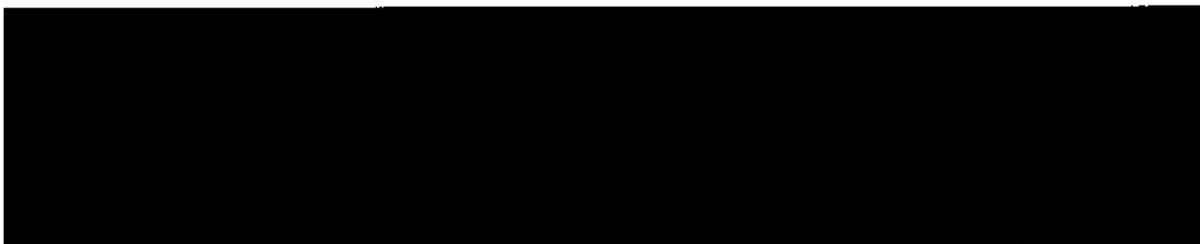


**2003
Herman Goldstein
Award Submission**

**Fontana Serious Traffic
Offender Program
F-STOP**



FONTANA POLICE DEPARTMENT



Fontana Police Department

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Frank J. Scialdone
Chief of Police

May 2, 2003

PERF: Attention Herman Goldstein Award
1120 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 930
Washington, DC 20036

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Chief of Police for the Fontana Police Department, I proudly present to you the Fontana Serious Traffic Offender Program (F-STOP) and submit it for consideration for the Herman Goldstein Award for 2003. The outcomes of the program were far superior to anything our organization had hoped for when the program was conceived and ultimately the City of Fontana has become a far safer place to travel through than it otherwise would have been were it not for this program.

In the late 1990's leading into the early 2000's we became aware of a very serious traffic issue that was looming on the horizon. The question we asked ourselves was, *with the population explosion we were experiencing combined with the massive freeway and roadway construction projects that were ongoing, how could we prevent a significant increase in our fatal and injury traffic collisions?* Members of our Traffic Unit secured funding, developed the F-STOP program, and implemented it in such a way that not only prevented an increase in fatal and injury collisions, but dramatically reduced that number while our population grew by 24%.

Fontana Police Officers consistently and routinely engage in problem solving and do great police work. We believed this was just another example of that. More importantly, based on the research we had conducted prior to implementation, and the assessment phase following the program, we believe we are able to show a direct correlation between the removal of unlicensed and suspended drivers from the roadway and a reduction in fatal and injury traffic collisions. One only needs to look at the remarkable outcome numbers in the attached submission to see that there is really no other explanation for such sharp reductions.

"Service with Integrity"

I would like to thank PERF and the Herman Goldstein Award panel for the opportunity to showcase this program. The Fontana Police Department and the community it serves are both very proud of what it has been able to accomplish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank J. Scialdone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "F" at the beginning.

Frank J. Scialdone
Chief of Police

FJS:ash

SUMMARY

Fontana Serious Traffic Offender Program

(F-STOP)

1). SCANNING

- Fontana was experiencing explosive residential, commercial, and industrial growth along with associated population growth in the late 1990's and it continues today. We are consistently ranked as one of California's top ten fastest growing cities.
- > Numerous major roadway construction projects including construction of a new freeway through the north end of town and a demolition and construction project of a major freeway overpass in our largest business district.
- > Traffic issues are the greatest concerns of the members of our community.
- Traditional methods of enforcement were not very effective in reducing traffic collisions.
- Extremely large number of unlicensed and suspended drivers operating in our city - a dangerous and collision prone group of drivers.
- One of the smallest, understaffed traffic units in the region combined with the aforementioned issues equaled a looming traffic safety crisis of significant proportions.
- With all of this growth, a very small traffic unit, and an incredibly large number of unlicensed and suspended drivers, how would we prevent a major increase in **traffic** collisions in Fontana?

2). ANALYSIS

- Demographic pattern in Fontana: Very young, low income, large undocumented immigrant population. This pattern resulted in a very high number of unlicensed and suspended drivers operating in our city.
- Research proves that the unlicensed and suspended drivers are one of the most dangerous and collision prone groups on our roadways.
- Fresno study showed that targeting this group could have a significant impact on reducing traffic collisions.
- The City of Fontana lacked the financial resources to develop and implement a broad and effective program to combat this problem.

3). RESPONSE

- ✓ Secured \$434,000 in grant funding.
- ✓ Hired personnel and purchased material and equipment to develop program (F-STOP) that would target unlicensed and suspended drivers.
- ✓ Program included strict and aggressive enforcement, which included a department-wide zero tolerance philosophy, checkpoints, sting operations, and specialized officers assigned to the problem. This was coupled with a far-reaching education and public relations campaign.
- ✓ Program included close cooperation and support of many facets of the police department and business community.

4). ASSESSMENT

- > Massive increases in the numbers of citations issued to and vehicles impounded from unlicensed and suspended drivers.
- > During the two year period of the program, while undergoing explosive development and population growth we achieved the following outcomes:
 - ❖ Overall fatal and injury collisions reduced by 21%. Per capita decrease was 38%.
 - ❖ Nighttime collisions were reduced by 6%. Per capita decrease was 34%
 - ❖ Speed related collisions were reduced by 7%. Per capita decrease was 25%.
 - ❖ Hit and run fatal and injury collisions were reduced by 31%. Per capita decrease was 52%.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Scanning

Throughout the 1990s, the City of Fontana saw tremendous growth. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of the City increased 46%. We were consistently ranked as one of the top ten fastest growing cities in the State of California. Along with this growth rate came significant problems. Major construction programs were on-going throughout the city, including a new freeway interchange in the center of the city's business district and a new freeway being constructed through the north end of the city. Traffic congestion and traffic collisions related to that congestion and population explosion were expected to increase dramatically.

Traffic related problems were consistently identified by citizens attending community meetings as the number one issue in our city. Our City council had also identified traffic related problems as a major issued that needed to be addressed by city staff. As our crime rate continued to drop, traffic problems became a progressively more critical issue in our city.

Police staff felt that one way of improving traffic flow in the city would be to reduce the number of traffic collisions. The city had a small yet aggressive traffic enforcement program. All patrol officers were encouraged to write traffic citations. By the late 1990's, the police department was issuing over 20,000 citations for traffic violations each year.

When we started looking for ways to reduce our traffic collision rate we first attempted to look at targeting locations where collisions were occurring or specific violations that were causing most of our collisions. We were unable to see any patterns of

either violations or locations that could be targeted. The primary collision factor in our collisions varied and the worst location for collisions was an intersection that had only eight collisions in the last year.

One thing we did notice was the serious issue of the large number of unlicensed drivers operating in our city. In April of 1998 the Fontana Police Department conducted its first Driver's License Checkpoint and by September of 1998 we had conducted three. During these checkpoints, which lasted 5 hours each, we towed 154 vehicles (over 10 an hour) for license violations. In addition to these checkpoints, a review of statistics showed that the Fontana Police Department averaged 5,682 misdemeanor arrests per year during calendar years 1996, 97, and 98. Of those misdemeanor arrests, an average of 2,077 arrests per year were for driving on a suspended license or driving with no license. This represents a staggering 37% of all misdemeanor arrests. Adding to this problem, Fontana has a large population of undocumented immigrants, many of whom are found to be driving regularly without a driver's license.

The challenge facing the Fontana Police Department was to find a method by which we could reduce traffic collisions in Fontana during a population and development explosion while remaining fiscally prudent as an organization. We believed that if we could find a way to begin targeting unlicensed *violators*, rather than our standard practice of targeting traffic *violations* in general, we could make a significant impact on traffic safety in our community. The ultimate goal of our organization was to combine an aggressive and proactive traffic enforcement component with a broad yet effective public relations and education campaign in order to make our streets safer.

This problem was selected from among other problems the department faced because we believed it was the most pressing issue related to the safety of *all* of our citizens. While violent crimes affect relatively few people throughout our city, a looming traffic safety crisis would affect the actual physical safety of our entire community. We felt that we owed it to our growing community to get ahead of this problem and cut it off so that it would not get beyond our control. Organizationally, we were engaged in basic risk management. We were making a sound prediction based on residential, commercial, and industrial development along with massive roadway and freeway construction projects throughout the city. We viewed these factors in the context of our community's demographic make-up (young, lower income, large undocumented population) and our understaffed traffic unit. When all of these factors were looked at together, our prediction was that the current method of enforcement would result in continuing increases in fatal and injury collisions of various types over the course of the next several years.

