

A PLAN TO

GET MORE COPS IN NEIGHBORHOODS!



"BACK TO BASIC CAR"

A Comprehensive Neighborhood Police Patrol Strategy

White Paper
January 19, 2017
by Councilmember Mike Bonin

"Too often, I hear from constituents that they rarely see a patrol car in their neighborhood, or that it takes LAPD too long too long to respond to an emergency call. Our neighborhoods deserve better. We need more patrol officers - in Westside neighborhoods, and in neighborhoods around the city.

"My "Back to Basic Car" plan will make that happen. LAPD's leaders must improve how they allocate resources to get more patrol units in neighborhoods. That is the only way the department can protect and serve our residents and our neighborhoods in the way that we all deserve."

- Councilmember Mike Bonin

Table of Contents

Historical Overview and Recommendations for Improving LAPD’s Patrol Function	4
Timeline	6
CHART: LAPD Patrol Deployment Comparison 1969 vs. 2016	9
Mike Bonin’s 10-Point Plan	10
For More Information	11

“Back to Basic Car”

Historical Overview and Recommendations for Improving LAPD’s Patrol Function

A significant factor behind the continued public support for maintaining a police force of 10,000 sworn officers is the expectation that the number officers hired directly correlates to the number of officers patrolling the streets. However, all too often, constituents contact their City Council office to echo a common concern that their neighborhood lacks a consistent police presence. In several cases constituents have shared their personal experience and discomfort with inadequate LAPD response times. In one recent case, a resident reported waiting over an hour for a police response to his 9-1-1 call for a man actively attempting to enter the front door of his home. Such reports raise legitimate questions regarding the adequacy of current LAPD deployment and community policing strategies, the overall number of officers assigned to patrol neighborhoods throughout the City, and the ability to quickly respond to a life-threatening emergency.

In 1969, LAPD Chief of Police Ed Davis created the “Basic Car Plan” with the goal of bringing police officers and citizens closer together under his new concept of community policing. The plan subdivided LAPD’s geographic community police divisions into smaller neighborhood areas, each with at least one, and often two dedicated radio cars permanently assigned and staffed with a regular contingent of patrol officers. Nearly 900 officers were assigned to this new program under the guiding philosophy that police officers would be more effective if they were familiar with the neighborhoods they served, built relationships, and established trust within the community. To coordinate each Basic Car area, the Senior Lead Officer (SLO) rank was created. The Basic Car Plan was a key component of Chief Davis’ decentralized policing strategy between 1969 and 1978 — initially accomplished with a force of roughly 6,200 officers. This strategy was so successful that as crime rose 55% nationwide, crime actually fell by 1% in Los Angeles during this same period.

The Basic Car Plan continues to serve as the foundation of LAPD’s field patrol function and 9-1-1 response model. There are currently 168 Basic Car areas spread over the LAPD’s 21 geographic divisions. Unfortunately, far too often, not all 168 areas are continuously staffed with even one dedicated patrol car. A recent 12:00 p.m. “Logged On Units Report” indicated that only 133 Basic Cars and 19 “extra” patrol cars were deployed Citywide. It has been observed that West LA Division is often only able to deploy as few as two patrol cars at certain hours of the day in a geographic area that encompasses 64 square miles, 544 street miles, and is allocated an already meager seven Basic Cars. In fact, the sheer size of many LAPD divisions relative to the number of Basic Car areas currently allotted also raises questions as to the adequacy of the baseline patrol deployment footprint Citywide – particularly given the significant population growth, new development, traffic, and the overall increase in 9-1-1 calls for police service over the last several decades.

In 1988, the LAPD replaced the Uniform Deployment Formula used to determine patrol deployment with a new computer program and formula known as “Patrol Plan”, which calculates the specific number of patrol cars necessary for each geographical police area to be able to respond within 7

minutes — a key component of the “7/40 Mandate.” This City Council established performance mandate requires officers to respond to all emergency calls within 7 minutes and to devote 40% of their available time to proactive policing. While the 7/40 Mandate remains in place today, it does not appear that the LAPD has been meeting either component of this policy. A recent survey conducted by the Police Protective League indicated that 87% of the 1,200 LAPD officer respondents did not believe divisional deployment was sufficient to respond to 9-1-1 calls in a timely manner, and 89% did not believe deployment was sufficient to conduct community policing.

