



Houston Police Department

Freeway Crash Removal Program

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March 4, 2020



Program Objectives

- Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is willing to fund a pilot program to efficiently remove crashes from Houston freeways.
- Trained HPD officers, working overtime at Houston TranStar, will work with Houston Fire Department personnel to evaluate crashes on the freeway, remotely conduct an investigation, and authorize them to be moved by authorized wrecker drivers, pursuant to existing City ordinances 8-116 (c) and 8-121 (a).



Why It is Needed

- HFD is dispatched to any crash with known or unknown injuries. According to HFD dispatch records, they are dispatched to approximately 10,000 freeway crashes per year, with few of these crashes resulting in transport to the hospital.
- HFD is required to wait for HPD to arrive to clear the scene, as HFD personnel do not have authority to order the vehicles removed from the freeway.
- HFD has reported wait times of up to an hour during peak HPD calls for service and must commit to at least a fire truck and ambulance tied up for that period.



Why It is Needed (Continued)

- H-GAC notes that freeway crashes are responsible for approximately 50% of daily congestion
- City Ordinance 8-116 (c) authorizes law enforcement officers to remotely authorize removal of vehicles by viewing the scene from a remote location and/or communicating with the wrecker driver by telephone or radio.



Funding

H-GAC has committed \$210,000 to the program, fully funding the pilot period, via reimbursement to the City.

- Implementation: \$181,000
- TranStar Console Rental: \$20,000
- Administration/Supervision: \$9,000

H-GAC is also funding a baseline evaluation and program evaluation to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

The cost to the City of Houston is \$0.



How It Works

- HFD arrives and evaluates the parties for injury.
 - If any person must be transported or any driver is intoxicated, the crash will be handled under current policies.
 - If no person must be transported, HFD personnel will contact the overtime officer working at TranStar. The overtime officer will notify the dispatcher of the remote investigation and any HPD officer will be disregarded.
- The HFD captain will use their city-issued smartphone to take photographs of the scene and obtain basic contact info, then email them to the investigating officer.
- The investigating officer has authorization to approve moving the vehicles, thus allowing HFD to depart from the scene.



How It Works (Continued)

- The HPD officer will conduct the investigation remotely by telephone. The officer will complete the crash report if necessary and if no on-scene action is required.
- The only time an HPD unit will need to come to the scene is to conduct necessary on-scene action, such as writing a citation or arresting someone for warrants.



Pilot Program Timeline

- February 2020: Obtain approvals and sign agreement between COH and H-GAC
- March 1 – May 30, 2020: Baseline Evaluation
- June 1 – November 30, 2020: Pilot program
- December 1, 2020 – January 31, 2021: Program evaluation



City of Houston Obligations

Under the proposed Interlocal Agreement with H-GAC, the City must:

- Station at least one officer, Monday through Friday, between 5:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
- Develop SOPs.
- Remotely investigate crashes according to SOPs.
- Inform HPD & HFD employees of the program.
- Submit monthly billings to H-GAC for reimbursement of overtime costs.
- Provide monthly reports and access to CAD information for program evaluation



Possible Benefits

- Lower HFD personnel and fuel costs
- Quicker clearance of freeway crashes and less unnecessary congestion
- Lower risk to first responders and the public from secondary crashes
- Alleviation of pressure of calls for service for HPD



Specific Questions

- Are there any other cities doing similar programs?
 - Not that we know of. This project developed organically to address the specific problem put forth by HFD of long wait times on the freeway.
- What is the specific criteria for Qualified Crashes?
 1. City of Houston Freeway (excluding HOV/HOT, toll roads, and frontage/service roads)
 2. HFD personnel present on scene
 3. All parties must decline transport to hospital
 4. All driving parties must have a valid DL & insurance
 5. No driving party may be suspected of DWI



Specific Questions

- How will we handle citizens who refuse to comply with a remote order to leave the freeway?
 - As with all other cases where an in-person response is necessary, contact the dispatcher to request a patrol unit to respond
- How will we know if it is successful?
 - H-GAC is obtaining a baseline evaluation (3 months) and evaluation during the Pilot Period (6 months); the evaluation will determine the time taken to open all lanes for the evaluation period vs. the Pilot Period, using HPD data



QUESTIONS & COMMENTS?