B. Analysis

Research indicated that drivers with convictions for driving while intoxicated or who have received a significant number of citations are identified as "high-risk" and typically have their licenses suspended or revoked for varying amounts of time. A California DMV study released in 1998 showed that at any given time there are 2 million unlicensed and suspended drivers throughout the state. About 75% of these drivers drive without regard to their license status and this group causes four times as many fatal accidents as the average driver (DMV 97/98). The same study showed that the 30 day impound law passed in 1995 that allowed for the impoundment of vehicles for up to 30 days if a driver

was suspended or unlicensed had reduced crashes involving this offender group by 38%. It had also reduced subsequent traffic convictions by these same offenders by 22%. We were able to find several studies from around the country that demonstrated that the use of vehicle-based sanctions (impounding the offender's vehicle) had a much greater impact on the offender than citations alone.

In 1996 the City of Fresno received a two-year grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety. Fresno assigned five full time officers to target subjects driving with suspended licenses or who were unlicensed. Those officers were also required to present educational programs directed at unlicensed drivers and serve arrest warrants on subjects wanted for license violations. They had one deputy district attorney hired and assigned to file cases and vertically prosecute offenders. Fresno Police Department reported that over the two years of the grant they saw a 54% increase in the number of vehicles impounded for license violations over the base year of 1995. During the first year of the grant, fatal and injury collisions were reduced by 30%. During the second year there was an increase in fatal and injury accidents of 12%. While there was a slight increase in the second year, a significant overall reduction in the number of injury and fatal collisions over the two-year period did occur (Fresno PD, 1999).

After Fresno started their program a 1997 California Department of Motor Vehicles study evaluating the effectiveness of California's thirty day impound law found that a weakness in the law was the difficulty of detecting violators. Since subjects who were unlicensed but not violating any other law could not be stopped, the deterrent effect of the law was found to be diminished. That study speculated that large-scale use of driver's license checkpoints might help solve that problem. There was no mention about

the possibility of courthouse sting operations in his report but it would appear that they are an example of another type of program that would address that problem.

We believed that we could build on the success of the Fresno program by concentrating our resources on what appeared to be its most effective parts and incorporating the suggestions made in the 1997 DMV study. Fresno was more effective during the first year of the program when they concentrated on citing violators and impounding their vehicles than during the second year when they spent more time serving arrests warrants on previous violators. This was consistent with our research that showed that impounding an offender's vehicle was a more effective deterrent than subsequent prosecution. By including the use of license checkpoints and courthouse stings operations, which Fresno had not included in their program, we would be adding to the deterrent impact of the program as suggested in the DMV study.

Prior to implementation of the F-STOP program, Fontana PD responded to traffic collisions and problems of traffic safety in the traditional way. We would attempt to identify "high collision" locations and the associated primary collision factors that appeared to be responsible for those collisions. We would send traffic officers to those locations and strictly enforce traffic laws in that location, paying particular attention to the specific collision factor that seemed to be involved in the majority of collisions. We would also pay close attention to traffic related complaints that came in to the police department from members of the community and watch carefully for any patterns that might emerge from these complaints. Our traffic officers were and are one of the best sources of information on what is occurring in the city as it relates to traffic safety.

The result of this traditional type of enforcement is that it is primarily reactive. This was a very common, yet somewhat ineffective, form of traffic enforcement for most police departments in the 1980's and 1990's. Targeting unlicensed and suspended drivers and impounding their vehicles, or the instrument of their crimes, as a *primary* means of traffic enforcement and collision reduction strategy represented a sea change in thinking for our organization.

The studies that we reviewed along with a review of our own circumstances and statistics revealed that the City of Fontana had a significantly high number of unlicensed and suspended drivers operating in our city. One example of the depth of this problem prior to F-STOP being implemented is to compare statistics in the City of Fontana to similar statistics of our neighboring city, Rancho Cucamonga. During calendar years 1996, 1997, and 1998 Fontana towed nearly as many vehicles *for drivers being unlicensed or suspended* (average of 2,202 per year) as Rancho Cucamonga did for ALL violations (average of 2,290 per year). At the time this occurred, Rancho Cucamonga had a traffic unit nearly twice as large as Fontana's and there were approximately 15,000 more residents in Rancho Cucamonga than in Fontana. Fontana averaged 4,465 total impounds per year compared to Rancho Cucamonga's 2,290 impounds. There are a number of factors that have caused this to occur. We have a very young population. The median age of a Fontana resident at the time the analysis was taking place was 26 years old (A.O.B. 98/99). This compared to a statewide median age of 33 (US Census, 2000). We have a large number of undocumented immigrants that live in and travel through our city. The sheer nature of their undocumented status tends to cause this group to avoid

applying for government identification or driving privileges. For many citizens and non-citizens living in our community, English is a second language.

While the median income is beginning to climb in Fontana, the population can still be described as primarily "blue collar" and oriented towards service industries. According to the City of Fontana Operating Budget, the median income in Fontana during the analysis phase of this program was \$43,600 and per capita income was \$14,230 (A.O.B. 98/99). This compares to the statewide median income of \$47,493 and statewide per capita income of \$22,711 (US Census 2000). While none of these factors in and of itself were responsible for this large number of unlicensed drivers operating in our city, the combination of all of them seems to have caused Fontana to see more of these violators than many other surrounding cities.

C. Response

All of our research indicated that targeting our high-risk drivers (those that were unlicensed or had a suspended license) and impounding their vehicles would be an effective way to reduce traffic collisions. We were also aware that impounding a large number of cars could be a public relations problem. We had talked to several cities that had reduced their emphasis on impounding vehicle due to public pressure. Based on our analysis however, we believed we could avoid that problem by adding an aggressive public relations / education component to our program.

In order to start our program we applied for grant funding through the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). We submitted the facts of our traffic safety problem to the funding source and made a pitch for a large amount of money in order to support a

very ambitious program. Fortunately for us, the Office of Traffic Safety clearly saw the serious nature of our problem and awarded us over \$434,000 over two years to combat it. Our program had two major components with several strategies included in each one:

1). **Enforcement:**

As part of the "F-STOP" program we decided to concentrate on traffic violators rather than strictly traffic violations. We felt, based on research, that we would have the greatest impact on traffic collisions by targeting these high-risk drivers and removing them from our roadways. We did this by developing the "F-STOP" motto, "**No License=No Vehicle, No Exceptions!**" The following activities were undertaken in order to give true meaning to that motto:

Checkpoints- We conducted bi-monthly driver's license checkpoints. During the driver's license checkpoints we set up a roadblock for traffic and randomly checked driver's to determine whether or not they had a valid drivers license. One of the strengths of our checkpoints is our use of Citizen Volunteers to assist in the operation. As much as half of all of the personnel working the checkpoints were citizen volunteers. One of our checkpoints was conducted in conjunction with another local agency. We focused our efforts on one side of the roadway and they focused theirs on traffic traveling the opposite direction on the other side of the roadway. With the same number of officers working, we were able to impound over twice as many vehicles as did that other agency. We were able to do this because of the assistance of our Citizen Volunteers, who while not able to actually write tickets or impound vehicles, assisted by counting cars, making

sure cars were parked in the proper spaces, handling traffic control, running the command post and filling out paperwork.

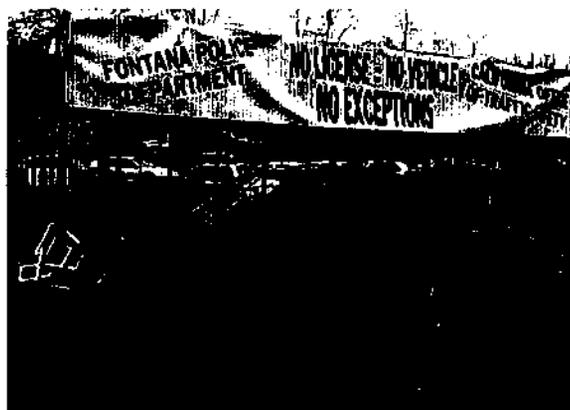
Court House Sting Operations- During a courthouse sting operation, a plain-clothes officer sits in the courtroom during traffic court. When subjects come into court and plead guilty to driving without a license or a suspended license, the officer gives their description to officers outside the courtroom. They then stop that person if they drive away from court in a vehicle. While we do not generally catch as many violators on these operations as we do in other types of operations, they target the most serious offenders, those who have multiple counts of driving without a license.