As the LAPD’s sworn workforce has increased from roughly 7,000 officers in the late 1970’s to nearly 10,000 today, it is not clear how many of these additional positions have been allocated to patrol duties and how the current figure impacts response times. In 1978, Chief Daryl Gates moved a significant number of the LAPD’s 7,016 officers away from patrol duties in favor of bolstering specialized units. In the early 1980’s, citizen groups became concerned about police response times, prompting the City Council to request an outside study. In 1988, an outside consultant concluded that the LAPD did not commit enough of its 7,250 officers to actually patrolling the City, did not respond quickly enough to citizen calls for help, and diverted too many of its patrol officers to special assignments. In 1992, a special commission headed by former FBI Director William H. Webster determined that only 350 of the LAPD’s 7,800 officers were on patrol duty at any given time and urged Chief Willie Williams to reassign specialized units to patrol. In 1995, after expanding the force to 8,391 officers, it was revealed that the patrol ranks had only grown by 27 positions. In 2003, Chief William Bratton’s staff indicated that the 9,200 officer force would need to increase by at least 600 personnel in order to reduce response times to seven minutes. Today, with more officers than at any time in the LAPD’s history, patrol deployment levels do not appear to have increased and response times do not appear to have improved.

The vision, strategies, and organizational priorities put forward by the LAPD Command Staff ultimately influence the overall level of field patrol deployment Citywide. The recent decision to create a new a social media oriented division and bolster an elite unit add credence to the widely held belief that specialization continues to be emphasized over basic patrol duties. Additionally, the current deployment system is too heavily subject to the scheduling unpredictability of officers in any one division, on any given day, and on any specific watch. The LAPD’s own reports on Patrol Plan compliance have routinely indicated that the prescribed baseline patrol staffing plans for the individual geographic patrol areas are not consistently met due to vacancies resulting from illnesses, injuries, and the temporary loaning of officers to other assignments. The backfilling of these vacancies is not only essential to achieving compliance with Patrol Plan, but also to strengthening the overall patrol force. A revamped staffing model based on the Fire Department’s “Constant Staffing” overtime policy would greatly improve the LAPD’s ability to maintain a stable baseline patrol deployment level at all times. Finally, while the LAPD argues that the current watch schedules and associated patrol staffing levels attempt to mirror the peaks and valleys of daily call volume, an increase in the overall number of officers assigned to patrol duties around the clock would greatly enhance community policing efforts, increase the daily police presence in neighborhoods, move towards compliance with the 7/40 Mandate, and provide an improved level of service.

Timeline

Community Policing and Patrol Staffing History

1965 - A special commission headed by former CIA Director John McCone to investigate the 1965 Watts Riots provided several recommendations - most notably to expand police-community relations programs. These recommendations ultimately lead to the creation of the Basic Car Plan and the Neighborhood Watch Program.

1969 - Chief Ed Davis creates the Basic Car Plan with a force of 6,194 officers -- 3,127 of which are assigned to the patrol force, with an average of 325 officers on the street at any given time. He also develops the Neighborhood Watch Program.

1973 - Chief Davis decentralizes LAPD by creating four geographic bureaus, each headed by a Deputy Chief *“charged with responsibility for all operational law enforcement functions and for opening new avenues of communication with the residents, civic groups and businessmen within their jurisdictions.”*

1978 - Chief Daryl Gates moves a significant number of the LAPD’s 7,016 officers away from Basic Car patrol duties in favor of increasing specialized units. According to the LA Times, *“Many of Davis’ innovations were deemphasized or dismantled when Daryl F. Gates took over as chief in 1978... Davis tried to bring the community into the department. Gates shut it out.”* A subsequent study by the LA Police Protective League stated that police-community relations seemed to have slipped to an all-time low.

1981 - An audit conducted by the City Administrative Officer is critical of the LAPD’s inefficient use of sworn personnel and specialized units. At a news conference, Chief Gates throws the report to the ground and stomps on it.

1985 - Citizen groups grow concerned about police response times, prompting the City Council approve an outside study and the Police Commission to eventually hire an outside consultant to study the issue.

1988 - The outside consultant concludes that with 7,250 officers, the LAPD does not commit enough of its 3,000 officer patrol force to actually patrolling the City, does not respond quickly enough to calls for help, and diverts too many of its patrol officers to special assignments. The consultant warns that *“special units . . . can develop a life of their own.”*

1988 - In response to the consultant’s report, the LAPD implements a new computer program and deployment formula known as “Patrol Plan”, and adopts the “7/40 Mandate”, which requires officers to respond to calls within 7 minutes and to devote 40% of their available time to proactive policing.

