Spring 2016 Campus Sustainability Fund Proposal

Project: Establishment of a Campus Safety Office Bike Patrol Unit
Project Leader: Paul Otenti
Co-participants: Jenna Griffo (student), Brenden Blair (student)

Funding Request: $ 3,453

Project Summary:
Goals:
With the Campus Safety Bicycle Project, we have identified three goals for this environmentally friendly project;

- To demonstrate to the students, faculty, staff and future Smittys, Paul Smiths College's commitment to local and global sustainability.
- To increase the visibility and approachability of our Campus Safety Officers for students
- To enhance interaction with students, faculty, staff and visitors in a positive way.

Project Justification and Relevance:

The average fully equipped police bike costs around $2,000 and, properly maintained, will last for years. They don't need gasoline for operation, nor the full-sized parking spaces required by other vehicles. Bike patrols run on human power rather than gasoline, their carbon footprint is much smaller than patrol cars. With zero emissions and less need for pavement, a bicycle patrol is an attractive option for the College's green initiatives.

Officers in vehicles often generate negative perceptions that some members of a culturally diverse campus population have about campus safety officers. Unlike patrol vehicles, which often reinforce these perceptions, bicycle patrols give an opportunity for a new impression (Menton, 2007). Most of the negative attributes associated with vehicle patrol officers - double parking and a noticeable wait time between arriving on scene and attending to the issue - are not associated with bicycle officers. As a result, those who come in contact with bike officers may be more cooperative and willing to listen.

To demonstrate the possible cost savings of this project, we used the expenses of just one vehicle in our cost analysis. In the one year time period ending in December 2015, one Campus Safety Motor vehicle traveled a total of 10300 miles. Gasoline usage over that time period amounted to 800 gallons (an average of 13.4 miles per gallon). If we were to patrol with a bicycle for just one, 8 hour shift per day (average daily use calculated over the course of one year) instead of a motor vehicle, we anticipate saving 252 gallons of gasoline per year, a 31.5% savings. We are currently paying $3.18 for our gasoline so this translated to a $800 saving annually.

Additionally, due to the fact that this vehicle is in a lease plan, most of the maintenance cost are included in the lease payment. The one exception are the tires. Due to low speed turns on

campus during patrolling, tire war is excessive. This vehicle made it to just past 10, 000 miles when a new set of tires had to be purchased to replace the worn-out ones, at a cost of $500. Our calculations show that using a bike patrol for 8 hours per day on average will extend the tire life by four months. Between reduced fuel usage and extended tire life, we believe that a savings between $900 and $1000 per year is possible.

Methods:

We will accomplish our goal of demonstrating Paul Smiths College's commitment to local and global sustainability by scheduling, at a minimum, one campus safety officer on bike patrol for an eight hour shift. Of course, being in the Adirondack region, we will be constrained in our scheduling by weather conditions. It is expected that during late spring, through the summer and into early fall, an officer will be able to patrol campus on his bicycle as much as 24 hours a day. Bike Patrol Officers will be outfitted with illumination equipment and appropriate reflective clothing and devices.

We will accomplish our goal of increasing our visibility and approachability on campus by patrolling the campus as often as possible on the bicycle. The current expectation is to staff the bicycle patrol position with one officer for a minimum of eight hours per day. The Bicycle Patrol Officer will be better positioned to engage students in conversation, observe any questionable behaviors, and be easily hailed to a situation by students.

We will accomplish our goal of enhancing interaction with students, faculty, staff and visitors in a positive way by stopping to chat with members of the campus community, offer a laugh, a compliment or directions. The Bike Patrol Officer has the added advantage of meeting the campus community members where ever they may be, walking the great lawn, at the canoe ramp, gathering outside their residence hall, the athletic field, and yes, even out at the Point.

Project Budget and Timeline:

Budget Table:

Items:	Price
One bike and on-bike equipment	$1,923.00
Clothing and protective equipment For 0ne Officers	$280.00
Automatic External Defibrillator	$1,250.00
Total:	$3,453.00

Budget Justification:
Obviously to have a bike patrol we need a bicycle and the associated safety equipment. Having a legitimate bicycle patrol necessitates that the patrol bicycle is equipped with the same emergency equipment as in the current patrol vehicles. With limitations on the amount of funding we can apply for, included in this budget is the bare minimum to get this project started, one bicycle, officer safety equipment and one portable Automatic External Defibrillator. Funding to completely outfit and train the patrol unit will be sought from other sources.