Zero Tolerance- Using the funds from the California Office of Traffic Safety Grant, we were able to assign two full time motor officers whose primary duties were to stop unlicensed drivers and impound vehicles. They also attended patrol briefings and trained all officers on impound laws and laws related to unlicensed and suspended drivers. The *zero-tolerance* philosophy was reinforced with all officers in the department during this training.

2). **Public and Community Involvement** - One thing that sets Fontana's "F-STOP" program apart from other programs is our partnership with community members, businesses, and organizations. The following are examples of what the community has done to assist in making "F-STOP" an effective program:

- Volunteers supplied thousands of hours assisting us on enforcement related programs.

- Community Volunteers have participated in, and in many cases conducted, presentations on the "F-STOP" program at community events around the city.
- The **"IN-CAR-CERATOR"** used to publicize the "F-STOP" program was built and maintained by the department's Explorer Scouts.



F-STOP "IN-CAR-CERATOR"

- Numerous community businesses have participated by donating free food and turkeys for good drivers.

D. Assessment

When the grant was originally submitted to OTS in 1999, the last full year of traffic collision data that we had was calendar year 1998. The F-STOP program actually was staffed and started in September of 2000 and it ended in September of 2002. For statistical purposes, we compared calendar year 1998 with the two consecutive 12-month periods after the grant officers actually started to work the grant program. The first 12-month period was September 2000 through August 2001. The second was September 2001 through August 2002.

By any standard, the F-STOP program has been an overwhelming success. Using a combination of strategies which included checkpoint and courthouse sting operations, a

massive public relations and education campaign, along with training our officers on the appropriate laws and taking a department-wide zero tolerance approach towards unlicensed and suspended drivers, we accomplished the following:

- During the first year of the program we increased 30 day impounds for license violations from the 1998 total of 1,697 to 3,390. This represents a 100% increase.
- During the second year of the program, impounds for license violations were down slightly to 2,959 however this still represented an 85% increase over **1998**.
- During the first year of the program we increased the number of citations written to unlicensed / suspended drivers to 3,660 from 2,000 in 1998, an 83% increase.
- During the second year of the program we increased the number of citations written to unlicensed / suspended drivers to 4,283 from 2,000 in 1998, a **114%** increase.
- Over the two-year program period Fontana impounded a total of **10,996** vehicles.

Of even greater significance than enforcement statistics were the outcomes related to traffic collisions in the city of Fontana. When compared with the 1998 data, fatal and injury traffic collisions were down significantly in all categories:

- > Overall fatal and injury collisions dropped from 602 to 476 by the end of the program - a 21% decrease.
- > Nighttime collisions were down from 248 to 235 by end of program - a 6% decrease.
- > Speed related collisions were down from 180 to 168 by end of program - a 7% decrease.

- > Hit and run fatal and injury collisions were down from 52 to 36 by end of program - a 31% decrease.

* Statistics taken from Fontana Police Department Final Grant Report, 2002

These reductions, while significant standing on their own, are even more significant when one considers that the population of the city of Fontana during the base year in 1998 was 112,000 people. The average population of the city of Fontana during the last 12-month period of the F-STOP program was 139,000. The city saw a 24.2% increase in population from 1998 to the second 12-month period of the grant, which ended in September 2002. Based on this population growth rate analysis, the *per capita* collision rates are even more impressive and the decrease in collisions even more astounding:

- ✓ Overall fatal and injury collisions - a 38% per capita decrease.
- ✓ Nighttime collisions - a 34% per capita decrease.
- ✓ Speed related collisions - a 25% per capita decrease.
- ✓ Hit and run fatal and injury collisions - a 52% per capita decrease.

* Fontana Police Department Final Grant Report, 2002

The city of Fontana has also been extremely successful in our public education efforts. During the grant program period, media representatives were routinely invited to cover and publicize our program. Grant officers and other members of our traffic unit participated in and conducted programs in over 50 community events that were attended by a total of over 30,000 people. These events ranged from our school and community safety fairs, where educational and informational booths were set up, to the Fontana Days Parade where the department showcased our Motor Santa program. In this program, motor officers dressed as Santa and his elves and gave out coupons for free holiday turkeys to good drivers. As a result of these efforts, we had over 65 positive articles and

stories about our program that appeared in local print and regional broadcast media. We used a number of different strategies to get out the message of our F-STOP program including our motto, "No License = No Vehicle, No Exceptions!"

During the entire course of the grant, both the community at large and the city council were extremely supportive of the entire grant program and philosophy of targeting high risk and unlicensed drivers using vehicle-based sanctions. We believe that it was our aggressive and comprehensive public relations and education program that allowed us to tow almost 11,000 vehicles in a two-year period while receiving very few complaints from the community.

The most obvious way to make our response more effective would have been to have a larger program in place. We included our Patrol Division, Multiple Enforcement Team, Traffic Unit, Explorer Scouts and Citizen Volunteers in the program. All of these groups worked the driver's license checkpoints and when officers from any unit stopped an unlicensed driver, the vehicle would be impounded under the zero-tolerance policy. With more personnel assigned specifically to the grant program, there is no doubt that we would have removed even more unlicensed and suspended drivers from our roadways, further enhancing traffic safety in our community.

We did not have any concerns regarding displacement as we conducted this program. It is somewhat difficult and inconvenient for drivers to drive around an entire city, particularly when they live in that city. Most likely, rather than displacing a problem into another jurisdiction, we unwittingly assisted our surrounding jurisdictions through our efforts. It can be safely assumed that all of our surrounding jurisdictions, whether knowingly or not, felt some positive benefit by our taking as many unlicensed and

suspended drivers off of the road as we did. The overall impact can be assumed to be regional.

Our response will require continued monitoring and effort to maintain these results. We will continue to examine our collision rates and look for signs of an increase in the number of unlicensed and suspended drivers. We continue to maintain our "impound account" so that revenue generated from impounding these vehicles will go directly towards making this a self-funding and sustainable program.

While we believed that targeting high-risk drivers with vehicle-based sanctions would reduce traffic collisions, no study or program had been able to demonstrate a direct long-term relationship between increasing impounds and reducing traffic collisions. The success of the F-STOP program demonstrates that targeting unlicensed and suspended drivers using vehicle-based sanctions is a very effective method of reducing traffic collisions.

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AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

- 1). This problem solving initiative was adopted through our Traffic Unit. Once funding was obtained and the program was developed and implemented, the entire organization was brought into the problem solving process through training and adoption of the zero tolerance philosophy.
- 2). Our entire organization prides itself on being a community and problem oriented policing agency. This philosophy permeates every facet of our organization, all of our officers receive training in this style of law enforcement, and all officers in all units are expected to engage in community and problem oriented policing.
- 3). Standard management incentives (commendations and recognition) were given to officers who performed particularly well in this program.
- 4). The additional \$434,000 provided by the California Office of Traffic Safety and the grant guidelines provided by them were the primary resources and guidelines used in this program. A number of research materials were used to study, analyze, and respond to the problem (see reference section).
- 5). We did not have any major issues to deal with in applying the problem-solving model to this community problem. This type of problem fits nicely into the SARA model and, due to the large amount of data regarding traffic issues, is easy to assess upon completion of any traffic program.
- 6). The large majority of the program was funded outside of our existing budget through grant funding. We did provide some "in-kind" contributions of personnel and equipment, however this program would not have gotten off the ground

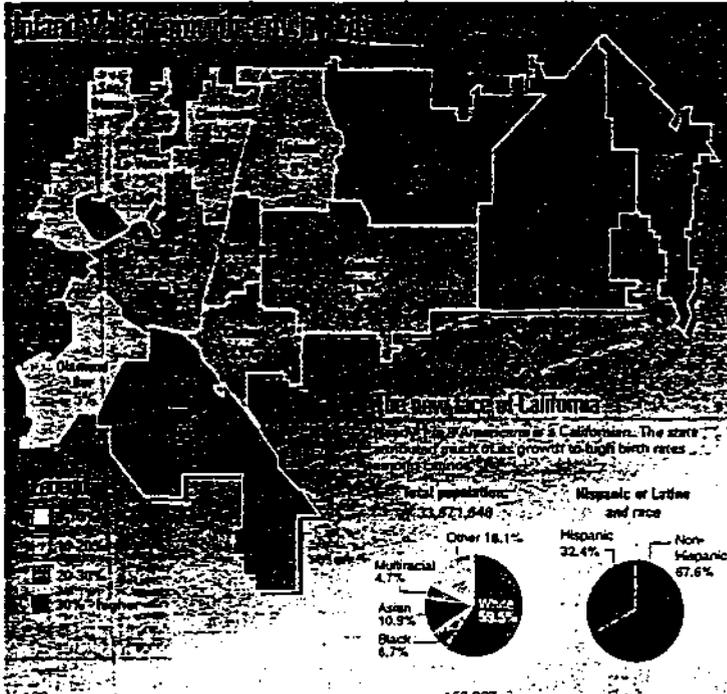
without the OTS grant funding. Revenue raised through vehicle impounds now goes into a separate account that is for the purpose of maintaining this program.

