

The Peoria Experience

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Traffic Enforcement and Crime: It Plays in Peoria



Acknowledgments

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration expresses appreciation to the following individuals and law enforcement agencies whose contributions made this project possible:

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Introduction

During the Vaudeville hey days, they tried new stage productions in Peoria to measure audience acceptance. If the show was a hit in Peoria, it was ready for Broadway, hence the birth of the phrase . . . “if it plays in Peoria, it will play anywhere.”

What’s playing in Peoria now? . . . traffic enforcement.

Over a three year period (1994 through 1996), Peoria experienced significant reductions in violent crimes, property crimes and traffic crashes. How did they do it? New leadership brought traffic enforcement back to the forefront as a valued way of doing business . . . and got results.

Traffic Enforcement Results 1994-1996

Traffic Citations Issued - Increased 24%
Officer Initiated Activity - Increased 28%
 Custodial Arrests - Increased 16%
 DUI Arrests - Increased 11%
 Traffic Crashes - Decreased 21%
Citizen Generated Calls - Decreased 6%
Part One Crime Index - Decreased 12%
 Violent Crime - Decreased 10%
 Property Crimes - Decreased 12%

About Peoria . . .

Peoria, Illinois, located on the banks of the Illinois River two and one-half hours south of Chicago and three hours north of St. Louis, Missouri, is the second largest Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in Illinois. It is home to 116,000 residents within the city limits and 339,172 within the MSA. Bradley University, Caterpillar Corporation, a municipal airport, three hospitals and three housing projects are also in Peoria.

Two Interstate Highways, I-74 and I-474, run through the heart of the city. War Memorial Drive (U.S. Route 150) and Illinois Route 88 are part of the 550 miles of roadway within the city limits.

About the Peoria Police Department . . .

Mission Statement

The men and women of the Police Department are dedicated to building a strong Peoria. Through the delivery of exemplary service with a focus on problem solving, we are committed to enhancing the quality of life in our neighborhoods by **“Building a Partnership”** with the community we serve.



Peoria Police Department has 301 total personnel, of which 231 are sworn and 70 are civilian. Peoria Police Department is a full service police agency which provides a full spectrum of services with emphasis on building partnerships and community-based problem solving. Peoria Police Department is similar to many police agencies of comparable size. Changes which led to the Peoria Police Department success happened after they appointed Arthur Kelly III as the Superintendent of Police on July 11, 1994.

Prior to the appointment of Superintendent Kelly, traffic enforcement was not emphasized as an important law enforcement tool. Responsive patrol strategies were the accepted strategy . . . wait until it happens, then we'll respond. Peoria Police Department was not the only agency to use a responsive strategy. Some agencies still use it today as their primary enforcement strategy.

Superintendent Kelly operates differently. Proactive traffic enforcement combined with community oriented policing and problem oriented policing has resulted in significant improvements of traffic and crime trends within Peoria.



Because the two strategies were used back-to-back within the same city, a unique opportunity to compare them emerged. Superintendent Kelly had a wealth of data to use (both prior to his appointment and after), but no one to effectively interpret or report on the statistical findings. Kelly re-energized the Office of Strategic Planning, hiring Ron Henson to manage the Office and provide statistical analysis of the data. To make the analysis meaningful and timely, the computers and software were upgraded and improved. The strategy, personnel and support changes set the stage for *The Peoria Experience*.

About how they accomplished it . . .

Changing the Paradigm

First, Superintendent Kelly re-emphasized traffic enforcement as a primary function and a tool for all Peoria Police Officers. Command officers and patrol officers alike were expected to do traffic enforcement. It was a new way of doing business with an old tool.

At the time Kelly took the helm, Peoria had been experiencing an upward trend in crime and motor vehicle crashes. Calls for service were frequent. How was an officer to find time to do traffic enforcement? . . .

