

Bethlehem Police Department

Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative

**The Who, What, When, Where, How and Why of Traffic Stops
&**

Anatomy of a Traffic Stop and Data Gathered

November 19, 2020

What is the purpose of Traffic Enforcement?

FACTS

- SAFETY 1st!!
 - Improve safety for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians
 - Decrease crashes, decrease injuries, decrease roadway fatalities
 - Does it work? – YES
 - Deterrent for others
 - Visible safety presence for peace of mind
 - Overall safety is the primary objective of traffic enforcement
- Unmeasurable purposes
 - Criminal Deterrent & Crime Prevention
 - Does it work? – YES

MYTHS

- There is a ticket quota
 - Quotas are illegal
 - Bethlehem does NOT have quotas
- Police have nothing else to do
 - Annually police respond to well over 20,000 calls for service
- Everyone police stop receives a ticket
 - Less than 50% of traffic stops result in the issuance of a ticket



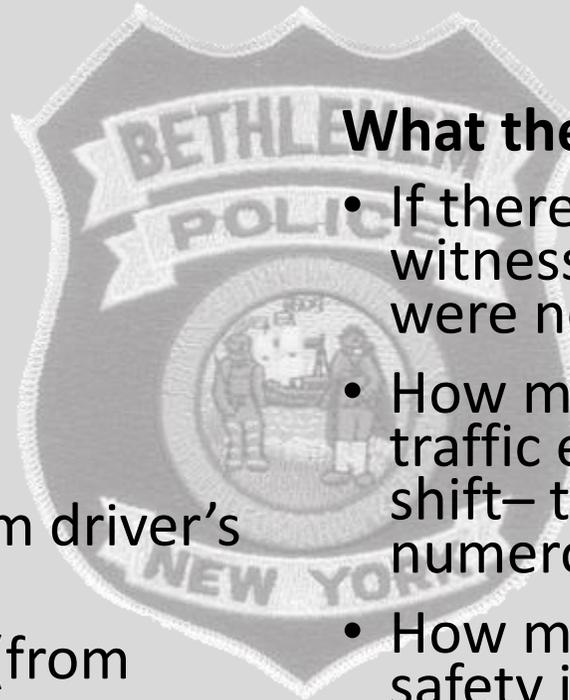
Who, Where, When and Why, do police conduct traffic enforcement?

- In some ways – everywhere and at any time for a violation
 - Police can initiate a traffic stop based on an observance of any violation of the law or upon reasonable suspicion or probable cause.
 - Patrol officers are the members primarily responsible for traffic enforcement but any member can and will take action based on the egregiousness of a violation
- Focus or extra enforcement based on an analytical response
 - Review of crash data, speed data, previous citation data
 - Follow the three E's of best practices of traffic safety – Education, Engineering and Enforcement
 - Focused patrols and enforcement are based solely on this data
- Complaint based response
 - Resident complaints
 - Over 120 traffic complaints in 2019 – speed is the most common complaint

Stop and Ticket Data

What the data tells us

- Location of stop
- Officer making a stop
- Number of tickets issued
- Violations tickets issued for
- Age of alleged violators (from driver's license)
- Gender of alleged violators (from driver's license)
- Perceived race (Based on officer's observation – NOT required for tickets or stops by the state)

