



Date: February 12, 2020

To: Rep. Sarah Copeland Hanzas, House Committee on Government Operations
Andrea Hussey, Committee Assistant

From: Karen Gennette, CRG | karen@crgvt.org | 802-747-8659

Re: Traffic Stop & Race Data

MEMO Regarding Traffic Stop and Race Data

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the data submission process for traffic stop and race data and the requirements under the Fair and Impartial Policing Statute, 20 V.S.A. § 2366. Crime Research Group (CRG) was selected by the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council as the vendor to receive the traffic stop and race data from law enforcement agencies (LEAs). CRG has been working with the LEAs to create standardized, analyzable excel spreadsheets for posting on a public website, currently the CRG website (www.crgvt.org/tsrd). This work was funded through a Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) grant that was awarded to the Department of Public Safety (DPS) who then contracted with CRG to provide services. Additional funding was provided by a Governor's Highway Safety Grant/AOT to CRG. No state funding was appropriated for this work.

Improving the data collection process:

When the Fair and Impartial Policing statute was implemented, Act 147 stated, "...law enforcement agencies shall work with the Criminal Justice Training Council and a vendor chosen by the Council with the goals of collecting uniform data, adopting uniform storage methods and periods, and ensuring that data can be analyzed." The Act also stated: "On or before September 1, 2016, every State, local, county, and municipal law enforcement agency shall collect roadside stop data..." The LEAs interpreted this to mean that the data were to be extracted for September 1 to August 30 each year.

Vermont LEAs primarily use two computer aided dispatch/records management systems (CAD/RMS) called Spillman (vendor is Motorola) and Valcour (vendor is Crosswind). Approximately 36 law enforcement agencies use each system. Three agencies are on what is known as "little Spillman." CRG worked with LEAs to streamline the process. Below is a year by year update on the progress.

2016: This was the first year CRG received the data extracts. There were 72 data files submitted with tickets and warnings for September 1 through August 30. Some submissions were handwritten, some in pdf format, some in excel, and some data were sent by letter. For LEAs requiring help to extract the data, CRG, DPS, and Crosswind provided technical assistance.

After receiving the 2015/2016 data for different dates and in a variety of formats, CRG asked LEAs to send the **2017** data for the calendar year. DPS extracted the traffic stop and race data for the LEAs using Spillman, and Crosswind created a customized report for Valcour agencies and sent instructions to the LEAs on how to extract the data. Even so, many Valcour agencies struggled with the extraction and needed assistance which was provided. The Valcour agencies used the same standardized excel format and these files were posted separately for each agency.

In **2018**, DPS extracted one excel spreadsheet for most LEAs using Spillman. VSP, Essex PD, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife are in separate excel spreadsheets. Several LEAs switched from Valcour back to Spillman so for 2018 their data are in both systems which is noted alongside their published data. Valcour agencies submitted their data and they are posted in separate excel spreadsheets.

The plan for **2019** is for CRG to work with the Valcour CAD/RMS vendor, Crosswind, to extract the traffic stop and race data into one excel spreadsheet. This alleviates each agency having to extract its own data and this will provide a standardized, more easily analyzable format. The LEAs using the Spillman CAD/RMS will continue to have their data extracted in a minimum number of spreadsheets.

Posting the Traffic Stop and Race Data

The statute required that the organization receiving the data, post the data. CRG posted the data on its website. In 2019, CRG inquired about posting the data on the Vermont State website: Vermont.data.gov. This is currently being explored.

Additional Traffic Stop and Race Data Fields

In 2019, CRG requested additional data fields be added to 20 V.S.A. 2366. CRG worked with the chiefs and sheriffs to obtain approval for the request. The rationale behind this request is that CRG has completed several analyses using best practices in the field and has determined that these fields - already collected by law enforcement - will be helpful for researchers and citizens who use the data. The additional data will allow for a more robust and accurate analysis of traffic stop and race data. In December 2019, the Chiefs and Sheriffs agreed to approve the additional fields through an MOU. The following data fields were approved:

- Date, time, and location of the stop is a way to determine and eliminate duplicates and needed to conduct the veil of darkness analysis.
- Make, model, and year of vehicle can explain disparities in vehicle equipment stops.
- State of the vehicle plate will allow researchers to remove out of state vehicles from any analysis involving Vermont census data.
- State and town of residence of the driver will allow researchers to remove out of jurisdiction drivers from analysis using Vermont census data.
- Underlying violation - the current broad categories of vehicle stops may be concealing differences.

CRG also requested “reason for the arrest” and “type of contraband found.” CRG met with representatives from the Valcour and VIBRS (Spillman) Governance Boards to review the data and discovered that these two fields can only be extracted manually in Spillman. The representatives from the Governance Boards shared that LEAs are willing to produce non-personally identifiable data is that available and easy to extract from the systems.

DPS has recently released its Public Safety Modernization Strategy. One of the benefits anticipated in the plan is to realize administrative cost savings over time. This is, in part, brought about by consolidating some support functions including information technology systems and sharing technology. The plan to use one CAD/RMS for law enforcement agencies would alleviate the struggle that the LEAs currently have to provide traffic stop and race data, improve data quality, increase access to the data for the public and researchers, and allow for more robust analyses of the data.