

Commission on Police Practices

COMMISSION ON POLICE PRACTICES

Saturday, August 22, 2026

10:00am-1:00pm

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA

Logan Heights Library

567 S 28th Street

San Diego, CA 92113

The link to join the meeting by computer, tablet, or smartphone at 10:00am is:

[Microsoft Meeting Link](#)

Meeting ID: 227 404 963 808 053

Passcode: cp7QW7DD

**Downloading the latest version of Microsoft Teams is required.*

PURPOSE OF THE COMMISSION ON POLICE PRACTICES

The purpose of the Commission on Police Practices (CPP or Commission) is to provide independent community oversight of SDPD, directed at increasing community trust in SDPD & increasing safety for community and officers. The purpose of the Commission is also to perform independent investigations of officer-involved shootings, in-custody deaths and other significant incidents, and an unbiased evaluation of all complaints against members of SDPD and its personnel in a process that will be transparent and accountable to the community. Lastly, the Commission also evaluates the review of all SDPD policies, practices, trainings, and protocols and represents the community in making recommendations for changes.

The Commission on Police Practices (Commission) meetings will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of California Government Code Section 54953 (a), as amended by Assembly Bill 2249.

The Commission business meetings will be in person, and the meeting will be open for in-person testimony. Additionally, we are continuing to provide alternatives to in-person attendance for participating in our meetings. In lieu of in-person attendance, members of the public may also participate via telephone/Teams.

- I. CALL TO ORDER/PUBLIC COMMENT INSTRUCTIONS (Chair Bonnie Benitez)
- II. ROLL CALL (Executive Assistant Alina Conde)
- III. CLOSED SESSION
 - A. Public comment
 - B. Lead CPP into Closed Session

(Not Open to the Public)

C. PUBLIC EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE/DISMISSAL/RELEASE

Discussion & Consideration of Complaints & Reports: Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957 to discuss complaints, charges, investigations, and discipline (unless the employee requests an open public session) involving San Diego Police Department employees, and information deemed confidential under Penal Code Sections 832.5-832.8 and Evidence Code Section 1040. Reportable actions for the Closed Session items on the agenda will be announced and posted on the Commission's website at www.sandiego.gov/cpp.

- a. SDPD Feedback on Case-Specific Matters – None
- b. Review of Internal Affairs Investigations
 - 1. Case 2025-0583 (CATI)
 - 2. 2025-0268 (OIS)
- c. Discipline Memos – None

IV. REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION – *Estimated time 11:30am*

V. NON-AGENDA COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

VI. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT (Direct Community Engagement & Internship Programs Yasmeen Obeid)

VII. NON AGENDA COMMUNICATIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS

VIII. ACTION ITEM

- A. Pretext Stop Proposal
 - 1. Public Comment
 - 2. Commissioner Comment

IX. FUTURE REGULAR BUSINESS AGENDA ITEM REQUESTS

X. NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT (Direct Community Engagement & Internship Programs Obeid)

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Materials Provided:

- Final Draft of Pretext Stop Recommendation

In-Person Public Comment on an Agenda Item: If you wish to address the Commission on an item on today's agenda, please complete and submit a speaker slip before the Commission hears the agenda item. You will be called at the time the item is heard. Each speaker must file a speaker slip with the Executive Director at the meeting at which the speaker wishes to speak indicating which item they wish to speak on. Speaker slips may not be turned in prior to the day of the meeting or after completion of in-person testimony. In-person public comment will conclude before virtual testimony begins. Each speaker who wishes to address the

Commission must state who they are representing if they represent an organization or another person.

For discussion and information items each speaker may speak up to three (3) minutes, subject to the Chair's determination of the time available for meeting management purposes, in addition to any time ceded by other members of the public who are present at the meeting and have submitted a speaker slip ceding their time. These speaker slips should be submitted together at one time to the Executive Director. The Chair may also limit organized group presentations of five or more people to 15 minutes or less.