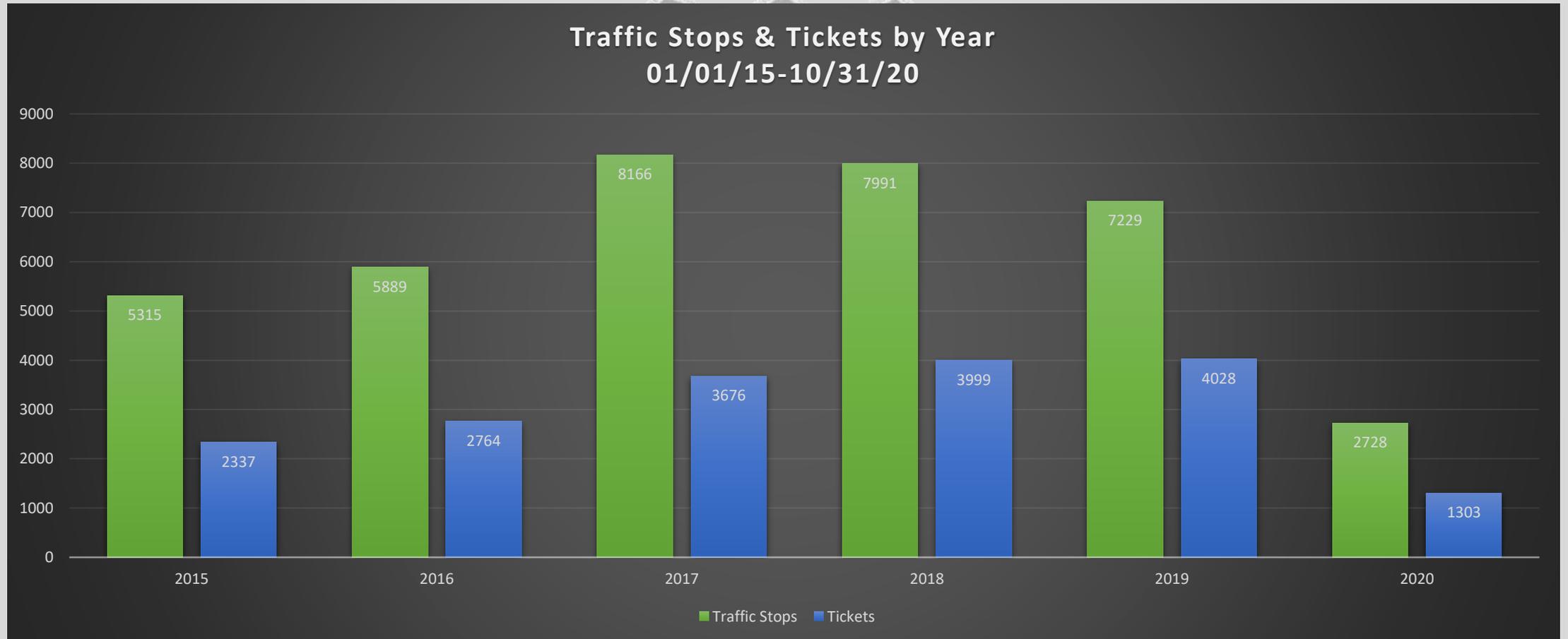


What the data does not tell us

- If there were other violations witnessed by the officer that tickets were not issued for
- How much time an officer spends on traffic enforcement in the course of a shift– this changes based on numerous variables
- How much time is dedicated to traffic safety initiatives
- Perceived race (Based on officer's observation – NOT required for tickets or stops by the state)

