



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2026-245
IN CITY COUNCIL
September 14, 2026

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please see attached a memo from Pauline Wells, Acting Police Commissioner, responding to Awaiting Report #26-45 which requested that the Police Department prepare a report on the causes of the significant decline in traffic enforcement since 2015, current departmental priorities, and recommendations for enforcement.

Very truly yours,

Yi-An Huang
City Manager





City of Cambridge Police Department

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Pauline M. Wells
Acting Police Commissioner

Yi-An Huang
City Manager

To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager
From: Pauline Wells, Acting Police Commissioner
Date: September 9, 2026
Ref.: Awaiting Report No. 2026-45 – Review of Decline in Traffic Enforcement

This memo responds to Awaiting Report 2026-45, which requested that the Police Department prepare a report on the causes of the significant decline in traffic enforcement since 2015, current departmental priorities, and recommendations for enforcement.

Causes of the Decline in Traffic Enforcement Since 2015

After a departmental review of citation data from 2015 to present, the data does show a decline into the pandemic of 2020. Since 2020, the data shows the citation numbers have improved and remain stable:

- 2021 - 1,994 citations were issued with 2,005 charges
- 2022 – 2,145 citations were issued with 2,401 charges
- 2023 – 4,209 citations were issued with 4,356 charges
- 2024 – 4,228 citations were issued with 4,996 charges
- 2025 – 4,149 citations were issued with 4,290 charges

During this timeframe, the Department has experienced several challenges, including staffing shortages in patrol operations, with more retirements than new hires. Staffing shortages have also prevented the Department from not fully staffing the Traffic Enforcement Unit since 2019. While this unit performs the majority of the Department's traffic enforcement, that is not their only function. They also handle street cleaning enforcement, morning and afternoon school crossings, crash investigations, hit-and-run investigations, dignitary escorts, traffic control at large events, and fire scenes.

Grant funding has fluctuated during this time period, and the Department has lost and gained motor vehicle grant funding at various times throughout this period.

Additionally, DOT has also made effective traffic-calming infrastructure changes throughout the City during this time period, as a result speeding in the City has declined, this is supported by data from DOT and from the CPD Speed Trailer data which shows the perception of speeding is worse in the City than it actually is.

A review of the MassDOT Citation Portal shows that the decline during this same time period mirrors citation trends in Somerville. The data also shows for the last three years CPD has issued more citations than the surrounding municipalities of Somerville, Arlington, and Brookline.

Officers now have expanded enforcement options and additional charges that were previously not created, such as citing bicycles, mopeds, and e-scooters on Massachusetts citations.

This same Citation Portal shows CPD led the Commonwealth in e-scooter citations in 2025 (85 citations) and is currently leading the state in these citations in 2026 (currently 61).

In 2025, regarding red lights/stop signs, crosswalk violations, speeding, and bicycle violations, citations for red lights/stop signs and crosswalks made up 73% of these four violations. This data supports the fact that officers are citing violations that impact vulnerable road users.

Current Departmental Priorities

The Department continues to receive requests for enforcement throughout the City and we respond to these locations to address these concerns using directed patrols. These do not always result in citations being issued but are important for the community to see that we are addressing their concerns.

The Department is committed to the City's Vision Zero goals and works with the other City agencies to collaborate with them. When there is a crash involving serious bodily injury or death, these agencies meet to conduct a Vision Zero walkthrough at the crash site and see if any changes need to be made to the crash location.

In furthering our commitment to Vision Zero the Department has placed an increased emphasis on traffic enforcement as part of the current Field Training program for probationary officers. Additionally, changes to Civil Service hiring rules and the new alternative pathway hiring process are anticipated to address the staffing issues the Department has faced for over a decade.

The Department is also working with DOT on GIS crash data project which will specifically address crosswalks and use that data to help focus our enforcement efforts.

Recommendations for Enforcement

The Department will continue to utilize a mix of community feedback and data to guide our enforcement efforts. This includes:

- Continuing directed patrols in response to community concerns.
- Prioritizing enforcement that protects vulnerable road users.
- Using DOT and CPD crash-related GIS data to identify high-risk crosswalks and intersections for focused enforcement.
- Supporting staffing improvements through ongoing hiring reforms to restore full staffing levels for the Traffic Enforcement Unit.
- Maintaining enhanced traffic-enforcement training for new officers as part of the Field Training program.

The Department will continue to address community concerns while working collaboratively with other City agencies to eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries while promoting safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all.