

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **COMMUNITY POLICE COMMISSION'S CLARIFICATION OF DATA PRESENTATION**

(Seattle) – A May 14 presentation by SPD analyst Bob Scales at the Community Police Commission (CPC) has been widely discussed but poorly understood. The presentation, a Powerpoint showing raw data on traffic and pedestrian citations and misdemeanor charges filed in Seattle Municipal Court from 2005-2013, has been erroneously referred to as a “report,” and cited as concrete evidence of so-called de-policing. It was neither.

Both the Department generally and Mr. Scales particularly, and his supervisors, should be commended for working diligently with the CPC in implementing an important aspect of SPD's new Bias Free Policing Policy: a provision to reduce unnecessary racial and ethnic disparities in enforcement patterns. The May 14 presentation by Mr. Scales was a first step in the department's efforts to review data with the CPC to identify areas in which alternative approaches might reduce enforcement disparities without compromising public safety.

Copies of the presentation were not handed out or distributed precisely because it was not a report or a finished product -- it was the beginning of a conversation. Both Mr. Scales and the Commission chairs framed the presentation with numerous caveats, including that the data reflected the combined impact of officer practices and prosecutor filing practices, and that race data originated with the Municipal Court, not with SPD. Most important, Mr. Scales and the CPC chairs noted that certain patterns of decreased formal enforcement measures originated long before the inception of the Justice Department investigation regarding SPD or the consent decree adopted between DOJ and the City of Seattle.

In the view of the CPC, the data presented on May 14 do not present any clear evidence of so-called "de-policing." While some of the trends could reflect decreased productivity, that is not clear, and in fact, the lower levels of citation and arrest in some areas may likely reflect the Department moving in directions that DOJ, the CPC and many other community leaders have long called for: de-escalation of minor incidents, crisis intervention training for engaging mentally ill individuals, and community-based diversion of many quality of life-type offenses. Additionally, the CPC believes it is quite likely that some if not many of these developments are cause for commendation of the department.

Discussion in the media in the aftermath of the May 14 presentation has highlighted the need to develop new standards to measure officer productivity beyond citations and arrests. In an era of increasing emphasis on public health strategies to deal with issues of addiction, untreated mental illness and homelessness, officers who are working diligently and appropriately may not use formal enforcement tools as often as in years past.

The Department certainly should be commended for its cooperation and transparency in producing and discussing these data with the CPC, which has allowed that important discussion to get underway. We urge the media and members of the public to understand that without further analysis, no conclusions can be drawn from these data regarding the productivity of particular officers or squads or of the department as a whole.

To learn more about the Community Police Commission, please visit [www.seattle.gov/community-police-commission](http://www.seattle.gov/community-police-commission).

*The Community Police Commission (CPC) was established by the City of Seattle to provide community input on proposed Seattle Police Department (SPD) reforms. The CPC was mandated under a memorandum of understanding between the City and the U.S. Department of Justice which details work to be done over three years to ensure bias-free policing and address the past use of excessive force. The CPC's charge is represent a broad range of community perspectives and to reach out and engage communities directly, to get critical feedback, and to then recommend changes to SPD policies and practices.*

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