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STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON STATE PATROL

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April 26, 2002

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee
Police Executive Research Forum
1120 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 930
Washington DC 20036

Subject: Herman Goldstein Award

The Washington State Patrol is pleased to submit two (2) nominations to be considered for the Herman Goldstein Award. (See enclosed documentation.) Each project was based on sound methodology and the results of each are both accurate and attributable to their respective projects.

If you have any questions, please call Captain Brian Ursino at (360) 570-3135.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald W. Serpas", written over a horizontal line.

CHIEF RONALD W. SERPAS, Ph.D.

RWS:dc

Enclosures

cc: Captain Brian A. Ursino, Field Operations Bureau

INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

WASHINGTON STATE PATROL



TO: Lieutenant Gary Shand, Burlington

FROM: Sergeant Mark V. Brogan, Bellingham

SUBJECT: Herman Goldstein Award Nomination

DATE: February 11, 2002

FILE: Mis-Awa

I nominate Trooper Mark Dennis for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing. Trooper Dennis's outstanding commitment to Problem Oriented Policing is evident in his everyday work, but most prevalent in the reduction of fatality collisions on State Route 546 in Whatcom County, Washington.

1. SUMMARY OF SR 546 (EAST BADGER ROAD) PROJECT

A. Scanning

Trooper Dennis and Trooper Jim VanDiest recognized an increase in fatality collisions at the intersection of SR 546 and Depot Road in Whatcom County. Three fatalities in the same month of 2000 also raised the local community's awareness of the problem.

B. Analysis

State Route 546 is a rural roadway with good visibility in all directions. The roadway is straight, relatively flat, and surrounded by open farmland. Each county road that intersects with SR 546 is required to stop via a stop sign.

Using data obtained from the Washington State Patrol Collision Records Division (CRD) and statistical data obtained from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Trooper Dennis was able to identify a causal factor of increased fatality collisions at the intersection ~~16X~~ (Depot Road as a lack of visibility on the southwest side of the intersection.

Trooper Dennis also used local troopers as resources in the analysis. Troopers working in the area identified speeding and failing to stop as the primary enforcement concerns at or in the area of the intersection.

C. Response

Trooper Dennis coordinated stakeholders and assigned primary responsibilities to each:

- Local troopers were assigned the role of increased enforcement in the area.
- WSDOT contributed with improvement to roadway visibility.
- Whatcom County Road Department increased signage in the area.

Each stakeholder assumes responsibilities in short- and long-term goals.



Lieutenant Gary Shand

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D. Assessment

Collision statistics from 2000 to 2001 show a positive impact from all stakeholders' efforts. The most important measure of success of the project is zero fatalities in 2001.

2. DESCRIPTION

A. Scanning

Trooper Mark Dennis, with the assistance of Trooper Jim VanDiest and other Bellingham troopers, identified an increase in fatality collisions at the intersection of SR 546 and Depot Road. Local residents and motorists who traveled the state route expressed concerns to local media and area troopers.

In the course of the scanning the increased number of fatality collisions, Trooper Dennis established a preliminary definition of two problems:

Preliminary Problem 1: There is a combination stop sign/stop line on northbound Depot Road at SR 546. The stop line was too far south of the intersection and causes poor visibility of the traffic traveling east and west on SR 546. There is also brush and shrubbery located on the southwest corner of the intersection blocking the view of eastbound traffic on SR 546.

Preliminary Problem 2: Vehicles traveling north- and southbound on county roads that intersection with SR 546 are failing to stop completely or failing to yield the right of way to SR 546 traffic.

Trooper Dennis identified the stakeholders and the level of commitment required of each in order to successfully solve the problem. The stakeholders were identified as follows:

- Citizens and the motoring public Whatcom County
- Washington State Patrol Bellingham Detachments
- WSP Aggressive Driver Apprehension Team (ADAT)
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Whatcom County Road Department

Trooper Dennis acted as the coordinator of all stakeholders' efforts toward solving the identified preliminary problems.

B. Analysis

State Route 546 is an eight-mile highway located in the northeastern portion of Whatcom County. The roadway is part of the Washington State Highway system, maintained by WSDOT. State Route 546 is an east/west arterial and is intersected by several north/south county roads. The Whatcom County Road Department maintains the county roads that intersect with SR 546.

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As you travel from west to east, the first two miles of SR 546 are surrounded by flat open farmland with very good visibility in all directions. As you continue east, more homes, farms, buildings, and trees line and parallel the highway. Each county road that intersects with SR 546 has a stop sign.

In order to form a thorough analysis, Trooper Dennis surveyed and interviewed local troopers on their enforcement efforts, calls for service, and collisions investigated in the area. Troopers surveyed ranged in tenure from three to twenty-five years of commissioned time. Through the surveys, Trooper Dennis was able to determine many things. The most important fact determined was that in 2000, the fatalities on SR 546 made up over 15% of the fatality collisions in Whatcom County. With over two hundred miles of state routes and over thirty miles of interstate in Whatcom County, SR 546 was well above the proportionate number of fatalities for the number of miles of the highway.

Trooper Dennis continued his analysis by meeting with the WSDOT. In these meetings, WSDOT expressed serious concerns with the liability issues of poor visibility at the intersection. The Whatcom County Road Department expressed the same concerns toward liability as voiced by WSDOT.

The Patrol's AD AT expressed interest in the project in order to further the agency's efforts toward the reduction of injury collisions on interstates and state routes.