- 7). Contact Person: Alan S. Hostetter
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MEDIA

Population boom

DB 3/30/01



Chino Hills, Fontana show most growth in Inland Valley

By Nicole White
Staff Writer

Far outpacing most of California, the Inland Valley is one of the fastest-growing portions of the fastest-growing region in the state, according to figures released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The population of the Inland Valley — including Pomona, Claremont, San Dimas, La Verne and western San Bernardino County — grew nearly 20 percent over the past decade, far faster than the state's 13.3 percent growth rate, census figures show.

The Inland Valley's 13 cities grew to just under 1.5 million people, up from 1.2 million a decade ago.

Perhaps nowhere is the growth more obvious than

Chino Hills, which grew 142 percent, more than doubling in population. Incorporating in 1991, the city grew from 27,508 residents a decade ago to 66,787 today.

Residents of Orange and San Diego counties poured into the Inland Empire's vast rolling hills, farmland and desert, many seeking more affordable homes.

Riverside and San Bernardino counties' median home price is as much as \$150,000 less than the median home price of some neighboring counties, such as Orange County.

Rancho Cucamonga Mayor Bill Alexander said public safety, good schools, parks and athletic programs contributed to his city's 25 percent growth.

"I think it's actually one of the last really upscale communities that remain affordable," he said. "When you look around, particularly as you get closer to the coast, you have some real bargains."

The Inland Empire, which makes up the Inland Empire, expanded at a blistering 22 percent pace, more than double the state average.

The two counties have a combined population of 3.2 million people, compared to 2.5 million in 1990.

Fontana also surged in population, growing by 47 percent to 129,929 residents. Rialto grew 27 percent. Ontario and Montclair also outpaced overall state growth.

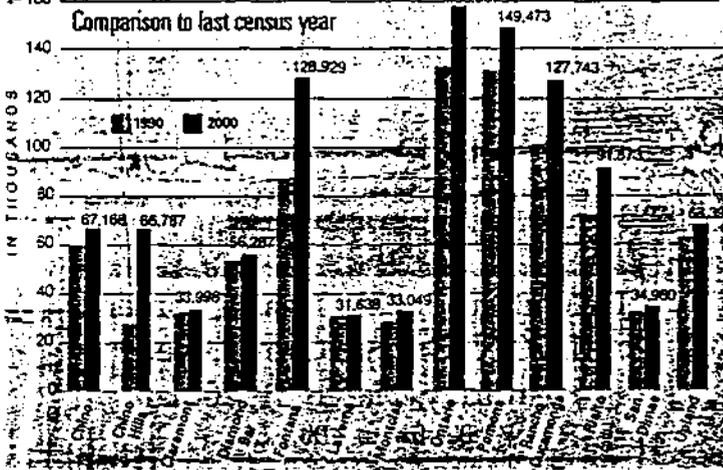
California overall grew 13 percent. With 33.9 million people, California can boast that nearly 1 in 8 Americans is a Californian. The state's booming economy, fueled in part by a huge labor force, is ranked sixth in the world.

The Inland Empire rebounded after a number of economic setbacks that drove business and people from the region, such as the closing of Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino and the decline of the aerospace in-

CENSUS

The Latino population in the state soared by 43 percent over the past decade and nearly one out of every three state residents is a member of the fast-growing ethnic group / AS

The population of Los Angeles grew 6 percent in the last decade, surprising some who expected to see double-digit growth / AS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Associated Press. Richard Heselin/Staff Artist

NEXT PAGE

Fontana is now third largest city

Fontana's population is nearly 129,000, census says; City had biggest growth (41,000) in county since 1990

in county

By ED TIEDGEN and RUSSELL INGOLD
4-5-01
HERALD NEWS

Fontana's population grew 47 percent over the past decade, bringing the city's total from 87,535 all the way to 128,929, according to statistics released last week by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Fontana now ranks as the third-largest city in San Bernardino County, slightly ahead of fourth-place Rancho Cucamonga (which has 127,743 people), the census reported. San Bernardino remains the largest city with 185,401 and

Ontario is second with 158,007. From 1990 to 2000, Fontana added more people — 41,394 — than any other city in the county. To put this number in perspective, Fontana's population growth in the past 10 years was larger than the entire present-day population of the city of Yucaipa (41,207).

"It's exciting, and it shows how much Fontana has to offer and how much people want to be here," said City Councilmember Janice Rutherford.

Fontana's census total of nearly 129,000 was higher than most of

the estimates made in recent years by local officials and economic analysts, who believed that the population was between 115,000 and 120,000.

"It's a little higher than I thought, but I'm not surprised," said Mayor David Esleman. "We've been the fastest-growing city in San Bernardino County for the past 10 years."

"I suspect Fontana will continue to grow because of our affordable housing, inexpensive land, and all of the infrastructure improvements

Continued on page A-3

Population

Continued from page A-1

we're doing. We will probably edge out Ontario soon. I predict in 20 years Fontana will be the No. 1 city in San Bernardino County."

Due to the huge surge in home construction during the past five years, the population totals have skyrocketed in many areas of Fontana, particularly in the north-west section.

City Manager Ken Hunt said the city is at "50 to 60 percent build out," meaning there is still plenty more room for growth.

"The degree of attraction is phenomenal," said City Councilmember Josie Gonzales. "We have what a lot of other people want."

However, Gonzales added: "The growth is fine as long as we have good management to control the growth wisely and we have high development standards."

Esleman said the city will benefit in several ways from the new census figures.

"We should get additional revenue because of our increased numbers," he said. "This will help with obtaining grants and special funding. Also, we will gain more clout politically."

Gonzales said: "Fontana's numbers are beginning to make (state and federal) elected officials say, 'We'd better pay attention because these people have the power to shut

us out."

City Councilmember John Roberts said he didn't expect Fontana would surpass Rancho Cucamonga, which was far ahead of Fontana in the 1990 census.

He said that "we have a lot of work ahead of us" to maintain services for the residents.

City Councilmember Mark Nuaimi said Fontana's increase was "higher than I anticipated. It's indicative of the undercount in 1990. The city has been cheated all these years (due to the revenue loss because of low census numbers)."

More police needed

One of the biggest challenges for the city will be providing more police officers to meet the demand of the rapidly expanding population.

Police Chief Frank Scialdone said the city's ratio of officers per 1,000 population has actually gone down since 1990. Eleven years ago, Fontana had 111 officers (1.26 per thousand), and last year, the city had 136 officers (1.06 per thousand).

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the western U.S. average for cities over 100,000 population is 1.8 officers per thousand, and the national average is 2.5 per thousand.

"Officers are expensive," Scialdone said. "We need more money to have more officers."

The city could not add a significant number of personnel for many years in the early 1990s due to the economic downturn and severe budget problems. Fontana's situation has improved tremendously since then, however, and just last month, 11 new officers were sworn in.

"We need to go back and take another look at our officer ratio," said Gonzales.

Remarkably, even though the officer ratio has declined and the population has increased dramatically, the crime rate in Fontana plunged 50 percent from 1995 to 2000.

"We are obviously going to have to add officers, but it's not just a simple calculation," said Roberts, who added that the city will need to pay for other services, including another fire station.

Leaders look at bigger picture

Gonzales said the census reflects numbers only through January, 2000. City staffers have estimated that over the past year, Fontana has added yet another 5,000 people.

Continued on page A-7

Continued from page A-3

giving the city close to 134,000 people at the start of 2001.