In-Person Public Comment on Matters Not on the Agenda: You may address the Commission on any matter not listed on today's agenda. Please complete and submit a speaker slip. However, California's open meeting laws do not permit the Commission to discuss or take any action on the matter at today's meeting. At its discretion, the Commission may add the item to a future meeting agenda or refer the matter to staff or committee. Public comments are limited to three minutes per speaker. At the discretion of the Chair, if a large number of people wish to speak on the same item, comments may be limited to a set period of time per item to appropriately manage the meeting and ensure the Commission has time to consider all the agenda items. A member of the public may only make one Non-Agenda Public Comment per meeting. In-person public comment on items not on the agenda will conclude before virtual testimony begins.

Speakers may not allocate their time to other speakers. If there are eight or more speakers on a single issue, the maximum time for the issue will be 16 minutes. The order of speaking generally will be determined on a first-come, first-served basis. A member of the public may only provide one non-agenda comment per agenda.

We welcome all viewpoints and encourage open participation. However, to ensure everyone has a chance to be heard and that we can complete our work, we ask that speakers respect time limits and refrain from disruptive behavior. Continued disruption after warning may result in removal as permitted under state law.

Virtual Platform Public Comment to a Particular Item or Matters Not on the Agenda: When the item you would like to comment on is introduced (or it is indicated that it is time for Non-Agenda Public Comment), raise your hand by tapping on the "Raise Your Hand" button on your computer or tablet. To raise your hand in a Microsoft Teams meeting on your smartphone (iOS or Android), tap the three-dot menu, then select the "Raise Hand" option. You will be taken in the order in which you raised your hand. You may only speak once on a particular item. When it is indicated that it is your turn to speak, click the unmute prompt that will appear on your computer, tablet or Smartphone.

Written Comment through Webform: Comment on agenda items and non-agenda public comment may also be submitted using the [webform](#). If using the webform, indicate the agenda item number you wish to submit a comment for. All webform comments are limited to 200 words. On the [webform](#), members of the public should

select Commission on Police Practices (even if the public comment is for a Commission on Police Practices Committee meeting).

The public may attend a meeting when scheduled by following the attendee meeting link provided above. To view a meeting archive video, click [here](#). Video footage of each Commission meeting is posted online [here](#) within 72 hours of the conclusion of the meeting.

Comments received no later than 8am on the day of the meeting will be distributed to the Commission on Police Practices. Comments received after the deadline described above but before the item is called will be submitted into the written record for the relevant item.

Written Materials: You may alternatively submit via U.S. Mail to Attn: Office of the Commission on Police Practices, 525 B Street, Suite 1725, San Diego, CA 92101. Materials submitted via U.S. Mail must be received the business day prior to the meeting to be distributed to the Commission on Police Practices.

If you attach any documents to your comment, they will be distributed to the Commission or Committee in accordance with the deadlines described above.

Late-Arriving Materials: This paragraph relates to those documents received after the agenda is publicly noticed and during the 72 hours prior to the start of, or during, the meeting. Pursuant to the Brown Act, (California Government Code Section 54957.5(b)) late-arriving documents, related to the Commission on Police Practices' ("CPP") meeting agenda items, which are distributed to the legislative body prior to and/or during the CPP meeting are available for public review by appointment in the Office of the CPP located at Procopio Towers, 525 B Street, Suite 1725, San Diego, CA 92101. Appointments for public review may be made by calling (619) 533-5304 and coordinating with CPP staff before visiting the office. Late-arriving documents may also be obtained by email request to CPP staff at commissiononpolicepractices@sandiego.gov. Late-arriving materials received prior to the CPP meeting will also be available for review, at the CPP public meeting, by making a verbal request of CPP staff located in the CPP meeting. Late-arriving materials received during the CPP meeting will be available for reviewing the following workday at the CPP offices noted above or by email request to CPP staff.

Access for People with Disabilities: As required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), requests for agenda information to be made available in alternative formats, and any requests for disability-related modifications or accommodations required to facilitate meeting participation, including requests for alternatives to observing meetings and offering public comment as noted above, may be made by contacting the Commission at (619) 533-5304 or commissiononpolicepractices@sandiego.gov.

