

Maryville Police Department

Home Fleet (Take Home Car) Program

The purpose of this study was to analyze the feasibility of a home fleet (take home car) program. Benefits and costs of such a program were identified and reviewed, both in relation to home fleet programs in existence in other cities and the impact such a program would have on the City of Maryville.

Home Fleet Programs

Home fleet programs have been around for many years but have grown in popularity over the last few years. A home fleet program is usually touted as a community policing program. Even while parked at the officer's residence, the vehicle is visible. Realistically, the vehicles are soon recognized by the criminal element as being take-home cars and have little effect as a deterrent to crime. However, the public's fear of crime usually relies on perception, and home fleet vehicles continue to *appear to be a crime deterrent to the public*.

Home fleets allow more rapid response for officers called back to duty. The City of Clarksville experienced a devastating tornado last year. Off-duty police officers were able to quickly respond to duty. The officers were able to contact the dispatcher for duty assignments while en route, rather than having to go to the station first. Without the home fleet vehicles, there would not have been enough police vehicles for the officers to use in dealing with the emergency.

More and more cities are going to home fleet programs. In the immediate area, Knoxville, Blount County, and Knox County all have home fleets. Around the state, Nashville, Clarksville and Kingsport and numerous smaller departments all have home fleet programs. While the vehicles should never be viewed as a benefit, the fact remains that officers do benefit from having take-home vehicles. Departments attempting to recruit and *retain* high quality police officers are at a disadvantage when competing with other agencies with a home fleet program.

The City of Kingsport tracked the total vehicle cost of their home fleet (including initial purchase price, gasoline usage, regular maintenance and major repairs) and realized a few cents per mile savings in comparison with traditional fleet vehicles driven two or three shifts per day.

City of Maryville

The department currently has 37 police officers. Of this number, the police chief, three Captains and the on-call detective take their vehicles home. The other detectives are assigned cars, but the cars are left at the police department.

There are nine patrol cars assigned to the patrol division. The cars are generally replaced every other year. The staff police cars are replaced less frequently, but the city can expect to purchase five or six new police cars each year. The police cars to be replaced are traded to the auto dealer when the new cars are replaced. The used police cars average around 65,000 to 70,000 miles at the time they are traded. Many police departments retain police cars through 100,000 miles or more. Trading the vehicles at the lower mileage probably enhances the resale value of the cars.

The small size of the current fleet would not allow the department to deploy additional personnel in the event of an emergency, such as a tornado. The higher resale value of the late model, low mileage police cars must be weighed against the value of retaining extra vehicles. Even if the city does not institute a home fleet program, several additional cars would allow for additional deployment in emergencies and special events.

Analysis of Home Fleet Program

Since the city trades vehicles before the police cars are completely “worn out,” they can simply keep the old vehicles and begin assigning those cars as take-home cars. The initial expense for the cars would be the loss of trade-in or resale value. There would be cost involved in outfitting the new cars since the vehicle equipment would be moved from the old car to the new car. Actually, most of the equipment, light bars, sirens, radios, etc., will last much longer in a home fleet program. High technology equipment, such as the mobile data terminals would also last longer, but advancing technology makes high technology equipment obsolete long before it is worn out. The mobile data terminals (or laptops) and the in-car video cameras are the biggest obstacle to implementing a home fleet program. The high initial cost and the need for replacing the equipment because of rapid obsolescence will substantially increase the cost of the home fleet vehicles. It is entirely possible, even likely, that mobile data terminals will need to be replaced before the end of the useful life of the home fleet vehicle.

Cost for adding additional vehicles:

Police cruiser	Negligible*
Emergency light bar	\$ 750.00
Light control	\$ 70.00
Mobile police radio	\$ 250.00
Siren amplifier and speaker	\$ 250.00
Security screen	\$ 280.00
Equipment box with: first aid, evidence collection, etc	<u>\$ 285.00</u>
Total equipment:	\$1,885.00

* The cost of adding vehicles would be the trade-in value of the car not traded.

Optional equipment:

Radar unit	\$2,000.00
In-car video camera	\$5,000.00
Mobile Data Terminal	\$3,000.00

While these last equipment items are “optional,” they are important pieces of equipment and should not be eliminated.

Many departments with home fleet vehicles see a minimum useful life for police vehicles of seven years. Rather than replacing vehicles after a specific period of time, an ideal replacement schedule would set a minimum benchmark time for replacement, but the vehicle would remain in service after that date as long as the annual maintenance costs remain below a benchmark figure.