Project Timeline:
Once funds are secured through this grant, the project will move forward with the purchase of the bicycle and equipment by the end of March. To get the initial project up and running previous to graduation day, bicycle patrol officers will receive initial training from The Campus Fire Safety Officer. Once the spring semester is complete, graduation ceremony passed, The Director of Campus Safety will make the necessary arrangements to have officers receive training from an outside contractor. The target date to have the Bicycle Patrol in-service is May 1, 2016

Supporting Documentation:

- Bicycle Patrols versus Car patrols, Chris Menton, 2007 http://docs.rwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=sjs_fp

Attachments:

- 10 Advantages of Bicycle Patrols, Campus Safety Magazine, 2009
- Tom Woods Article, Founding Member and Past President of the International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA)

Reference Sources:
The Complete Guide to Public Safety Cycling: Second Edition, IPMBA
Officer Tom Woodruff
NUSUP Oswego
SUNY Oswego
Chief Michael Lefancheck
Baldwinsville Police Department
Officer Robert Light
SUNY Plattsburgh Public Safety Officer
SGT Derek Osbeck
Solvay Police Department

Sustaining the Project:
Once funds are secured through this grant, the project will move forward with the purchase of the bicycle, accessories and response equipment by the end of March. Training for those campus safety officers who volunteer for the bike patrol as part of their duty assignment will be two fold. To get the initial project up and running previous to graduation day, bicycle patrol officers will receive training from the Campus Fire Safety Officer. Once the spring semester is complete, graduation ceremony passed, The Director of Campus Safety will make the necessary arrangements to have officers receive training from an outside contractor.

Current Campus Safety Officers will be canvassed to identify those who are interested in participating in the bicycle patrol program. Currently the Campus Safety Office has four officers interested in participating in this program. As the unit moves forward from its birth and matures, policies and procedures will be established to guide officer selection, continuous training, and project funding.

The costs of maintaining the equipment for this program will be minimal. The officers will be trained in conducting daily inspections of the bicycle and its equipment and taught how to perform basic maintenance tasks. For the maintenance or repair issues needed on the bike, the Campus Safety Office anticipates utilizing the Spoke and Board Club on Campus. All costs of maintaining this program beyond the grant period will be included in the budget of the Campus Safety Office.

Attachments

From Campus Safety Magazine, December 31, 2009

1. Bikes are less threatening than patrol vehicles: The novelty of a police officer on a bike is often enough to start overcoming the negative perceptions that some members of a culturally diverse campus population have about law enforcement.

Unlike patrol vehicles, which often reinforce these perceptions, bicycle patrols give an opportunity for a new impression (Menton, 2007). Most of the negative attributes associated with vehicle patrol officers - flashing lights, double parking and a noticeable wait time between arriving on scene and attending to the issue - are not associated with bicycle officers. As a result, those who come in contact with bike officers may be more cooperative and willing to listen.

2. Other bicyclists are more accepting of bike patrol officers: Cyclists can connect with bicycle officers on different levels than vehicle patrol officers. They may be more receptive to education and/or enforcement efforts related to cycling behavior and more apt to follow advice on how to prevent bike theft. These individuals might develop a camaraderie with bike patrol officers that would not occur with law enforcement personnel riding in their cars. This camaraderie is important to community-oriented policing.

3. Bicycle patrols result in more than twice as many contacts with the public than vehicle patrols (Menton, 2007): Students, faculty and staff are more likely to talk about legal matters, directions, parking information, or ask for information from a campus bicycle patrol officer. These positive contacts help counter stereotypes of police officers as "out to get you" and reinforce efforts to establish relationships of trust between the community and the department.

4. Bicycle police/security uniforms help officers to quickly transition from their traditional law enforcement duties to more service oriented work: There is no doubt that the dressed down yet authoritative appearance of a bicycle officer's shorts and shirt provides a campus constituent with a different, less threatening experience. Agencies can opt for the traditional "Class A" style or a more relaxed golf-style shirt depending on their desired image.

5. Perpetrators don't notice bike patrols: Individuals who break the law normally are not looking for bicycle officers. They are concerned with marked and unmarked squad cars (Kariya, 2004). Any bicycle patrol officer will relate story after story of riding up to crimes in progress, unnoticed or unrecognized by the perpetrators until the very last moment.

6. Bike patrols can go where traditional patrol vehicles can't: One of the biggest advantages to bicycle patrol is its ability to navigate swiftly around a campus, avoiding obstacles and

hazards that would stop a patrol vehicle in its tracks. University and college campuses are characterized by car-free zones, clusters of buildings with limited vehicle access, constant construction, events of all kinds, texting pedestrians, and people skateboarding and even bicycling into traffic.

Responding to calls in a motor vehicle can take a great deal of time, and often the car can't access a remote location or is blocked by pedestrians or other barriers. As for events, whether the situation is a sporting event, concert or student protest, bicycle police have the unmatched ability to be in the center of crowds with the means to get to other areas quickly.

7. Bicycle officers can use all of their senses to detect illegal activity: Bicycle officers encounter crime as it is happening and can see, hear and even smell clues that lead them to areas where crimes are being committed.

Brad Miller, a Lewisburg bicycle officer, describes his apprehension of a suspect, saying, "As I began to ride past a building, a [Bucknell University Public Safety] car pulled alongside. Right then, I heard something in the bushes. That's right. I HEARD something that the officer in the car would never have heard," (Miller, 2006).

8. Cycles have other uses: While essential for community policing initiatives, bike patrols can be integrated into other operations and initiatives. Targeted enforcement, surveillance, traffic enforcement, and public order are just a few ways in which bike officers can be deployed.