Requests for disability-related modifications or accommodation required to facilitate meeting participation, including requests for auxiliary aids, services, or interpreters require different lead times, ranging from five business days to two weeks. Please keep this in mind and provide as much advance notice as possible to ensure availability. The city is committed to resolving accessibility requests swiftly.



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

Recommendations to Restrict Pretext Stops and Promote Bias-Free Policing

A pretext stop is a traffic, pedestrian, or other street stop initiated for a minor equipment, administrative, or technical violation but used primarily to investigate unrelated criminal activity. Pretextual traffic stops have occupied a contested space in policing. Community concern regarding pretextual traffic stops has increased at the local, state, and national levels, with community members, policymakers, and civil rights advocates raising questions regarding the relationship between discretionary traffic enforcement, racial disparities, public trust, and constitutional policing. The Commission believes that a comprehensive review of pretextual traffic stop practices is necessary as it presents an opportunity to evaluate current policies, assess available data and community perspectives, examine emerging best practices from other agencies, and identify potential policy improvements that advance both public safety and police legitimacy. The Commission issues these recommendations pursuant to its authority under San Diego Municipal Code Section 26.1107(a)(9) to review and evaluate police department policies and practices.

The San Diego Commission on Police Practices recognizes both the importance of lawful and effective traffic enforcement in promoting public safety and the need to ensure that enforcement practices are conducted in a manner that is equitable, transparent, evidence-based, and consistent with the principles of procedural justice and community trust. Pretextual traffic stops remain a valued investigative tool for many law enforcement officers because they can create opportunities to identify weapons, drugs, outstanding warrants, and other criminal activity that might otherwise go undetected. The Commission finds that stops initiated solely for minor equipment and administrative violations often produce limited public safety benefits relative to the distrust, complaints of unfairness, and racial disparities they generate. The goal is not to weaken lawful enforcement, but to ensure that discretion is exercised where it produces clear public safety value.

Findings published by the California Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory Board (RIPA) have consistently documented disparities in stop, search, and enforcement outcomes across demographic groups, contributing to ongoing policy discussions regarding the appropriate use of discretionary traffic stops and the potential impacts on historically over-policed communities. The San Diego Commission on Police Practices has reviewed numerous cases involving allegations of racial profiling, insufficient justification for traffic stops, and escalations arising from low-level enforcement contacts. The Commission's review identified recurring concerns involving stops initiated on vague or unsupported observations, such as vehicles that "looked" suspicious, window tint that "appeared" too dark, or vehicles that "appeared" to be speeding without clearly articulated, objective facts. While each case must be evaluated on its individual



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

facts, these patterns underscore the importance of ensuring that discretionary enforcement decisions are supported by proven facts. The San Diego Police Department's policies and procedures do not currently contain a standalone policy specifically governing the use of pretextual traffic stops, leaving such encounters subject to broader discretion, leading to implicit (sometimes explicit) bias in stop data and intrusive investigations. The following recommendations aim to reconcile discriminatory patterns of practice.

The Commission recommends that the San Diego Police Department:

Recommendation 1: Prohibit Stops Based Solely on Minor Equipment or Administrative Violations

Prohibit officers from initiating a traffic stop solely for the following minor equipment or administrative violations:

- A. window tint violations;
- B. registration expired less than one year;
- C. a missing front license plate when the rear plate is clearly displayed and legible;
- D. minor rear license plate illumination deficiencies when the plate remains reasonably legible;
- E. a single non-functioning taillight or brake light;
- F. objects suspended from a rearview mirror that do not materially obstruct the driver's view;
- G. minor bumper equipment defects.
- H. Non-moving vehicle occupancy

Note: These listed violation stops may constitute a partial basis, in combination with other information establishing reasonable suspicion of other violations of law.

Recommendation 2: Prohibit Stops Based on Status or Generalized Factors

- A. Direct staff to quarterly review stop reports and body-worn camera footage to ensure compliance with AB 2773 and identify opportunities for corrective action, training, or policy refinement.
- B. Declare that parole status, probation status, prior criminal history, or other status-based indicators shall not independently justify extending a stop, initiating an investigative detention, requesting consent to search, or conducting a field interview absent additional specific and articulable facts.