Interagency Cooperation

The Peoria Police Department's motto is "Building A Partnership," yet it is more than a motto. It is the foundation for Peoria's success. The Peoria Police Department partnered with other agencies to conduct highly visible roadside safety checks. By working with sworn officers from the Illinois State Police, the Peoria County Sheriff's Office and the Illinois Public School District Number 150, the Peoria Police Department was able to have 40 officers assigned to each checkpoint.

According to Assistant Superintendent Michael Button, "Egos can't get bigger than intelligence - don't let egos override the mission. With tighter resources, we have to work smarter."



Changing Perceptions

Another important element of the Peoria checkpoints was to give officers an appreciation for the types of arrests that could result from traffic enforcement efforts and also to get command officers involved so as to lead by example. All agency heads were present at the safety checks, so officers involved could see the commitment the department had for the effort. After they conducted a few checkpoints, calls for service began to drop and officers had time for self initiated activity.

Community Relations and Involvement

Media campaigns, prior to and after the checkpoints, kept citizens informed about the objectives and results of the enforcement efforts. Media representatives frequently reported "live" from the checkpoint locations, providing a dramatic visual backdrop for the citizens of Peoria to see their Police Department at work.

Operational Considerations

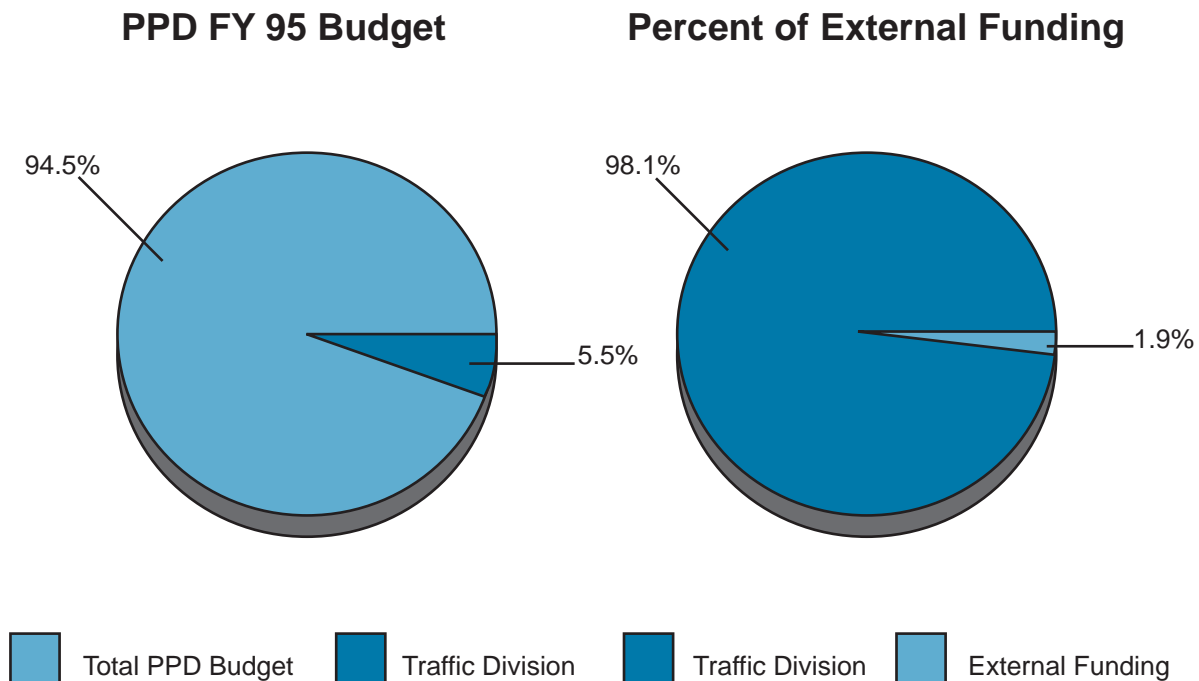
Officers from each district were asked for suggestions on when and where the checkpoints would be most effective. Community leaders expressed their concerns with problem areas. Statistical analysis of trends and locations were used to direct the efforts. The Peoria Police Department conducted checkpoints in every region of the city, not just in gang or poor socioeconomic areas. One unique aspect of the Peoria checkpoints was the ability to dismantle and move quickly. In a given night, the checkpoints would be in three pre-planned locations for one to two hours, which sent a clear message to would-be criminals . . . Peoria Police Department does provide “drive-up” service.

