

Questionable Enforcement Tactics?

There are eight major intersections in Courtelaney Pass (CP) and each is equipped with intersection cameras. As municipalities that employ such devices share the revenue from fines with the manufacturer, the city averages \$2.1 million dollars per year in revenue from these fines. The constitutionality of this practice is highly debated and public support is low according to recent surveys. A local "action group" has filed a lawsuit against the city in an attempt to remove these cameras; this lawsuit is pending a court date. A recent study conducted by a local CP reporter indicated that per capita, the revenue generated for the city is twice as high as any similarly situated city in the state that utilizes these cameras. The reporter also alluded to the fact (not substantiated yet) that black residents are twice as likely as whites to be ticketed for intersection violations.

Courtelaney Pass is listed by AAA as the "Biggest Speed Trap in the South" as a major highway runs north to south through the town. Particularly, the speed limit reduces from 55 mph to 35 mph in a 50 yard stretch of road and consistently a police officer is running radar (in a concealed fashion) at the 35 mph speed sign. The CP reporter has also written that blacks and out of town travelers passing through receive 87% of the speeding tickets. This statement is backed up by the reporter's study of statistics from the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. The reporter has also spoken to former officers (off the record) who report that the Chief of Police mandates that each officer issue at least 12 citations per shift. It is common that most traffic enforcers allow a motorist 10 mph over the posted limit, but during a recent interview with the chief he has stated that he has a "zero tolerance for speed, as it kills" so he instructs his officers to issue tickets for 5 mph over the limit. The chief would not comment on the 12 citation minimum per shift policy.

As Courtelaney Pass has recently seen its violent crime rate soar by 35%, the chief believes that this is due to the proliferation of street drugs being sold in open air, drive up, drug markets. These "markets" are located on the southern edge of the city where the majority of the population is minority. The CP Police Narcotics Unit conducts regular and aggressive enforcement actions including crack cocaine search warrants and reverse sales operations wherein undercover officers pose as drug sellers and customers are arrested for purchasing. During one of these operations, a shooting occurred wherein a known dealer shot at the undercover officer who returned fire, killing the dealer. The ensuing internal affairs investigation cleared the officer and the day that this report was made public, rioting erupted in the minority community. This unrest actually spilled over into the down- town area requiring the chief of police to call in re-enforcements from neighboring agencies and the state police. As a result, 13 businesses were badly damaged, 8 officers injured, and 112 rioters and looters were arrested. The minority community has warned that if relations do not immediately improve with the police that more unrest was certain. After this shooting incident and subsequent riots, the chief has suspended all narcotic enforcement actions in the area.

Political Influences

The 5,600 Hispanic residents are counted only as those who responded to the census or were property owners. It is estimated that an additional 5,000 + undocumented immigrants also call Courtelaney Pass home. The majorities of these folks work in the immense strawberry fields