The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

- C. Train officers not to rely solely upon generalized assertions such as presence in a high-crime area, manner of dress, homelessness, prior contacts, perceived associations, or other non-specific factors to justify expanding a stop.

Note: The Commission recognizes that status-based contextual factors may be relevant to identifying a suspect during a stop. However, such information alone should never justify a stop, search request, or field interview.

Recommendation 3: Limit Stops to Purposes Supported by Evidence or Observed Conduct

- A. Limit the scope and duration of a traffic stop to addressing the observed violation, conducting related safety inquiries, and completing lawful enforcement actions unless new, specific, and articulable facts establish reasonable suspicion or probable cause supporting additional investigative activity. Officers may not extend a stop based on hunches unconnected to objective factual information.
- B. When making traffic stops for violations connected to public safety concerns, direct officers not to request consent to search a person, vehicle, or personal effects to investigate unrelated crimes. For all other stops, require officers to request consent to search only when specific and articulable facts observed during the encounter establish an objective basis for believing evidence of criminal activity may be present.
- C. Direct officers not to initiate a field interview or separate investigative encounter arising solely from a low-level traffic or equipment violation unless specific and articulable facts support a separate lawful detention or investigation. Absent independent reasonable suspicion of criminal activity, questioning shall be limited to matters reasonably related to the purpose of the stop. Examples include: identification, licensing, vehicle registration, insurance verification, and other immediate safety concerns.
- D. For low-level violation stops not covered by Recommendation 1, prohibit CalGang entries where the reason for the stop does not provide evidence establishing reasonable suspicion or probable cause of additional crimes.
- E. Ensure department adherence to the requirements of AB 2773 by requiring officers to provide a clear, objective verbal statement regarding the purpose of the stop on body-worn camera recordings prior to the commencement of investigative questioning.



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

Direct officers to clearly communicate the reason for the stop at the earliest practical opportunity consistent with officer safety.

Note: Officers should retain the authority to expand an encounter when new articulable facts establish reasonable suspicion. This recommendation does not seek to restrict lawful investigative action when circumstances change and warrant additional action during an encounter.

Recommendation 4: Implement Principles of Procedural Justice During Traffic and Pedestrian Stops

- A. During all recruit and in-service programs, train officers to conduct stops in a manner that preserves the dignity and respect of the civilian by treating every person with professionalism and avoiding unnecessary escalation of force by training on the dangers of implicit bias in human interactions.
- B. Train officers to provide individuals with a reasonable opportunity to explain relevant circumstances, when practical and consistent with officer safety, before finalizing enforcement decisions.
- C. Train officers to explain the reason for a stop whenever there is a reasonable opportunity to do so.
- D. Train officers to make decisions grounded in objective facts, constitutional principles, department policy and applicable law. Train officers not to rely on race, ethnicity, gender, housing status, perceived social status, or other protected characteristics when describing a specific suspect, except when permitted by law.
- E. Train officers to be sincere, truthful and empathetic during stops in order to build and preserve community trust in the idea that officers are making a genuine effort to do what is best for public safety and the people involved.
- F. Evaluate the potential equity impacts of new department initiatives and programs and communicate a philosophy of anti-bias through community engagement and regular reporting.



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

Commission Authority and Policy Purpose

These policy recommendations aim to strengthen constitutional policing, promote equitable stops, and enhance community trust. The San Diego Police Department's current policies generally reflect applicable constitutional standards and California law governing stops, searches, detentions, and enforcement activities. However, policies that primarily track legal minimum requirements leave substantial discretion in precisely those areas where concerns regarding pretextual stops, investigatory stop expansions, consent searches, and perceived inequitable treatment most often arise. While discretion is an essential component of effective policing, it is most legitimate when accompanied by clear standards, meaningful accountability, and transparent safeguards.

