

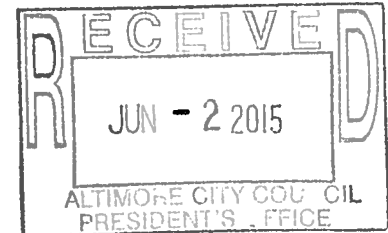


STEPHANIE RAWLINGS BLAKE
Mayor

ANTHONY W. BATTS
Police Commissioner

June 2, 2015

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



Attention: Natawna A. Austin, Executive Secretary

**Re: City Council Bill No. 15-0225R
Investigative Hearing – Police Wagon Safety**

Dear Council President Young and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD or the Department) has reviewed Council Bill 15 0225R. This resolution is for the purpose of calling on the Police Commissioner and representatives from the Baltimore City Police Department to appear before the City Council to discuss the current state of the Department's wagon fleet, what steps can be taken to improve the safety of individuals being transported in these wagons, and how the Department plans to address concerns about wagon safety in the immediate future.

The Department currently has 24 prisoner transport vehicles. The safety of individuals transported in these vehicles is of paramount importance. In fact, Commissioner Batts has set a goal that BPD will be a national leader in prisoner transportation. Section 1 of BPD Policy 1114 specifically states that "Whenever a person is taken into custody: 1.1 Ensure the safety of the detainee is maintained, and 1.2 Ensure medical treatment for a detainee is obtained, when necessary or requested, at the nearest emergency medical facility." Policy 1114 also requires a detainee to be secured with the provided seat belt or restraining device. The Department has acknowledged that several of these procedures were not properly followed in the case of Mr. Freddie Gray. As a result, the Department is working to reinforce these procedures.

The Department is exploring a number of options to modernize our fleet for the long term, as well as some short term options to improve safety. The Department has convened an internal working group to evaluate best practices, as well as to solicit input from transport officers. Starting immediately, the Department will begin replacing its aging fleet of 24 transport vehicles. The Department is currently developing specifications for new prisoner transport vehicles based on the feedback of wagon drivers and the latest safety and functionality features available from manufacturers. Because the Department does not have the resources to replace all 24 vehicles at one time, several short-term safety enhancements are being considered. These options include eliminating the center partition in the

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vehicles, adding a side-loading option, and adding a camera monitoring system. The updates currently being considered by the Department would cost approximately \$13,000 per vehicle. The Department is also currently evaluating whether it makes sense to contract out for prisoner transport services.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. The Department looks forward to working with the City Council on this matter.

Sincerely,



Drew Vetter
Director, Government Affairs