Even in unruly crowd situations, bike officers have a unique ability to develop a rapport with the members, defusing situations before they get out of control. When they do, bike patrol officers can not only maintain swift response times, but their bicycles can become a useful barrier. Bicycle officers are trained to hold up their bicycles at chest level while standing next to another bicycle officer. When the command is given, the bicycle officers march as one unit with the very sturdy, very light bicycle frame used as a shield (Goetz, 2002).

9. Bicycles cost much less to purchase and maintain than traditional patrol cars: The average fully equipped police bike costs around $1,000 and, properly maintained, will last for years. They don't need gas for operation, nor the full-sized parking spaces required by other vehicles.

10. Bikes provide environmental and health benefits: Because bike patrols run on human power rather than gas, their carbon footprint is much smaller than patrol cars. With zero emissions and less need for pavement, bicycle patrols may be an attractive option for campuses with green initiatives.

Additionally, bike patrol officers tend to be healthier and more physically fit than their car-bound brethren. This has the side benefit of improving the department's image and cutting down on donut jokes.

Tom Woods's article:

Anyone who spends even a few minutes at a college or university soon realizes how prevalent bicycles are on a campus. Reasons vary from economics to convenience, from versatility to effectiveness, to just plain fun. Whatever the reason, a campus' pedestrian-friendly design makes cycles the ideal conveyance for fast and easy personal transportation. The reasons they work so well for students and staff are the same reasons they work so well for campus police and security.

Police first began using mountain bikes in Seattle to combat the gridlock of a downtown construction project. They soon learned that the bikes brought them quickly and easily to places they never dreamed of policing in their squad cars. As a result, arrests went up and crime went down. Those with a penchant for committing crimes found it more difficult to find places the police couldn't or wouldn't go. In addition, the bike officers reported a greatly enhanced ability to interact with the public in a way never possible while patrolling in a car. Positive contacts increased exponentially, and the reaction to the bike officers was welcoming.

The effectiveness of police and security using mountain bikes was proven beyond question. City police and college campus public safety departments soon replaced foot beats with bike patrols. Others added bikes to the back of police cars to combine alternative patrol and response methods to the conventional ones. In most instances, bike patrol led to almost instant success.

Bike Patrols Encourage Safe Cycling

In an environment with a significant cycling population, putting police/security on bikes places officers in the midst of the community's primary mode of transportation. Trained officers encourage safe cycling behavior by setting a positive example. They also enforce cycling laws and ordinances, increasing safety for all roadway and campus facility users. Traffic in and around campus areas is historically dangerous for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists alike. Bike officers who ride correctly and enforce laws both targeting and protecting cyclists have an impact on overall traffic safety on and around the campus.

In pedestrian zones, which are present on practically all college campuses, patrol cars are impractical for all but the most serious calls. Mountain bikes enable trained officers to quickly

and easily reach most areas, including tunnels, skyways and even inside buildings where motor vehicles could never reach. As a result, response times are significantly reduced.

Most campuses have hidden or out-of-the-way places, like alleys and trails, which enable troublemakers because police/security in patrol cars can't easily reach them. Mountain bikes make access easy, even if they have to be carried or pushed a short distance. Trouble will have to find another place take root.

Mountain bikes can be used in less conventional methods of patrol as well. Plainclothes personnel riding unmarked or disguised bikes can ride or "hang out" in target areas while blending in with the community. Officers are able to observe and survey an area for particular crimes or problems, or wait for particular people. Equipment can be carried in the same sort of backpack seen everywhere on campus. The bike enables the officer to either move in quickly to make an arrest or continue surveillance on the move while summoning uniformed officers.

For campuses embracing the concepts and goals of community policing, bike patrol, used correctly, is one of the most effective tools in the community policing "toolbox." The increased presence and accessibility of the officers encourages positive contacts and interactions with all members of the campus community. And for those striving for a "greener" environment, police bikes fit the bill.

Bike officers are also uniquely qualified to combat the growing problem of bike theft. Some campuses, including the University of Wisconsin-Madison, have successfully used GPS-equipped "bait" bikes to target and reduce bicycle thefts. They report arresting nearly 50 people in the first couple years of the program. Using bike officers to provide both surveillance and arrest teams during these initiatives works well.]

BRTs Effectively Control Crowds

Within the past decade, police have discovered yet another effective use for patrol bikes: crowd management at political and sporting events. Called Bicycle Response Teams (BRTs), or "Bert" for short, they have made a noticeable difference in the ability of trouble makers to move about and function unimpeded. While first used primarily at high-profile political events, BRT methods have increasingly been adopted by regional incident response teams and smaller agencies, including campus departments.

In the spring of 2011, Virginia Commonwealth University's (VCU) basketball team advanced to "The Final Four." Twice during VCU's run, students used the games as an excuse to cause trouble. After their final loss to Butler University, a large group of students gathered around campus. A small group started fires and set off fireworks. What followed were assorted acts of violence and property destruction by a few people. It was made worse and more dangerous by the larger group there to egg them on.

VCU Police employed many of their resources, including bike teams, to control the crowds and violence. Even without specialized training and tactics, the bikes proved effective, but not nearly

as effective as they could have been with adequate numbers and the specialized BRT methods available through the International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA).