This is based on the number of homes that have been built, new business licenses, new utilities, and real estate agency figures, she said.

Even this number is small compared to the estimated total in the (including surrounding county territory) — 170,000 people.

"If we are successful in annexation (of county areas), our numbers will grow even faster," Esleman said. "We have to think of Fontana as the whole sphere of influence, not just the city limits."

Public officials use the 170,000 figure when planning for development of services, Gonzales said. This total takes into account all the people who use the city's roads, parks, and facilities, even though they may not be inside the city limits.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY LARGEST CITIES

Official statistics from U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000

	1990	2000	Percent Growth
1. San Bernardino	164,164	185,401	13
2. Ontario	133,179	158,007	19
3. Fontana	87,535	128,929	47
4. Rancho Cucamonga	101,409	127,743	26
5. Rialto	72,388	91,873	27
6. Upland	63,374	68,393	8
7. Chino	59,682	67,168	13
8. Chino Hills	27,608	66,787	142
9. Victorville	40,674	64,029	57
10. Redlands	50,394	63,591	5

Fontana traffic faces slow going

Improvements at Sierra, Etiwanda and Cedar avenues to take awhile

By Emily Sachs
Staff Writer

DB 2/26/01
FONTANA — Sierra Avenue already is a tangle of traffic at Interstate 10, and a project to rebuild the interchange is barely under way. Nearby freeway exits at Etiwanda and Cedar avenues are just as packed, and improvement projects scheduled for those areas are still weeks or months away.

By December, the three projects all could be under construction, with motorists trying to maneuver around orange barrels, construction crews and freeway lane closures.

"The expansion of the megatropolis of Los Angeles has reached us finally," said Fontana Mayor David Ebleman. "It's time now to get all these on-ramps and off-ramps improved. There hasn't been major improvement in 50 years. It can't be ignored. It has to be addressed."

Since construction in the 1960s, the Sierra Avenue interchange at I-10 has rarely been updated. It was designed to handle 25,000 vehicles a day. It handles more than 65,000 today. When done, the interchange will be expanded to include more lanes, including some entrance onto I-10 with no traffic lights. The city received the \$17.5 million for construction from state and federal sources.

Since starting in January, construction on the interchange has amounted to little more than clearing eucalyptus trees and installing cement rails on freeway off-ramps.



LaFonzo Rachel Carter/Staff Photographer
CONGESTED: Traffic backs up at Sierra Avenue and Valley Boulevard in Fontana.

Now workers are partially demolishing the bridge at the interchange. Much of the new interchange will be built around the existing bridge. Traffic then will be routed onto the new lanes, and the old bridge will be demolished to make way for the remainder of the project.

Construction at Etiwanda Avenue could begin after the fall, when cleanup of materials on the former Kaiser Steel mill property north of the freeway is completed. The cleanup begins next month, said Caltrans spokesman

Charles Wahoon. Castulus Development Corp., which plans to build a commercial and industrial business based on trucking and railroad transportation on the site, is paying for the estimated \$15 million project.

Within 20 months, new ramps will replace roadway loops, and merging lanes will be extended on the freeway.

The smallest project is at the Cedar Avenue interchange in Bloomington, where widening and ramp improvements will pave the way for a \$28 million Roadway Express distribution cen-

ter on Slaver Avenue south of I-10. Ohio-based Roadway Express is financing the \$150,000, four-month project. A start date hasn't been established, but the work is expected to be completed by summer 2002, company spokesman John Hyre said.

If there is good news in construction, Caltrans officials point to a traffic-management plan limiting freeway and road closures to one at a time.

Still, the simultaneous bridgework isn't likely to end with the trio of projects, officials said, further testing the patience of residents and commuters. Road projects are already a daily sight around the city.

"The problem is there's so much development in the city that we're sort of in a constant state of construction," said Ray Bragg, city redevelopment and special projects director.

A free commuter guide mapping all the connecting roadways in the city will be distributed soon by Caltrans and the Fontana Area Chamber of Commerce.

In the meantime, many drivers are taking the four-lane Valley Boulevard, which runs along I-10 to avoid the construction, Bragg said. From Interstate 15, other motorists are taking San Bernardino Avenue east into the city. Some motorists are taking the Sierra Avenue exit at I-15 and driving south into the city.

So far, businesses and commuters are finding the traffic tolerable.

Emily Sachs can be reached at (909) 386-3379.

Fontana growth clashes with Interstate 210 project

► But soon, officials say, construction woes will be over and the freeway will serve the city's new residents.

By Louis Rom
The Press-Enterprise 12/22/00

Fontana
To some, construction of the Foothill Freeway, soon to be Interstate 210, couldn't have come at a worse time for Fontana.

FREEWAY

Continued from B-1
"We expect to open that section of the freeway in March or April, depending on weather," Green said.

The 28-mile link between San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties, which will cost about \$1.1 billion to build, is at least five years from completion, according to Green. Caltrans has oversight of the project, but is sharing construction work with San Bernardino Associated Governments.

"There's a tremendous amount of development in Fontana, and the city has a lot of projects that are going to dramatically increase the population in the next few years," said Chester Britt of SAN-BAG's public information department.

"Obviously, having (the freeway) completely open is going to improve traffic quite a bit," Britt said.

Green says the full project, stretching from Sierra Avenue in Fontana to La Verne, is also on schedule and should be completed by the end of 2002.

The future I-210 — now High-

The city has grown by a third in the last 10 years, and much of that growth has come on its north side, where the dust and noise from construction have become a way of life for owners of homes and businesses there.

In 1990, Fontana's population was 87,535, according to U.S. Census data. Ray Bragg, redevelopment/special projects director for the city, says it's now about 117,000, an increase of 33 percent.

But relief is in sight, at least for those living along the soon-to-be Interstate 210 corridor.

The final few Fontana bridges under construction will offer inland empire motorists who commute to Orange and Los Angeles counties another choice, with four lanes of traffic each way.

That's good news to area residents.

"I-10 is horrible," says Emilio Lopez, who recently moved to north Fontana from Orange County.

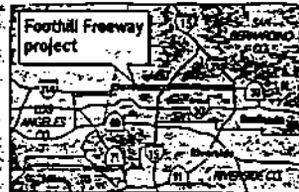
"Anything would be better than (I-10). From what I can see, the new freeway would be great. Hopefully, they'll make it big enough so they don't have to tear it up and start all over in 10 years."

For the last three years, construction along the Foothill Freeway has clogged collector roads that connect southern and northern Fontana.

Bragg says the abundance of quality property in the north has helped fuel growth in the foothills of Fontana.

"The majority of the growth is probably above Foothill (Boulevard), although there was considerable growth in Southridge," said Bragg, attributing much of the northern boom to "flat, easily developable land."

Jim Knudsen, sales manager for Century 21's Fontana office, says



The Press-Enterprise

construction — including those on Sierra, Beech and Cherry avenues — are expected to be finished next month.

And, weather permitting, the stretch of freeway between Day Creek Boulevard in Rancho Cucamonga and Citrus Avenue in Fontana should be open by late spring or early summer, according to Caltrans spokesman Dennis Green.

Please see FREEWAY, B-5

the area is just starting to take off. "The prices are higher up in that area, but the growth is going so fast the city can't keep up with it," Knudsen said. "We don't know when the stopping point is going to be."

Knudsen attributes much of the interest to the growth of Ontario International Airport and the wealth of businesses that have sprouted in that area.

The convenience of living near the new interstate has not quite "set in" with home buyers, Knudsen said.

"It's just brought a lot of people out in this area that are looking for housing," he said.

Louis Rom can be reached by e-mail at lrom@pe.com or by phone at (909) 890-4464.

New 210 freeway opens in Fontana



Numerous public officials (including Gov. Gray Davis, center) and Caltrans workers erupt in a cheer following the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new 210 freeway in Fontana on Aug. 20. Fontana Mayor David Eshleman and his daughter Krystal also took part in the historic celebration.

Freeway will help bring economic development

By RUSSELL INGOLD
Fontana Herald News
Editor

The Route 210 freeway opened in Fontana last Monday, and not too many people were happier

about this historic occasion than Ray Allard.

"This is wonderful," said Allard, reflecting his opinion as a Fontana resident, as a business owner (Allard Engineering), and as president of the Fontana Area Chamber of Commerce.