The San Diego community is ready for change. The Commission appreciates the San Diego Police Department's ongoing commitment to accountability, professionalism, and effective community policing and offers these recommendations in the spirit of continuous improvement. The Commission stands ready to collaborate with the Department on policy development, implementation planning, training considerations, data collection strategies, performance metrics, and future evaluations of policy effectiveness.

Legal Framework Background

Federal law permits an objectively lawful traffic stop supported by probable cause even if the officer's subjective motive is to investigate other crimes. Federal limits on expansion focus on what happens after the stop begins: officers may not prolong a stop beyond the traffic mission for unrelated investigative activity absent independent reasonable suspicion (or another lawful basis). Any frisk requires reasonable suspicion that the person is armed and dangerous, supported by specific, articulable facts.

Recommendation 1-4 Background

Prohibit Stops Based Solely on Minor Equipment or Administrative Violations

Definition – A pretext stop is a traffic, pedestrian, or other street stop initiated for a minor equipment, administrative, or technical violation but used primarily to investigate unrelated criminal activity.

For purposes of these recommendations, a public safety risk is an observable condition or violation that materially increases the immediate risk of a collision, injury, or other harm to motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, or the public. The San Diego Police Department should adopt a



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

safety-first enforcement framework that limits the initiation of traffic stops for low-level equipment and administrative violations that do not present an immediate or identifiable threat to public safety. Enforcement efforts should prioritize violations demonstrably linked to roadway safety, injury prevention, and the protection of the public. Stops based on equipment or administrative violations should be limited to circumstances where the violation materially interferes with roadway safety, prevents lawful identification of a vehicle, or creates a substantial risk of injury to motorists, pedestrians, or officers.

Officers shall not initiate a stop, detention, or investigative contact because of non-moving vehicle occupancy where an individual may be sleeping or resting in a legally parked vehicle absent specific and articulable facts indicating a welfare concern, criminal activity, or an objective threat to public safety. When appropriate, officers should utilize warnings, correction notices, mailed notices of violation, referrals to City services, parking enforcement mechanisms, or other non-custodial approaches designed to achieve compliance while minimizing unnecessary police-civilian contacts.

Prohibit Stops Based on Status or Generalized Factors (Anti-Biased Policing)

The Commission is calling on the SDPD to formally adopt an anti-bias policing philosophy that establishes equitable, impartial, and discrimination-free policing as a foundational principle of all Department operations. This philosophy should recognize that public trust, procedural justice, and constitutional policing are advanced when enforcement decisions are based on objective, articulable facts rather than actual or perceived personal characteristics, stereotypes, or assumptions. The Commission finds that these stops frequently impose substantial community costs, including diminished public trust, perceptions of unfair treatment, and disparate impacts, while often producing limited corresponding public safety benefits.

Further, the Commission recommends that the Department strengthen its commitment to bias-free and impartial policing by incorporating explicit anti-bias principles into traffic enforcement policies, training, supervision, and performance review processes. Such measures should reinforce the Department's obligation to ensure that enforcement decisions are based on objective, articulable facts rather than race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, neighborhood characteristics, or other protected or non-criminal factors, while promoting fairness, transparency, and equal treatment under the law.

Limit Stops to Purposes Supported by Evidence or Observed Conduct

The San Diego Police Department should establish clear limitations on the scope and duration of traffic stops to ensure that enforcement actions remain closely connected to the original basis for



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

the stop unless additional facts arise that independently justify further investigation. For purposes of these recommendations, public safety concerns are circumstances in which an officer has an objective and articulable basis to believe that immediate enforcement action is necessary to prevent or respond to a threat to human life, bodily injury, roadway safety, or the commission of a crime. Public safety concerns include, but are not limited to, dangerous moving violations, impaired or reckless driving, vehicles that cannot be lawfully identified, active felony investigations, wanted persons, and situations supported by reasonable suspicion or probable cause of criminal activity.

