPV program are discussed at length at the end of this memo.

DISCUSSION

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Administration within the Police Department promoted the take-home vehicle program for primarily two reasons:

- There was strong evidence to support a significant cost savings in a take-home vehicle fleet.
- The program would increase the preparedness of the Police Department for both on-duty and off-duty to respond to any sort of police-related emergency.

During the FY 2007-2008 budget preparation all the City department heads worked together with some considerable give and take to assemble a fleet replacement program for all City rolling stock. City-wide, the rolling stock was ranked based on age, mileage, and wear, with the oldest and worst to be replaced first. Under this plan the Police Department was to replace a total of eight vehicles this year.

Budgeting Factors

The most common factor raised by residents of the City and the County is the cost inherent with the operation and purchase of a larger fleet. In the case at hand, this paper does not suggest the purchase of a larger fleet, merely the appropriate replacement of operationally worn police vehicles. It was the anticipated replacement of the current vehicles that drove this program in this City initially in order to fully reap the benefits of a PPV program. The operational figures from the 2006 Raleigh studyⁱⁱ were shown to support a one third lower operating cost for take-home vehicles when compared to a regular patrol fleet (RPF).

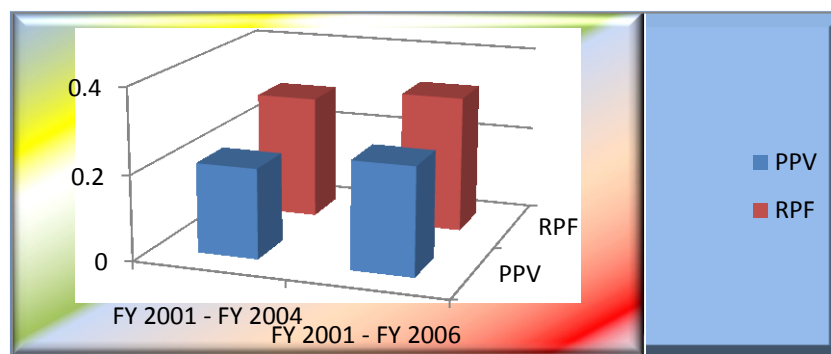


Figure 1. Raleigh Study

The significance of the Raleigh study is that a considerable fleet was audited, thereby reducing any deviations in application to the this PPV program. There were a total of 533 vehicles of which 428 were take-home vehicles which Raleigh designates as “Personal Patrol Vehicles” (PPV) in the report. The report should be considered relatively independent as it was primarily conducted by City’s budget analysts.

It is not just the studies of these two jurisdictions that show a significant savings in operating a PPV fleet. Not all of the reports have supported a PPV program. In our research we found a reference to a National Bureau of Standards report from the early 1970’s that *surmised* that the concept of a PPV would most likely be a “break-even” issue on a fiscal basis. We were unable to locate an extract of the original article. Another study in Tacomaⁱⁱⁱ, WA, purported to show the failure of a PPV program, but was in reality addressing issues extrinsic to our program here: officers living significantly away from the local jurisdiction.

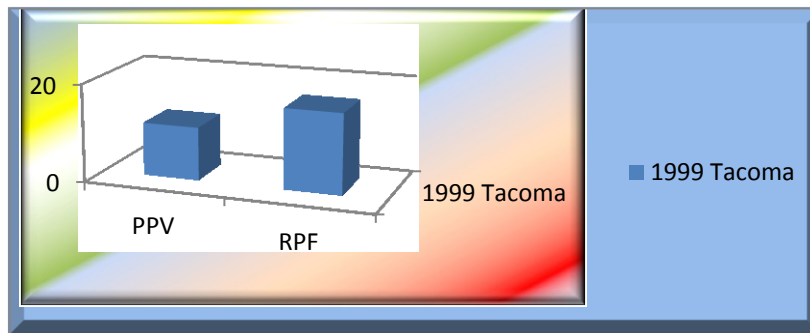


Figure 2. Tacoma, WA study from 1999 for TCO shown in dollar per miles.

The majority of articles and studies located for this memo have examined in-place PPV programs after implementation. Generally, the studies involved larger fleets than that of this City Police Department, however, there were several in our fleet range. Without question, each of the studies supports a PPV program from position of financial consideration.

