LOCAL ISSUE

2016 National Law Enforcement Challenge

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION:

Being the largest city in Southwest Virginia, Roanoke is a natural hub for shoppers, particularly during the holiday season. The City of Roanoke has one large indoor shopping complex, Valley View Mall, and several other shopping centers that are more of the outdoor variety, such as Towers Mall, which is in the Colonial Avenue SW traffic corridor of the city. So when you have a large number of people frequenting a smaller space, by nature it's going to lead to an increase in congestion, traffic, and crashes in those locations.

Using data driven analysis from the department's crime analysts in ISTAR [Intelligence, Statistics, Technology, Analysis, and Research], as well as TREDS [Traffic Records Electronic Data System], the department discovered a higher concentration of crashes between August 1st to November 10 in 2014 in the Towers Mall-Colonial Avenue shopping zone compared to the same time frame in 2015. The data made it a local target area.

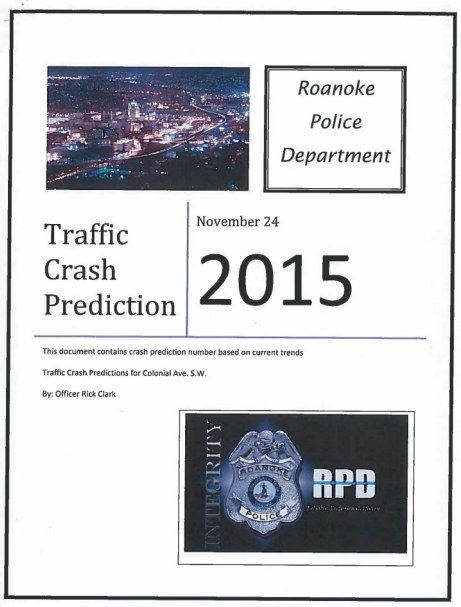
A survey compiled by the department's traffic safety officer found a 28-percent increase in crashes from 2014 to 2015 in the target area. Based on that survey, the traffic safety officer and the crime analysts predicted crashes would increase in the Colonial Avenue SW corridor during the holiday shopping season of 2015. Crime analysts found 17 crashes between November 27, 2014 [Black Friday, or the start of Christmas shopping season] through Christmas Day 2014. The prediction suggested the number crashes in that corridor would rise to 22.

POLICY:

Attached in separate PDF file are operational directives [in order of appearance]: Officer Contact with Traffic Violators (62.1.5), Traffic Crash Investigation (63.1.1), Vehicle Operation and Vehicular Pursuits (41.2.2), Traffic Enforcement Data Collection and Evaluation (61.3.1), Traffic Law Enforcement (62.1.1), RADAR/LIDAR Speed Enforcement (62.1.11).

PLANNING:

Traffic Safety Officer, Rick Clark, submitted an operational plan and crash prediction number to command staff on November 24, 2015, three days before Black Friday. The proposal [cover depicted on right] identified the Colonial Avenue corridor in the "problem identification" portion of the plan and outlined recommendations for patrol and a holiday force multiplier initiative on enforcement strategies, use of patrols such as bicycle patrols, and traffic safety campaigns such as "Click It Or Ticket."


Roanoke Police Department

Traffic Crash Prediction

November 24

2015

This document contains crash prediction number based on current trends

Traffic Crash Predictions for Colonial Ave. S.W.

By: Officer Rick Clark

Officer Clark's plan was specific to the target location, as well as target dates and times when the activity was occurring:

Traffic Recommendation

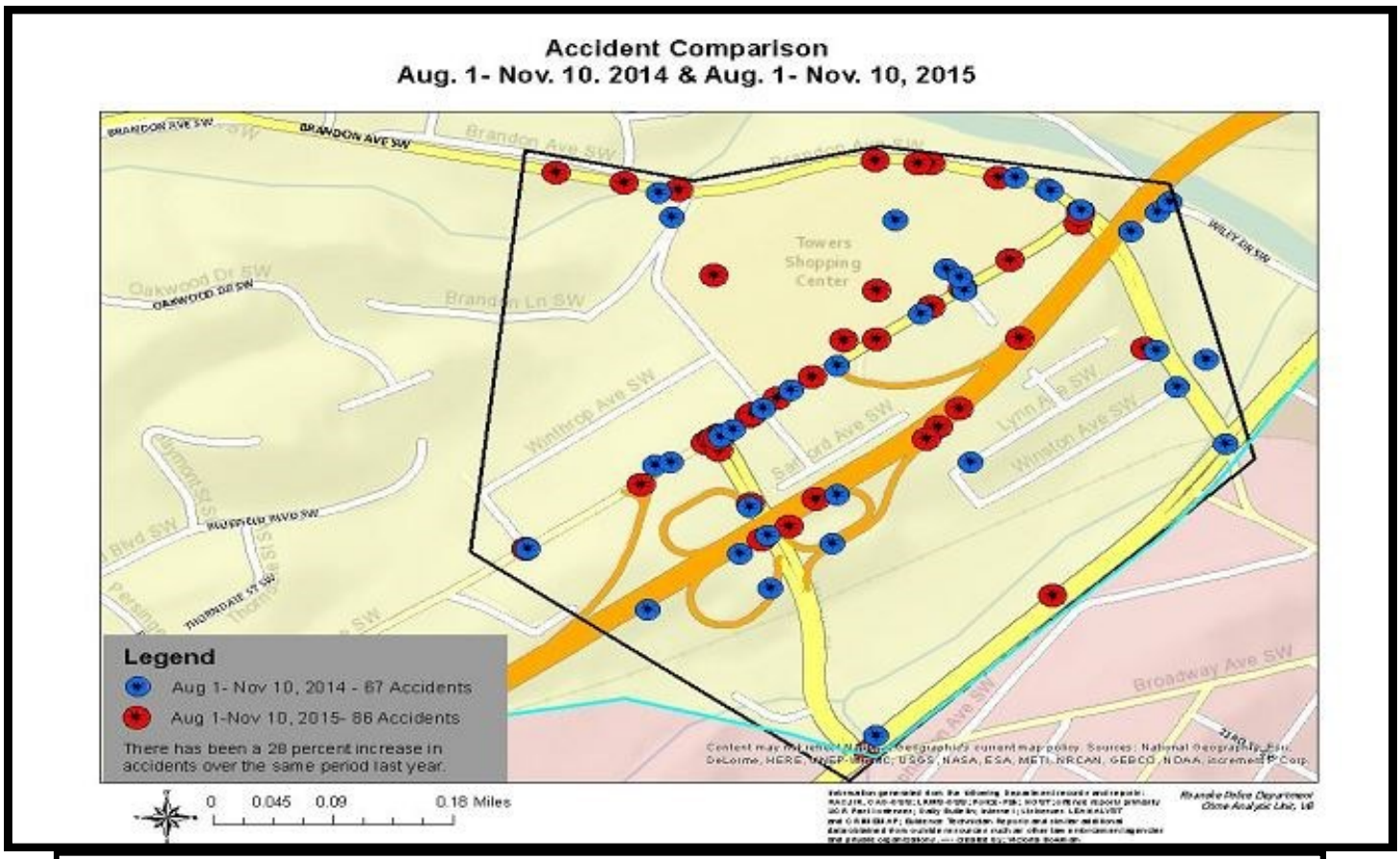
As Officers are patrolling the areas of Towers Mall and Valley View Mall, they need to be aware of and prioritize "Right of Way" issues. Citizens disregarding red lights, improper turning and failing to yield the right of way to pedestrians are the leading causes of crashes. A review of Valley View Mall traffic crashes indicate similar patterns, but on a smaller scale. During this holiday season the Roanoke Police Department will be focusing on drinking and driving, speeding, and failing to wear seatbelts, there are other important factors like "tailgating." This tends to be the second or even the primary cause of crashes as we get closer to the Christmas season.

