Memorandum

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Date: March 22, 2017

Agenda Item No. 2(B)4
April 4, 2017

To: Honorable Chairman Esteban L. Bovo, Jr.
And Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

Subject: Feasibility Study to Examine Equipping Miami-Dade Police Department Vehicles with Dashboard Cameras – Directive 151481

The following information is provided in response to Resolution No. R-889-15 adopted by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) on October 6, 2015, directing the County Mayor to conduct a feasibility study to examine equipping Miami-Dade County police vehicles with dashboard cameras and to provide a written report to the Board.

The use of dashboard cameras (DCs) by law enforcement officers offers potential advantages in keeping officers safe by enabling situational awareness, improving community relations and accountability, and providing evidence for successful prosecution. Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) staff has explored the utilization of DCs for patrol vehicles. Numerous publications, studies, and magazine articles have been reviewed, market research of companies providing DCs has been conducted, and contact was made with other local, state, and out-of-state police departments that are utilizing DCs. Additionally, other departments' policies have been reviewed including the International Association of Chiefs of Police Technology Technical Assistance Program for In-Car Cameras.

MDPD currently has a fleet of approximately 3,000 vehicles consisting of marked, unmarked sedans, trucks, motorcycles, and specialty vehicles. Approximately 1,800 of these vehicles are marked police vehicles that are normally used to conduct traffic enforcement, respond to calls for service, and conduct proactive patrol. Quotes were obtained for 1,800 DC from two (2) County vendors. The DCs are costly, averaging $4,300.00 to $4,700.00 per vehicle, with a potential fiscal impact of $8.5 million (cost excludes installation, warranty, equipment replacement, and video storage).

The operating costs associated with DC systems will also vary depending on the vendor selected by MDPD. Some DC systems provide cloud-based storage which is estimated to cost about $3.60 a year per gigabyte while other systems allow storage of data on a server. According to Miami-Dade County's Information Technology Department, if the department maintains the system, it would cost approximately $8.40 a year per gigabyte. Additionally, a server which would hold approximately 96,000 gigabytes (96 Terabytes) would cost around $100,000.00. One of the main advantages of having a cloud-based storage system is that it includes several back-up systems to ensure the data is available. The purchase of a server would incur additional costs for backing up the data somewhere else. However, body worn cameras have an average cost of $780.00 each per year, totaling an estimated cost of $1.4 million for 1,800 police officers (cost includes warranty, maintenance, equipment replacement, and video storage).

There are advantages and disadvantages to the use of the DC systems. One of the advantages of this system is that it provides unbiased evidence during interactions between law enforcement and the public. DCs allow officers to record traffic stops, pursuits, and all other police activity that takes place in front of their vehicle. DCs record video and audio; however, they are stationary and captures only a limited viewing field area. Some body-worn camera manufacturers offer a mounting station which can be installed on the dashboard to act as a dashboard camera, allowing multi-positioning to include toward the rear of the car to monitor the prisoner's activity while being transported. A 2014 statistical report of MDPD call data shows that, out of the 626,625 calls for service, only 54,313 were calls resulting in an interaction within the limited viewing field area of the police vehicle DC. Using this data, approximately 8.67 percent of police activity takes place in front of police vehicles, while 91.33 percent takes place outside the view of the DCs. During an interaction, if a law enforcement officer and civilian leave the available field of vision, the DC will not capture that video footage, but it will capture the audio recording. These recordings could provide useful information for the officers to review before completing their offense incident report and arrest affidavits.

The time necessary to equip all police vehicles with DCs would be lengthy. It is anticipated that a vendor would be able to equip 20 police vehicles per week. At that rate, it will take approximately 21 months to complete the full implementation of DCs. An implementation schedule ensuring the availability of loaner vehicles would need to be established for installation period.

Another concern of implementing the DC system would be the cost associated with installing this technology into aging vehicles. The approximate installation cost for equipping our entire marked fleet with the DCs is $936,000, which is $520 per vehicle. With the projected five-year vehicle purchase plan, it would be necessary to initially equip approximately 900 aging vehicles. Not only will this incur a cost, but potentially there will be additional charges for the subsequent removal of DCs previously installed in retiring vehicles. The body-worn cameras do not have any installation cost as they will be issued individually to officers, allowing several wear applications. Additionally, some body-worn camera vendors have optional dash mounting equipment available.

According to the IACP/COPS Technology Technical Assistance Program study and communications with several police departments utilizing DCs, the use of DCs increases transparency and public confidence of law enforcement by allowing for a timely review of an officer's actions from an independent perspective at the time of an incident. DCs also cut through divergent views of an incident, protecting citizens against police misconduct and protecting the officers against false allegations by the public. For example, participants of the study were asked if the presence of a DC would impact their decision to initiate a complaint against an officer. A significant number, 48 percent, responded that the presence of the camera would make them less likely to file a complaint. Most departments report that DCs improve the accountability of their officers thereby reducing the instances of misconduct and the number of complaints filed against officers. DCs also expedite the resolution of citizen complaints by allowing supervisors to immediately address that citizen's concern.

As part of the IACP/COPS Technology Technical Assistance Program study, the community members were asked to gauge their support of the use of cameras in police vehicles - 900 citizens from 18 states completed the survey. Of the completed surveys, 94 percent of the responding community members stated that they support policies that include the use of DCs in their communities. However, 71 percent suggested that they should be informed when they were being videotaped.

The IACP/COPS Technology Technical Assistance Program study found that managing and storing the audio/video recording evidence has become one of the biggest obstacles agencies have had to overcome. The purchase, acquisition, duplication, and storage of recorded media requires personnel, time, space, and resources. Planning for the maintenance and protection of the integrity of the recorded media is essential in developing an in-car camera management plan. The MDPD's DC system retention and public release would follow the body-worn camera system draft policy, which states that all data captured as part of a department member's duties shall be the property of the MDPD and considered an official public record of the MDPD. The release of information requested through a public records request will be subject to the same statutory exemptions from public disclosure as any other departmental record. Prior to releasing any body-worn camera recordings, the body-worn camera records section staff will ensure that any and all redactions are in compliance with Florida Public Records laws. Non-evidentiary data shall be retained for 60 days, and all data will be purged per the retention schedules published by the Department of State's Division of Library and Information Services.

On March 3, 2016, the Board approved Resolution R-203-16, awarding a contract to Vievu, LLC to obtain body-worn camera devices and an associated turnkey, cloud-based Video Management Solution to capture, record, and store video of law enforcement activities for the MDPD. The MDPD's body-worn camera unit has implemented the body-worn camera program and has issued 1,306 body-worn camera's to date to sworn personnel throughout the Department, which includes all district stations, airport and seaport operations, municipal contracted cities, and the Special Patrol Bureau's traffic enforcement units. The use of the body-worn camera enables the officer to capture law enforcement interaction with the public more effectively than the DCs. The body-worn camera acquisition included 1,000 vehicle mounts free of charge. To date, seven mounts have been issued to the Special Patrol Bureau for use with their traffic enforcement details.

Due to the limited field of view, duplication of video already being captured by the BWC, and higher associated costs, MDPD recommends that the DC program not be considered for implementation.

Per Ordinance 14-65, this memorandum will be placed on the next available Board of County Commissioners agenda meeting.

If you require additional information regarding this report, please contact Juan J. Perez, Director of the Miami-Dade Police Department, at 305-471-3272.

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