Officers Must Receive Training

There may be some truth to the old saying “It’s just like riding a bike”, but when it comes to the level of skill required of public safety cyclists, the fact is that cycling skills are perishable. If you don’t use or practice them, you will lose them. And if you were never trained how to perform the skills needed to ride a public safety bike professionally, that adage simply doesn’t apply.

Just as civilian driving and emergency vehicle operation are different, so too is police/security cycling different from regular bike riding. Officers need to be able to ride safely and legally in all types of traffic conditions. They must to be able to ride slowly and precisely through crowds of people, on sidewalks (where legal and when necessary) and through parking areas. They must be able to negotiate urban obstacles, ride up and down curbs and stairs, and avoid a seemingly endless variety of hazards. Proper training reduces the risk of falls and injuries to both the cyclists and those around them. It teaches them how to employ the bicycle tactically and technically in a wide range of scenarios.

Without training, bike officers are likely to ride around like other cyclists, doing mostly public relations and getting exercise. Once they know how to use the “tool” effectively, good, self-motivated officers will use it to its utmost advantage.

As many college and university public safety agencies have already discovered, a campus is the near perfect environment for police/security bikes, and bikes are the near-perfect vehicle for both routine patrol and rapid response. The positive contacts officers experience on bike patrol are a benefit no other patrol vehicle can duplicate. Take a look around a college campus for even a little while and you learn what the others there have figured out – bikes are the answer.

Sustaining

Like their counterparts in towns and cities across the country, many campus-based law enforcement agencies have created mountain bike patrols to serve the unique needs of their communities. And like their counterparts, they have been tremendously successful. Often it is a motivated individual who asks the questions, does the research, and gets the bike unit off and rolling. It is greeted with enthusiasm by the officers, the administration, and the campus population. Then, three or four years later, it seems to flounder. The interest from the community isn't there anymore; the officers aren't as excited as they once were. The unit coordinator must ask, "what can I do to get things going again?" This was the experience of the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) Police Department. The bike unit was begun in 1992 with excitement, but by 1997, interest from both the officers and the community was waning.

Rather than allow the bike unit to just wither up and die, the UW Police Department decided it was worth the effort to revitalize it. First, they allowed those officers who were no longer interested in riding to leave the unit. Then they began to recruit new officers from all three patrol shifts, which increased the size of the bike unit from six to fourteen. It was a sizable expansion, one that required similar growth in the unit budget in order to purchase uniforms,

bikes and equipment. Because the UW does not permit officers to ride until they have completed the International Police Mountain Bike Association's (IPMBA) Police Cyclist Course, it also required an investment in training time.

Once out on the streets, these fresh, new, aggressive officers gave the bike unit a much-needed infusion of vitality. They took so much pride in being members of the bike team that they created a modified version of the department patch for tee-shirts. The t-shirts, designed for training and off-duty wear, are in demand from other members of the department. The enthusiasm extended to the streets, sparking an improvement in unit statistics and reviving both officer and community interest. The sight of officers out in the community, interacting with the public, helped generate a positive image for the Department and the unit.

Marketing

Public interaction and recognition is just one small part of establishing an identity and keeping the energy level of the bike unit high. Marketing is also essential, especially on a college campus, when students frequently do not perceive the police - especially those on bikes - as "real cops." It was a marketing effort that finally established a strong identity for the bike unit. In early 2002, the chief of police requested a poster, similar to those produced for the University's sports teams, that highlighted the various aspects of the department.

A budget was established, and the work began with a call to the athletic department. As it turned out, the athletic department used a campus resource dedicated to these types of projects: the university's publications department. University Publications agreed to assist, and responsibility for the various aspects of the project was established. Officers from the patrol, bike, and mounted units were selected for the photo shoot to reflect the department itself, the diversity of the department, and the department's units.

The poster was well-received by members of the department and across the campus. It was posted in academic buildings, residence halls and alongside the athletic posters in the athletic department. The unmitigated success of this first poster led the Chief to request additional posters for the community officers and communications center. She also requested two crime prevention posters, one for Date Rape and the other for Theft Prevention. A total of seven posters were completed.

In August of 2002, it was decided that a new series of posters highlighting the department's various units were needed. One of the posters was to feature the bike unit and would play a pivotal role in re-establishing the department's commitment to the bike unit. Bike officers were photographed in uniform, with bikes, in front of a campus landmark building. The image emphasized the unit, but the setting tied it to the campus community. Suddenly the bike unit was enjoying celebrity status and the increased motivation that often accompanies positive feedback.

Community Involvement

The UW bike unit did not stop there, however. It built upon the foundation of the public relations campaign by actively involving itself in the community, both on- and off-campus. One

primary focus has been the promotion of safe cycling. The bike unit teamed up with officers from surrounding communities to form a task force to tackle bike safety issues. The task force was awarded a Department of Transportation grant for education and enforcement of bicycle laws; several members were certified as Law Enforcement for Bicycle Safety instructors, training other police officers about the importance of enforcing traffic laws as they relate to bicycles. Each fall, members of the unit participate in "Bike to Work" week activities around campus, again, focusing on the responsibilities of cyclists and motorists as users of the transportation system. The bike unit contributes articles about cycling issues to the department newsletter on a regular basis.