"For the business community — and for residents, too — this freeway will be great," he said. "I live in Sierra Lakes and my business is in the north end of town. This will decrease transportation costs for everyone, including employees getting to work."

Allard said that the new freeway, which cuts across northern Fontana along the former Highland Avenue (just south of the Sierra Lakes development), will serve a vital role in the continuing revitalization of Fontana's economy.

"So many businesses and home-builders have been waiting so long for this freeway," he said. "Something like this can help carry the city through these tough times."

Fontana Planning Commission Chairperson Ken Galasso, the owner of Sierra Realty, agreed

wholeheartedly with Allard's sentiments.

"The freeway will foster the economic development of the north end," Galasso said. "When the other section (from Rancho Cucamonga to the previously existing 210 in La Verne) is complete, it will be absolutely tremendous. I'm excited to see it happening."

Galasso said that after years of stagnation in the early 1990s, the city is now experiencing a major resurgence, and the freeway is one

Continued on next page.

Economic

Continued from previous page of several components of Fontana's explosive potential. "It's all coming together," he said.

Galasso is a member of the citizens' group which will make recommendations for the city's new general plan, focusing much attention on the area surrounding the freeway.

"There are a lot of things that could happen up in northern Fontana, but whether we get commercial or residential development, it will all benefit the city," he said.

City Councilmember Jossie Gonzales, who owns Mexico Lindo, said the freeway's opening means that Fontana's future is

bright.

"There are unforeseen opportunities that will be opened up by the freeway," Gonzales said. "There will be unimaginable revenue sources."

City Manager Ken Hunt, who lives in Rancho Cucamonga, enjoyed driving on the freeway to work on Tuesday morning.

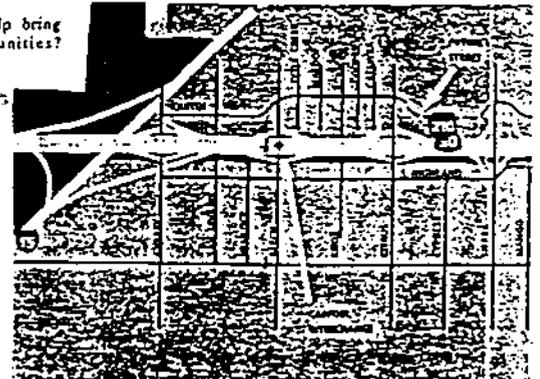
"The freeway opens up a whole window on the north end of town,"

Hunt said. "I view the north end as a land of opportunity. As you drive from Rancho to Fontana, you can see the wide open spaces that are available for us. Fontana has all of this outstanding land, and we want to use it for a combination of commercial, housing, and job-generating opportunities."

"Will the freeway help bring about those opportunities? Absolutely," Hunt said.



FONTANA



The new 210 freeway has on- and off-ramps at Sierra, Citrus, Beech, and Cherry avenues in Fontana.

Fontana Congestion relief for

Project set for Interstate 10/Sierra Avenue interchange

By Inran Ghori
and Don Lee
The Press-Enterprise

DE 12/1/00

FONTANA
After years of suffering through congestion on the heavily traveled Interstate 10/Sierra Avenue interchange, relief is finally on the way for motorists.

About 100 people celebrated the start of the \$18.3 million project with a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday morning at the Inland Empire Shopping Center along Sierra Avenue, with cars whizzing toward the interchange in front of them.

"Fontana citizens and travelers have been waiting for this for ten years," Fontana Mayor David Esbleman said. "It's finally here."

Several commuters said late Thursday afternoon that while they're not looking forward to the hassles of construction, those hassles will be worth it if they ease congestion.

"It's pretty crazy. It takes forever to get across," said Ron Leon of Victorville, who often commutes to Fontana for his job as a swimming-pool service repairman.

Louis Romero, who lives near interchange and drives it frequently, said that on Fridays at 4 p.m. it can take almost a half an hour to cross to the overpass.

"I think it'll be good but I know it's going to be a pain for the next two years," Romero said.

The construction project would relieve the traffic bottleneck at the interchange by expanding the overcrossing and freeway ramps.

Built in 1955, the interchange was
Please see TRAFFIC, B-7

TRAFFIC 12/1/00

Continued from B-1
designed to handle 25,000-35,000 vehicles a day. But the current volume has grown to more than 65,000 vehicles daily.

Esbleman said nothing has been done in the 45 years since the interchange was built to increase the capacity of the interchange even as Fontana grew from a rural town of 15,000 to an urban center with 125,000 residents.

The city has had plans on the drawing board to rebuild the interchange since 1989. But Fontana did not get the funding until two years ago when it received \$17.3 million in federal, state and regional funds. The remaining \$800,000 will come from city funds.

The construction bid is expected to be awarded to Bantsee Construction Company Inc. of Colton, the lowest, at \$15.5 million, of seven bids for the contract.

Now that the wait for the project is over, city officials said residents will have to go through a different kind of waiting as they put with the delays at the intersection.

"Have some patience," Councilman Manuel Mancha advised residents. "We're going to go through two years of construction here."

Construction is expected to take 20 months and be completed by fall 2002.

Except for off-peak hours during the night, "we don't anticipate ever having a full (road) closure," said Dennis Green, Caltrans' construction liaison to the community while the project is built.

Green said major work won't begin until after Jan. 1, partly so that holiday shopping around the commercial corridor won't be hurt.

But preparatory work will start soon and drivers will also start seeing signs advising them of the construction work.

Green said Caltrans will start holding a series of meetings this month to address issues that will come up during the construction period. A first meeting will be held with police, fire and other emergency services departments, followed by one with business owners and then one for the general public. Future meetings will be held on an ongoing basis.

Mohammad Radwan, owner of Audio America, a car audio store at the Inland Empire Shopping Center, said he was worried about the 20-month construction period. "It's better for the community. It's better for all the businesses," Radwan said.

Groundbreaking marks long-awaited improvement of freeway interchange

■ Funding freezes, flies couldn't stop long-awaited project in Fontana.

By Emily Sachs
Staff Writer

DB 12/1/00

FONTANA - Against a backdrop of heavy traffic, local elected officials and transportation officials broke ground Thursday on a long-awaited project to improve one of the county's busiest interchanges.

The \$17.5 million interchange project at Interstate 10 and Sierra Avenue has been in the works for more than a decade, falling victim several times to funding freezes and flies.

A host of political notables celebrated the project's start at a ceremony next to an existing interchange built 45 years ago to serve just 25,000 commuters a day.

"Fontana was just a small, rural community with 15,000 residents," Mayor David Esbleman said. "Today we are an urban center. Our population exceeds 120,000."

With that, growth, interchange traffic has jumped to 65,000 vehicles a day. Morning and afternoon commuters come to a standstill, often blocking traffic from reaching Kaiser Permanente Medical Center and keeping emergency vehicles from reaching fires and medical patients.

The congestion has also hurt schools and businesses. With better



LaFonzo Rachel Carter/Staff Photographer
CRUNCH TIME: Construction was started Thursday to begin improving the interchange between Interstate 10 and Sierra Avenue in Fontana. City officials hope it will improve traffic conditions for Fontana's 120,000 residents.

traffic flow, downtown Fontana could become a reachable destination again, officials said.

"This interchange is going to go a long way to encourage people to come back to Sierra Avenue," San Bernardino County Supervisor Fred Aguilar said.

Rep. Joe Baca, D-Rialto, joked that with a golf course at the north end of Sierra and another one under construction near the south end, the interchange will be necessary for golfers to make tee times.

In October, Bantsee Construction Co. of Colton was awarded a contract for \$15.5 million, \$300,000 less than the engineering estimate for the project. Additional money was used for land acquisition and related costs.

Construction probably won't start until after Christmas, officials said.

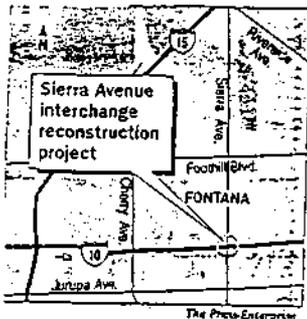
The federally protected Delta Sands flower-loving fly, which came close to halting bidding on the project, may be a thing of the past - it hasn't been spotted in 212 years.

On-and-off negotiations have taken place all year with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has taken issue with the project's potential to harm habitats for endangered species, including the fly.