Aside from the cost of mobile data terminals, the Maryville Police Department would benefit operationally and financially from a home fleet program. The cost of mobile data terminals and the rapid obsolescence of that type of technology will likely increase the cost of the program far too much to result in long-term financial savings.

This leaves operational benefits as the primary criteria for implementing a home fleet program. Operational benefits include:

- 1) increased visibility, helping citizens feel safer.
- 2) availability and usefulness of off-duty personnel -
 1. officers can respond to emergency calls while commuting;
 2. officers can respond more quickly when called in off-duty;
 3. officers can report directly to whatever location they are most needed;
 4. and called-in officers will be productive, rather than sitting around the station or riding with an on-duty officer.
- 3) the city will enjoy a greater deployment of personnel in marked patrol cars in the event of an emergency or special event.

Secondary benefit: the use of a vehicle for commuting becomes a side-effect benefit. This may become critical in attracting and retaining police personnel, given the number of other departments with home fleet programs.

Note: The time spent commuting to work in a home-fleet vehicle is not compensable, unless the officer responds to a call for service while commuting. Obviously, this would have to be controlled by policy to prevent abuse.

Options

1. The city could “phase in” a home fleet program. Police vehicles that would normally be traded as new police vehicles are purchased could be retained. The cost to the city would include the loss of the trade-in value and the cost of equipping the new car, since equipment from the older car would not be transferred. Actually, the cost of new equipment should not be considered at full cost. While most of the vehicle equipment can be moved from one car to another, it must be replaced periodically. Replacement cycles for equipment vary, and it is difficult to predict the cost long-term.

Since the vehicles that would initially be used to build the home fleet will already have 65,000 to 75,000 miles, it is unlikely that they will last for five more years. Starting at about year four, the city would have to allocate one or two of the new vehicles to replace home fleet vehicles, rather than using them to add to the fleet. Depending on the longevity of the former traditional fleet vehicles converted to home fleet vehicles, it should take about seven years to fully implement a home fleet program.

If this type of program is implemented, all officers living in the county should be allowed to drive the vehicles home. The cost to the city for the commute outside the city is negligible in relation to the benefit to the city and the officer.

2. Over the next two or three years, the city could retain the best of the cars scheduled to be replaced, and these could be issued to senior police officers. While not a department-wide home fleet, this would achieve part of the benefits of a home fleet. The program would not necessarily serve as an incentive in attracting employees, but it would serve as a retention incentive. The city could require officers assigned a take-home car in a limited home fleet program to live in town. This would create an incentive for officers to live in town.

Recommendations

1. Allow officers with assigned cars to drive them home.
2. Implement a partial home fleet program:
 1. Retain the two or three best vehicles scheduled to be traded over the next two or three years. (Total of six vehicles).
 2. Assign these vehicles to the most senior officers. (Those living outside the county would leave the vehicles at the police station. Those living inside the county would take the vehicles home.)
 3. Track the maintenance costs of the retained vehicles for comparison with the newer traditional fleet vehicles.
 4. Establish a maintenance cost benchmark for use in determining the end of the useful life of these vehicles.

Sample Home Fleet Policy

GENERAL ORDER

Use of Vehicles Owned by the _____ Department

16.00 The purpose of this order is to establish policy and procedure for the most efficient use of motor vehicles of the _____.

16.0 1 ASSIGNMENT

A. Individual

1. Vehicles will be assigned in a manner which will insure maximum utilization toward the achievement of the Police Department goals.
2. Vehicles will be assigned to individuals for full time retention and use only on approval of the Police Chief.

(Optional) ONLY OFFICERS LIVING INSIDE THE CORPORATE CITY LIMITS OF THE TOWN/CITY OF _____ WILL BE ALLOWED TO DRIVE THE POLICE VEHICLES HOME. ALL OTHER OFFICERS WILL PARK THE VEHICLES AT THE POLICE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS.

(Optional) ONLY OFFICERS LIVING WITHIN _____ COUNTY WILL BE ALLOWED TO DRIVE THE POLICE VEHICLES HOME. ALL OTHER OFFICERS WILL PARK THE VEHICLES AT THE POLICE DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS.

3. Assignment of vehicles to individuals will be considered as a privilege to be enjoyed as long as all rules and regulations are obeyed.
4. Vehicle shall be assigned to each officer individually and shall not be utilized by any other officer unless approved by the Police Chief.