Beyond the promotion of safe cycling, members have become involved in rides for various causes. One member of the bike unit rode cross-country from Oregon to New York to raise awareness and money for Alopecia Areata, a highly unpredictable autoimmune system skin disease. The unit provided a bicycle escort for a law enforcement officer from Canada who was riding across the United States to raise awareness about autism. And every year since 1996, the University Police Bike Unit has taken a leadership role in Madison's Law Enforcement Memorial Day events.

Training

Serving as a model to other bike units is another way to call attention to a bike team and sustain the energy of its members. One of the best ways to do this is to develop a reputation as "the" place to go to for training. A university is typically endowed with all the facilities needed to host a successful training. Those facilities are usually readily available, especially during the summer months, and less costly than privately owned meeting space. Rental fees are typically not charged as the University often sees the benefit of sponsoring nationally recognized training events. Instructors can be brought in; agencies from around the state can be invited to participate. The media can be notified and will often do a story about the crime-fighting effectiveness of a well-trained bike unit. This type of coverage can educate the public about the rigorous training bike officers undergo, which may dispel the myth that bike cops are not "real" cops. That alone can be a real morale-booster.

The UW bike team agreed to host an Instructor Course for the International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA), using the university's state-of-the-art sports arena as the venue and offering lunches prepared by the same catering team which prepares the training tables for the athletes. It may sound like a lot of work, but the rewards are immense. Officers from around the region will attend the training and share their experiences with the other members of their departments. The community will see that the facilities are being used year-round and not just for sporting events. The University administration and community as a whole will see that the police department serves an active role even outside of the normal academic year. And the bike team gains credibility and, with it, respect.

Innovation

Finding new ways to utilize the bike unit also keeps officers interested and engaged, and makes it a more integrated part of the department. There is a tendency to think of bike officers solely in the context of community-oriented policing, but they can be used for so much more, as

described in series of articles that appeared in the April 2002 issue of Law & Order. One of the recent development is the use of bikes for crowd control and crowd management. Large cities, such as Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington, DC, have successfully deployed bicycle rapid response teams during large-scale demonstrations. This type of operation has so much potential and so many applications that IPMBA now offers a 40-hour training course at its annual conference. Some may believe that this type of training is unnecessary for campus police, but that is not the case. The University of Maryland at College Park is currently exploring the possibilities of developing a bike-mounted civil disturbance unit for use during sporting events to combat the type of destruction that resulted from a basketball defeat in 2002. And since college campuses have historically been the setting for the anti-war movement, it is advisable for campus police departments to be prepared to handle potentially volatile crowds.

Motivation

While promoting the bike unit and enhancing its image are critical to continued success, it is important to remember that a bike team is comprised of individual officers. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to inspire confidence and motivate the members of his or her team. Making sure the officers are properly equipped is a good start. It may not be possible to outfit them with all the new toys and gadgets, but they should at least ride high-quality bikes and wear comfortable, functional, bike-specific uniforms. And, of course, they need encouragement and a positive word. Congratulate them on making good arrests. At briefing, let them know that they are doing a great job. Volumes have been written in management books about the importance of encouragement, praise and recognition to improved employee work and morale. Listen to the concerns of the unit members as they relate to uniforms, equipment, training, operations, etc. Sometimes listening is all it takes.

Finally, motivate and reward them with additional training. If an officer possesses above-average skills and would like to become an instructor, make it happen. This will show that good work pays off and demonstrate to others that the department rewards those who put forth that extra effort. And it is worth the investment: the department will reduce the expense of training by having an in-house trainer and the bike unit will benefit from the enhanced skills that the training will provide.

Conclusion

Most bike patrols are formed as a result of the hard work of a highly motivated individual or group of individuals. At first, the members of the team are out to prove themselves and justify the unit's existence. But it is not realistic to expect a bike unit to sustain the high level of motivation it had when it started. It takes marketing, morale-building, innovation, and community involvement to keep the members of the bike team engaged and involved. With a little bit of effort, the bike team will become an integral part of the department, one that officers want to be identified with and one that plays an important role in overall departmental operations.

During the advent of the modern era of police bike patrol in the mid-to-late '80's, law enforcement agencies exploring the idea of starting a bike unit encountered a dearth of information. There were few existing units to provide information, and many departments anxious to get started were stalled in the process over important issues yet to be resolved. Bike patrol was proving to be a valuable component of the budding community policing movement - with grant money available – and some agencies took the leap, banking on what they thought they knew just to get a unit up and running.

The bike patrols that followed are grateful to those early pioneers for what has been learned from their successes and mistakes. This article is based on an accumulation of that information from departments across the country and a decade of personal experience finding the answers to the myriad questions about bike patrol that have arisen over the years.

At first glance, establishing a bike unit seemed to be a rather straightforward endeavor; just buy the bikes, find some volunteers and turn them loose on crime. How hard could it be to put cops on bikes, right? Well, unfortunately, there is far more to it than pure logistics and desire. This reality was the impetus for the creation of the International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA), the first "clearinghouse" for training and information exchange, by and for police bike officers.