Officers shall maintain adherence to the mandates of AB 2773, California Vehicle Code § 2806.5(a), officers shall provide a clear and objective verbal justification for the encounter, ensuring the reason for the stop is documented at the earliest practical opportunity. Absent a documented imminent threat, this statement must precede any investigative questioning related to the traffic violation or potential criminal activity. Officers shall state the reason for the stop into their body worn camera prior to engaging in questioning related to a criminal investigation or the traffic violation.

Any expansion of a stop beyond its original purpose shall require documentation of the specific facts that created reasonable suspicion or probable cause, including those facts relied upon by the officer to justify the expanded detention or investigation. The scope and duration of a traffic stop shall be limited to addressing the observed violation, conducting related safety inquiries, and completing lawful enforcement actions unless new, specific, and articulable facts establish reasonable suspicion or probable cause supporting additional investigative activity.

Expansion of Search

The San Diego Police Department should recognize that consent searches, investigatory questioning, and field interviews conducted during traffic stops may be perceived as coercive due to the inherently restrictive nature of police detentions. Accordingly, such practices should be narrowly tailored, carefully documented, and supported by legitimate investigative needs. Officers shall not request consent to search a person, vehicle, or personal effects during a stop initiated for violations identified in Recommendation One. For all other stops, officers should request consent to search only when specific and articulable facts observed during the encounter establish an objective basis for believing evidence of criminal activity may be present.

Prior to requesting consent, officers shall advise individuals that consent is voluntary and may be refused or withdrawn at any time. The advisement and response shall be recorded on body-worn camera whenever feasible. Absent independent reasonable suspicion of criminal activity, questioning shall be limited to matters reasonably related to the purpose of the stop, including identification, licensing, vehicle registration, insurance verification, and immediate safety



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

concerns. Officers shall not initiate a field interview or separate investigative encounter arising from a low-level traffic or equipment violation unless specific and articulable facts support a separate lawful detention or investigation.

Principles of Procedural Justice During Traffic and Pedestrian Stops

The Department should provide recurring training on procedural justice, implicit bias, effective communication, and conflict de-escalation. Training should incorporate realistic traffic and pedestrian stop scenarios and emphasize constitutional policing, respectful public interactions, and sound decision-making under pressure. Fair policing is not defined solely by lawful outcomes, but also by how people are treated throughout the encounter. Respect, transparency, neutrality, and meaningful communication strengthen public trust, reinforce officer legitimacy, and improve community cooperation while supporting officer safety. Every person should be treated with professionalism and respect.

Adopting an overall philosophy of anti-bias policing would intuitively reinforce the notion that officers shall conduct stops in a manner that preserves the dignity of those involved, avoids unnecessary escalation and reflects the Department's commitment to serving all members of the community with fairness. Officers shall explain the reason for the stop at the earliest practical opportunity consistent with officer safety, in order to reduce the mental anguish experienced by civilians during encounters. Department culture should also strongly reinforce that officers shall not rely on race, ethnicity, gender, housing status, perceived social status, or other protected characteristics except as authorized by law when describing a specific suspect. The public should have confidence that decisions are driven by evidence rather than assumptions. When practical and consistent with officer safety, individuals should be given a reasonable opportunity to explain relevant circumstances before enforcement decisions are finalized. Allowing people to be heard promotes fairness, improves communication, and reinforces the legitimacy of police actions.

Performance Evaluation

SDPD should establish measurable performance indicators to evaluate implementation of procedural justice principles. These measures should include community feedback, complaint trends, body-worn camera audits, supervisory reviews, and other objective indicators of officer performance. Aggregate findings should be reported periodically to the Commission on Police Practices to promote a culture of transparency, continuous improvement, and accountability.

Research and Data Background



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

Assembly Bill 953: Racial and Identity Profiling Act (2015) established California's (RIPA). Under RIPA, state and local agencies must annually report data on all stops. All stop data must be made publicly available. San Diego's 2024 RIPA data reflects substantial racial disparities in several enforcement actions taken during police stops. Individuals perceived to be Black were 4.42 times more likely to be frisked than individuals perceived to be White and 3.36 times more likely to be subjected to a consent search of their property. They were also 3.24 times more likely to experience force and 3.31 times more likely to be handcuffed. Parole status inquiries occurred at 2.31 times the rate observed for individuals perceived to be White, while curbside or patrol-car detentions occurred at 1.22 times the rate.

