



Reimagining Community Safety: Portland Police Bureau Core Patrol Services

Recommendations— Spring 2021

Approved by PCCEP Board on May 25, 2021 with a unanimous vote.

The Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing (PCCEP) was charged by Mayor Wheeler in June 2020 with reviewing Core Patrol services of the Portland Police Bureau (PPB). Since January we have been soliciting community feedback on how they would want to see core patrol services reimagined and how public safety can be improved. In mid-January we launched an online survey on MapApp to which more than 250 people responded. In addition, we held several town hall meetings and work sessions to discuss the feedback from the community and to develop recommendations that will be brought forward to the City Council in early June. In April and May, we conducted a survey of public responses to our draft recommendations to which we received 327 responses. The overwhelming majority (60-90%) were either “very supportive” or “supportive” of these recommendations.

A data analyst is working on an analysis of that robust community feedback, but our analysis thus far reveals that the overwhelming majority of respondents indicated a desire to expand non-police first responders to minimize the interactions of the police with the houseless, those with mental health issues, and people with alcohol and drug addictions. Some people recognized the need for police to focus their resources on solving violent crimes. There was widespread support for expanding Portland Street Response and ideas to develop new bodies that could take on some of the work currently done by sworn police officers. There were a few people calling for more policing and another outlier group calling for the complete abolition of the police. There was, however, broad consensus to develop non-police responses to various public safety issues in Portland.

The recommendations that follow distill this rich feedback into concrete proposals. We recognize that these recommendations are broad ideas that would still need to be fleshed out

by city staffers should they be adopted by city council. Although our recommendations do not address the question of the police budget, we would imagine that as tasks previously performed by the police are undertaken by other entities, the PPB budget would be adjusted accordingly.

Our recommendations are broken down by the public safety area they would address.

Mental Health, Addiction, and Houselessness

Gun Violence

Disproportionate Policing of Black and Brown Portlanders

Structural Changes

Health of Police Officers

Core Patrol of PPB currently does the following:

1. Responds to emergency and/or non-emergency calls for service;
2. Conducts preliminary investigations;
3. Enforces traffic and criminal laws;
4. Provides a visible presence within the community; and
5. Participates in community activities

Supporting Documents:

[Townhall Jamboard](#)

[March Townhall Slidedeck](#)

[March Work Session Brainstorm](#)

Mental Health, Addiction, and Houselessness

Portland Street Response

Current Funding: \$4.8M

Problem

According to [PPB data](#), [half of arrests in Portland](#) are of people designated as “homeless” by the PPB. The “homeless” also account for 40-50% use of force incidents. 15% of use of force incidents involve someone perceived to be in mental health crisis. By reducing the interactions of the Portland Police with these vulnerable groups and having trained mental health providers to be first responders, harm can be reduced and more effective aid can be provided.

PSR teams are dispatched by BOEC when calls for service meet certain criteria. These types of calls currently are still in a pilot program. Portland has one team operating in the Lents neighborhood since February of 2021, with plans to add a second team to the same neighborhood in the second half of 2021 and further teams the following year throughout the city. Currently, they have funding to expand up to \$4.8M. An overwhelming number of community comments expressed the desire for PSR to be expanded dramatically to eliminate the community’s involvement with PPB in instances that could be better handled by Portland Street Response. PSR’s focus is on people living on the streets and/or dealing with drug, alcohol or other substance abuse.

Recommendations

1. Expand the program to cover the entire city by proposing a multi-year roll-out strategic plan.
 - a. Increase in funding over 5 years (what area of funding) to account for 15-20% of calls (~15% of Lents calls estimate)

Background Info

Portland Street Response (PSR) is a Portland Fire and Rescue program meant to provide a non-police alternative for calls for low risk calls for service involving individuals experiencing mental health issues, individuals experiencing addiction issues, and/or the houseless. Teams consist of a firefighter EMT, a licensed mental health crisis therapist, and two community health workers meant to better connect people with available services.

Resources

- [PSR Home Page](#)
- [CAHOOTS Parallel-Model](#)
- [LENTS POLICE PERFORMANCE MEASURE ANALYSIS](#)
- [PSR Program Evaluation](#)
- [\\$1 billion in federal aid](#) to help develop Cahoots-like model (85% of costs covered by Feds) was passed as part of Cares Act.