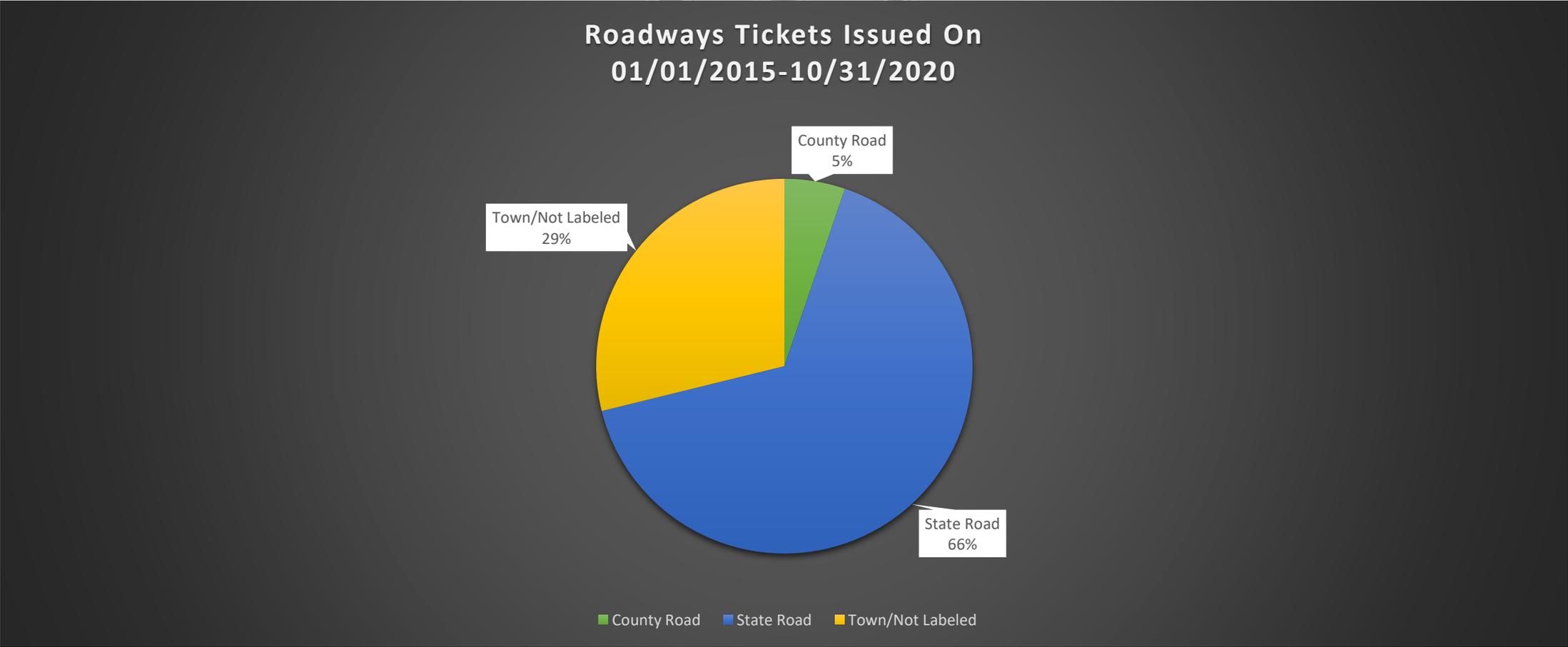
Stop and Ticket Data

01/01/15-10/31/20



NOTE: Data represents tickets issued by Bethlehem PD, not all tickets issued in Bethlehem (ie- State Police, Sheriff, etc.).

