

ALLAN H. KITTLEMAN
County Executive




GARY L. GARDNER
Chief of Police

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

3410 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Subject: Testimony & Fiscal Impact Statement
Council Resolution No. _____ - 2015 authorizing the donation of five (5) surplus Dodge Chargers to the Maryland Police Training Commission for training purposes

To: Lonnie Robbins
Chief Administrative Officer

From: Gary L. Gardner 
Chief of Police

Date: June 9, 2015

The Department of Police has been designated as the coordinator for the preparation of testimony in regard to the donation of five (5) surplus Dodge Chargers to the Maryland Police Training Commission.

In 2008 the Department of Police acquired a number of Dodge Chargers and thus began the transition from the Crown Victoria as the primary patrol vehicle. Today, the bulk of the police patrol fleet consists of the Dodge Charger.

As our police vehicles reach a certain mileage/years of service they are decommissioned and surplus through the normal Fleet policy/practice. Currently there are five Dodge Chargers that have met these criteria.

The Maryland Police Training Commission (MPTC) in Sykesville, Maryland is the body that oversees the certification of police officers throughout the state of Maryland. The Training Commission also oversees the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC), the site where Howard County Police recruits receive instruction on emergency vehicle operation. This is also the location where veteran Howard County Police officers go for general or remedial driver training. The only vehicle currently utilized at the Operations Course is the Ford Crown Victoria.

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Although there are still Ford Crown Victorias in the current Howard County fleet, their numbers are diminishing since the transition to the Dodge Charger. There are significant differences between the two vehicles in terms of handling and performance. For that reason the Dodge Charger is the preferred vehicle for use during driver's training.

The FY 15 fleet has been delivered to the Police Department and a number of aging Dodge Chargers have met the criteria for replacement. Rather than surplus and auction through the normal process, I'm proposing that five surplus Chargers be sold to MPTC for a total of \$10,000 to be utilized for EVOC training. MPTC will permit any jurisdiction to utilize those vehicles for EVOC.

The fundamentals of emergency vehicle operation are taught at EVOC, but in order to maximize the benefits of the course the attendees should train with the same vehicle they will ultimately be operating while on-duty. The difference in operating platforms is significant. A Dodge Charger, for example, will respond differently than a Crown Victoria in certain maneuvers because of the axel design. The weight distribution, responsiveness, etc., will differ. Therefore, getting first hand experience with the Charger at EVOC will better prepare the officers for a similar situation while on patrol. This could arguably lead to fewer accidents and claims against the county. More importantly, it will likely make the officer safer since he/she will already have first hand knowledge of the vehicle attributes.

Thus far in 2015, fifteen (15) officers died behind the wheel of police vehicles across the country. In 2014, twenty-six (26) officers died in vehicle collisions, which is about the average annual loss of life for law enforcement officers. Many more officers are severely injured each year. Our goal as an agency is to ensure our officers get the appropriate training to prevent such a tragedy.

MPTC is required to provide vehicles for use to other agencies. MPTC is responsible for the care and maintenance. Agencies attending EVOC are charged \$30.00 per session for each vehicle used. Agencies are also required to pay for fuel. Some agencies utilize their own vehicles and are not charged the session fee. Typically the vehicles must have the center console removed in order to aid the EVOC instructor during practical exercises. This is an added cost to the agency and renders the vehicle unusable for patrol duties.

If you require further information concerning this matter or have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Thank you for your consideration.

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