From the studies that have been completed on the PPV programs, it appears that there is a general savings for PPV fleet in maintenance. Generally, the PPV fleet runs one third to one quarter less in maintenance costs than a pool fleet based on a per mile maintenance rate. There is no standard for reporting these factors, so some of the information is based on figures and premises to bring them in line with other known baseline figures.

In July of 1980, the St. Louis County Police Department issued a report on their “Personal Car Program^{iv}” that had begun three years earlier. Unlike most of the other departments who have published data on their PPV programs, the cost for PPVs was initially lower than that of the RPFs and then climbed to parallel the RPF fleet at about \$.04 less per mile. During this period, St. Louis County was in dire financial straits and it is believed extrinsic factors may have been at

affecting the process of the program. Nonetheless, the recommendation by the study was to continue with the PPV program.

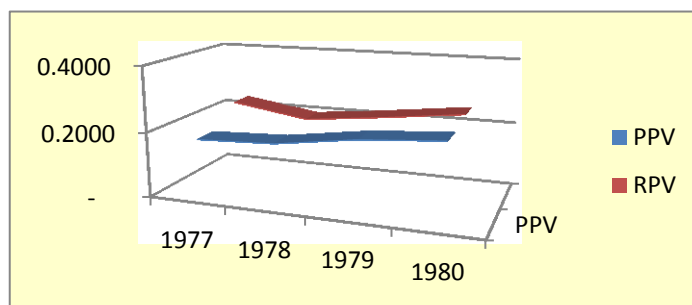


Figure 3. St. Louis County Police

In 1990 the Visalia, CA Police Department released their internal report on^v their PPV Program. They were particularly aware of the NBS conclusions and differed saying, “*Under the program, police services are being provided at a fraction of what it would normally cost. Maintenance costs continue to decrease and vehicles last longer.*” Their reported total operating costs for PPV vehicles was \$.2279 per mile versus \$.2741 per mile for pool fleet vehicles. Visalia had a fleet of 62 PPV vehicles. The average total cost of a PPV was \$2,260.68 per year while a Pool fleet vehicle average was \$5,414.07.

In 1992 the Indianapolis Police Department made the move to a PPV program^{vi}, looking primarily to the financial aspect and, as most of the other agencies have, they made a solid consideration of the Community Policing aspect of the PPV program. The Indianapolis study has inclusions from the Village of Skokie, Illinois, which refers to successes in the PPV program in Bryan, Texas. In addition to financial reasons to move to the PPV program as supported by most reports, Bryan PD discovered that the burglary rate had been reduced by half after the inception of the PPV program.

The Hillsborough FL Sheriff’s Office in their Assigned Car Program^{vii} had operated a PPV program since 1972 that was considered to be an effective model. In 1992 the Department was asked to investigate the viability of moving toward a pool fleet program. They believed their per mile vehicle operational costs would rise. Their investigation of a similar program in another city showed that the second city had their maintenance costs per mile rise from \$.30 to \$.44. At the time, the Department figured their comparable costs were \$.19 per mile.

The Massachusetts State Police moved to a PPV program after their investigation led them to believe the cost effectiveness of such a program. They anecdotally report^{viii} that, “*The city of Mesquite, for example, studied samples of take-home vehicle and fleet vehicles during a four – year period. Mesquite reported an annual average of \$2,720.19 for maintenance of fleet vehicles compared with \$1,481.48 for take-home vehicles.*”

The Anchorage, AK Police Department investigated^{ix} the concept of continuing a PPV program that had been in place for eighteen years. The report made the recommendation to continue the program. Unlike many of the other jurisdictions in this memo, Anchorage did not intend for the costs of a PPV program to fall below that of a RPV program. The program succeeded in reducing fleet costs, however, most importantly to this agency, it reduced the rapid deterioration of the fleet.

Another study^x completed the same year involved the Cape Coral, FL Police Department who looked at surrounding agencies and their successes with PPV programs in a study to the police chief. Their study recommended a move toward a PPV fleet, predominately based on financial savings to the city after the initial capital cost “break-even” point.