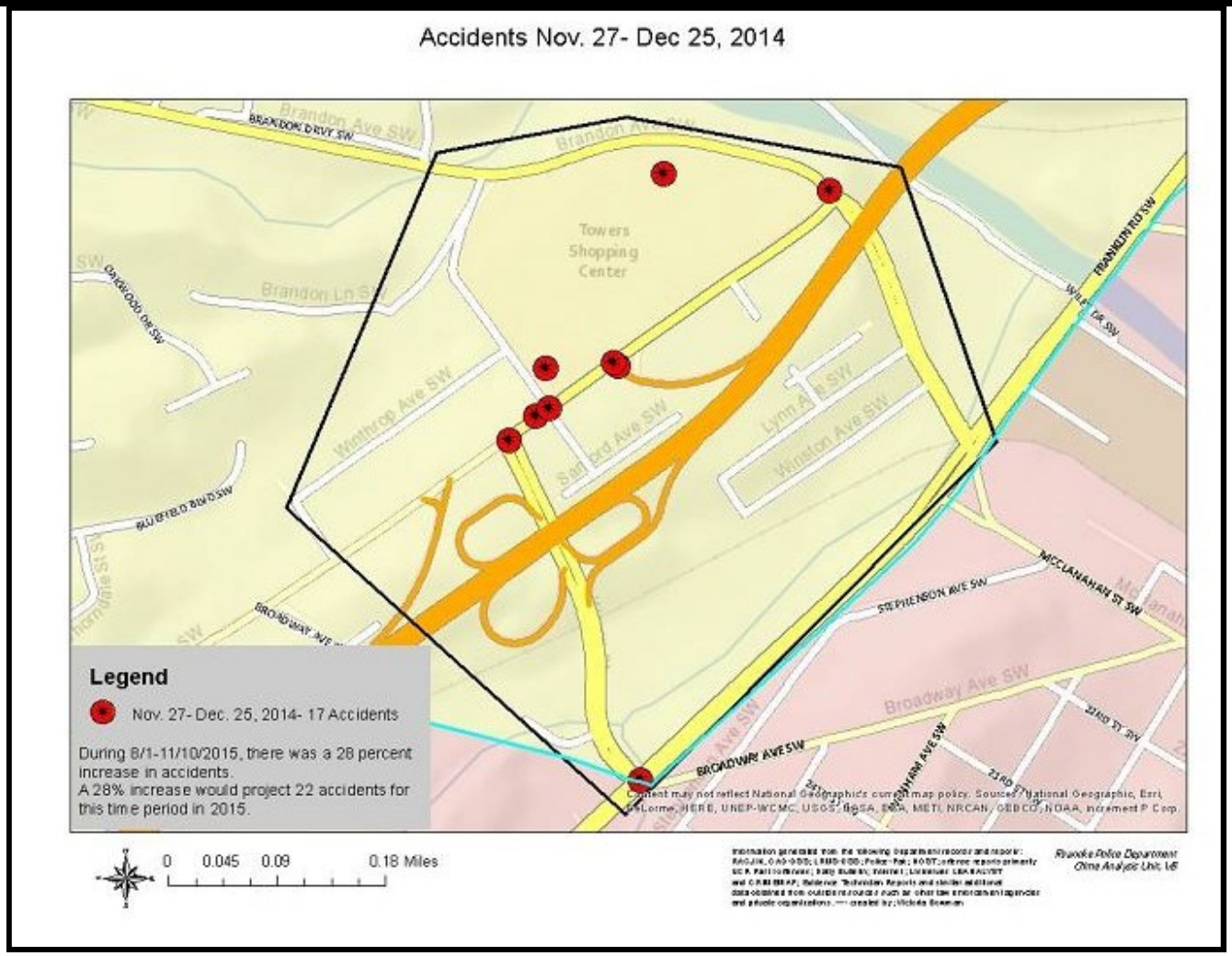
As Officers are patrolling on bikes this season, engage the citizens with positive contact and remind them to have a safe holiday season and be sure to wear your seatbelt. This positive interaction will influence those drivers to remember to buckle up.

Officer patrolling in police vehicles can be diligent in looking for any and all traffic violations. This zero-tolerance that can be adopted this holiday season will reduce the number of severe crash.

Traffic safety campaigns such as Click it or Ticket and Driver Sober or get pulled over will aid in projecting the message that the Roanoke Police Department is dedicated in making the 2015 holiday season as safe as it can be.

To ensure follow-up and implementation, Officer Clark used the detailed maps below to assist in planning future enforcement, prevention, and education efforts:





A significant portion of the plan called for the Traffic Safety Office and businesses in the Towers Mall area to work together in an continuing effort to reduce crashes in the Colonial Avenue corridor. The traffic safety officer planned to set up meetings with business owners and ask the businesses to distribute free traffic safety brochures from our partners at Drive Smart Virginia. Officers working that area were encouraged to visit businesses and be visible as a means of follow-up to ensure the plan's implementation. An example of the plan and flyers is below:

The 2015 holiday season has come to a close. The results from this traffic safety campaign are as follows:

Towers Mall Area:

In the month of December, based on past trends, traffic prediction crashes were projected to be at 22 for the holiday season. Based on the efforts of the Roanoke Police Department, the number of traffic crashes was three (3). This was an 87 percent reduction on crashes for Towers Mall. From November 27th to December 31st the Officer issued 14 citations during this period.

Summonses issued ranged from Fail to Obey a Highway Sign, Improper Lane Changes, and Improper turn.

Education Component:

The Traffic Safety Office is planning to meet with the business at Towers Mall to join forces in the continuing effort of crash reduction. This effort would be the Roanoke Police Department asking the businesses if they could pass out free brochures on Distracted Driving. This brochure would be placed on the trays of patrons dining within the restaurant, and placing on inside the bags of patrons ordering meals to go.

Brochures used,

STRATEGIC HIGHWAY SAFETY PLAN SUPPORT:

The Department supported the Virginia Strategic Highway Safety Plan by doing the following:

1) Developed and implemented plans to address speed and safety related concerns

2) Utilized ISTAR to track and analyze crash statistics.