The city has maintained that the traffic problem needs to be improved now, and has argued that Fish and Wildlife is trying to protect species, including the California gnatcatcher and the San Bernardino kangaroo rat, that no longer inhabit the sand.

Fish and Wildlife was offered land in the city to ease last-minute restrictions on the project. The agency never responded to the offer and has fallen silent on the matter, city Redevelopment Director Ray Bragg said. Colton has also negotiated with Fish and Wildlife over the fly as it attempts to set aside land near Interstate 10 for development.

Emily Sachs can be reached by phone at (909) 386-1377.



The Press-Enterprise

'... WE ARE PUTTING OUT THE MESSAGE'



Staff photos by LaFONZO RACHAL CARTER

ABOVE: Fontana police Officer Mike Dorsey tickets William Quiñones for not carrying proof of vehicle insurance at a checkpoint on Sierra Avenue in Fontana. **BELOW:** Officer Phill Hinkle checks cars for proof of insurance.

Fontana Police impound 29 cars during safety checkpoint Feb. 28

By ED TIEDGEN
 Fontana Herald News
 Staff Writer
 1-8-20
 The Fontana Police Department impounded 29 vehicles in just under five hours at last week's vehicle safety checkpoint on Sierra Avenue at Jurupa Avenue.

violations, seat belt and child restraint child. This checkpoint was part of the department's ongoing "Fontana Serious Traffic Offender Program" (F-STOP) in which police have been conducting monthly checkpoints at various locations in the city since last July.

The F-STOP program was made possible through a state grant from the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). This 27-month grant totaling more than \$400,000.

Checkpoint

Continued from previous page
 aims to reduce the number of traffic collisions caused by unlicensed, suspended or revoked-licensed drivers.
 "We have adopted a zero tolerance policy against this," said Fontana Police Sergeant Robert Beltran.
 Officials pointed out that a recent study by AAA indicated that

those driving without licenses accounted for more than 20 percent of injury and fatal traffic collisions in California (19 percent nationwide).
 Police hope this increased level of enforcement will reduce the number of fatal and injury collisions, increase public awareness

Continued on next page

Checkpoint

Continued from previous page
 throughout the community, and increase compliance rates regarding the use of seat belts, child restraint seats and bicycle helmets.
 Since the program started nine months ago, over 26,000 vehicles in Fontana have passed through the monthly checkpoints, with over 800 citations being issued and 272 vehicles being impounded some for as long as 30 days.
 During the Feb. 28 checkpoint, police constructed a symbolic jail that was used to "in-CAR-cerate" a officer. "Withing the first five minutes, we got our first impound," said Beltran.
 Officer Chip Wideen helps to oversee the F-STOP program including the monthly checkpoints.
 "It takes a lot of pre-planning and logistics and reassignment of police personnel as well as a lot of paperwork," said Wideen, who helped organize more than 35 people, including sworn and non-sworn personnel and volunteers.
 In addition to Wideen's position, the grant also funds the positions held by officer Wayne Blessinger and traffic clerk Jan Kahn.
 Wideen said the grant also provides the city with two new motorcycles, a checkpoint trailer, a versatile message board (worth \$27,000), and two hand-held radar guns.
 This checkpoint operation was

well-organized, using the entire traffic unit, multi-enforcement team and the crime prevention unit, which is all part of the special operations unit.
 Wideen said sometimes the checkpoints include a sobriety check, such as the one last New Year's Eve. He said the police have also conducted a "bicycle rodeo" in which they cite children for riding with no helmets. "If they came to a course, we will issue them a

helmet and the citation will not be reported to the court," said Wideen.
 The grant also helped the police purchase 100 car seats. "If we come across a needy person, we are more than happy to supply them with a new car seat," he said.
 Officials are currently working on a courtroom sting in which the police will check drivers coming to court for traffic violations. Wideen said that when a vehicle is impounded, the owner has the right to an impound hearing with a traffic sergeant in order to plead the case.
 The Fontana P.D. is also helping other police agencies start a similar program.
 "The program really is making a difference because the number of towes are decreasing," he said.
 Because Fontana received a 27-month grant for this program, so the monthly checks at random locations will continue through this year and well into 2002.

FONTANA

58 vehicles impounded

Police said they impounded 58 vehicles and arrested two people on outstanding warrants during a sobriety and vehicle checkpoint between 10 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Wednesday on Sierra Avenue and Athol Street. More than 4,300 vehicles passed the checkpoint, police said. Most of the vehicles impounded were for unlicensed or suspended driver's licenses, police said. Officers issued 201 traffic citations for equipment and licensing violations and for lack of proof of financial responsibility, police said.

120 lose their cars to police impound

CHECKPOINT: Fontana sets a record for number of confiscated vehicles.

BY RICHARD BROOKS
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Fontana — Police impounded a record 120 cars and trucks Thursday at a safety checkpoint that nabbed an unusually high number of motorists driving without a valid driver's license, officials said.

"When someone gets in an accident and flees the scene more than likely they don't have insurance, or they don't have a driver's license," said motorcycle Officer Wayne Blessinger.

Blessinger is among 25 officers, volunteers and cadets who staffed the safety checkpoint from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. along Sierra Avenue just south of Athol Avenue.

The previous record number of vehicles impounded by Fontana police came in September 1996, when 96 were towed away. Since then, officers have set up about one checkpoint per month.

Funded by a state grant that ends next month, the checkpoints are designed to crack down primarily on unlicensed

drivers and those who violate seat belt and child restraint laws.

"We do not confiscate the car for seat belt or car seats, speed or insurance. Those are just given citations," Blessinger said.

"If you drive without a driver's license or with a suspended license or if your registration is expired over six months, your car can be impounded."

More than 4,200 motorists passed through the checkpoint Thursday, resulting in 183 tickets. Blessinger said no major traffic tie-ups resulted.

"If it starts backing up, we wave cars through," Blessinger said. "So it runs pretty smoothly. That's why we shut it down before rush hour."

As for the impounded vehicles, drivers who take care of their license problems can recover their cars, he said.

"If the car is left in impound the full 30 days, it's over \$1,000," Blessinger said. The city gets \$70 per impounded car, he said. "The rest goes to the tow companies."

Reach Richard Brooks at (909) 890-4452 or rbrooks@pe.com.

FONTANA Department plans safety checkpoint

The Fontana Police Department will conduct a safety checkpoint between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. today at Sierra Avenue and Athol Street.

The goals of the checkpoint are to inspect use of seat belts and child restraints, sobriety and whether the driver has a valid license.

Drivers passing through the checkpoint will be asked to show their licenses, current registration and proof of auto insurance.

Sting aims at unlicensed-drivers

■ Fontana police officers ticket offenders as they leave court after entering guilty pleas.

Gene Maddaus
gene.maddaus@latimes.com
and Joanna Corman
joanna.corman@latimes.com

2/21/02
FONTANA — Steven Payne has had better days. Not five minutes after pleading guilty to driving on a suspended license and paying a \$700 fine, Payne drove out of the parking lot at Valley Superior Court, and was immediately pulled over.

He was furious. "You're going to pull me over for that!" he screamed. "I got a baby in the hospital and everything!"

Cpt. Fred Flores calmly explained that Payne was the newest victim of a "courthouse sting," in which undercover officers follow traffic violators who have just been admonished not to drive, and watch them get into their cars and drive away. They radio to motorcycle officers, who quickly pull the offenders over.

"There's public transportation," Flores explained. "You know what public transportation is?"

Payne, 27, of Highland, was in court Wednesday to take care of a ticket issued two months ago for driving on a suspended license with invalid registration. It was his second ticket for a suspended



Fernando Rivas, 25, talks with Sgt. Eric Wendt as he writes him a citation for driving on a suspended license while fellow Fontana Officer Danny Gore looks on. Rivas was one of three people caught during a sting conducted by Fontana police.

license, and he also had a pair of DUI convictions, Flores said.

Before he gets his license back, he must complete DUI classes, Flores said.

His new Cadillac Sedan Deville, for which he paid \$11,000, will be impounded for a month. The

See STING Page 2

STING

CONTINUED FROM 1

2/21/02
impound fee will likely be about \$1,000, Fontana Sgt. Eric Wendt said, and the cost of the ticket could go as high as \$2,000.

After angrily removing speakers, cell phones, a sledge hammer and other items from his trunk, Payne calmed down.

"I try to do good. I try to come and take care of my ticket," he said. "All this does is make more money for them."