Mental & Behavioral Health Responses

Problem

Although PSR is an excellent alternative first responder to people experiencing mental health issues, there is a severe shortage of resources and centers to which such people can be referred.

Although we want to minimize the interactions of the police with people in crisis, we recognize that there will be a need for police interactions under particular circumstances when there is a threat of imminent violence. Expanding the number of police officers who have ECIT training would make such interactions less harmful.

Recommendations

1. Expansion of access and utilization of a Sobering/Resources Center in multiple locations across the Portland Metropolitan area.
2. Ensuring sustainability of the Service Coordination Team (SCT) in order to assist community members who need wrap-around services and support from dedicated personnel. Make access to services available to all and not just those who interact with police through the SCT.
3. Increase the number of officers trained as ECIT.
4. Maintain the Behavioral Health Unit in PPB.
5. Expansion of PSR described above would also help to avoid police interactions with people with mental illness and help connect them with appropriate services.

Background Info

Our goal is to minimize police use of force against people with mental health or addiction issues by reducing contact between police and people with mental illness, alcoholism, and addiction. The Portland Street Response would be one of the primary ways to accomplish this, but given the inevitable involvement of the police, we also recommend the expansion of the Enhanced Crisis Intervention Team (ECIT), patrol officers who volunteer for 40 hours of further training in de-escalation and behavioral health issues. The training includes lectures, site visits, and role-playing scenarios. Approximately 25% of patrol officers are trained to be ECIT.

Resources

[MHA Key Documents](#)

[Behavioral Health Unit Program Description](#)

Public Safety Support Specialist (PSSS) Program

Current Funding: \$351,640 (12 positions)

Problem

43 percent of calls to 911 and non-emergency are low-priority. Response by police often leads to escalation of tensions and involvement in the criminal justice system. The Public Safety Support Specialists can address many calls for service currently handled by sworn officers and could as well aid in connecting people to available services thereby reducing harm and allowing police to focus

their resources on violent crime. PSSS officers are also less expensive than sworn officers and thus more help can be provided for the same amount of money currently being allocated to PPB officers. We believe that the bureaucratic connection between PSSSs and PPB undermines the community's trust in them as does their membership in the Portland Police Association.

Recommendations

1. Increase funding to program to increase the number of PSSSs to fully handle low priority calls for service currently identified as being within the program's purview.
2. Review dispatched calls and other types of activities currently handled by sworn officers to identify areas where PSSSs can be further utilized.
3. Train PSSSs to be knowledgeable of publicly available resources and programs so they can aid community members who are calling for service in accessing these resources.
4. Placing PSSSs under the Bureau of Fire & Rescue.

Background Context

The Public Safety Support Specialist (PSSS) is a pilot program within the PPB. PSSSs are unarmed specialists without the ability to perform criminal investigations, write citations, or make arrests. Rather they handle low priority calls, take low level crime reports, perform other duties which do not require an armed sworn officer, and assist officers as needed. PSSSs undergo the same background and mental health checks as officers and receive six months of training focused on de-escalation, community engagement, and basic first aid. They are differentiated from the police by different uniforms, a polo shirt and utility pants, and by driving vans marked with the City of Portland logo. The goal of the program is to provide a cost-effective alternative which will allow sworn officers to better focus on traditional police duties. Currently there are 12 PSSS positions.

Resources

[Program Description](#)

Enhanced Service District Patrols

Problem

Using private security removes public oversight from potentially harmful interactions with the public. There is also a potential for conflict of interest when an ESD is being funded and directed by a business group or landowners. Security should be a public not a private function and ESD's blur the line between the two when they fund PPB officers.

Recommendations

- 1) Remove private security patrols from public spaces.

- 2) Remove the ability of enhanced service districts to fund PPB sworn officer positions.
- 3) Allow enhanced service districts to fund additional Public Safety Support Specialists and/or Portland Street Response teams which will serve in the district, but only if equal funds are also put toward services meant to alleviate issues of homelessness and addiction within the district.