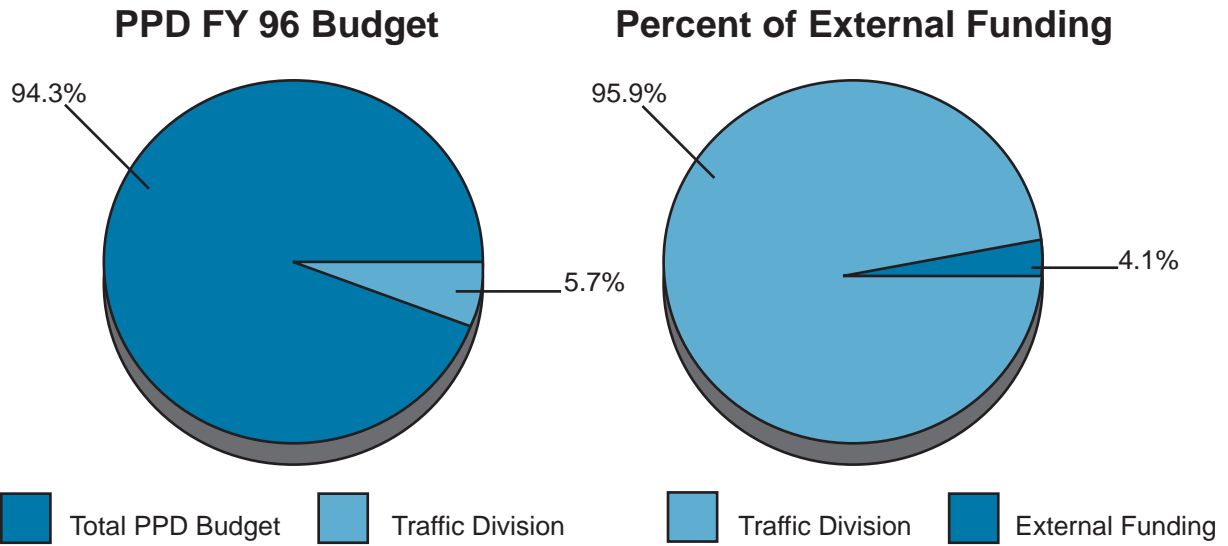
Tactical considerations were consistent with any checkpoint operation. Planning, planning, and planning again was the credo for success.

Additionally, after each checkpoint, a multi-agency critique of the operation provided valuable insight, improving subsequent checkpoints.

Funding

As illustrated in the following graphics, funding for the traffic efforts in Peoria is predominately internal. This aspect of the Peoria experience is significant, because the efforts are self-sustaining and not dependent on external funding.

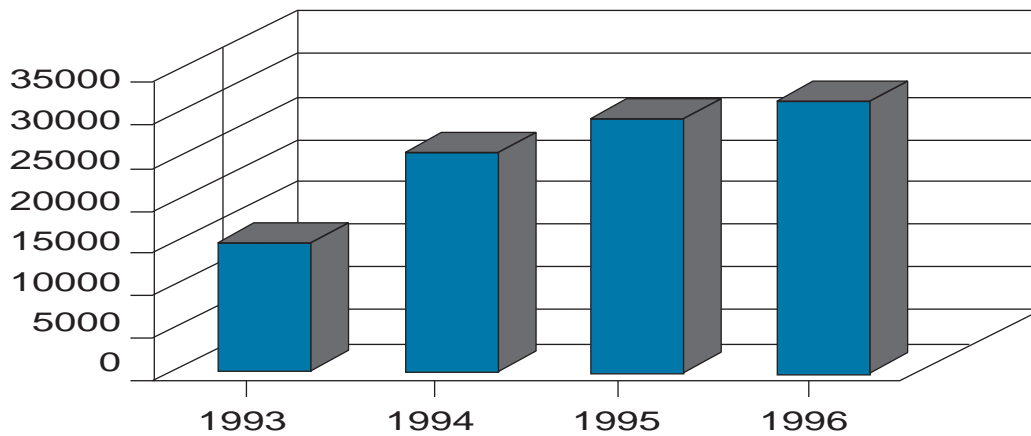




About the Results . . .

