

# On the Subject of Dismantling the Traffic Division of the Portland Police Bureau 2021

December 7, 2021 updated December 17-19th

## Background

The automobile claims a large amount of resources of our police department not to mention the harm done to our citizens. There have been a total of 63 traffic deaths this year. Of those deaths, 27 have been pedestrians. There has not been this many traffic deaths in Portland since 1990 (when there were 63 traffic deaths in a single year).

There are six relevant crime offenses: Car Prowl, Hit and Run, Motor Vehicle Theft, Negligent Manslaughter -Vehicle, Driving Under the Influence, and Reckless Driving. See Attachment B.

Two of the six indicate considerable activity - hit and run plus car prowl.

(Crime Reports, PPB, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/80152>)

**Silverman said  
criminals know the  
police response is slow,  
and the likelihood they  
get caught is slim.**

Sgt. Josh Silverman, a 12-year veteran of PPB and a sergeant in Portland's North Precinct responsible for scheduling and deploying patrol officers. [Source](#)

### Hit and Run

Business District Population:	2021	2020	2019	2018	TOTAL	Monthly Average
<b>Downtown</b>	164	125	272	243	804	80
<b>NorthWest</b>	118	111	152	170	551	55
<b>The Pearl</b>	107	82	122	123	434	43
<b>Old Town</b>	54	37	81	143	315	32

Four Years 2021-2018, 10 months January - October, Monthly Average

### Car Prowl

	2021	2020	2019	2018	Total	Monthly Average
<b>The Pearl</b>	468	492	565	817	2342	234
<b>Downtown</b>	614	546	559	616	2335	234
<b>NorthWest</b>	366	382	383	337	1468	147
<b>Old Town</b>	67	75	78	143	363	36

## Dismantling the Traffic Division

Sgt. Ty Engstrom said there are fewer motor officers and car officers for traffic enforcement than in previous years, meaning the bureau doesn't have the resources to patrol the streets.

The Portland Police Bureau currently deploys fewer sworn officers — 789 — than at any point in the past in 30 years, according to the bureau and an analysis of records by The Oregonian/OregonLive, even though the city added more than 165,000 new residents over that period.

[Source](#)

"At the beginning of 2021, staffing levels in the PPB were so low that they had to dismantle almost the entire traffic division," Engstrom said.

Engstrom said the police bureau does not have a functioning traffic patrol division any longer. All of its officers except him have been transferred to the precincts because of staffing shortages.

"We used to have 35 motorcycle officers, plus cars," Engstrom said. The entire community has to act to stop these fatalities," said Engstrom. [Source](#) See [Traffic Dashboard](#) for more info.

### Questions

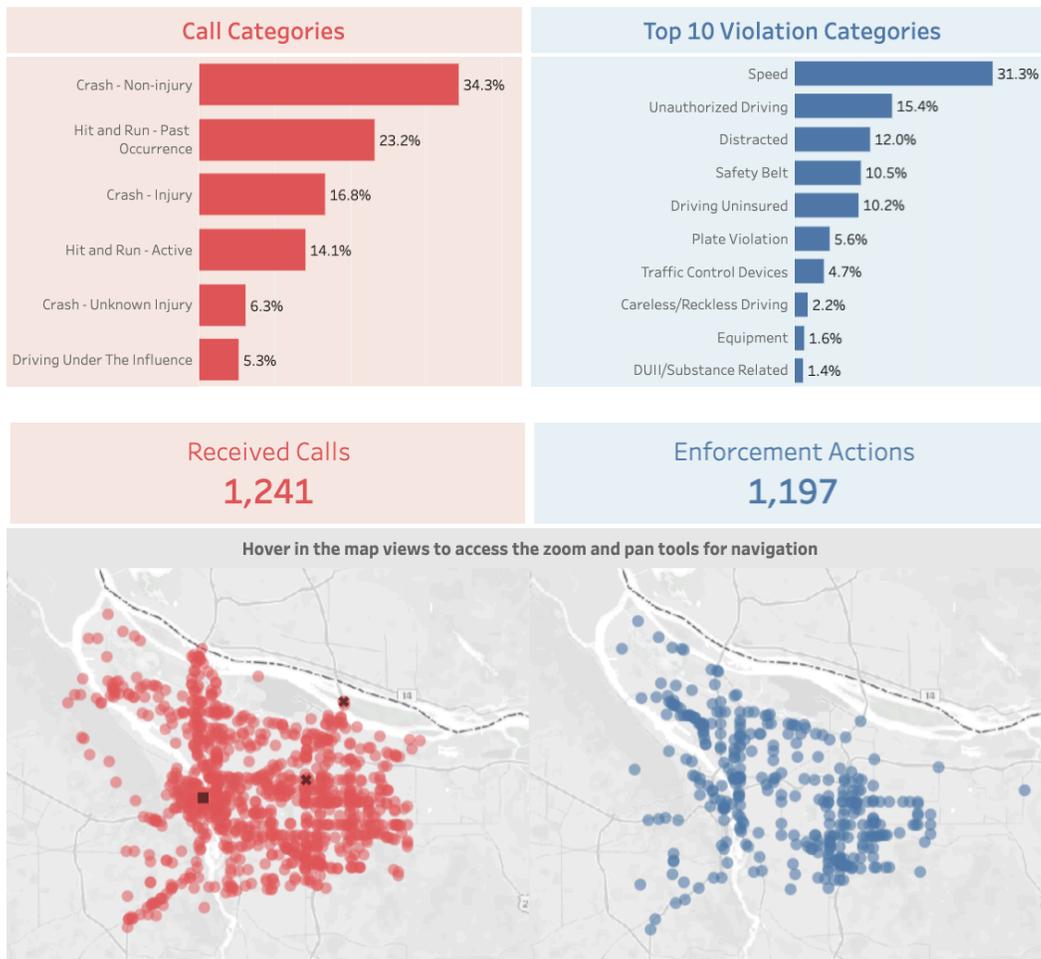
What exactly are the business districts in our central city neighborhoods to do about their need for traffic enforcement and all related offenses for both visitors and residents. What is the effect of this on residents as well as visitors. Who are the victims in terms of neighborhood, location, and basic demographics such as age, sex, race and ethnicity?

Could traffic enforcement, in whole or part, be contracted out and more involved in street-level livability and safety with crime investigation part of a different police unit for high density, urban neighborhoods. How is the safety aspect of Clean and Safe working and is it a model for improving traffic safety?

## ATTACHMENT A (December 18, 2021)

The PPB Open Data Traffic Dashboard will no longer be supported. The Strategic Services Division is planning to launch a new dashboard later this year. (4/14/2021)

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/tableau/traffic/>



ATTACHMENT B (December 19, 2021)

## **Speeding**

Slate Magazine

Speeding is a national health problem and a big reason why this country is increasingly an outlier on traffic safety in the developed world. More than 1 in 4 fatal crashes in the United States involve at least one speeding driver, making speeding a factor in nearly 10,000 deaths each year, in addition to an unknowable number of injuries. Thousands of car crash victims are on foot, and speed is an even more crucial determinant of whether they live or die: The odds of a pedestrian being killed in a collision rise from 10 percent at 23 mph to 75 percent at 50 mph. And we're now in a moment of particular urgency. Last year, when the pandemic shutdowns lowered total miles traveled by 13 percent, the per-mile death rate rose by 24 percent—the greatest increase in a century, thanks to drivers hitting high velocities on empty roads. “COVID,” Roberts said, “was midnight on the day shift.”