1988 - LAPD estimates that it needs 9,000 officers to respond to emergency calls in five minutes or less and still have enough forces for adequate routine patrol.

1991 - A special commission headed by Warren Christopher following the Rodney King Beating calls for community-based policing and indicates that the department can do more with the officers it already has on the force. The commission also indicates that police officers see patrol duty as a dead end for career advancement, and that officers try to get out of patrol work as quickly as possible.

1992 - A special commission headed by former FBI Director William H. Webster to investigate the LAPD's response to the 1992 Civil Unrest determines that only about 350 (4%) of the Police Department's 7,800 officers were on patrol duty at any given time. The commission's first recommendation: *"adopt new priorities that place renewed emphasis on basic patrol duties."*

1992 - A series of LA Times articles determine that the LAPD patrol force is down to 279 officers in radio cars on an average shift, while more than 400 officers are assigned to jobs that do not require police skills and powers, including teaching physical fitness and Spanish.

1993 - Chief Willie Williams describes patrol as *"the last place where resources are invested and the first place from which they are taken."* Chief Williams vows to put more of the LAPD's 7,618 officers on the streets by redeploying personnel from specialized units and increasing hiring.

1995 - LA Times indicates that while the LAPD increased the sworn ranks by 773 in two years to 8,391 officers, the patrol force only grew by 27. Mayor Richard Riordan states: *"I think the people of Los Angeles have a right to know why these numbers are so low and where the officers have been placed if not in the field."*

2000 - Report of the Rampart Independent Review Panel cites a *"continued failure by the Department's management to treat the communities it polices as full partners in its mission."* The Panel further indicates that *"...officers and citizens repeatedly told us that officers frequently 'rotate' out of patrol at the earliest opportunity... In part, this is due to a widespread perception among officers that patrol work is not valued and is not an avenue for promotion... As a result, community members complain throughout the City that they rarely see the same officer twice in relation to any particular problem..."*

2002 - LA Times reports that Chief Bernard Parks *"has deliberately allowed vacancies to soar in [specialized] divisions so they don't stack up in another, more critical area: patrol."* This results in *"more officers on patrol than in 1993--a year in which the LAPD's force was a similar size."*

2003 - LA Times reports that the number of police officers patrolling LA streets hits a near five-year low, stating: *"Even as the number of LAPD officers has grown slightly, the number of police assigned to patrol has dropped."* The staff of newly appointed Chief William Bratton's indicates the 9,200 officer force would need to increase by at least 600 personnel to reduce response times to seven minutes.

2006 - Chief William Bratton creates the Entertainment Trademarks Unit, with the aim *"to restore and protect the Department's image."* This specialized unit focuses on investigating and regulating works that include LAPD references, such as the *'To Serve and to Protect'* motto.

2007 - LAPD Office of Operations releases the Optimal Area Staffing Reengineering Proposal that proposes an ideal staffing model at area police stations. This proposal acknowledges that the patrol force *"bears the brunt of harvesting practices that strip divisions of resources and expertise."*

2008 - City Controller audit identifies 565 positions that could potentially be filled by civilians. The audit also finds that *"in one Area station, of the 154 authorized patrol positions, only about 100 officers were actually deployed to patrol in a particular deployment period."*

2011 - LA Times reports that *"700 police officers work in the LAPD's Counter-Terrorism and Special Operations Bureau... That's more than twice as many officers as are assigned to any police station in the city, even those in the highest-crime areas."*

2014 - LA Times investigation reveals that the LAPD seriously underreported violent crimes. In response, Chief Charlie Beck creates the Data Integrity Unit in order to retrain hundreds of officers in how to classify crimes. This new unit also conducts spot checks of crime reports.

2015 - Chief Charlie Beck increases the size of Metro Division by 229 officers (from 250 to 479 officers) - an increase of 92 percent. This is accomplished by redeploying officers from throughout the Police Department, and many positions are taken directly from patrol.

2016 - In February, Chief Beck indicates that the 9,900 officer force needs to increase to 12,500 officers in order to bolster the size of patrol.