Once the community and officers realized traffic enforcement was there to stay, a very definite trend emerged . . . increased traffic enforcement led to decreased crashes and crime.

Traffic Citations

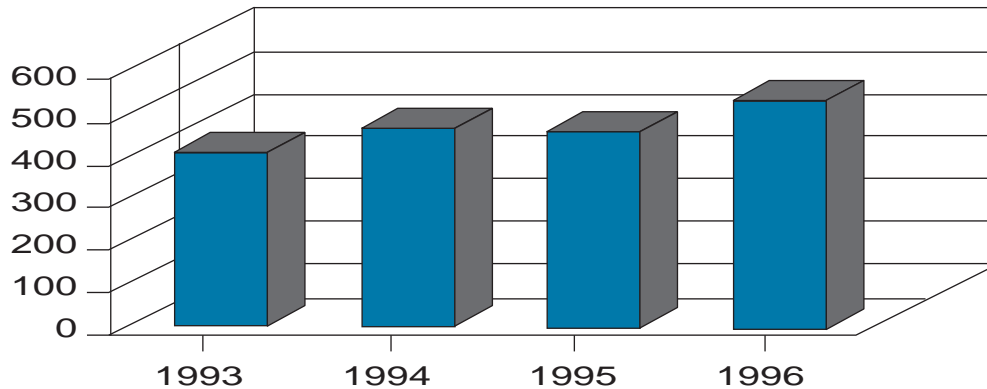


1993	1994	1995	1996
15507	26085	30186	32280

Though some debate may exist on the impact that traffic enforcement has on crime, it is generally accepted that an officer engaged in visible enforcement activities affects criminal behavior. One measure of an officer's visible enforcement efforts are the number of citations the officer writes. Using the number of traffic citations written and comparing them to traffic and criminal trends is one way to show the traffic/crime relationship. In Peoria, the traffic enforcement effort was well under way. All that remained was to examine the traffic and crime effects.

Detection and apprehension of impaired drivers were expected outcomes of increased traffic enforcement.

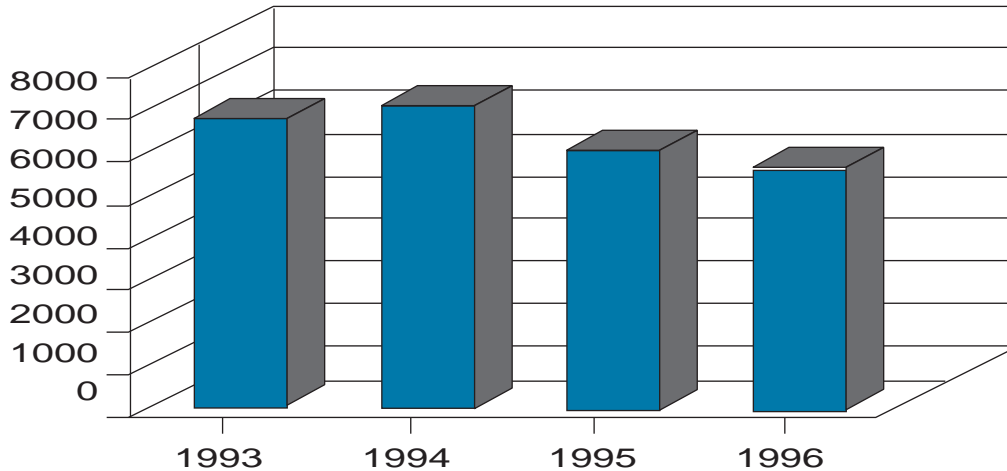
DUI Arrests



1993	1994	1995	1996
394	462	461	515

A desired result of a vigorous traffic law enforcement program is a reduced number of traffic crashes. Traffic crashes in Peoria decreased by 21 percent between the years 1993 to 1996.

