City of Brisbane
Agenda Report

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Via Clayton L. Holstine

FROM: Commander Robert F. Meisner

DATE: January 17, 2011

SUBJECT: Black and White Patrol Vehicles

CONTINUED TO FEBRUARY 6, 2012

CITY COUNCIL GOALS

- To provide for effective and efficient delivery of City services.

- To provide public service that assures the safety of property and citizens residing, working or visiting in Brisbane.

PURPOSE
The police department is considering changing the design of our patrol vehicles from all white, to black and white.

RECOMMENDATION:
The Police Department recommends that the council review, consider and approve moving forward with this proposal.

BACKGROUND:
Traditionally, police patrol vehicles have been painted black and white. In the late 80's and early 90's, departments began experimenting with different paint schemes, one of the more popular at the time being a variation of all white. In 1989, the Brisbane Police Department followed suit and began deploying the all white design that we have today.

In the late 1990's, police departments began a migration back to the traditional black and white. Reasons cited for switching back were: better visibility, tradition, officer morale, crime reduction and community relations by giving the citizens the added comfort of seeing a "united" law enforcement front.

DISCUSSION:

The men and women of the Brisbane Police Department take pride in our image and appearance in the community. The black and white patrol car is a tradition, and a universal sign of professionalism. The black and white patrol car is immediately recognized as law encorcement in the same way that people identify that a fire truck is red. Citizens gain a sence of security when seeing a black and white, and those with less admirable intentions will take notice too.

For several years now, the Brisbane Police Officer's Association has explored the possibility of changing our patrol car design back to the traditional black and white. With nearly every agency having done so already, we feel that it would be appropriate for us to do so as well.
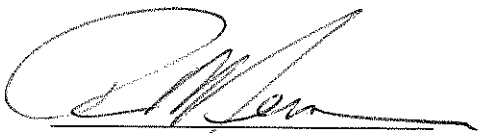
The POA realizes that this is partly a matter of preference and that switching any of our existing vehicles would be a non-budgeted for expense. As such, the POA has offered to pay for the painting of 4 of our existing 6 patrol vehicles. The other vehicles would be replaced with black and whites through attrition.
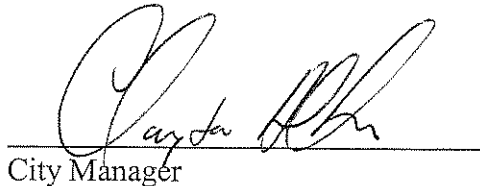
FISCAL IMPACT

Initially, there will be no fiscal impact as the association has agreed to pay for painting the first 4 cars. Subsequent vehicles being purchased as black and whites will cost an additional $650. Currently, we purchase an average of one vehicle per year. We anticipate that this minimal investment will be overshadowed by the benefits of reduced crime and public perception.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Success will be measured by the increased morale among our officers and feedback from citizens and businesses within the city.

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Commander

_____
City Manager

A copy of supporting materials provided to the City Manager and City Council for this agenda item is available for public inspection and copying at 50 Park Place, City of Brisbane Community Development Department, Brisbane, CA, 94005, Telephone: (415) 508-2120.

POLICEONE.COM News

01/24/2007

Police Driving:
Safety Behind the Wheel
with Capt. Travis Yates

Back in Black: Police cars go retro

Law enforcement is a profession of trends and traditions. Few traditions are more identifiable than the black and white police car. In the 90's, agencies that once sported black and white cars began converting to solid white, green or blue. In recent years, black-and-whites have made a comeback, and street officers are rejoicing.

Black and white was not always the tradition. As police vehicles became a mainstay in the United States, most of them were a solid color. In an effort to stand out from the general civilian car, many departments utilized a black car and simply added a white stripe. Ford started making extra-durable police package cars in 1950, and the black and white paint scheme soon followed. By the1960's, black-and-whites were everywhere, further mythologized by TV police shows like Adam 12 and Andy Griffith.

In the 1990's, many departments converted to solid-colored cars. As local governments battled increasing demands and lower budgets, the traditional black and white was eliminated in favor of cost-efficient solids. White cars soon became standard. Emblems that had often been simplified for the readily recognizable black and white scheme often were now embelleshed and enlarged so citizens could recognize white cars as police cars.

But in the past few years, the trend has reversed. Black and white is making a comeback. Cost is no longer a prohibitive factor. Manufacturers, aware of agency constraints, quote less than a $500 increase for each car with the traditional paint job. Cash-strapped police departments around the country are getting creative with their bottom line: Mesa, Arizona purchased smaller hubcaps to offset the $400 increase; Fond du Lac, Wisconsin offset $300 each by opting for a less complicated graphics package. With a few pocket windfalls and overwhelming enthusiasm, the popularity of black and white cars is approaching an all-time high.

But why bring them back? Public recognition tops the list. For instance, the concept of community policing relies heavily on the active participation of citizens to solve community-wide problems. The street officer must maintain a high degree of visibility in order to collaborate and build relationships with these citizens. To this end, having a recognizable police vehicle makes a lot of sense.

Captain Tim Johnson of the Sunnyvale (CA) PD has done extensive research on this topic. He finds that, not only does the public have a positive response to black and white cars, but that officers who drive them are seen as more approachable. Indeed, recent surveys suggest that nearly every department using black and white cars cite increased visibility and accessibility as the main selling points.