Local citizens and motorists expressed their concerns to troopers. The Bellingham Herald published two letters to the editor and one article.

Trooper Dennis used statistics gathered from the Washington State Patrol's Collision Records Division in order to determine a historical view of the problem. The following facts were paramount in Trooper Dennis identifying the problems facing SR 546:

- From 1996 to 2000, there were 103 collisions on SR 546.
- Approximately 67% of the collisions occurred in the first three miles of the eight-mile road.
- 50% of the collisions were caused by right-of-way and speed violations.
- DUI drivers caused only 8% of the collisions.
- 90% of the collisions occurred between the hours of 0800 and 0000 hours.
- There was one fatality collision in 1996 killing two people.
- There were no fatality collisions in 1997, 1998, or 1999.
- There were three fatalities in 2000.
- Two of the three fatalities in 2000 involved DUI and a combination of right-of-way/stop sign and speed violations.

Using the above facts and the input of stakeholders, Trooper Dennis was able to identify two problems facing SR 546:

When WSDOT marked the stop line on Depot Road, it was painted too far south of the actual intersection with SR 546. The brush and shrubbery located on the southwest corner of the intersection prevented clear visibility for persons traveling northbound on Depot Road.

Vehicles traveling north- and southbound on the county roads intersecting with SR 546, particularly between Mileposts 0 and 3, are speeding, failing to stop, and failing to grant right-of-way to traffic on SR 546.

C. Response

Trooper Dennis developed strategies to address the problems identified in the analysis. Stakeholder responsibilities were determined and goals were set.

Stakeholder Responsibilities

1. WSP Bellingham detachments will spend more time patrolling SR 546 individually and participate in emphasis patrols.
2. WSP AD AT will schedule one emphasis a month using local troopers, motor officers, and ADAT/unmarked vehicles.
3. WSDOT will move the stop line to the north, closer to the intersection, and remove brush and shrubbery on the southwest corner of the intersection.
4. Whatcom County Roads will place "Stop Sign Ahead" warning signs before each intersection with SR 546.
5. Local media will be invited to report the changes made and the progress in problem solving.

Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

1. Reduce collisions by increasing officer presence and using education-through-enforcement method of patrol.
2. Reduce citizens' fears and concerns with traveling SR 546.
3. Improve citizen/customer satisfaction with service provided by WSP.
4. Reduce liability for the WSP, WSDOT, and Whatcom County Road Department.

D. Assessment

Assessing the collision statistics from 2000 to 2001 has shown a positive impact on fatalities as well as collisions caused by DUI drivers.

Fatality collisions dropped from three in 2000 to zero in 2001.
Collisions caused by DUI drivers dropped from two in 2000 to zero in 2001.

The short- and long-term goals of the citizens and customer satisfaction continue to be assessed through the local troopers' contacts in the area. Improved customer satisfaction is evident in the reduction of letters to the Bellingham Herald regarding the SR 546 fatalities.

Currently, there is no pending litigation regarding collisions on SR 546. This is a strong indicator toward reducing liability for all involved stakeholders.

In evaluating the response plan, Trooper Dennis was able to recognize that the biggest impact was made by WSDOT increasing visibility. He came to this conclusion by assessing the increase in total collisions. Although total collisions increased from fifteen in 2000 to sixteen in 2001, injury collisions decreased. Even with increased individual and emphasis patrols on SR 546, stop sign and speed violations increased as causes of collisions.

Collision-Causing Violations 2000 2001

Stop sign	3	5
Speed	0	2
DUI	2	0

Collisions between Mileposts 0 and 3 also increased from 9 to 13. Assessing this increase suggests enforcement efforts should be more inclusive for the first three miles of SR 546 than just the area near Depot Road. Trooper Dennis was able to see this and suggest this area to troopers involved in the project.

The biggest impact of the project is the reduction of fatality collisions to zero. Many ideas and goals were proposed throughout this project, but the creation of a highway environment that reduces the loss of human life is the best outcome for any policy agency.

3. REFERENCE LIST

Trooper Dennis Used collision and enforcement effort statistics from our internal QMF computer system. These figures assisted in establishing baseline data and assisted in monitoring the progress of the project. No external academic resources were used for the project.

4. AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

1. The project was initiated at the local trooper level with further input from the local sergeant.
2. Trooper Dennis is the only officer in this geographic area with specialized training in POPS. However, all department personnel have had introductory POPS training and are familiar with the SARA problem-solving model.
3. Troopers are expected to use the SARA model when addressing problems and are evaluated **semi-annually** on this practice as part of their individual Job Performance Appraisals.
4. The line trooper used the POPS trooper and his resources as a guideline. The POPS trooper primarily assisted with statistical data and the paperwork process.
5. The primary issue/problem with our model was in the reporting process. There were some areas of redundancy in reporting, however, the format was reduced fifty percent and is now more user-friendly.
6. There were no additional budgetary resources committed to this project. As to personnel commitments, local troopers were encouraged to work in this targeted area as time allowed. We also asked that our motorcycle unit and AD AT units focus some of their time in this area as well. These two specialized units' primary function is to address problem areas. Thus, no additional resources were used.
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CONCLUSION

Trooper Dennis is a twelve-year veteran of the Washington State Patrol. He is also one of the agency's original POPS troopers.

Trooper Mark Dennis's tireless commitment to this outcome makes him an outstanding candidate for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem Oriented Policing.

MVB:lc