B. Police Department Vehicles must at all times display the issued authorized license tag. Unmarked vehicles will display government tags unless otherwise authorized by the Police Chief.

16.02 DRIVER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. No member shall operate a Department vehicle without a valid Tennessee Drivers License issued to said member, and on his person at the time of operation.
- B. All employees and/or passengers occupying the front seat of a Police Department Vehicle will wear a seat belt at all times, whether on or off duty, while the vehicle is in operation.
- C. Driver's will not leave vehicles unattended with keys in the ignition, nor leave the motor idling for extended periods, as it is damaging to engines. It is also the responsibility of each driver to insure the following methods for reducing fuel consumption are strictly adhered to :
 - 1. Strict observation of the speed limit.
 - 2. Reduce unnecessary idling of vehicles.
 - 3. Avoid over-acceleration of starting of vehicles.
 - 4. Reduce the use of the car whenever possible for other than police business.
- D. Officers using Police Department vehicles will be responsible for the following:
 - 1. Reporting all deficiencies promptly to the Police Chief, via the established chain of command. Deficiencies will be reported on a standardized maintenance form.
 - 2. Keeping a detailed maintenance log on their assigned vehicle.

16.03 ACCIDENTS

- A. Reporting
 - 1. All accidents involving vehicles must be reported immediately, and a supervisory officer called to the scene.
 - 2. All accidents involving Police Department vehicles will be worked by Tennessee Highway Patrol or the Sheriff's Department. All accidents will be reported as soon as possible to the Chief. This - notification will be the responsibility of the operator of the vehicle.
 - 3. All accident reports must include a statement of the facts from the driver of the vehicle and supervisory officer called to the scene.

4. It will be the responsibility of the driver involved in the accident to submit, through the proper channels to the Police Chief, all reports pertaining to any damage to the vehicle.

B. Arrest

1. Personnel involved in accidents with a Department vehicle will not issue a summons or make an arrest of the driver of the vehicle for a traffic violation. This will be the responsibility of the investigating officer.
2. In cases where the driver of the Department vehicle actually observes the other driver commit a traffic violation, which causes the accident, the driver of the Department vehicle shall appear in court and testify.
3. Make no statements, except to authorized persons.

16.04 VEHICLE TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

- A. Police Department vehicles will be parked in designated areas only.
- B. Operators of vehicles shall use utmost care, be on the lookout for, and yield the right-of-way to pedestrians.
- C. The operator will adhere to all traffic laws and regulations.

16.05 PERSONAL VEHICLE PROGRAM

A. Goals

1. *Promote the security of the citizens of by greater visibility and presence of vehicles on the streets and highways.*
2. *Increase police/community relations through mutual understanding of Police Department's objectives by increased personal contacts and services performed by the members.*
3. *Deter crime by limiting the opportunity of criminals to commit an act by the presence of more vehicles.*
4. *Provide quicker response time to certain types of calls and therefore increase the opportunity to apprehend criminals.*
5. *Reduce the yearly mileage on each vehicle, therefore increasing vehicle life.*

6. *Reduce maintenance cost on each vehicle in the fleet.*
7. *Provide quicker response of off-duty personnel when called back to duty because of an emergency.*
8. *Provide increased incentive and morale of officers participating in the program.*
9. *Maintain vehicles in top condition through preventive maintenance and personalized assignment.*

B. Police

1. *Vehicles are assigned to an officer on a regular basis. A vehicle shall mean any automobile of motor driven wheeled conveyance of the _____ P.D.*
2. *The use of the vehicles while off duty shall be considered a privilege and not an automatic fringe benefit or employment right.*
3. *Unmarked vehicles will be used only for transportation to and from work and official business.*
4. *Marked vehicles may be driven when an officer is off duty if he is in uniform and WHEN NOT IN UNIFORM, FOR OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT BUSINESS ONLY. (Examples: Maintenance, court appearances, etc.) See 6.06 below.*

C. General regulations, vehicle operation, and maintenance regulations

1. *General regulations*
 - a. *Officer will not presume any special privileges with a vehicle while off duty.*
 - b. *Unattended vehicles of off duty officers must be locked at all times, and weapons, portable radios, and other valuables will be removed from the vehicle or locked in the trunk. The above items will be removed from the vehicle if it is left at the garage for repair.*
 - c. *General orders pertaining to officer on duty will also apply to officers off duty when driving a Police Department vehicle.*
 - d. *Vehicle will be used outside of _____ city limits ONLY on official business.*