Other factors are cited, as well. When the Costa Mesa (CA) PD began reverting to black and white cars in 2004, the public began asking if more cops were on the streets. Lieutenant Karl Schuler of Costa Mesa believes that the traditional look is a great way to make the community feel more secure. In fact, the Winnemucca, Nevada PD credits their black-and-whites with not only giving the appearance of more officers, but also reducing certain crimes in their small town.

With the traditional look, it appears that an increase in officer morale follows. Officers from across the country have overwhelmingly supported a change to black and white cars. A recent vote in a large Midwest municipal police department revealed that 83% of the officers were strongly in favor of transitioning to a black and white vehicle. The popularity of black and white cars by the officers has a positive impact on any administrator that chooses to make the change.

Ed Nowicki, the Executive Director of the International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainers Association (ILEETA), is a proponent of a unilateral switch. "A black and white car would clearly represent law enforcement in the same manner that people know that fire trucks are red," he says. Mr. Nowicki emphasizes that a standard LE vehicle would not only help prevent the impersonation of an officer, but would also give citizens the added

comfort of seeing a "united front" in law enforcement.

Whether it is community relations, better visibility, tradition or perception, black and white police cars appear, once again, to be making their cultural mark on American law enforcement. In the fast-paced, technology-driven police culture, the simple tradition of a black and white car is a welcome sight.

Captain Travis Yates commands the Precision Driver Training Unit with the Tulsa, Okla. Police Department. He is a nationally recognized driving instructor and a certified instructor in tire deflation devices and the pursuit intervention technique. Capt. Yates has a Master of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Northeastern State University and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy. He moderates www.policedriving.com, a website dedicated to law enforcement driving issues. He is available for consulting and may be reached at policedriving@yahoo.com.

About the author

Captain Travis Yates commands the Precision Driver Training Unit with the Tulsa, Okla. Police Department. He is a nationally recognized driving instructor and a certified instructor in tire deflation devices and the pursuit intervention technique. Capt. Yates has a Master of Science Degree in Criminal Justice from Northeastern State University and is a graduate of the FBI National Academy. He is the owner of www.policedriving.com, a website dedicated to law enforcement driving issues and the Director of Ten-Four Ministries, dedicated to providing practical and spiritual support to the law enforcement community. You may contact Travis at Policedriving@yahoo.com.

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Posted 10/13/2005 1:57 AM

Police cars going back to classic black-and-white

By Tom Kenworthy, USA TODAY

DENVER — What's black and white and making a comeback all over?

The traditional *Adam 12* police cruiser, in basic black and white.

Police departments from Florida to Arizona are converting their squad cars to the old color scheme made famous by the TV police drama that aired from 1968 to 1975. The reasons: tradition and better visibility.

In Mesa, Ariz., the police department's 287 marked Ford Crown Victoria cruisers — white with a blue decal on the doors — will be switched to black-and-whites over the next six years.

"Studies have shown that cars with alternating light and dark colors are more visible in low light or high illumination," says department spokesman Chuck Trapani. He says many civilian cars are white in a hot-weather region. Having cruisers painted black on the hoods, trunks and fenders will make them more visible, both to other drivers and the department's helicopter.

"It's also a morale thing," Trapani says. "We did a survey in the department, and a majority of the police officers wanted to go with black and white."

In Monroe, Wis., a city of 11,000 people in the southern part of the state, the police department switched its four marked cruisers in March, returning to the black-and-white scheme the city used in the late 1990s before going with white cars with color striping.
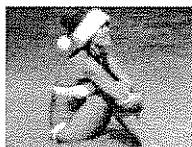
"The officers like it because it's retro," Chief Fred Kelley says. "There's also some practicality. There's a bit more visibility. In Wisconsin, where the snow flies, we found white cars blend in with the snow."

To keep costs down, Monroe bought black Chevy Impalas and had a body shop paint the doors and roof white, for about $800 per vehicle.

Though many police departments cite visibility as a reason for the switch, an expert in emergency vehicles and color visibility says the black-and-white paint job isn't the optimum scheme.

"If you two-tone a vehicle, you camouflage it more than if you use a single car color,"
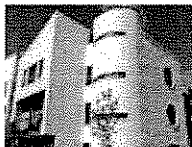
says Stephen Solomon, an Owego, N.Y., optometrist and member of New York state's Department of Motor Vehicles medical advisory board. "In a municipal setting, the background is straight lines, and when you two-tone a vehicle, you break down the ability to be able to see it in silhouette."

Solomon says the way to make cars more visible is to use lots of fluorescent, reflective tape. The best color is lime-yellow, frequently used on firetrucks, he says.

The National Safety Council, a non-profit organization that promotes health and safety, recommends to its business members that their fleet cars be painted in light colors with contrasting company logos for better visibility.

Officers like the black-and-whites, says Bill Sager, police chief in Port Richey, Fla., whose department is converting its nine-car fleet. He envisioned a silver color but left the decision up to his officers, who opted for tradition.

"When one gets behind you, you can very easily pick it out as a cop car," Sager says. "I didn't care for the black-and-white scheme at first, but once you see them, they really grow on you."

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