Background Context

Enhanced service districts are areas where the city collects money from landowners and distributes it for services the district chooses. These districts are Clean and Safe (downtown), Central Eastside, and Lloyd. Clean and Safe uses a portion of these funds to pay for four PPB officer positions assigned to downtown as well as private security officers provided by Portland Patrol Inc. Portland Patrol has joint supervision with the PPB over the police officers and provides input in their selection and assigning their duties. Private security officers, at times armed, patrol public streets, waking up or moving people if they're blocking business entrances, deterring vandalism, and responding to complaints from downtown businesses and residents. Pacific Patrol provides a phone number for the community to call for services. The Central Eastside district also utilizes private security patrols in a similar manner, though without the dedicated PPB positions.

Resources

[City Auditor Reports on ESDs](#)

["New City Audit Highlights Lack of Oversight of Three Private Security and Cleanup Teams,"
Willamette Week](#)

Gun Violence

Office of Violence Prevention

Current Funding: \$1.6M

Problem

If we are ever to achieve a more peaceful Portland, we must start with a new approach to violence in our community. Recently, the Portland City Council unanimously passed a landmark ordinance to address gun violence with \$6 million in funding for community-based solutions. It's a first step toward immediate responses to the crisis we are in while also allowing the development of longer-term strategies for preventing violence from happening in the first place. A [2019 study](#) by the Portland Police and the California Partnership for Safe Communities concluded that only 100 people per year were directly involved with the vast majority of the shootings in Portland. The primary recommendations from this study were to develop a violence intervention strategy and target the small numbers of people involved in shootings. The essence of our recommendation is in alignment with the ordinance on gun violence passed by City Council on April 7, 2021, as well as a further affirmation that we need to reorient our responses to gun violence to up-stream solutions.

Recommendations

1. OVP reorients their current strategic gun violence prevention plan to address the root causes of gun violence like access to employment, education, housing, and other upstream support systems. This approach needs to be prioritized with the influx in current funding and with anticipation of further permanent funding.
 - a. OVP to draft city-wide language to standardized the definitions of “prevention” “intervention” and “suppression” along with other similar relevant terms to help ensure equitable shared definitions guide our work towards progress.
2. Requested funding from OVP \$3,250,876*
3. Allow for full City Council review of cooperation agreements between federal and city police (ATF and FBI).

Background Context

Defining the context: The Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) reflects priorities identified by City Council to build a more family-friendly city and increase public safety and reflects the emphasis on attacking the root causes of problems in neighborhoods, rather than simply focusing on policing efforts.

Description of activities: OVP serves as grant manager for the following pro-social resource programs: Street Level Outreach (SLO); Healing Hurt People (HHP); Trauma and Violence

Impacted Families (TVIF) Coordinator; and Restorative Justice Program. The grant programs provide pro-social resources to at risk youth, and their families, creating an investment in Portland's livability and economic future

*funding has been guaranteed through the aforementioned ordinance for the FY21 period. The report is available below.

Resources

[OVP Program Description](#)

[Portland Shooting & Portland Police Homicide Problem Analysis 2015-2019](#)

[04/07/2021 City Ordinance on Gun Violence Prevention](#)

Disproportionate Policing of Black and Brown Portlanders

Restorative Justice Programs

Problem

A restorative justice model provides an alternative approach to the traditional justice system which involves bringing together offenders and victims to share experiences, create consensus, and make amends. Such models are seen as especially effective in cases of community disputes and low-level crimes. We too often focus on penal systems that perpetuate mass incarceration and the criminalization of the poor and disenfranchised. Restorative justice moves away from incarceration and works towards restoration of justice to the victim and offender. Such models are proven effective in cities across the country. Notably, Seattle recently engaged in a “Zero Youth Detention” strategic reimagining of their juvenile facilities.

Recommendations

- 1) Partner with the Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office and community organizations to establish an effective restorative justice model in Portland and Multnomah County. Use community support to ensure the city, county, and state view it as a priority.
- 2) Pursue the establishment of standardized community service citations to replace monetary citations.

