

Transportation

This article is taken from “The Long Blue Line,” a 1984 publication of the Saint Paul Police Department.

Early Transportation

One of the many problems that the early Department had to deal with was transportation. Officers in the 1850s were forced to utilize whatever mode of transportation was available no matter how ill-suited to the task at hand. It was not uncommon for unfortunate inebriates to be transported up the hill to the town jail in a wheelbarrow.

In 1856 a civic-minded grocer donated his horse and wagon for use at night. Used during the day by the grocer, the horse and wagon remained parked and ready for police use at what's now the corner of Seventh and Wabasha Streets. The Department purchased its own patrol wagon in June of 1883. It was reported that “many a semi-respectable ‘vag’ let himself be arrested just to ‘see how it felt’ to be driven up the street in style by driver Pat Casey.”

Horses were used to develop additional police patrol capabilities in the rapidly growing community of St. Paul. In 1885, a six member mounted patrol was created to serve out-lying areas of the city. The patrol grew to 17 in 1910, before yielding to the advent of the motorized age.

Motorization

During the first 50 years of the Department's existence, horses and officers' legs provided the necessary locomotion for police work. However, with the advent of the automobile in the early 20th century, another mode of transportation became a reality — the motorized vehicle.

The motorization of the Department dates back to 1912 when a “White” squad wagon was acquired for \$5,000.00. Also in 1912 a “Chalmers” five-passenger touring car for \$2,400.00 was authorized and the following year an authorization was given for an “Automobile” ambulance. It was not until 1914, however, that the Department purchased automobiles specifically suited for police work — a “Velie Runabout,” a “White” police patrol and two “Kissel” police patrols. These predecessors to the modern squad car ranged from 30 to 37.5 horsepower.

Throughout the 1930's and 1940's, the Department utilized many types and models of automobiles. Squad cars were generally Fords, Chevrolets, Pontiacs, Dodge-Grahams, Cadillacs, Lafayettes, and the most popular car of the late thirties, the Terraplane. The police ambulance was usually a Packard, Buick or Dodge, while the Department's motorcycles were predominately Indians, later replaced by the Harley Davidson.

Today the fleet consists of 137 marked squad cars, 85 cruisers, 7 Cushman scooters and 17 miscellaneous vehicles. In 1982, a marked squad car cost \$7,899.00; in 1983 it cost \$8,195.00; and in 1984 it will require \$10,026.00. An average price tag of \$2,384.00 is added to each car

with the inclusion of radios, lightbar, spotlights, etc. The cost is high, yet the benefits of mobility and flexibility prove that the squad car is a valuable tool for modern policing.

Motorcycles

Motorcycles have been frequently used over the years to aid police personnel in the completion of their duties. The Department's experience with two and three wheel vehicles began in 1897, when bicycles were used to patrol areas of downtown St. Paul. The formation of the first motorcycle squad occurred June 15, 1909 and consisted of two men and their machines.

Motorcycle patrols reached their peak in St. Paul in the 1920's. The so-called 'flying squads,' consisting of an operator and a cycle with a side car, were established in the early 1920's. Assigned to a series of substations, garages, and fire stations, these units were utilized to provide maximum coverage at a crime scene. The 15 'flying squads' were instructed to proceed to the scene of a call while picking up the nearest beat officer on the way. The Department claimed that only two to ten minutes were required to answer most calls. 'Minute Service' became the slogan of the Department, largely due to the speed of the motorcycle units.

The use of motorcycles was temporarily suspended in 1930, only to be reinstated on a limited basis in 1934. Three wheel vehicles are used today primarily for parking enforcement and escort services.

2007 Footnote: The Motors Unit was started back up in 1999 as a full time unit under the direction of Sgt. Frank Foster with 5 officers. There were 6 Kawasaki motorcycles. In 2000 same number of officers, but Harley Davidson motorcycles were used, and are still today.

- In 2001-2003 — 13 officers
- In 2004-2007 — 10 officers

2007 Harley Davidson motorcycles are leased for \$900 each per year. Radios and lights are added at \$3500 per bike.

The Motors Unit does primarily traffic enforcement along with some escort and special event details.

Fleet

A frequent comment from Department personnel concerning the latest array of police vehicles is that the current fleet is the best the Department has ever had. For Lt. Robert Anderson and the personnel assigned to the motor fleet this is a compliment of the highest order, reflective of their efforts in purchasing, maintaining and repairing the approximately 246 vehicles that compromise the fleet.

Fleet personnel deal with the routine problems of vehicle operations and any car owner knows that vehicle maintenance is a never ending cycle. Multiply that by 246 times and it becomes

apparent how much effort is necessary to "get the job done." In addition, they dispose of "out of service" vehicles and equip vehicles with necessary emergency equipment.

2007 Footnote: At the end of 2006 the department has 194 marked squads, 60 investigator cars, and 35 support vehicles. The vehicle of choice is the Ford Crown Victoria which initially costs \$22,000. Then \$5,500 in radios, lights, and other equipment is added.