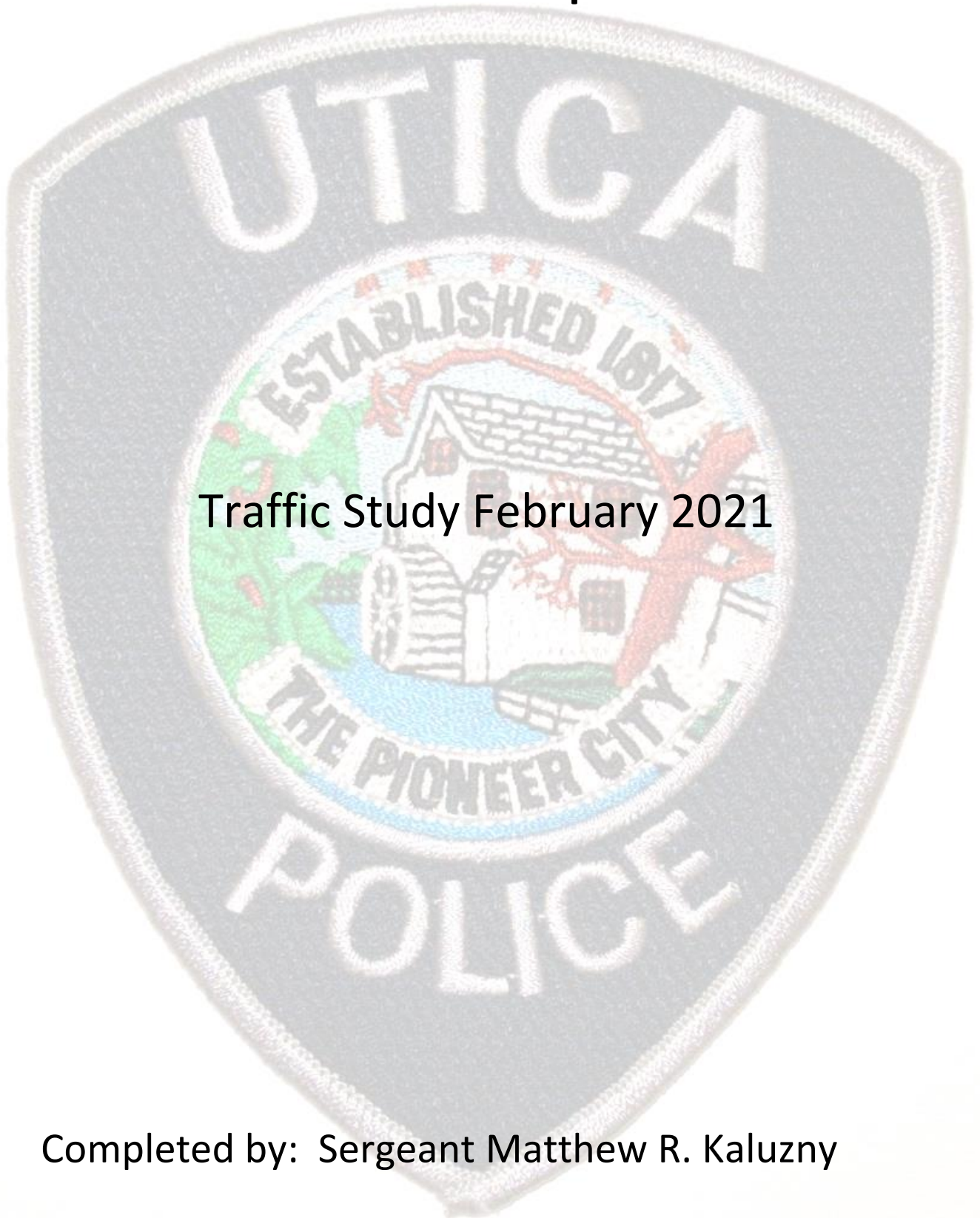


Utica Police Department



Traffic Study February 2021

Completed by: Sergeant Matthew R. Kaluzny



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INTRODUCTION: The Utica Police Department has conducted various traffic studies throughout its tenure examining complaints of residential speeding / safety issues. Many of the streets that were looked at in this study have been previously looked at in years past as it validates an ongoing issue. The goal of these studies is to determine if in fact the citizens complaint about traffic issues can be validated and how best the police department can structure its force to address these issues. The ultimate goal is to ensure safety of every citizen within the City of Utica whether they are residents, visitors or simply driving through the city borders. The Police Department has an obligation and mission to dedicate itself to traffic safety while maintaining the best utilization of its resources.

