



VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

REPORT TO THE VANCOUVER POLICE BOARD

REPORT DATE: September 28, 2021
BOARD MEETING DATE: October 21, 2021
BOARD REPORT # 2110C05
Regular

TO: Vancouver Police Board Service and Policy Complaint Review Committee
FROM: Staff Sergeant Jason High, Operations Division / District 1
SUBJECT: Service or Policy Complaint #2021-010 re: VPD All-Terrain Vehicles

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Vancouver Police Board Service and Policy Complaint Review Committee (Committee) conclude its review of the complaint based on the information outlined in this report.

SUMMARY:

On July 8, 2021, the Vancouver Police Board received a Service or Policy complaint from the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC) about the Vancouver Police Department's (VPD) use of All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) in parks, beaches and on hiking trails. The complainant believes more environmentally friendly and quieter modes of transportation would be better suited to police these areas, and the VPD should be more considerate of climate issues.

This report explains the use of ATVs by the VPD Beach Patrol and summarizes the VPD and the City of Vancouver's (CoV) ongoing initiatives to reduce CO₂ emissions in its police vehicle fleet. After speaking to the complainant, explaining how the ATVs were deployed, discussing the steps taken to reduce emissions, and plans for continued improvements – the complainant was satisfied with the response to this complaint.

Based on the information detailed in this report, it is recommended that the Committee conclude its review of this complaint.

BACKGROUND:

On June 22, 2021, the complainant sent a web submission to the OPCC indicating that they do not like the police department using ATVs in parks, beaches, and hiking trails. The complainant thinks that "bikes and horses would be a better alternative because ATVs burn gas, and are very loud and disruptive," and "would like to see the police department be considerate of climate issues." On July 8, 2021, the OPCC categorized the complaint as a Service or Policy Complaint.

On September 2, 2021, the VPD spoke with the complainant to clarify their concerns. The complainant indicated they had recently observed officers on ATVs in the City of Coquitlam while hiking. The complainant was unaware that Coquitlam was not in the VPD's area of jurisdiction; however, they are aware that the VPD does have ATVs in its fleet. It was further explained that, in conjunction with the CoV, the VPD had taken several steps to deploy alternative-powered vehicles to reduce overall CO₂ emissions in the past number of years.¹ Furthermore, the VPD continues to explore ways to replace the current fleet with cleaner vehicles without impacting public safety or service delivery.

DISCUSSION:

This report:

- Outlines the reasons for deploying ATVs; and
- Speaks to the VPD and the CoV's initiatives to reduce CO₂ emissions from the VPD fleet.

The VPD ATV Deployment

Currently, there are four ATVs in use by the VPD and assigned to the District 4 Beach Patrol. District 1 has a similar team focused on patrolling the beaches and parks; however, these members deploy on bicycles. The current District 4 Beach Patrol, which has been in existence since 2003, consists of three dedicated members each shift, usually active from the Victoria Day weekend to the Labour Day weekend. The VPD ATVs may be used sporadically for special events during the remainder of the year but are otherwise not regularly deployed. In addition to using ATVs, District 4 Beach Patrol members may also deploy by foot, bike or car as required.

The VPD addressed the use and deployment of ATVs in a previous Service or Policy complaint.² At that time, the complainant felt that ATVs were "invasive, disruptive, and obnoxious." The VPD conducted an extensive review of the deployment of these vehicles and found that they were the best option for the District 4 Beach Patrol, given their mandate, geographical area, and type of terrain in the patrol area. No other suitable green alternatives were available with the range and capability to effectively and efficiently cover the patrol area. Also reported was that the ATVs produced a significantly lower CO₂ footprint than the standard police vehicle and were under the acceptable threshold for noise. The ATVs were replaced in 2015 with similar models and have not functionally changed. Recent research has not identified any viable green models available in Canada capable of the range and equipment capacity of the current ATVs. Moving forward, the VPD remains committed to selecting suitable alternatives to replace its gasoline-powered ATVs when these units become available in Canada.

Current and Future Initiatives to Green the VPD Fleet

Since the Committee reviewed the previous Service or Policy Complaint report, there have been ongoing improvements to the VPD fleet, specifically to address reductions in CO₂ emissions; these are:

¹ The VPD pays a wet lease to the CoV over the life of the each vehicle. The CoV, Facility and Manufacturing Services, facilitates all new procurements, manages and performs repairs. The VPD determines vehicle requirements and operational need.

² <https://vancouverpoliceboard.ca/police/policeboard/meetingminutes/2013/SP-2013-09-17.pdf>

1. All but four VPD patrol vehicles have been transitioned from the V8 Ford Crown Victoria to the V6 Dodge Charger. This change effectively represents a 30 percent reduction in emissions or 660 tonnes per year.³
2. Of the 492 vehicles in the fleet, the VPD currently has 22 fully electric cars, two electric motorcycles, 38 hybrid vehicles and two plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.
3. There are plans to replace 70 gas-powered vehicles with 25 hybrid patrol vehicles and 45 electric units for the investigation and administration vehicle pool by September 2022. By then the VPD's fleet will consist of 27 percent (134 units) hybrid or electric vehicles.
4. Moving forward, when feasible, all new procurements will be either hybrid or electric.

In addition to these changes, the VPD has a long history of deploying frontline members by alternative modes of transportation. Since 1908 the VPD has been patrolling Stanley Park by horse. Currently, the VPD has nine horses that provide Mounted Unit officers with their primary mode of transportation. Horses have less impact on the environment and are less intrusive on the heavily forested trails in Stanley Park.

Since the 1980s the VPD has had a robust police bicycle program. The VPD currently has 65 bikes and 121 bicycle-trained members. In District 1, Vancouver's most densely populated area, each of the ten patrol teams and the Neighbourhood Policing Team regularly deploy police officers on bikes. Almost every major event has bicycle units assigned. The 60 members in the Beat Enforcement Team, responsible for policing the Downtown Eastside, typically deploy on foot. Other districts also routinely deploy members on foot to police highly populated areas. Finally, The VPD deploys 60 percent of their patrol cars as two-person units. All these measures have further contributed to reductions in CO₂ emissions.

CONCLUSION:

Significant research has been conducted regarding the noise and emissions that the VPD ATVs produce, and analysis has determined these vehicles are within acceptable standards. In addition, there are currently no other suitable greener ATVs available in the Canadian market that meet the needs of the VPD Beach Patrol. When they become available, the current ATVs will be replaced.

For many years, the VPD has been a leader in deploying personnel on foot, bicycle and horse. The VPD recognizes the seriousness of climate issues and has made significant progress towards a greener fleet over the past several years but will continue to seek ways to replace existing vehicles with units that produce low or zero emissions.

Based on the information detailed in this report, it is recommended that the Committee conclude its review of this complaint.

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Submitting Executive Member:

DCC Howard Chow Date: October 8, 2021

³ <https://council.vancouver.ca/20130710/documents/cfsc3.pdf>