Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project
Tuesday, June 25, 2019
10:00am – 12:00pm
Legislative Office Building, Room 1B

Minutes

Present: William Dyson, Ken Barone, Andrew Clark, George Sinclair, Ana Maria Mitchell, Werner Oyanadel, Melvin Medina, Aaron Swanson, Cheryl Sharp, Tanya Hughes, Tamara Lanier, Chief L.J. Fusaro, Chief Neil Dryfe, Commissioner James Rovella, Rashad Glass, Amy Bepko

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

I.   Welcome

Chairman Dyson welcomed the advisory board and thanked them for attending.

II.   Approval of the March 21, 2019 meeting minutes

Andrew Clark made a motion to approve the May 23, 2019 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Chief Neil Dryfe and the minutes were approved.

III.   General Announcements

Ana Maria Mitchell, IMRP community outreach coordinator, announced that the public forum in New Haven on June 19th was a success. The forum took place at Gateway Community College and the community conversation was recorded by IMRP staff. Highlights from the forum will be made available to advisory board and members of the public. The community outreach team will be planning the next forum for early fall in the New London area.

Ken Barone informed members that the Policy Work Group plans to schedule its next meeting in the coming weeks. There were no other updates.

IV.   2017 Traffic Stop Data Findings and Analysis Report Presentation (4th Annual Report)

Ken Barone and James Fazzalaro made a formal presentation on the 2017 Traffic Stop Data Analysis and Findings report, which was released that morning.

They mentioned that some changes were made to the reporting structure this year including adding a seventh analytical tool that looks at the outcome of stops to see if drivers are treated differently when stopped for similar reasons. The second modification in this report is the incorporation of the follow-up reports in the publication of the annual analysis. This is the first-time follow-up reports were being published at the same time as the statewide analysis.

The report is composed of two components– part one serves as a screening tool, essentially highlighting areas where disparities between race and ethnicity are greatest during traffic stops throughout the state. Part one of the report provides guidance to researchers on where to focus their time and attention in terms of those departments identified with the most statistically significant disparities. Part two of the report focuses attention and resources on those specific departments that were identified.

Ken and Jim pointed out that since the start of this project in 2013, there are 70,000 fewer traffic stops being reported annually. This is largely attributed to a reduction in traffic stops reported by the Connecticut State Police. Ken pointed out that the State Police have also seen a large reduction in personnel during that same time period.

Ken provided a brief summary of the statewide analysis, which was Part I of the report. The Veil of Darkness method is considered the most statistically rigorous analytical tool used. The analysis did not indicate that stopped motorist were more likely to be minority in daylight, relative to darkness, and the lack of disparity statewide and the lower number of departments that were identified when using this methodology, is a promising sign. Researchers were cautiously optimistic that Connecticut is making progress but would like to see if this trend continues in future years.

The analysis also included a post-stop analysis which indicated that across all specification, we found strong evidence that minority motorists are treated differently than their non-Hispanic white counterparts. Even when controlling for the reason for the stop there was a significant difference in the outcome of the stops. Minority drivers are more likely to be searched as a result of registration or a license related violation than white drivers stopped for those same offenses, as well as more likely to be searched for seat belt and cell phone violations, and less likely to be searched across other stopped categories. Evidence suggests that the bar for searching a minority motorist is substantially lower than their non-Hispanic white counterparts.

The last component of the statewide analysis reviewed vehicle searches and hit rates. Police were less likely to be successful when searching a black or Hispanic motorist, than their white non-Hispanic counterpart. Approximately 29% of all white drivers searched were found with contraband, compared to only 19% for black and Hispanic drivers.

When data was analyzed by department there were only four municipal police departments and two state police troops identified for further analysis. Those departments included: Derby, Fairfield, Meriden, Wethersfield, Troop C and Troop K. Based on the results of previously published follow up analysis and our further understanding of traffic enforcement in both Meriden and Wethersfield, we determined that additional follow up analysis would not significantly add to the knowledge of factors that may have influenced the disparities already documented.

Ken and Jim presented summary findings for the two municipal police departments (Derby and Fairfield) and indicated that they were still working with State Police to better understand the factors influencing disparities in Troop C and Troop K. A summary of the findings is provided below.

Derby Police Department:

Derby traffic stop data clearly reflected the influence of the route 34 corridor, where we were able to determine that drivers were somewhat more diverse than the predominately white local driving age population. Route 34 had the highest level of traffic enforcement and it also had a relatively higher proportion of out of town minority drivers traversing through the roadway. Route 34 is also a major thoroughfare between New Haven and Newtown. 58% of all stops in Derby occurred on Route 34, with 21% involving Black driver, and 17% involving Hispanic drivers.

Over half of all equipment and administrative offenses were made on Route 34, where we had already indicated that there were a higher percentage of minority drivers stopped. When equipment related and administrative offenses occur with greater frequency in areas with higher minority drivers, than they do where the driving population might be majority white, there is a potential for racial disparities to appear in the data. The disparity identified in vehicle searches was largely related to the inventory search policy the department has and almost 70% of vehicle searches were the result of the inventory policy.

Fairfield Police Department:

Fairfield traffic stop data reflected the influence of Route 1 corridor, where researchers determined that the driving population is more diverse than other roadways in town. Route 1 also appears to have higher levels of enforcement, over 40% of all traffic stops were made on Route 1 and they had relatively higher proportions of non-resident minority drivers stopped. Over 95% of black and Hispanic drivers stopped in Fairfield, did not live in Fairfield which compares to 79% of white drivers stopped. The non-resident component of the stop demographic appears to have the greatest impact on Route 1, where 80% of all drivers did not live in Fairfield. Non-resident drivers were more likely stopped on Route 1 than any other roadway in town.

White drivers were significantly more likely to be stopped for speeding violations or safety related violations compared to black and Hispanic drivers who were significantly

more likely to be stopped for equipment or administrative related offenses. Half of all driver stopped in town were issued an infraction, 42% were issues a warning. Black and Hispanic drivers were more than four times as likely to receive a misdemeanor summons than their white counterpart.

V.   General Discussion

Following the presentation, advisory board members asked questions and a few additional topics were discussed. Questions about how license plate reader technology works, and the public's awareness of this technology was discussed at length. In addition, Tamara Lanier asked for clarification about how researchers identify towns and how we determine if the department truly has an issue. Jim stated that researchers take great care in the identification of an individual police department. We rely on a series of well-regarded analytical tools to determine if a statistical disparity is present in the data. Due to the safe guards built into the analysis, if a department is identified researchers are very confident that the racial or ethnic disparity exists.

There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.