ISSUE: Citizen traffic complaints were received by the Police Department and Mayor's office regarding traffic issues on multiple streets in the city.

RESPONSE: The Police Department, in cooperation with Mayor Calandrino, instituted a traffic study to examine the various traffic complaints and determine what is the best course of action to respond to these issues. Mayor Calandrino created a social media post to reach out to the residents allowing them to interact directly with the Police Department.

METHODOLOGY: All patrol officers were required to conduct a minimum of (2) 15-minute traffic details during their tour of duty. The location of the details was collected from contacts made from citizens originating from the Mayor's social media post. The officers were able to choose the location and time of their 2 details to hopefully cover a 24 hour cycle.

Patrol officers were given log sheets to annotate which street the detail was completed on, date, time, duration of enforcement, traffic stop (if conducted), citation issued (civil infraction or warning), actual speed of offense and if it was a City of Utica resident.

DURATION PERIOD: Enforcement period will run from 2/3/2021 through 2/17/2021.

ENFORCEMENT LOCATIONS:

- Canal - Speeding
- Cass – Speeding / stop signs
- Crissman - Speeding
- Custer – Speeding / stop sign
- Flickinger Elementary (Surrounding Area) – Speeding / stop signs
- Hahn – Speeding / sign
- Keding – Speeding / stop sign
- Ruby – Speeding
- Utica – Speeding
- Vanker – Speeding / stop sign

STATISTICS: The following statistics are encompassed of the entire detail and further analysis will be added in the summary. Addendums will include individual street statistics.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ENFORCEMENTS	139
TOTAL DURATION OF ENFORCEMENTS	2,546 minutes / 42 hours 26 minutes
FASTEST DOCUMENTED SPEED	48 MPH / 25 MPH Zone
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRAFFIC STOPS	49
TOTAL NUMBER OF CITATIONS ISSUED	36
WARNINGS ISSUED	13
MISDEMEANOR CITATIONS ¹	5
NUMBER OF STOPS THAT INVOLVED A CITY OF UTICA RESIDENT	14
PERCENTAGE OF STOPS INVOLVING CITY OF UTICA RESIDENT	28%

¹ Misdemeanor citations included in count for total number of citations issued.

SUMMARY: Speeding in the residential neighborhoods has been a persistent problem in the City of Utica. The Police Department through the years has attempted to address the issue through several enforcement options. The first measure was through the utilization of a traffic officer in addition to patrol officers who also conduct traffic enforcement. Traffic officers focus solely on safety and enforcement of the motor vehicle code on City streets and are generally exempt from responding to general police calls. At its highest point for personnel and coverage the Department employed two traffic positions. The two traffic positions were split into a day and night traffic position that covered 2/3 of a given day but focused on separate issues. The day-time traffic officer would primarily be looking for violations of the motor vehicle code and responding to accidents whereas the night traffic officer would add on the enforcement of impaired driving. The Department at one time possessed a traffic speed trailer that would be placed at several locations around the city. An officer would be tasked with setting up and removal of the trailer on a given day. This process was cumbersome and potentially placed the public at risk because it would remove the emergency response capabilities from the officer while they were deploying the trailer. Through attrition, budget constraints and staffing requirements the two traffic positions have been decreased to one officer. The radar trailer has been decommissioned as it had reached the end of its life cycle and a replacement trailer was not included in any budget request.

Current staffing at the Department employs one traffic officer along with patrol officers. The traffic officer works a split shift on a 4 (10-hour) weekly schedule. The shift design was created to maximize coverage for the highest probability of traffic accidents and to minimize overtime by overlapping shifts.

There is vast literature on the issue regarding speeding in residential areas along with possible research suggesting possible solutions. Speeding in residential areas causes the following five basic types of harms to residents (Scott, 2003)

- It makes citizens fear for children's safety
- It makes pedestrians and bicyclists fear for their safety
- It increases the risk of vehicle crashes
- It increases the seriousness of injuries to other drivers, passengers, pedestrians, and bicyclists struck by a vehicle
- It increases noise from engine acceleration and tire friction

Most citizens I spoke to who voiced concerns on their street cite the first two harms as their primary concern being the safety around where they live.

RESULTS: The current study encompassed 42 hours of details resulting in only 49 traffic stops which works out to 1 stop every 51 minutes. A total of 9 patrol officers and 1 traffic officer participated in the traffic study. The officers issued 36 citations and 13 verbal warnings and had 5 traffic related misdemeanor arrests. The two civil infraction violations that vehicles were stopped for was for speeding and disobeying stop signs. 30 of the 36 citations issued involved speeding in a 25 miles per hour zone. The highest recorded speed was 48 in a 25 mph zone with a median speed of 41.8 mph. Resident complaints were the

driving force to conducting this study as one of their primary concerns is safety within their households. City of Utica residents were responsible for 28% of the violations stopped by officers.