Background Context

When carrying out their duties, officers are limited in how they can respond to issues. They can perform arrests or issue citations, or they can do nothing, at best trying to mitigate problems or shift them to another location such as with encampments of houseless people. The former results in the creation of a criminal record, which at best saddles individuals who are least able to afford them with added expenses, and at worst negatively affects their ability to find housing, work, and more in the future. Due to socio-economic inequities, this especially affects the houseless and Black communities. The latter results in a lack of justice for victims of crimes and a growing sense of community degradation where only extreme measures can result in improvements. Due to the same socio-economic inequities, this as well especially affects the houseless and other historically disenfranchised communities. The Department of Community Justice currently partners with community organizations like Latino Network and POIC to undergo restorative, culturally-competent diversion programs for youth. PPB and the District Attorney are currently underway exploring how to move forward with such programs like the one DCJ runs in consultation with restorative justice practitioners and survivors.

Sources

- [Restorative Justice, Multnomah County](#)
- [Restorative Justice Coalition of Oregon](#)

Traffic Safety

Current Funding: \$11.1M ([Source](#))

Problem

Police stops of drivers have often been occasions for [unwarranted use of force](#) that has been [disproportionately used against Black people](#). The [data from Portland](#) and around the country reveals the same disproportionate policing. By taking the police out of traffic safety, we can reduce the harm done to drivers, especially Black ones.

Recommendations

1. PPB will craft internal assessment of Traffic Division’s existing bias and disproportionate stops to identify solutions to such issues.
2. Develop a plan to create a new body of unarmed traffic safety employees who would be responsible for enforcing traffic laws and promoting safety on the roadways.
 - a. Advocate for revisions to such laws to make it possible for such bodies to exist and operate in Oregon.

Background Context

One oft-mentioned alternative to armed traffic cops has a model in many cities already: unarmed parking enforcement officers. Their role could be expanded to enforce other traffic safety-related laws, thereby reducing the potential for escalation and violence. However, others call for significant reductions in the total number of uniformed police officers in our communities (whether armed or not) and shifting the resources previously spent on them to non-police affiliated officials. In the traffic safety realm that could mean, for example, replacing police with mental health responders to attend to pedestrians in crisis. Or it could mean sending a city-employed mechanic to help drivers fix a brake light on their car when it burns out, rather than writing them a ticket. (Feet First)

Resources

[Feet First, Alternatives to Police Traffic Safety Enforcement](#)

Structural Changes

Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC)

Problem

Over the past decade, calls for public safety services via the 9-1-1 and non-emergency systems have increased faster than population growth would suggest, straining public safety resources and increasingly resulting in a reactive rather than proactive public safety system. A large part of this growth can be attributed to the city's failure in finding effective solutions to issues such as houselessness, addiction, and mental health. Concerns also exist regarding the ability of the current system to filter out calls, especially those involving the reporting of suspicious behavior, involving community members, especially Black community members, simply going about their business. At this time, only limited data regarding the work of the Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC) is easily accessible by the public.

Recommendations

1. Increase transparency regarding the number and types of public safety calls for service received and dispatched by BOEC and protocols used by BOEC to limit the unneeded or inefficient use of public safety resources.
2. Review BOEC protocols regarding the handling of calls which may not require a public safety response, especially regarding calls involving the houseless and BIPOC populations.
3. Review the effect of individuals who frequently call for public safety services on the effectiveness of the system and examine feasibility of using alternative resources to help lower calls volumes by these individuals.

Background Context

The Portland Bureau of Emergency Communications (BOEC) oversees the 9-1-1 and non-emergency systems and the dispatching of public safety resources in the city of Portland. BOEC annually handles over 860,000 calls for police, fire, and medical services, a number that has increased over the past decade. Aside from police dispatched calls, there is little easily available public information regarding BOEC calls for service being received and dispatched, protocols used by BOEC to determine when and how calls for service are responded to, or the effect on the system of individuals calling frequently. Over the past several years, there have been several incidents of public safety resources being needlessly called for in the Metro area, including one infamous incident involving an elected state representative, and there is a need to ensure the efficient use of the system in a way that does not unfairly target BIPOC and houseless communities.

Resources

[BOEC Website](#)

[Police Dispatched Call Data](#)

Data Transparency and Accountability

Problem

While the PPB has made strides in collecting and making publicly available aggregate data regarding the work of police officers as it relates to various demographic groups, many significant holes remain in the data, specifically in areas including officer-initiated calls for service and police custodies, making both internal and external analysis difficult. Unfortunately, the ability of the PPB to easily collect and make available such data is limited by the current antiquated records system.