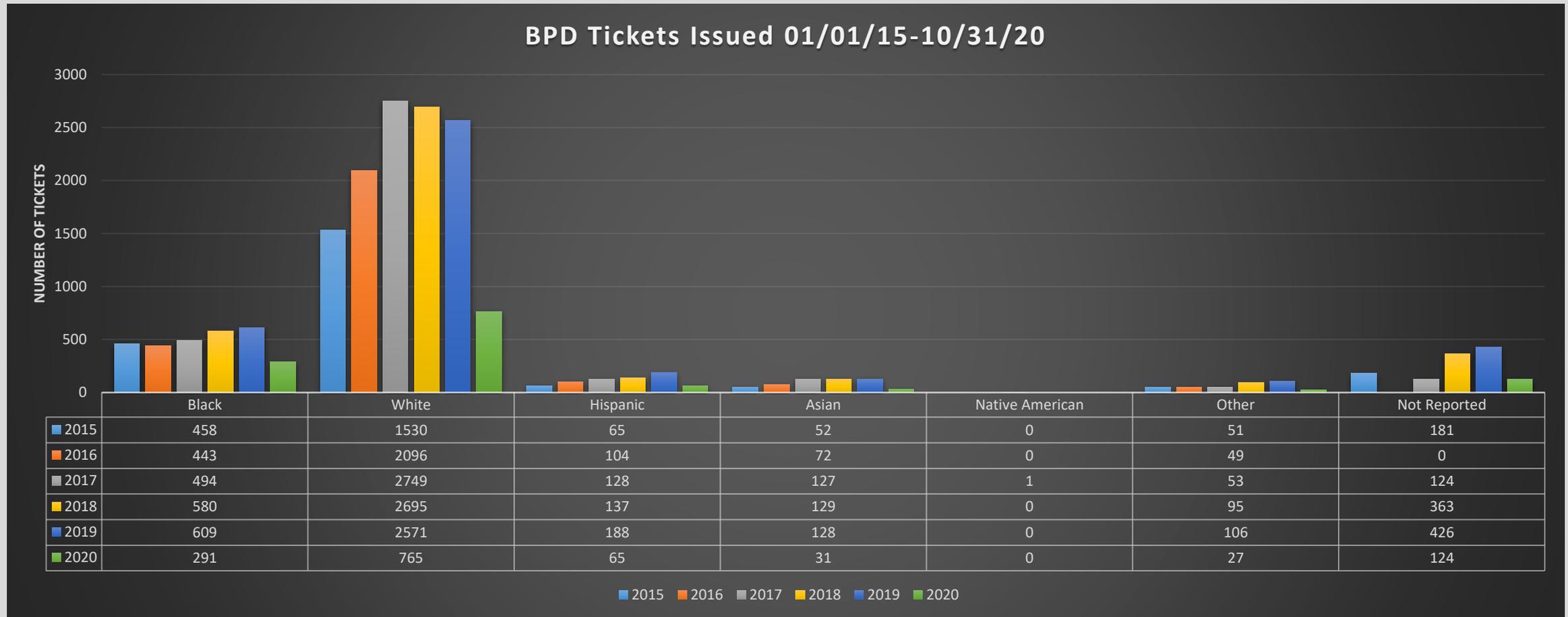
Types of Roadways Tickets are issued on



NOTE: Data represents tickets issued by Bethlehem PD, not all tickets issued in Bethlehem (ie- State Police, Sheriff, etc.).

Ticket Data

01/01/15-10/31/20



- Note: This data represents total number of tickets issued – NOT number of persons issued tickets.
- Race and ethnicity factors can skew the data based on perception – this information does not auto populate on forms.

* Data represents tickets issued by Bethlehem PD, not all tickets issued in Bethlehem.

Anatomy of a Traffic Stop
and
“To Ticket or Not to Ticket”
Traffic Stop – Inadequate Tail Lamp

officer:388 unit:729
GPS:(42.6202,-73.7804)



11/14/2020 01:10:10

Anatomy of a Traffic Stop
and
“To Ticket or Not to Ticket”
Traffic Stop- Safety Hazard

officer:384 unit:725
GPS:(42.6191, -73.7841)



Anatomy of a Traffic Stop and

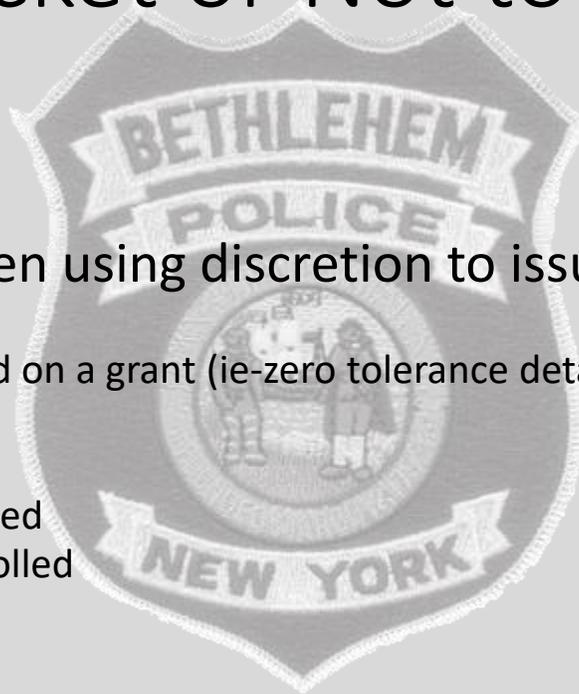
“To Ticket or Not to Ticket”

Traffic Stop- LPR Hit for Misdemeanor Suspended Registration



Anatomy of a Traffic Stop and “To Ticket or Not to Ticket”

- Traffic Stop Videos
 - Review
- Some variables considered when using discretion to issue a traffic ticket
 - Egregiousness of violation
 - Mandatory citation detail based on a grant (ie-zero tolerance detail)
 - Respect
 - Honesty
 - Complaints – area being patrolled
 - Crash history – area being patrolled
 - Degree/Level of violation
 - Explanation
 - Severity of known penalty
- Variables Not considered
 - Driver’s abstract – previous record is not considered or viewable
 - Previous stops and warnings given to the motorist



Next Steps on Data Collection

- Summary of Current Situation:
 - Only data that is required by the state is captured.
 - State data requirements have changed over time and are not specific to what each community needs answered
- Solutions:
 - Identify the exact data that is needed to be collected.
 - We are in the late stages of a multi-year effort to transition our data collection software and database to a more modern and efficient system
 - Gathering and managing data take time and are expensive – we need to be clear on what questions we want to answer to ensure we collect the right data in an efficient manner
 - Develop a method(s) to increase data collection and most importantly – the accuracy of the data collection – without compromising efficiency, officer and public safety. As well as without adding large amounts of manual searching to compile the data.