In looking at the timeframe of offenders I analyzed the data looking at two metrics. What percentage of stops occurred between 0000 hours and 1159 hours and 1200 hours till 2359 and what percentage occurred during the hours when the traffic officer could be working?

- 79% of stops occurred between 1200 and 2359
- 21% of stops occurred between 0000 and 1159 hours. More specifically only 1 of the stops occurred during midnight shift (2300-0700) and the earliest stop occurred at 930 hours.
- 91% of the stops occurred during the hours that the traffic officer would be working (0900-1900).

9 street locations were reported by citizens as areas of concerns. Out of those 9 areas Crissman was the only street that officers did not conduct a detail on. Crissman had been included in prior studies and has not been validated as a larger violation zone when compared to other areas. Crissman will be turned over to the traffic officer to include in his regular enforcement. Hahn, Utica Rd, Canal, Keding, and Cass yielded 87% of the traffic stops generated. Canal had the highest amount of traffic stops at 11 stops resulting in 22% of the overall total.

FUTURE ANALYSIS: In future studies it might be informative to include the following metrics

- Average speed of all vehicles
- Percentage of vehicles speeding
- Number of vehicle crashes per roadway
- Number and severity of any crash injuries
- Attempt to collect questions from speeders regarding: Why they were speeding? etc.
- Include Crissman to analyze for speed and stop sign

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS: Below is a list of possible solutions and courses of action.

DIRECTED PATROL: The results of this study are beneficial in narrowing down specific streets that need extra attention. While it does not invalidate the claims from residents on the other streets, it does outline where a larger occurrence of speeding exists. The study also validates the traffic officers scheduled times as having the highest potential to respond to traffic issues in the residential areas. The Traffic officer will be directed to focus on Utica Rd, Canal, Keding, Hahn, and Cass along with other areas in the City.

The amount of dedicated manpower hours illustrates that mandating patrol officers to focus on a narrow scope of residential streets may not be the most effective use of their time. Patrol officers are still encouraged to enforce traffic on these streets, but their resources are

best used for the City as a whole. Dedicating patrol hours limits the overall effectiveness of a patrol officers crime deterrence abilities and the services to other residents and businesses.

INCREASE MANPOWER: Depending on upcoming budget constraints

One possible recommendation would be to increase the traffic bureau and add an additional officer into traffic. This additional officer could be assigned as a night traffic officer who also focuses on impaired driving enforcement or a secondary day traffic officer who would work on offsetting days.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Social media has shown to be an easy, free way to allow residents to communicate their concerns back to the Department. The recommendation is to continue the cooperation with the Mayor and social media with regards to allowing an avenue for residents to voice and interact with their concerns.

TRAFFIC TRAILER: Dependent on upcoming budget constraints

Recommendation would be to explore a cost/ benefit analysis on the acquisition of either a radar trailer or a portable radar sign at a future date for the upcoming budget. Preliminary research into radar signs does state that, “speed display boards have been shown to reduce speeds and crashes and appear to be at least as effective as speed cameras in reducing speeds, and to do so more cost effectively” (Scott, 2003).

PAINTING STREETS: Dependent on recommendation of Council and DPW supervisor

One approach is to include paintings on roadways advising motorists of a change in speed (Canal from 35 to 25mph zone). These have been shown to be effective in giving motorists a secondary notification of speed changes. More research is needed into the effectiveness and where would be appropriate areas to mark the paint. One obstacle would be if residents would want additional signs/ markings in-front or within their city limits.

STOP SIGNS: Not recommended

National studies have shown that stop signs installed in the wrong places designed to control speeders have an adverse effect on traffic by creating more problems than their intended purpose. These studies found that drivers increase speeds between stops signs when unneeded signs are installed. The Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices clearly states that “stop signs should not be used for speed control”. National standards dictate when and where a stop sign should be installed. These standards include intersections where a combination of high speed, restricted view and serious crash records indicate a need for control by the stop sign.

Reference Page

Scott, M. S. (2003). Speeding in residential areas. *Problem Oriented Guides for Police Problem Specific Guides Series, 3*.

Speeding in residential Areas 2nd ED.: Page 2: ASU Center for Problem-Oriented Policing. (n.d.). Retrieved March 05, 2021, from <https://popcenter.asu.edu/content/speeding-residential-areas-2nd-ed-page-2>