

# Urbana Police Department Memorandum

**To:** All Personnel

**From:** Chief Bryant Seraphin ---DRAFT---

**Re:** 2021 Traffic Stop Pilot Program Procedural Guidelines

**Date:** December 8, 2020

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## **Background**

The Urbana Police Department is undertaking a new approach to traffic enforcement in the upcoming calendar year. The motivation for this change is the desire to reduce the racial disparity that exists in traffic stops and to focus our traffic enforcement efforts on those areas with the highest frequency of traffic crashes. We believe that officer presence in certain geographic areas is driving the disparity ratio. Therefore, the department will designate traffic stop zones within which officers may conduct routine traffic stops. Traffic stops will be still be allowed outside of these zones under specific circumstances. The following guidelines have been designed to assist officers in understanding department expectations.

## **Guidelines**

1. Traffic stop zones – The crime analyst will use traffic crash data, combining number of crashes and emphasizing personal injury crashes, in order to identify various zones. Quarterly analysis will assist in determining whether a zone should remain designated or whether another area that has seen an increase in crashes needs to be included.
2. Maps – The zones will be shared via maps, both in paper format and on the internal web.
3. Traffic stops outside of the zones – Officers may make stops outside of designated zones as long as the stop is made for a *dangerous life-safety issue*. The expectation is that a citation would be issued if a stop were made under these circumstances. Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to:
  - Driving without lights after dark
  - Driving through a stop sign without slowing down
  - Rolling through a stop sign causing pedestrians to alter their behavior to avoid being struck
  - Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs
  - Driving through a red light

The totality of circumstances will determine whether a violation is a dangerous life-safety issue. The same violation may or may not be dangerous depending on the time of day, number of

people present, etc. As an example, a driver rolling through a stop sign near King School at 3 pm in the afternoon that causes two little girls to jump back onto the curb would be a dangerous life-safety issue thus necessitating a traffic stop. A driver rolling through a stop sign near King School at 3 am where there are no people nor traffic present would not necessitate a traffic stop.

4. “Beyond Zone” sticker checkbox – When officers make a traffic stop outside of the designated zones, they shall mark the “beyond zone” box on the traffic stop sticker and provide a short narrative (a few words) as to why the stop was made. Supervisors shall review all traffic stops made outside of the zones.

As with all officer behavior, progressive discipline will be used to address issues of traffic stops being conducted outside of the traffic stop zones for situations that do not fit the parameters contained within this memorandum.

5. Suspicious vehicle stops vs IDOT traffic stops – The IDOT study was designed to review traffic stops for violations of vehicle codes. For review and according to Alexander Weiss Consulting, who authored the statewide IDOT reports for several years, the following is provided:

*The IDOT definition for a traffic stop is, “A traffic stop occurs when an officer stops a motor vehicle for a violation of the Illinois vehicle code, or for a local traffic violation. The Traffic Stop Study data does not include traffic citations arising from traffic crashes, or in cases in which an officer stops a vehicle that has been linked to a specific crime, such as a vehicle wanted in connection with a robbery.”*

Officers who stop a car for a suspected crime shall ensure the correct, specific language is used on the police radio to denote the stop. In other words, if a Terry Stop is performed on a car that is leaving the scene of a shooting, that would be considered a suspicious vehicle stop and shall be called out as such, i.e. a “10-37.” If an error is made, officers shall correct the dispatch ticket to provide the most accurate record of the event.

6. Pretextual stops – Pretextual stops are legal in Illinois. Having said that, they shall only be made for furthering the investigation of felony crimes. Officers shall note all pretextual stops by using the motivation code of “targeted patrol.” Supervisors shall review all pretextual stops to ensure compliance with the above.

As an example, a suspect in an Aggravated Discharge of a Firearm case fled the scene of the shooting in a black Ford Taurus with only one functioning headlight. Two nights later, an officer observes a black Ford Taurus with only one headlight. The officer would be able to conduct a traffic stop on the car due to the vehicle code violation of only having one headlight, even though the officer wanted to identify the driver to further the shooting investigation.