In several inches of unpublished documentation^{xi} from the Ft. Wayne, Indiana Police Department, there is strong support for a continued PPV program. Documentation is included via a survey instrument that focused on the non-tangible aspects of the PPV program. The community felt more secure, and the public awareness was heightened. Crime was down in the three major categories of robbery, homicide, and larceny. I might note that this flies in the face of conventional police thinking that has occurred since the “Kansas City Patrol Car Experiment” in 1973 under then Chief Joseph McNamara. Ft. Wayne reported there was a quicker response by off-duty personnel in the case of emergencies.

In the last decade, a comparative analysis (S.X. and T.D 1997)^{xii} was made of the PPV program by two social scientists. In what appears to be at first blush a scientific study of the matter, the authors carefully set out to look at as many aspects of a PPV program, insofar as to utilize regressive analysis in maintenance costs, although they do admit their study is not perfect. Their conclusion was, *“Our quantitative analysis revealed that the pool cars cost far more than the personally-assigned vehicles to maintain in both parts and mechanic labor.”* Later they say, *“Our interviews revealed many unintended benefits of assigning vehicles to individual officers, such as increased morale, faster police response, and enhanced visibility in the community.”*

In the following years since the inception of the program in this community, issues became apparent with the program.

- The purchased vehicles were often not covered by either a full warranty, or out of warranty.
 - Maintenance costs on these vehicles runs significantly higher than that of new vehicles, which are often covered by complete warranties for several years.
 - With biyearly replacement of vehicles at the originating agency in the Salt Lake basin, the tendency was to drive the vehicles as hard as practical without regard for downstream users. This would resultantly skew the current fleet of Police Department PPVs toward an earlier replacement than a new PPV purchased by the Police Department.

- Time out-of-service for used vehicles is increased significantly, resulting in a need for alternative vehicle swapping, or additional vehicles in the rolling stock.
- A number of the vehicles were not police rated.
 - There is a significant liability for using non-certified vehicles for police work.
 - Product liability actions by local governments are significantly reduced when the product is not specifically warranted for law enforcement.
- The equipment contained within the vehicles was distinctly different for almost every vehicle purchased.
 - A significant officer safety issue arises when the equipment inside the vehicles is so varied, especially in high-risk situations.
 - Some of the equipment within the vehicles when purchased was no longer in production but serviceable for several years, resulting in a rewiring (additional cost) when the item failed.
 - The service providers for the electronics in the Police Department's vehicles take several days to arrive and then investigate the service complaint. Since each vehicle is different, the equipment varies, the wiring is unknown, and the cause of the issue might be different, the service company cannot be expected to carry the replacement parts when they arrive on scene for repairs.
- The wiring loom for added police electronics in the purchased vehicles was not reduced to a service diagram, or was not designed industrial use.
 - On a number of occasions the wiring has been installed where the protective sheath has worn through resulting in service calls to trace the problem.
 - We have had several complaints from staff regarding burning wires in the police vehicles caused by inappropriate original installation of wiring.
- More jurisdictions have become aware of the lease return programs and have driven up the purchase price of the used vehicles.
 - With the issues listed above along with the similar initial vehicle purchase cost, it would appear prudent to purchase and add current equipment.
 - Given a take-home vehicle program and the care generally anticipated to be put into an individual officer's vehicle, there is a potential to resell these vehicles to another agency at a time when the City determines the appropriateness. Currently, when a used Police Department vehicle is sold, the sale is usually little more than the scrap value due to the wear and tear predominately due to the preexisting wear from the original law enforcement agency.

CONCLUSION

Attached is a comment from the International Association of Chiefs of Police regarding the benefits and detriments of a PPV program. Many of the benefits could apply to the agency at hand. We would like to address some of the more salient reasons with respect to the Police Department.

- As the initial capital outlay of the purchase of vehicles associated with this PPV program broke even with the cost/saving benefit of the program during the last decade, the studies we found would therefore recommend and support the continued PPV program as one of sound fiscal responsibility.
- It is clearly less expensive than a RPF program.
- A proper PPV program can reduce administrative time for procuring, outfitting, maintenance, take-down, and auction.
- The program reduces the need for ancillary support vehicles for the Department. The PPV program provides the Department with a vehicle for every officer should a major disaster or emergency occur or during some of our major events when all of our staff work and we use every other agency we can gather.
- Police vehicles are involved in collisions; however, PPV fleets tend to be in fewer collisions, with the potential for injury to our staff to be reduced with savings on Worker Compensation and overtime associated with work injury related absence.
- A PPV is a recruitment incentive during this period of local general low unemployment.
- Our officers can and do respond from their homes to a police scene in a minimal amount of time. This correlates to greater case solution. It is also important as the Department is the only twenty-four law enforcement agency in the county.