Recommendations

- 1) Invest in replacing the current RegJIN records system used by the PPB with an out of the box system, such as the Mark43 system utilized by Clackamas County and other neighboring jurisdictions. Ensure that such a system is easily adaptable and modifiable in order to meet current and future data needs.
- 2) Increase police open data to include custody and citation data which includes demographic factors and attributes similar to currently available use of force data.
- 3) Increase police open data to include officer-initiated calls.
- 4) Include crowd-control use-of-force data on the open data portal.
- 5) Ensure data can be tracked across multiple databases so that independent analysis can fully identify how calls for service, stops, custodies, and uses of force relate to each other.
- 6) Ensure police data is fully accessible by the city's independent police accountability body.
- 7) Lobby Multnomah County to fund the collection and analysis of aggregate data for the District Attorney's office regarding cases moving through the legal system based upon demographics and outcomes.
- 8) Insure greater community input to review data, including stops data, and assess whether data being reported accurately captures what is happening in the community.

Background Context

Thanks to the DOJ Settlement Agreement, the PPB has made significant strides in releasing relevant information to the public, including raw data, especially in the areas of citizen-initiated calls for service, crime rates, police uses of force, and many other areas. Such transparency allows analysis by external parties, which not only increases the sense of accountability, but also increases the likelihood of identifying the root causes of many issues of concern. This in turn not only helps push forward needed reform, by highlighting needed areas of reform, but also helps ensure that such reforms are effective via using a more targeted and nuanced approach. The success of this type of data transparency has been seen in the significant decline in the use of force by the PPB over the past decade, with most types of force declining 75% or more, which can be partially attributed to the improved tracking and public availability of information regarding the use of force. However, this past summer saw an unprecedented rise in use of force during crowd control events that is not reflected in the data on the Open Data portal. Neglecting to include such information diminishes public transparency and does not allow the public to track this important source of police use of force.

Resources

- [Open Data Portal](#)

- [Article on RegJIN records system](#)

Health of Police Officers

Officer Wellness

Problem

Historically the health and wellness of public safety providers, such as police officers, has largely been overlooked, resulting in a culture where seeking services to improve and maintain mental health and personal well being is stigmatized. While the PPB has made strides in this area over the past several years, it is still an important focus area given that poor officer wellness can result in increased complaints against officers, a higher likelihood of force being used, and higher rates of officer turnover.

Recommendations

- 1) Fully fund and support programs meant to improve the wellness of police officers and all other city employees tasked with maintaining public safety.
- 2) Create a public list of available EAP mental health providers and allow police officers, firefighters, and 911 operators to anonymously rate and comment concerning their ability to help with specific issues.
- 3) To more effectively provide wellness services, look for ways to share such services across the Portland Police Bureau, Portland Fire and Rescue, and the Bureau of Emergency Communications.
- 4) To alleviate officer concerns that seeking mental health services may have a negative impact on their career, move resources meant to connect officers to mental health services out of the traditional chain of command within the PPB.
- 5) Examine the possibility of creating rotations for officers so that all officers spend a certain amount of time working in different roles and low impact roles. Requiring all officers to participate in such rotations would counter the stigma regarding requesting transfers to lower impact roles.

Background Context

Good officer mental health is an important factor in not only improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency, but also improving interactions with the public, increasing the utilization of de-escalation and procedural justice training, and lowering instances of officer bias and uses of force. Officers often come into contact with traumatic situations which over time greatly increase their risk of developing post traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues. As well, the daily grind of non-traumatic lower-level calls for service can result in compassion fatigue. This is widely recognized by both mental health experts and the officers themselves, and in the past few years the PPB has launched both programs and training meant to not only improve officer wellness, but also shift the culture of the PPB regarding the importance of mental and emotional health.

Resources

[Building and Sustaining Officer Wellness \(San Diego\)](#)

[American Psychology Association: National Study on Suicide Prevention & Wellness Programs](#)

[“Overworked, overwhelmed and 'Burned Out'”](#)