Most of what was learned in the early days is now a given due in part to the advances in technologies in the bike, uniform, and related industries, but the collective experiences and knowledge of police officers and EMS riders has really set the bar for today's new public safety bike units. And although technology has changed greatly over the years, the basics of setting up and maintaining a bike unit remain the same.

Though it is not possible to cover in depth all aspects of starting a modern bike patrol in this article, the most frequently asked administrative questions will be addressed. Despite its importance, funding will not be discussed as it is beyond the scope of this article.

Justification

The first question many administrators ask officers trying to patrol on bikes is, "Why?" In the "old days," when the concept was new, justification was paramount as it seemed like a step backwards in a time of increasing computerization of law enforcement. Today, police bike units have proven that they have many functions and can offer advantages over other modes of providing public safety services.

The most obvious is the cost effectiveness of bikes versus squad cars; for example, twenty fully equipped bikes can be purchased for the price of one police car. Then there are health benefits to the riders that are indirectly passed on to the agency through less sick time used, more productivity, increased job satisfaction, etc. The list goes on as the concept is applied through various deployment strategies.

Today, the biggest issue is balancing what the unit can accomplish given the available resources against the need for the unique functions of a bike patrol. What can be expected from this

investment in manpower and capital? The answer flows from the needs of the department. Bike patrols excel at street crimes and drug interdiction, stealth patrol against property crimes, and as high visibility and public access patrol to augment community-policing initiatives.

Campuses across the country, along with parks departments and a growing number of fire departments and EMS agencies, are deploying bikes in increasing numbers. Bike officers are even used on traffic details, employing hand-held, battery-operated radar units.

Ask any veteran bike officer and he or she will have a story to tell about something they did on bikes that would not have seemed possible. In essence, bikes are adaptable to a wide variety of functions and roles in modern public safety agencies. Careful planning and management of the unit can reap many rewards on many levels.

Deployment Strategies

In creating a bike unit or expanding an existing one, the possible deployment strategies vary according to needs and circumstances. Bikes can be deployed on a part-time or full- time basis, utilized only for special projects or events, or serve as the officers' sole mode of transportation for delivering police services. They can be integrated with regular patrol as call-driven elements or as stand-alone units not responsible for responding to calls for service. Bike patrols can be high visibility crime deterrents in neighborhoods and around businesses or can be employed as specialized "stealth" units focusing on specific crimes in target areas.

Units' successes and positive public feedback has fostered the growth of smaller bike units employing one or two officers doing basic patrol duties, to much larger forces with more varied duties and purposes. Any agency that institutes a bike patrol must be prepared to respond to the requests from citizens who want the "bike officers in my neighborhood."

Fiscal

Once the unit's purpose is defined, it is easier to determine the capital outlay. Basic costs include fully-equipped bikes, complete with rear racks and packs, and head and taillights. Items carried on-bike include tool kits, pumps, spare tubes and patch kits. Outfitting the officers requires bike-specific uniforms, gunbelts, helmets, etc. In addition, specialized equipment for job-specific duties might include radar guns, handheld computers, night vision scopes, or fully-equipped trauma kits.

Maintenance costs range from a couple hundred dollars a year for a small or part-time unit, to thousands for larger, 24/7 fleets that require frequent (annual, bi-annual) replacement. If fleet maintenance will be done in-house, the initial investment for bike-specific tools, work stands, a wheel-truing stand, and other essential items must be included. The recurring costs for spare parts, lubricants, rags, and miscellaneous shop needs must also be considered. A policy governing whether the officer/mechanic(s) work for overtime/comp-time or do the work as part of their duty day must be established; this issue has payroll and manpower implications.

If the maintenance chores are to be "jobbed out", the cost of regularly scheduled periodic overhauls for each bike, along with general repairs as needed, should be part of the contract with the service provider, whether it is a local bike shop or individual contractor.

Which is more cost effective, in-house or outsource? Again, this is determined by the individual department's fiscal and manpower capacities. However, there are some issues that must be considered. Will in-house maintenance cause unexpected downtime for the bikes if the mechanics can't get to the chores due to other responsibilities? On the other hand, will the local bike shop mechanics stop what they are doing to work on a bike for an officer who needs it fixed right away? The answer may be to train all bike officers to do their own maintenance: food for thought.

How long should the bikes be kept? The factors to consider are: how often the bikes are ridden, the terrain and/or road conditions, and how the climate might affect the bikes. For example, over time, hilly terrain puts more stress on all the components than relatively flat environments. Likewise, dusty conditions (parks, off-road patrol areas) can shorten component life, while rain and harsh winter conditions can rust a steel bike frame and cause it to weaken.

The great unknown is how long a frame can last under the stresses of police riding. The mountain bike is the foundation of the police bike, and is designed for civilian recreational riding, not for the rigors of around-the-clock patrol work. The general consensus for bikes in use everyday is to replace them every three to five years. There are exceptions; some departments replace every year, while others choose to rebuild multiple times. Which is more cost effective? Considering the liability of fielding bikes that could be dangerous to ride. The bottom line is to invest in the highest quality bikes possible; they should last the longest.

