



Roseville Police Department News Release

2660 Civic Center Dr. Roseville, MN 55113

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Contact: Deputy Chief Joe Adams

Phone: 651-792-7275

Email: Joe.Adams@cityofroseville.com

Roseville Police's letters instead of tickets program reflects evolving community priorities

Roseville police officers observed more than 1,500 vehicles with burnt-out headlights, expired tabs and other equipment violations in this year alone.

Rather than initiate traffic stops, the Roseville Police Department mailed letters to the vehicle owners as part of a new pilot program designed to bolster both public safety and community trust.

Since the program launched in January, the city has mailed out 1,569 letters in lieu of traffic stops. The letters notify vehicle owners of equipment violations. The letters also share resources to help drivers remedy issues including information on financial assistance to renew license plate tabs and vouchers to fix burnt-out lights courtesy of the Lights On Program.

Roseville Police Chief Erika Scheider said the pilot program is off to a promising start and is part of the department's ongoing effort to ensure an appropriate and equitable law enforcement response.

"Ultimately, we decided to try a different approach with addressing minor equipment violations," explains Scheider. "We recognize that most vehicle owners are either unaware of minor equipment issues or perhaps they are unable to afford the repair."

The new program was launched after the Roseville Police Department conducted a review of all policies and procedures and determined that traffic stops based solely on equipment violations disproportionately impacted communities of color, which undermined law enforcement's legitimacy.

It also reflects the evolving community sentiment around policing priorities. Roseville Police began prioritizing moving violations after a series of community listening sessions in 2017, Scheider said.

It takes officers 30 seconds to log an equipment violation in their computer system compared to a traffic stop, which takes several minutes and may pull officers away from more urgent police work.

The pilot program was created with input and direction from the Roseville Police Department's Multicultural Advisory Committee, a group of citizens who meet regularly to advise police leaders.

Letters in lieu of a traffic stop are reserved for vehicles with minor equipment violations, expired registrations, or other non-moving violations that do not create a public safety concern or a dangerous condition.

Roseville is a welcoming regional crossroads where Twin Cities residents and visitors come to work, shop and play and traffic patterns illustrate that. About 87 percent of the letters sent have gone to addresses outside of Roseville.



Several drivers have contacted the police department thanking them for the opportunity to address the issue without the stress of a traffic stop. One resident explained that he was driving around his 86-year-old mother on errands when officers spotted his burnt-out light.

"I want to thank the officer for not stopping me even though he or she had a right to. We had an extremely busy morning and a traffic stop would have made my mother quite anxious," he wrote. "I will take care of this brake light immediately. I thank the officer and Roseville Police Department for their discretion in this matter."

The program is possible through support from the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, Lights On, Diversion Solutions, and the Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation. One of the biggest expenses has been the postage. A group of volunteers and summer interns are helping prepare the letters for mailing.

Scheider stressed that Roseville officers will continue traffic enforcement efforts that improve roadway safety, with an emphasis on curbing distracted driving, excessive speeding, street racing/exhibition driving, and impaired driving.

"These changes allow our officers to focus their time on driving conduct that impacts the safety of our roadways," Scheider said. "It allows us to prioritize violent crime over minor equipment violations."

Chief Scheider will participate in an expert panel and community discussion on "Traffic Stop Changes in Ramsey County" hosted by Ramsey County Attorney John Choi from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. on June 7 at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center, 270 N Kent Street, St Paul, Minnesota 55102.

