

Funding Bike Patrols with Non-Departmental Money

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I was asked by a chief from a local police department how to start a police mountain bike unit without using departmental funds. That question started me thinking, "how can I train and equip forty officers from different police departments at no cost?" My goal was to sponsor an IPMBA Police Cyclist training course for forty officers from 20 different departments. And I wanted each officer who attended to receive a Smith & Wesson police bike, a helmet, classroom materials, a full bike uniform from Bratwear, and IPMBA membership and certification.

I started to research various grants, including COPS, Community Block, and Department of Justice grants. None fit my project. As I broadened my research, I came across the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (DOT) project enhancement program, and I started thinking about the project in a different way. The communities whose officers I was looking to train had one thing in common – access to a rail-trail. The rail-trail proved to be the key to funding through the DOT's enhancement program.

The enhancement program is a reimbursement program that stems from the federal transportation funding known as TEA-21. Under TEA-21 (the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century), every state is required to set aside a certain percentage of federal transportation funding for projects that encourage alternative transportation, such as bike lanes and pedestrian access. Because of the restricted nature of the funds, your program must fall under one of the categories listed in the application, one of which is bike safety and educational programs. The application requires you to answer various questions in regard to your project. You also must have a government agency sponsor your project and complete a spending or federal fund request sheet that includes all costs related to your project. Once your application is completed, funding must be approved by several committees set up by the DOT.

The Allegheny County Police Academy (Allegheny County, PA) was my sponsor. The project is called the Allegheny County Police Academy Bike Safety and Education Program, and it focuses on providing training and equipment for police departments located along one of Pennsylvania's network of rail trails. The scope of the funding allows for the following costs to outfit and train 40 officers from 20 different departments:

- 40 Smith & Wesson bikes
- 40 sets of Bratwear bike uniforms
- 40 *Complete Guide to Police Cycling* books
- 40 IPMBA memberships and certifications
- One laptop computer with all software for instructor
- Instructor fees (10-15% of the funding)

The total cost of the project (amount of funds requested) was \$70,000.

The project was approved; the officers were trained and equipped. In exchange for the training and equipment, the officers are required to teach bike safety and education programs in their communities. They are also required to patrol their communities' sections of the rail trail. They must keep records of the times they patrol as well as how many bike education programs they sponsor and who attends. At the end of the year, the officers must forward this information to the project manager (instructor) who keeps a database on the laptop in case the project is audited by the federal government.

If you decide to pursue funding of this type, remember that this is a reimbursement, not a grant. Once your project is approved for funding, the state DOT sets up an account with the funds allocated to your project. The sponsoring agency sends out purchase orders for equipment, uniforms and training. They also send a bill for reimbursement to the DOT. The DOT then sends a reimbursement check to the sponsoring agency, which forwards payment to the bike and uniform companies and also to the instructor. As you can see, no department money has to be spent. The only money used is from the funding account.

If this program does not fit your needs, contact your local state representatives and your district attorney's office. Your state representative will send you a grant application, and your D.A.'s office may be able to fund your bike patrol out of their forfeiture fund. By seeking funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the state representatives and the district attorney's office, I have helped secure over

\$150,000 in funds to start bike units and provide training and equipment to over 250 bike officers at no cost to the local police departments.

If you would like more information about these funding sources, please contact Officer Rick Troy at rtroy@police.pitt.edu.

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