Training

Aside from the purchase of quality equipment, there is no expense more important than training. To skimp on training is to put the entire program in jeopardy. Whether it is basic training for a new bike officer or an advanced tactical course, no agency can afford the liability of putting officers on bikes without a proper indoctrination to the multifaceted aspects of patrolling on bikes. Even the most accomplished recreational mountain bike rider/racer will admit to learning something from a course like the IPMBA Police Cyclist Course.

A big mistake many agencies make is to stop training after the basic course. Training must continue in the form of in-service and annual re-certification, but advanced courses are just as important to bike officers as they are to other specialized public safety occupations. Regularly scheduled in-service training and periodic re-qualification are the best hedge against out-of-shape, injury-prone officers who might tempt fate if left to train on their own. Out-of-shape officers with rusty skills are a liability not only to their own safety, but also to other officers or citizens who might need their help. Keep the "failed to train" lawsuits at bay: train frequently.

Departments which opt for in-house maintenance should send the fleet mechanic(s) to a bike maintenance/overhaul course. There are several national schools available and IPMBA offers a four-day Maintenance Officer Certification Course designed for establishing a maintenance program specifically for police equipment. What's the difference? Remember, many police bikes are ridden 24/7 as compared to bikes ridden recreationally two or three times a week: The maintenance is more intensive and frequent, and the bikes require adjustment and replacement of components much sooner.

Logistics
One would be amazed at the number of officers who have started a bike unit, acquired the equipment, then realized they had no place to store it all. Storage space is essential, yet frequently overlooked. Obviously, this is determined by where the unit will be based: Will it be headquarters, a community office, the city garage, or a closet behind the jail?

Securable space should be provided for bikes, tools, spares, and other related equipment.

Receptacles to plug in the chargers for the headlight batteries are a necessity. Related equipment might include car-mounted racks for use in transporting the bikes to their area of deployment. Most racks are cumbersome and take up space, but if they are left on the cars, the weather will deteriorate the straps and rubber components, so they should be stored when not in use.

Outside bike storage is not advisable for the same reason cited for the car-racks. If they must be kept outside, they should be protected by a lean-to roof or a tarp to prevent direct exposure to the sun and rain. Long-term storage over the winter in unridable climates should be indoors if at all possible. Some departments issue their bikes to officers to take home, thereby eliminating the storage problem, but it might cost them in transport rack purchases.

For departments planning in-house maintenance, a shop area is an important consideration. It should have ample room for a workstation and tools, storage for spare parts, wheels, and other components; a bench with a vise and truing-stand, electricity, hot and cold water, and good ventilation.

SOP
The second most frequently asked question is, "Where can I get copies of bike patrol SOPs?" Having copies of various departments' bike patrol general or special orders can be useful, but it is important to keep in mind that what fits one agency does not always work for another. However, there are some basic areas that should be covered when creating bike unit SOPs.

Include a broad policy statement defining the purpose and scope of the bike patrol. This policy should be written with the future in mind; many small units grow over time in numbers and scope and a narrow policy focus can stunt that growth.

Next, define the bike officer profile, which becomes part of the selection criteria. For example, the ideal bike officer may have the following profile: self-motivating, productive work ethic; good physical condition and a willingness to continually improve same; good public relations skills. The next step is to lay out the selection process, including all prerequisites.

Other basic elements of the policy are the general duties of the unit, the hours of operation, adverse weather prohibitions, special assignments, and maintenance requirements.

Past experience has shown that it is wise to regulate the use of the bike uniform for various assignments. Bike uniforms are generally more expensive than standard issue so, unless your budget permits, it is good idea to make them last as long as possible. Uniform issues to address include: Can a bike officer still wear the bike uniform when relegated to the car due to

inclement weather or indoor assignment, or on an off-duty assignment where the bike is not part of the assignment? Can he/she wear the bike jacket with the regular uniform when not on the bike? Some of these questions may already be covered in the regular uniform policy but bike officers tend to be free thinkers who love their equipment, so it is best to cover all the possibilities up front.

As mentioned earlier, training is as important as the mission of the unit. The policy should include training mandates naming the course approved for basic training (such as the IPMBA P.C. Course), the frequency of in-service training and re-certification, the inclusion of bike-specific firearms training, and administrative actions for failure to pass re-certification or in-service training.

These are some of the basics, but the department's individual situation (POST, accreditation requirements, etc.) will dictate the inclusiveness of the bike patrol policy.

Officer Selection

Because of the unique, demanding – and usually public – role of bike patrol, bike units must be staffed by highly motivated officers. Bike units require officers who will promote the unit in the eyes of the department and the public by their demeanor, their activities, and their accomplishments. These officers become the foundation for and continue to fortify the unit's success.

When staffing a bike team, it is important to identify the desired job skills and personal qualities of the "ideal" bike officer. Those skills and/or qualities that comprise an "ideal" bike officer are often driven by the unit's purpose and goals, for example, drug interdiction, community oriented policing, or general patrol. Pre-requisite training may be defined and periodic requalifications established for those bike officers working in a specialized capacity.