Within the City of San Diego, these concerns are supported by local evidence. A city-commissioned, peer-reviewed study by San Diego State University researchers found that Black motorists were searched 72% more often than similarly situated White motorists. The study also found that contraband was recovered less often during searches of Black motorists. Its findings showed that disparities were most pronounced in discretionary enforcement actions rather than arrests. This suggests that racial disparities become more visible as officer discretion increases. More recent reporting has identified similar patterns. A 2023 Voice of San Diego analysis reported that Black residents comprise about 5% of San Diego's population but roughly 20% of SDPD stops. A 2024 Axios San Diego analysis also reported that Black residents accounted for approximately 27% of SDPD use-of-force incidents.

These findings indicate that the most significant disparities are concentrated in discretionary actions taken after a stop has begun. Emerging research and available stop data have increasingly challenged the efficacy, equity, and public safety justification for pretextual traffic enforcement. While judicial standards generally permit stops predicated on observed vehicle code violations, the exercise of broad officer discretion often generates disparate impacts and facilitates investigative activity detached from roadway public safety objectives.

Commission Findings

Based on the perspective developed through policy review, community testimony, available stop data and comparative local experiences, the Commission finds that stops initiated for minor equipment and administrative violations often produce limited public safety benefit relative to the distrust, complaints of unfairness, and disparities they generate, particularly when stops are prolonged beyond the traffic mission, used to elicit consent searches, or employed primarily to gather intelligence unrelated to the violation. The Commission further finds that these low-yield stops can escalate in unanticipated ways, increasing the risk of harm to officers and community members, and can consume staffing and supervisory time better allocated to higher-priority calls, investigations, and problem-oriented policing. Consistent with these findings, we recommend



The San Diego Commission on Police Practices

that SDPD should not stop a vehicle for minor equipment or administrative violations; such as window tint, registration expired less than one year, missing front license plates, rear-plate illumination issues, single nonfunctioning taillights or brake lights, bumper equipment violations, objects hanging from the rearview mirror, or non-moving vehicle occupancy—unless the condition materially increases the likelihood of a crash or prevents necessary vehicle identification. Examples of public safety risks include inoperable lights after dark, obstructed windshields, exposed tire belts or cords, significant brake defects, and other conditions that materially impair safe vehicle operation.

Conclusion

At its core, this recommendation package reflects a philosophy of anti-bias. Public confidence is not built only through lawful conduct; it is built when community members understand why police action was taken, believe it was justified, and trust that the same standards would have been applied regardless of who was involved. The Commission's review of available research, emerging national and statewide best practices, public testimony, community concerns, RIPA findings, and matters encountered through its case review process suggests an opportunity to strengthen Department policy by providing greater clarity regarding when traffic stops should occur, how they should be conducted, and under what circumstances they may appropriately evolve into broader investigative encounters.

The legitimacy of policing is strengthened when enforcement authority is exercised with clarity, restraint, consistency, and accountability. These recommendations are designed to establish clear, objective, and transparent guardrails for discretionary enforcement activity. They seek to prioritize traffic stops that are most closely connected to public safety objectives, require articulated justification for expanded investigative actions, reduce unnecessary police-civilian contacts arising from low-level violations, strengthen protections against discriminatory enforcement, and improve supervisory oversight of stop-and-search practices. Collectively, they create a framework that emphasizes both effectiveness and legitimacy while preserving officers' ability to address genuine threats to public safety.

The Commission will review and respond to the Department's written response and any proposed policy revisions as part of its authority to review and evaluate police department policies and practices. Based on what the Department decides to implement, the Commission may request that the Mayor's office and City Council review the Department's decision and provide any additional direction deemed appropriate. Pursuant to the Commission's authority under San Diego Municipal Code sections 26.1107(a)(9) and 26.1107(a)(10), the Commission requests that the San Diego Police Department provide a written response to these recommendations within 60 days of receipt.