Attachment

- A) International Association of Chiefs of Police, Document #: 586935 Title: "Take-Home Cruisers: Issues for Consideration"

ⁱ *Report on Hawai'i County Police Department Vehicles* Legislative Auditors Office, Hawai'i County Council, February 2004, Page 61

ⁱⁱ *Personal Police Vehicle Program Status Report*, Kirsten Larson, Diane Cherry, Catherine Clark, January 2006, City of Raleigh, North Carolina

ⁱⁱⁱ *Cost-benefit analysis of Tacoma's assigned vehicle program* , Lauria, Donald T. POLICE QUARTERLY, 10 (2): 192-217, June 2007

^{iv} *Personal Car Program*, St. Louis County Police Department, July, 1980

^v *PPV Program Report*, Visalia, CA Police Department, 1990

^{vi} *Take-Home Vehicle Program Study*, Indianapolis, IN Police Department, Planning and Research Branch, December 1992

^{vii} *Assigned Car Program Report* Hillsborough County, FL Sheriff's Office, 1993

^{viii} *Cruiser Replacement Plan*, Massachusetts State Police, 1993

^{ix} *1993 HomeCar Study*_ Anchorage, AK Police Department, October 13, 1994

^x *Staff Study, Assigned Vehicle program* , Lt. Craig Durham Cape Coral, FL Police Department, April 5, 1994

^{xi} *Home Fleet Program Study*, Ft. Wayne, IN Police Department, 1990

^{xii} *Cost-effectiveness and officer morale of a personally assigned patrol vehicle program: A comparative analysis*, Zhang S.X.; Benson T.D., Source: Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management, Volume 20, Number 4, 1997, pp. 749-765(17)

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- Sweitzer, Roland B.; San Felice, Giacomo, [The personal patrol car program](#) /. FBI LAW ENFORCEMENT BULLETIN, 42 (9): 16-20, September 1973.
- Unattributed, [Pool versus take-home cars](#) / LAW AND ORDER, 40 (5): 89, May 1992. **
- Yates, Tom [Take-home cars: after the first shock there are benefits](#) /. LAW AND ORDER, 40 (5): 88, 90-91, May 1992. **
- Zhang S.X.; Benson T.D., [Cost-effectiveness and officer morale of a personally assigned patrol vehicle program: A comparative analysis](#) / **Source:** [Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management](#), Volume 20, Number 4, 1997, pp. 749-765(17)



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Summary:

Fact Sheets are intended to help raise thoughtful issues regarding complex policy considerations -- in this case, take-home cruiser programs -- to inform the debate at the local level. Implementation of a take-home cruiser program can have potential benefits for the officer, the agency, and the community; there are also a number of potential concerns that have to be taken into consideration for the officer, the agency, and the community before adopting a take-home cruiser program.

Document Text:

International Association of Chiefs of Police
Research Directorate Fact Sheet

Take-Home Cruisers: Issues for Consideration

Introduction

The IACP Fact Sheet series is intended to help local agency decision-making by providing useful information gleaned from our network of information sources. Fact Sheets do not present IACP positions on the topic being addressed, nor do they replace long-term research. Fact Sheets are intended to help raise thoughtful issues regarding complex policy considerations -- in this case, take-home cruiser programs -- to inform the debate at the local level.

Potential Benefits

Implementation of a take-home cruiser program can have potential benefits for the officer, the agency, and the community:

Officer Benefits

- * Officer's positive attitude towards and identification with the job.
- * Money saved on personal vehicle (some agencies allow officers to use the cruiser as they would their personal vehicle).
- * Familiarity with the vehicle and confidence in its condition.
- * Allows officer to keep their equipment in one place and not have to move it from cruiser to cruiser.
- * Time efficiency -- time would not be wasted picking up a cruiser from the station before a shift.
- * Can be used for part-time security work if allowed by agency.
- * Higher ranked officers are typically issued unmarked take-home cruisers, attracting less attention during off-duty hours.