Many agencies use oral boards to identify or pre-qualify bike officer candidates before submitting them to physical readiness tests. Good bike officer candidates should practice good work ethics and be results-oriented, self-motivated, team players. Because they are highly visible and have close contact with the public and the media, good interpersonal communications skills are important. These skills are essential for community oriented policing practitioners who are frequently called upon to speak to citizen groups or conduct bicycle safety presentations for children. In addition, because they typically roll up on crimes in progress, bike officers must be able to react quickly from a tactical standpoint. They must possess excellent knowledge of the laws of arrest, search and seizure, drug laws, use of force, etc., in order to be effective.

From a risk management perspective, requiring candidates to submit to a medical examination and/or a stress test can identify health problems not conducive to the rigors of bike patrol work. A physical exam can show potential problem areas such as high blood pressure, asthmatic conditions, or back problems; and a stress test on a treadmill can ascertain the officer's aerobic fitness level. Together, these tests yield the best assessment of a candidate's suitability for bike patrol duty.

Recently IPMBA has employed the “Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire” (PAR-Q) for bike school candidates to fill out prior to enrolling in the basic IPMBA Police Cyclist Course. The form consists of questions requiring “yes” and “no” answers about the officer’s health history. If the candidate answers “yes” to any of the questions, a medical clearance form must be completed by the officer’s medical professional before he or she is allowed to participate in the class.

The medical and stress testing can be expensive, especially if multiple candidates need to be screened. Another, less scientific, way to accomplish the same end is to create on-bike, pre-training assessment exercises. Physical readiness and bike-handling skills can be assessed, and areas in which improvement is needed can be identified before the officer is admitted into the actual bike training course.

These prerequisite courses can be designed by active bike officers who are familiar with the levels of fitness and proficiency required for a candidate to be successful in the basic training course. Some departments use a “time trial,” in which officers must ride a certain distance within a given time limit; others use a cone course to test the candidate’s ability to negotiate slow speed turns or operate within a confined area as a reflection of the officer’s bike handling skills.

Frequently, the question arises: what level of fitness is required to be an effective bike patrol officer? This question is often followed by the almost inevitable comparison of -- and debate over -- the physical requirements of bike officers vs. those of SWAT or tactical officers. In reality, many bike officers are also SWAT Team members, and the jobs share many of the same physical demands.

It may be argued that SWAT officers may need more upper body strength for climbing, while bike officers need more leg speed and endurance for crosstown pursuits, for instance. Nevertheless, both bike and SWAT team members must have high aerobic capacity and must be able to sustain composure under the stress of anaerobic activity. Bike officers arriving at the scene of a crime in progress after a hard ride must have strength left to assist another officer or a citizen, affect an arrest or, ultimately, defend themselves against aggression.

Developing these physical abilities for both bike and SWAT officers comes from the same kinds of training and cross training, e.g., running, road cycling, off-road cycling, resistance training, swimming, and participation in such team sports as basketball and football.

Officers should not rely on duty time to maintain their fitness levels; rather, off-duty time should be set aside to work on strength and cardiovascular levels at least three times per week.

Once officers are selected and assigned to the bike unit, their training must not cease. Many departments ignore an important element of keeping a bike unit’s proficiency at a high level – regularly scheduled in-service bike training. In addition to basic skill drills and arrest tactics, bike officers should train off-road as often as possible. More bike-handling decisions (shifting, braking, pedaling cadence, body position, etc.) are made in one mile of off-road riding than in ten miles on the street.

In summary, the officer selection process is perhaps the single most important element of creating or sustaining a bike patrol unit, for it is the officers' commitment and dedication to the concept that ultimately ensures its success.

Summary

Although starting a bike patrol may seem simple, there is much more than meets the eye. Departments in the process of or thinking of starting a bike patrol would do well to conduct careful research and rely on the expertise of the members of the largest bike patrol organization in the world, IPMBA, to help in making those tough decisions.

Tom Woods, a founding member and past president of IPMBA, has been in law enforcement for 22 years and in bike patrol since 1990. Representing IPMBA, he started the first mountain bike patrol in the former Soviet Union in 1994, a 100-officer unit in Rwanda, Africa; and a unit in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia.

Cost work sheets:

ITEM NAME	Price
Pedal retention device: Toe clips	$63.00
Audible Warning devices	$54.00
Panniers: double side bag	$90.00
Rack	$40.00
Bar Ends	$25.00
Rear-mount Kickstand	$20.00
Water Bottle cages	$20.00
Cyclo-computers	$80.00
Trauma O2 Ems trunk bag	$125.00
AED Pannier bag	$125.00
Lights: Front and Rear	$150.00
Vehicle lockout kit	$60.00
Bicycle lock	$71.00
	$1,000.0
Mountain Bike	0

Total:		$1,923.00

Source: Trek Bikes
Source: Police bike.com
Source: Placid Planet

Protective Clothing			PRICE
Bike patrol shirts	$50 ea.	2	$100.00
Cycling Shorts	pants that unzip into shorts	1	$100.00
Cycling Pants		1	$80
Helmet		1	$280.00
TOTAL			

Source: 5-11.com
Source: Placid Planet

Automatic External Defibrillator $1,250.00