- e. *Vehicle will not be utilized for carrying heavy or excessive loads and will not have objects protruding from the trunk or windows.*
- f. *Officers participating in the program are subject to call outs.*
- g. *The Chief of Police may add, delete, or revise vehicle rules/regulations as needed to provide current policy to cover situations regarding needs of the Department.*

2. *Vehicle operation regulations*

- a. *All officers assigned vehicles on a personal basis shall exercise good judgment in utilizing them and shall not drive, use, or park vehicles in such a manner that will cause unfavorable comment or reflect discredit upon the department.*
- b. *Officer operating vehicles off duty on official business should be appropriately attired to effectively perform a police function while at the same time presenting a favorable public image.*
- c. *Only authorized personnel are permitted to operate vehicles.*
- d. *Off duty officers will monitor the frequency of the Police Department while they are traveling at all times and restrict radio communications to Departmental business only.*
- e. *Officers using vehicles off duty are required to check in or out of service and must advise the dispatcher when they are near an emergency, call for service.*
- f. *Passenger safety rests solely with the officer operating the vehicle.*
- g. *If responding to a felony call with non-sworn personnel as passengers the officers will first deposit the passenger at a convenient location and then respond to the call consistent with Department regulations. In all such cases, the officer will notify headquarters that he is responding.*
- h. *Emergency runs will not be made while the vehicle is occupied by passengers. (this does not apply when other sworn members of the Department or injured or ill persons*

are riding as passenger while said vehicle operator is making an emergency run to protect life and property)

- I. When responding to a call involving a felony while off duty, officers may be required to handle the call in order to best preserve and/or handle evidence and maintain continuity.*
- j. Off duty units are responsible for handling or referring to an on duty car, all incidents coming to their attention and, if the incident is referred, for the rendering of any aid necessary until on duty units arrive.*

3. Maintenance regulations

- a. Before any adjustments or maintenance are made the Police Chief must be contacted.*
- b. Receipt for repairs made should be turned in directly to the Police Chief.*
- c. Officers assigned vehicles shall be fully responsible for the general maintenance and proper care of the vehicle. They shall refrain from:
 - 1. Making anything but minor adjustments.*
 - 2. Altering the body, general design, appearance, markings, or mechanical or electrical systems.*
 - 3. Making any repairs or having any repairs made to the vehicle other than at the authorized garage.*
 - 4. Using fuel, oil, lubricant, or other liquid additives in the vehicle other than those authorized by the Department.*
 - 5. Removing, altering, or repositioning equipment supplied within and outside the vehicle.*
 - 6. Adding equipment which is not Department owned or supplied (i.e. extra radio receivers, gun mounts, speakers, antennas, and other add on equipment), unless approved by the Police Chief.**
- d. Officers will be responsible for the appearance and cleanliness of vehicles, both interior and exterior. The vehicle will be kept clean at all times.*

- e. *Officers with take home vehicles:*

 - 1. *Will have vehicle washed at the Police Department. All vehicles shall be kept as clean as possible. (inside and outside).*
 - 2. *Are required to schedule all maintenance, service or repairs done during duty time when possible. Work should be scheduled with the garage prior to taking vehicles in for service, if possible.*

- f. *Officers shall at all times drive vehicles with reasonable prudence in order to maintain them at the highest degree of operating efficiency.*
- g. *Damage of any type to vehicles caused by negligence of officers will be cause for disciplinary action.*
- h. *Damage to any vehicle for which the officer is not at fault will be handled by the Department at no expense to the Police Officer.*
- i. *Willful negligence on the part of officers in the care or operation of vehicles or failure to follow rules and regulations will be cause for taking away vehicle assignment privileges.*

16.06 USE OF POLICE VEHICLE IN OFF-DUTY EMPLOYMENT

- 3) Generally, officers are prohibited from using city owned police vehicles when performing outside employment. This includes commuting to and from an off-duty, outside job.
- 4) In some circumstances, the Chief of Police may determine that the use of a city owned police vehicle in a police officer's outside employment would benefit the community and/or enhance the safety of the community.

An example of such an instance would be using the police vehicle to assist in directing traffic around a roadway construction site when the officer has been hired by the construction company or utility company to provide traffic control.

- 1) Officer must obtain the permission of the Chief of Police prior to using the police vehicle in an off-duty, outside employment capacity.

- 2) Officer must be attired in appropriate police uniform, readily identifiable as an officer of the _____ Police Department.
- 3) As with all other outside employment, officers will be governed by the policies, procedures and rules and regulations of the _____ Police Department.