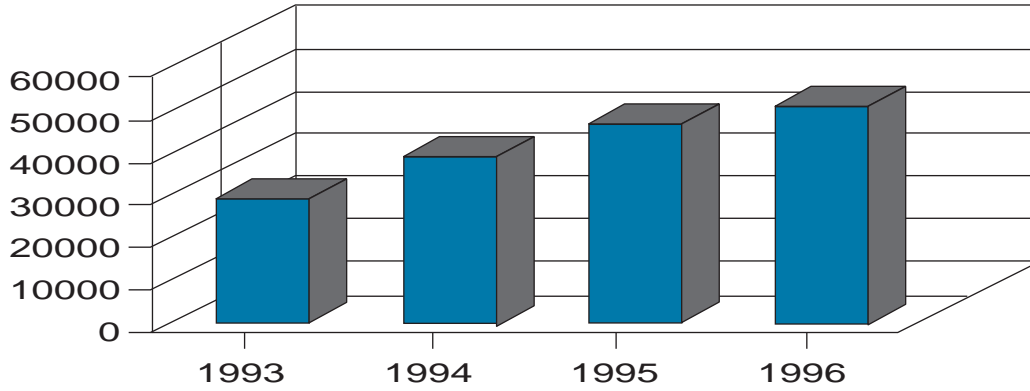
Crashes Investigated



1993	1994	1995	1996
6807	7224	6348	5730

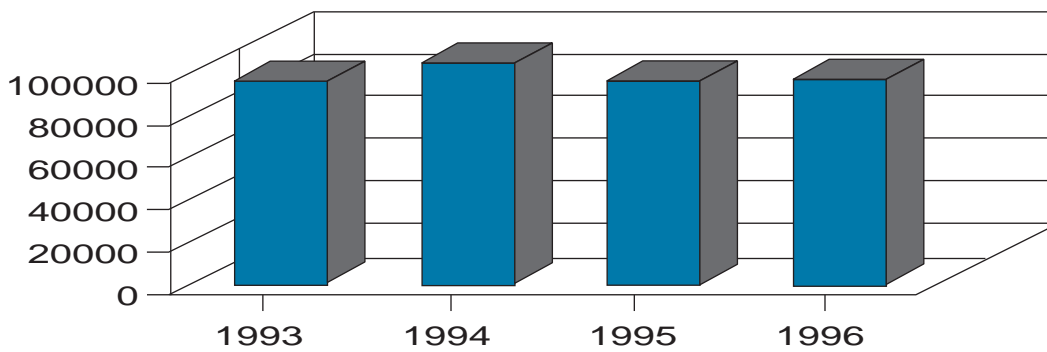
One of the most significant paradigms the Peoria officers had to rethink was the difference between reactive and proactive roles. In many law enforcement agencies like Peoria, officers were very busy going from one call for service to another. Being proactive would mean finding time to initiate calls and activity. The task seems monumental. As mentioned earlier, they accomplished part of the shift in paradigms through interagency cooperation. Officers were surprised with the results of proactive enforcement. There was greater activity and effectiveness with this approach, and they were more visible in the community. The shifts in calls for service are illustrated in the following graphics.