2016 - In March, the LAPD command staff confirms through a City Controller audit that nearly all of the positions and/or functions previously recommended for civilianization in 2008 are still being performed by sworn personnel.

2016 - In July, the Police Department formally transfers 52 regular sworn positions to the recently established Community Relationship Division - a centrally located special unit that makes sporadic appearances throughout the City and heavily utilizes social media, while having no familiarity or ties with any one community.

2016 - The December 8, 2016 LAPD "Logged On Units Report" reveals that only 311 officers are on patrol Citywide at 12:00 pm.

LAPD Patrol Deployment Comparison 1969 vs. 2016

1969 - Average Deployment			December 8, 2016 - Snapshot		
DAY SHIFT			12:00 PM		
Division	Patrol Cars	Patrol Officers	Division	Patrol Cars	Patrol Officers
Central	9	18	Central	8	16
Rampart	13	23	Rampart	7	14
University	12	23	Southwest	12	24
Hollenbeck	10	20	Hollenbeck	8	16
Harbor	6	12	Harbor	8	14
Hollywood	13	26	Hollywood	8	16
Wilshire	9	18	Wilshire	6	12
West LA	14	28	West LA	6	12
Van Nuys	15	30	Van Nuys	7	14
West Valley	11	11	West Valley	8	16
Highland Park	9	18	Northeast	7	13
77th Street	14	28	77th Street	10	20
Newton Street	9	16	Newton	6	12
Venice	10	20	Pacific	5	10
N. Hollywood	9	12	N. Hollywood	8	16
Foothill	10	20	Foothill	8	16
Devonshire	8	14	Devonshire	9	16
TOTAL	181	337	Southeast	6	12
			Mission	8	16
			Olympic	9	16
			Topanga	5	10
			TOTAL	159	311
1969		2016			
Total Sworn Officers	6,194*	Total Sworn Officers	9,885**		
Patrol Officers on the Street	337	Patrol Officers on the Street	311		
Patrol Cars on the Street	181	Patrol Cars on the Street	159		
Patrol Divisions	17	Patrol Divisions	21		
Basic Car Areas	83	Basic Car Areas	168		
City Population	2,935,300	City Population	4,031,000		
<i>*Sworn strength as of December 31, 1969</i>		<i>**Sworn strength as of November 2016</i>			

Mike Bonin’s “Back to Basic Car” 10 Point Plan

- 1) **Reinvigorate Patrol** - currently undervalued, underprioritized and understaffed - provide increased promotional paths and incentives for officers assigned to this core function.
- 2) **Establish Minimum Patrol Staffing Levels** - revisit the LAPD’s “Patrol Plan” deployment formula and set a more realistic Citywide minimum staffing level to meet daily workload demands and improve response times.
- 3) **Decentralize Personnel** - redeploy sworn officers from headquarters, administrative assignments, less-essential specialized units and details back to our neighborhoods.
- 4) **Establish “Constant Staffing” Overtime** - similar to the Fire Department, utilize an overtime system or staffing pool to fill all temporarily vacant basic car positions, ensuring that no neighborhood is left without a patrol car when an officer is unable to report to work.
- 5) **Add Basic Car Districts and Senior Lead Officers** - initiate an “Impact Study” to re-boundary basic car districts to create smaller patrol areas that better conform to identifiable neighborhood boundaries, with the goal of tailoring police services to better meet the needs of individual neighborhoods.
- 6) **Add Redundant Radio Cars** - the original Basic Car Plan deployed an additional radio car within each basic car district for redundancy and ensured that officers were not pulled out of their primary area of responsibility, unless absolutely necessary.
- 7) **Improve Operational Flexibility** - no uniformed officer on the streets should be exempt from responding to urgent radio calls and backing up fellow officers simply due to their unique mission or area of specialty (i.e. Metro Division Officers).
- 8) **Develop Geographic Coverage Protocols** - similar to the Fire Department, during unusual incident activity, heavy call-load, or significant personnel shortages, systematically and proactively move-up resources from outside divisions to balance Citywide geographic patrol coverage and maintain adequate response times in voided areas.
- 9) **Enhance Community Policing** - restore the Basic Car as the primary community and proactive policing delivery mechanism, with sufficient divisional deployment levels to enable officers to walk beats and directly interact with the neighborhoods they serve.
- 10) **Improve Non-Emergency Responsiveness** - assign redeployed sworn personnel to radio cars specifically designated to respond to lower-level calls for service.

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