Three undercover officers

watched from the back of Commissioner Deborah Daniel's courtroom as offenders pleaded guilty Wednesday afternoon. Then they radioed their descriptions to three motorcycle officers and one officer in an unmarked car.

Several people walked home, others waited for the bus and one actually arranged for someone to pick him up.

But three, including Payne, drove their own cars out of the courthouse parking lot.

They were among about 80 people who went before Commissioner Daniel in a little more than two hours Wednesday.

Otilio Arciniega, 26, drove his black pickup to court, even though he lives around the corner from the courthouse, Officer Wayne Blessinger said. He pleaded guilty to driving with an expired license. The license had been invalid for more than a year.

Fernando Rivas, 25, was pulled over after pleading guilty to driving on a suspended license. He paid a \$551 fine

on the 4-year-old ticket.

He told police he was on his way to the Department of Motor Vehicles on Wednesday to pay an \$80 fine when he was pulled over.

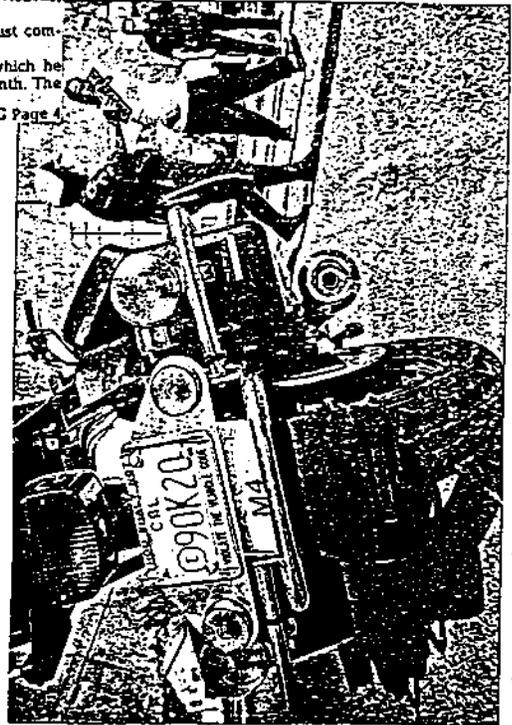
"I haven't driven in about two years," he said, before walking home to Rialto.

After Payne was pulled over, he called his mom. Pearl Payne showed up a few minutes later, and after the officers explained the ticket, she turned to her son.

"You could have called me on the cell phone!" she said. "I have a license. You should have called me."

Wendt said this is the fifth time police have conducted a sting at the courthouse since receiving funding for the program from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

Police at the other courthouses in the Inland Valley, in Pomona and Rancho Cucamonga, do not do such stings, though Pomona Cpl. Michael Olivieri said he would like to do them in the future.



Fontana Cpl. Fred Flores attempts to explain a citation in Steven Payne, 27, who was pulled over for driving with a suspended license.



PHOTOS BY CHRIS URSO / chris.urso@latimes.com

Otilio Arciniega, 26, holds his head after being pulled over for driving on an expired license. Arciniega had just pleaded guilty to a prior citation of driving with an expired license at Valley Superior Court in Fontana.

Eight cited for violations as they leave traffic court

FONTANA: A "courthouse sting" program focuses on drivers who have just pleaded guilty.

BY KATIE E. ISMAIL
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE 8/31/01

FONTANA—Police cited eight people Wednesday as they drove away from the municipal courthouse where they had just pleaded guilty to charges of driving without proper licenses, officials said.

Fontana police officers participated in the department's third "courthouse sting" program impounded the eight vehicles for 30 days, police said.

During the program, undercover officers were in traffic court to watch as people were appearing on citations for driving on suspended licenses or driving without a license.

After people pleaded guilty to the licensing violations, undercover officers followed them as they returned to their vehicles, police said.

Eleven people were followed and nine seen driving from the parking lot were stopped by motorcycle officers working with the program. Eight of those were cited for driv-

ing with suspended licenses.

After a coincidental nearby activation of a Lo-Jack anti-theft device, police also recovered a stolen vehicle, arrested two suspects in the theft and found a loaded handgun, officials said.

As a result of Wednesday's program, more courthouse sting operations will occur, police said.

The program is paid for by a 27-month grant of about \$435,000 from the state Office of Traffic Safety. The grant funds the department's Fontana Serious Traffic Offender Program.

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Unlicensed drivers get surprise from police

DE 2/21/02
BY TIM GRENOA
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

FONTANA—People who walked out of the Fontana courthouse Wednesday after pleading guilty to driving without a license and then drove out of the parking lot got an unwelcome surprise: another ticket.

Fontana police conducted an undercover operation at the Arrow Highway courthouse, targeting people who drive on sus-

suspended or revoked licenses, or without any license.

Five drivers were given misdemeanor traffic citations during the three-hour-long operation, police said.

Three undercover Fontana officers sat in the courtroom with dozens of people appearing in court on traffic violations.

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When a person entered a guilty plea to driving without a license, the officers followed the individual out to the courthouse parking lot.

If the person got in the driver's seat and drove away, the undercover officers radioed uniformed officers in the area, who pulled the car over within a few blocks.

The drivers were issued citations ordering them to appear in court again and their cars were towed away and impounded.

Fontana police have conducted the same operation before.

In August, eight drivers were cited after driving from the courthouse, where they had pleaded guilty to charges of driving without a license.

Police said they even recovered a stolen car, arrested two suspects and found a loaded gun in the last sting operation.

The undercover operations are paid for through a grant from the state Office of Traffic Safety.

Not everyone who admitted driving without a license drove themselves from the courthouse.

Some appeared to be walking home from the courthouse. Others brought a friend or relative to drive them.

"Some people are actually doing the right thing," said Officer Rich Hunt, who worked on the operation. "One guy took the bus home."

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Fontana police will pluck out good drivers

Motorists who obey the law as the holiday season approaches might get a free turkey.

Pam Noles
pam.noles@times.com
11/14/01

FONTANA—Drivers in the city should really keep an eye out for the law, starting today. Especially good drivers.

Beginning at 10 a.m. and running through Dec. 14, motorcycle officers will be on the prowl for drivers who do what they're supposed to do—wear seat belts, drive with caution and courtesy and keep within the speed limit, among other things. Those drivers will be pulled over and given one "citation," good for a free turkey at a local Albertson's.

The department has 150 turkey citations in its coffers.

"This is one of the few times when I can proudly say I profile," said Stan Hanaka, an officer assigned to the traffic division. "I do not try to pull over people in Lexuses or Rolls Royces. I look for people who seem to need a turkey ticket."

The idea is not entirely new among Inland Valley law enforcement agencies. Several said they have done incentive programs in the past, though for most it was many years ago.

Fontana decided to do it this year in part because money was available. The department is in its final year of a three-year, \$450,000 grant from the state Office of Traffic Safety. Part of that grant covers recognizing citizens for good driving, said Vicki Aubry, a police spokeswoman. For the last week of the project, Dec. 8-14, the motorcycle officers will deck out in Santa and elf costumes.

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as they patrol the streets looking for good driving violators.

Hanaka will be dressed as an elf, he said. The corporate gets to be Santa.

This is not the first time Hanaka has participated in patrolling for good drivers. When he was an officer with the Los Angeles Police Department, treats were sometimes given out in that city.

The important thing is to be direct when pulling a driver,

Hanaka said, particularly if they happen to be pulled over on a day he's not dressed as an elf. Getting pulled over can be a traumatic experience for drivers, he said, so the first thing he wants to do is set them at ease.

"I do not toy with them," he said. "I go right to the

point and tell them I pulled you over because you had the seat belt on, when you made that turn back there you used your turn signal, you yielded to the other driver when you didn't have to," he said. "I explain it all from the start, then I issue the turkey ticket. People are relieved."

driver to be redeemed at local restaurants for free food items or meals.

In this program, traffic unit officers will be on the lookout for drivers who are observed obeying traffic laws, using exemplary driving skills, or who are simply being courteous.

Police have 'Good Driver Recognition'

During the month of December, the Fontana Police Department Traffic Unit will be conducting a "Good Driver Recognition" program.

"This program is in effect to show the Fontana P.D.'s appreciation to those drivers who consistently make the effort to drive properly and help keep our roads safe," said Officer Chip Wixden of the Fontana Police Traffic Unit.

Upon contacting these drivers, officers will be giving out complimentary coupons to be used by the