Officer Initiated Calls for Service



1993	1994	1995	1996
.....			
27612	45413	51615	58140

Dispatched Calls for Service



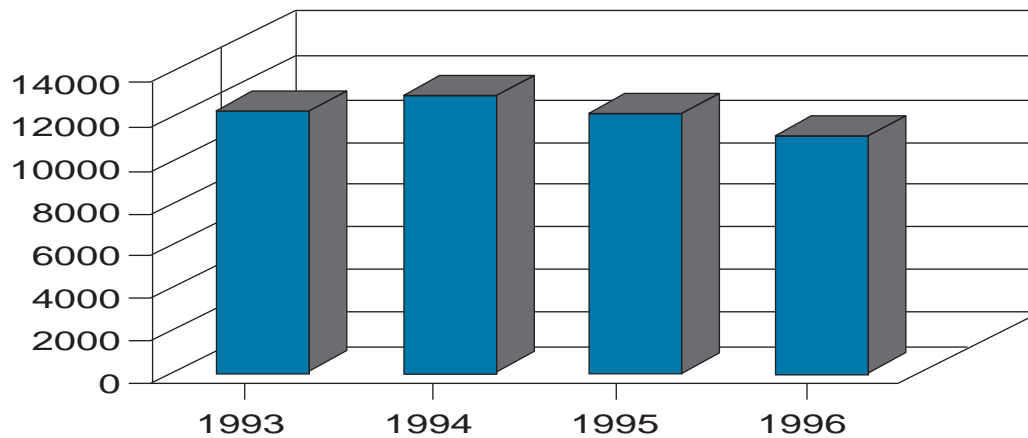
1993	1994	1995	1996
.....			
92328	97481	90658	92073

As traffic law enforcement increased, criminal arrests also increased slightly, leveled off and then began a slow decrease. Officers began to "look beyond the traffic ticket."

At precisely the same time Superintendent Kelly took office, traffic enforcement increased, and being proactive was the new philosophy. The result . . . crime in Peoria decreased for the first time in a decade.

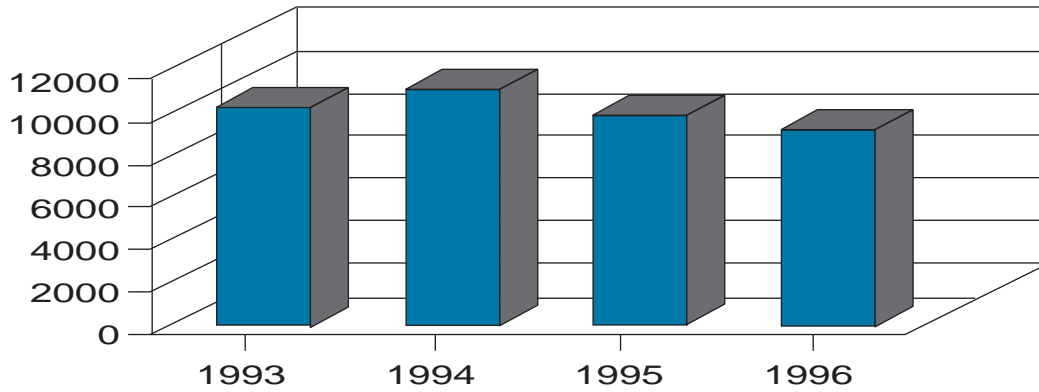
Custodial arrests for crimes and serious traffic offenses have increased over the last four years and the percentage of arrests as a direct result of vehicle stops is significant as shown in this graphic.