Agency Benefits

- * Recruiting tool -- Take-home vehicles are a positive recruiting mechanism in a competitive market.
- * Bargaining point -- take-home cruisers can be a positive bargaining point with the police union -- as part of a total benefits package for officers.
- * Officer visibility -- the agency benefits from having an increase in department and officer visibility.
- * The impression within the community of a larger police presence/higher police visibility.
- * Reduction in opportunistic criminal activity -- vehicles create an impression of a heightened police presence. During evening and day work hours, several police vehicles on the road may be off-duty officers simply using their vehicle for personal activities.
- * Increases levels of enforcement -- officers driving take-home vehicles off-duty observing serious motor vehicle violations and criminal activity are obligated to take enforcement action and do so.
- * Increases the number of trained observers on the street -- radio must be on while cruiser is in use and officers are trained in what to look for.
- * Increases the back up potential for officers on duty -- officers in marked cruisers are more apt to check the welfare of a fellow officer if he/she passes another vehicle taking enforcement action.
- * Rapid response to emergency call outs/recalls, since the officer does not have to go to a station to get a vehicle prior to responding.
- * The longevity of the vehicle is extended -- agencies generally replace their vehicles every two-to-three years. Take-home programs generally extend the life of their vehicle for an additional two-to-three years due to enhanced vehicle upkeep by officers.
- * Improved maintenance -- vehicles with one assigned operator tend to have preventative maintenance performed at appropriate times.
- * Maintains the professional appearance of the department -- officers take ownership and treat vehicle as their own keeping it clean.
- * Performance incentive -- offering newer vehicles to top performers.
- * Small agencies with officers on call 24/7 benefit with staff fully prepared to respond to a call.

Community Benefits

- * Perceptions of increased police presence when the cruiser is parked at an officer's home.
- * The officer's neighborhood benefits from vehicle presence when the cruiser is in personal use.
- * Having an officer's vehicle present in various neighborhoods gives communities a sense of safety.
- * Officers are generally prohibited from taking their vehicle out of the jurisdiction; therefore, most live in the jurisdiction they serve, reinvesting in the community that pays for their services.
- * The business community benefits as officers routinely park their vehicle in front of stores they frequent.

Potential Concerns

There are also a number of potential concerns that have to be taken into consideration for the officer, the agency, and the community before adopting a take-home cruiser program. As the first bullet indicates, budgetary concerns are foremost:

* A take-home cruiser policy is a significant expenditure item for the department -- a cost/benefit analysis is suggested, as is a pilot (small-scope) start-up initiative. Potential areas for consideration include: overtime; fuel/maintenance; increased fleet size; liability (both driver and passengers), insurance changes, and taxes levied on officers for use of the cruiser.

* Policies -- agencies must create a model policy that articulates all requirements for officers using take-home vehicles, for example: allowed uses, mandatory firearm requirements, vest requirements, restriction on driving while impaired or under the influence of prescription drugs, etc.

* Officer safety -- officers using their take-home vehicles off-duty must be armed, but may, or may not, be wearing a vest or in uniform -- either issue would be problematic if they become involved in a response of any kind.

* The officer may remain too 'visible,' and feel as though they are always on-duty.

* Take-home cruiser programs may create a loss in fleet availability/flexibility. The number of fleet vehicles may have to be increased to compensate.

* The potential exists for vehicle vandalism when the cruiser is parked in a public area, unattended.

* Officers not wearing a uniform when operating take-home cruisers when off-duty can confuse citizens.

* Increased liability for the agency -- whether they are on, or off-duty, the department assumes responsibility for an officer's actions when operating their vehicle.

* What to do with non-law enforcement passengers in the event of police response in an emergency -- i.e., family members, friends, or children's car seats.

* Potential increase in the number of complaints -- officers taking enforcement action while off-duty or exceeding the speed limit may draw more complaints than officers on duty.

* Some officers may have a tendency to make expensive alterations to issued vehicles -- strong policy preventing alterations may be required by some departments.

* In some agencies, take-home cruisers can be used as an incentive for good behavior, but by union legislation may not be used as a disciplinary tool.

Note: This information on take-home cruiser benefits/concerns was compiled by the IACP Research Division with input from several current and retired police officials familiar with such programs.

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