Crime Index



1993	1994	1995	1996
12540	13097	12301	11578

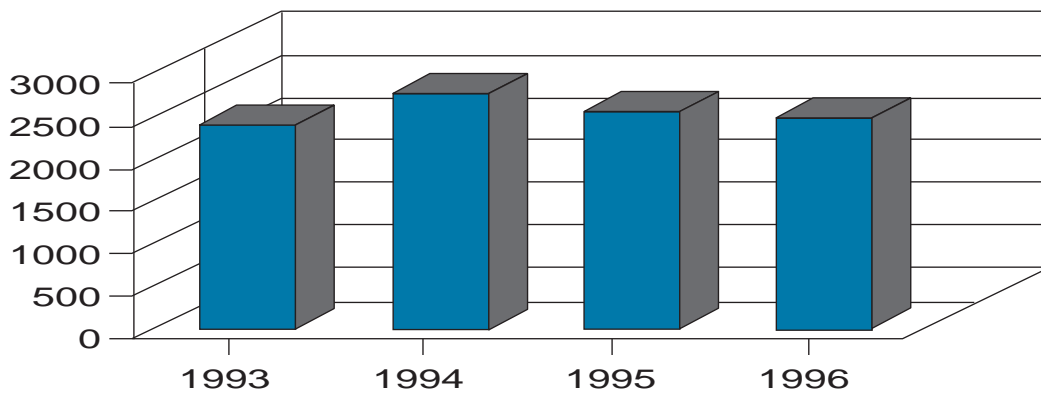
Property Crime



1993	1994	1995	1996

10133	10395	9768	9152

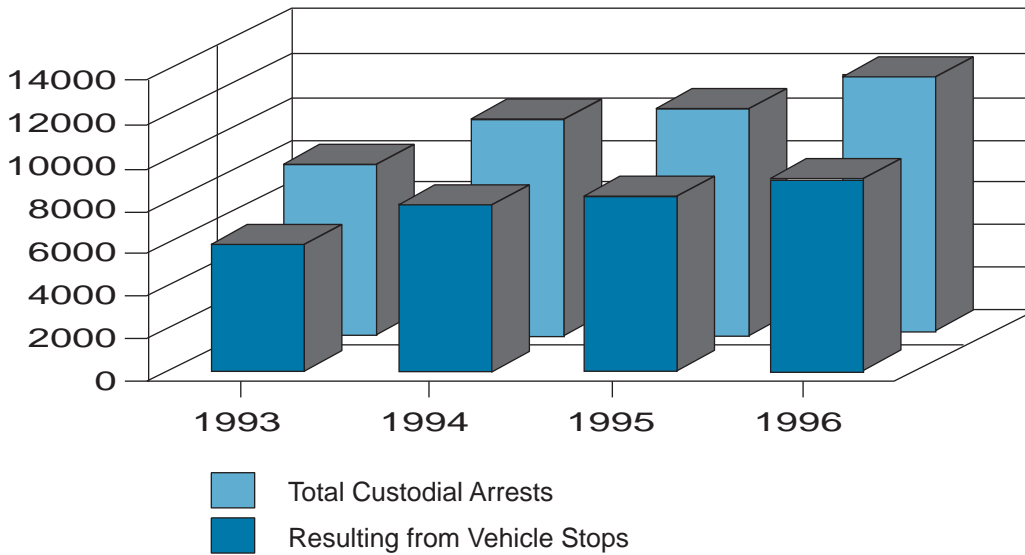
Violent Crime



1993	1994	1995	1996

2401	2702	2533	2426

Vehicle Related Arrests



1993	1994	1995	1996
.....			
72%	77%	76%	76%

- *1. **Crime Index:** The crime index is defined as the overall volume and rate of crime reported to law enforcement agencies.
- *2. **Property Crime:** A property crime is a crime against property where there is no force or threat of force against a victim. This includes arson, theft of money and theft of property.
- *3. **Violent Crime:** A violent crime is a forcible felony crime. These crimes involve force or the immediate threat of force. These crimes include homicide, sexual battery, manslaughter, etc.

About the future . . .

As a result of the proactive approach to traffic law enforcement, involving officers in the planning and implementation and asking for communities help in problem-solving, the Peoria Police Department has gained citizen support for its efforts. Through partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and the community, problems were identified. Once these law enforcement agencies and the community identified the problems, they formulated solutions and took action.

Who would have thought that the solution would include that “old tool”— traffic enforcement? To infer that this was a simple task would diminish the real dedication and effort that the Peoria Police Department has invested in its community. Meetings, planning, education, evaluation and critique were essential elements to the success Peoria has experienced.

The Peoria Police Department is a dynamic agency willing to “think outside of the box” and address problem issues. Essential components in Peoria’s success were planning, educating, meeting, evaluating and critiquing.

With such positive results, traffic law enforcement will continue to be the cornerstone of Peoria’s enforcement philosophy in the future. Traffic enforcement, partnered with support from a community, can achieve meaningful results. As said in the beginning, “if it plays in Peoria, it will play anywhere.”

References:

1. Henson, R. *1996 annual Statistical Analysis Report*, Peoria Police Department, February 1997.
2. Wilson, J. And Boland, B. *The Effect of the Police on Crime*, U.S. Department of Justice, November 1979.
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4. Sweeney, E. *Traffic Enforcement: New Uses for an Old Tool*, The Police Chief, July 1996.
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THE PEORIA EXPERIENCE

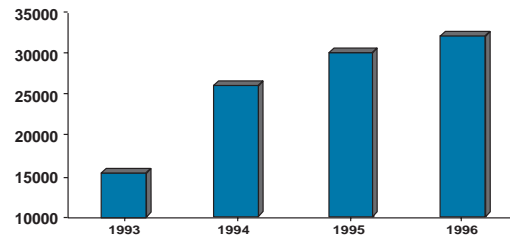
TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT REAPS BENEFITS

During the golden days of vaudeville, new stage productions were tried out in Peoria, Illinois to measure audience acceptance. If a show was a hit in Peoria, it was ready for Broadway . . . *if it plays in Peoria, it will play anywhere* became a measure of future success. In 1994, new leadership in the Peoria Police Department brought traffic enforcement to the forefront as a way of doing business and found impressive benefits in crime reduction as well.

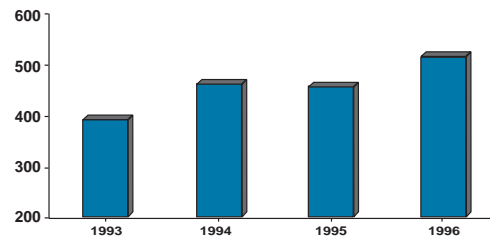
The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) sponsored a case study about the proactive traffic enforcement program in Peoria after their renewed emphasis on routine traffic enforcement and community policing. **The Peoria Experience: Traffic Enforcement and Crime: It Plays in Peoria** is available. This colorful booklet is the product of the combined resources of the Illinois State Police, the Peoria Police Department, the Peoria County Sheriff's Office, the Illinois Public Schools, and the Bradley University Police Department.

With the appointment of a new Superintendent of Police in 1994, Peoria shifted from a responsive patrol strategy to proactive traffic enforcement combined with community oriented policing . . . *"With tighter resources we have to work smarter."* Command officers and patrol officers alike were expected to do traffic enforcement. The Sheriff's Office, the State Police, the school district, and the university police pooled resources to conduct highly visible roadside safety checks.

The checkpoints received live media coverage, and were rotated to problem areas identified by statistical trends. In a given night, the checkpoints were in three locations for one to two hours.

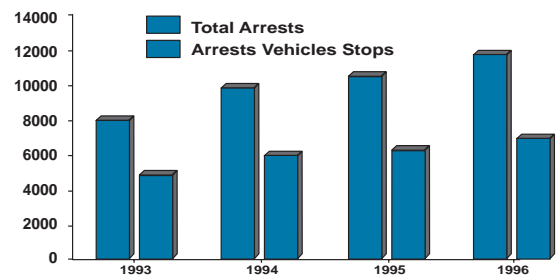


Traffic Citations Issued in Peoria, 1993-1996



DUI Arrests in Peoria, 1993-1996

By 1996, the number of traffic citations issued increased dramatically, the number of DUI arrests increased, and, most significantly, the percentage of arrest resulting from vehicle stops increased to 76 percent of the department's total arrests.



Vehicle Related Arrests in Peoria, 1993-1996

HOW TO ORDER

For a copy of ***The Peoria Experience***, write to the Media and Marketing Division, NHTSA, NTS-21, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington DC 20590, or send a fax to (202) 493-2062.