TRAINING:

Title	Date(s)	Attendance
Radar/Lidar Instructor Recert	6/29/15	4
Radar/Lidar Basic Instructor School	9/1/15—9/4/15	3
Crash Data Recovery School	6/29/15—6/30/15	1
In-Service, Speeding	Various	124
Initial Radar/Lidar Certification	Various	22

In Phase 2 of recruit training, officers are required to come write an operational plan that mitigates a problem community issue, such as speeding, which we believe helps officers throughout their careers by teaching them detailed planning and problem recognition during the early stages of their professional development. Experienced field training officers assist the young officers with these plans and implementation. The field training officers also stress follow-up to see if the plan is meeting its goal and helping to remedy the problem.

PUBLIC INFORMATION & EDUCATION:

Traffic Safety Officer Rick Clark met with the department's public information officer, Scott Leamon, in mid-November to launch a media and public awareness strategy to help reduce traffic crashes and theft from vehicle incidents not only in the Colonial Avenue SW area but citywide. It was decided that an all encompassing approach would work best and local TV outlets should be included in the plan since many people have access to that platform who live outside of Roanoke but commute into the city during the Christmas season for holiday shopping. We felt steady messaging over television, radio, social media, and with traffic safety partners such as the Roanoke Prevention Alliance and Park Roanoke should be utilized to further extend our public awareness campaign reach.

Traffic Safety Friday & #RPDtrafficsafety Alerts: The department released focused traffic safety messages via our Facebook and Twitter accounts every Friday during the holiday season. The messaging emphasized not just traffic safety but personal safety [cont. on next page]

and theft prevention. Our #RPDtrafficsafety Alerts also kept citizens abreast of any changing weather conditions that might impact safety. An example of the Traffic Safety Friday we used to kick-off the campaign is below:

Published by Scott Leamon [?]
Like This Page · November 25, 2015 ·

Holiday travel tips from our Traffic Safety Officer Rick Clark:

1. Be patient. During busy travel times, expect to hit traffic. It may make sense to drive late at night or early in the morning to avoid the rush and ensure you get to your destination on time and with minimal stress. A GPS device with traffic information and an exit guide can help you navigate around congestion and help find desired pit stop locations.

2. Don't be distracted. Cell phones and driving don't mix, so if you need to send a message or make a call, hand your phone to a passenger or pull over. It's not worth risking your life or others on the road.

3. Buckle up. Always use your seat belt, make sure children are properly secured in a car seat and are seated in the rear seats if they are under 13.

4. Watch for weather. If you're driving in wintry weather, make sure you clear off the snow and ice for better visibility, allow for longer braking distances, and reduce your speed. (Check your weather for that region if you are headed to a

Write a comment...

We also started our media blitz that very same day, November 25, 2015, by having Officer Clark interview with several local television stations as evidenced by the FOX affiliate story in the photo below:

ROANOKE, Va.

The holiday season means a lot of travel to see family and friends both in Virginia and out of town. It also means more people on the roads. Roanoke City Police Department has some tips on how to keep safe in high traffic situations.

Officer Rick Clark said he expects to see even more people out on the roads than in the previous year, since gas prices have dropped dramatically this year.

"With gas prices being as cheap as they are, a lot more people are going to tend to drive this year versus fly to their destinations," Clark said.

He also said people will tend to drive further distances. For those going out of state, Clark suggests they leave early.

"As it gets closer to the holidays, people are going to be in more of a hurry to get to those destinations," Clark said. "Leave early in the morning, the best time is about 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning after you get that good night's sleep."

However, he said there's no way to really avoid traffic entirely. Instead, he recommends driving cautiously, being aware of surroundings, maintaining a safe traveling distance and keeping distractions at a minimum.

With increased traffic, there will also be increased police presence on the roads. These saturation patrols will be monitoring high traffic areas until New Year's Day.

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We made sure and got our messaging out to our partners at Park Roanoke and its monthly electronic newsletter, which has approximately 6,000 subscribers. We figured that many of those subscribers would shop in the city, and in the Towers Mall area in particular, during the holidays. The communication is below:

PARK SAFE: TIPS TO STAY SAFE WHILE PARKING

by Scott Leamon, Community Relations Specialist, Roanoke Police Department

You ever seen a smart phone or tablet taking its owner for a walk? I have. It's when a person's walking and so interested in checking their emails or social media pages on their phones that they're oblivious to their surroundings. It almost looks like the phone is talking them for a walk. Just like we teach "heads up phone down" to teenagers who are just starting out driving, we teach the same thing when you're out and about at the mall, the park, and the parking garages. You can check your email and Facebook page when you're safely locked inside your car (before you start driving of course!). In the crime prevention world, it's called "situational awareness," being aware of your surroundings. Here are a few more tips when it comes to parking garages:

- Lock your doors. Unlocked vehicles make up about 65-percent of our theft from vehicle cases.
- Hide any valuables or take them with you. Thieves are lazy. They'll try to steal what they see. If they clearly see a laptop in the back seat, even if the door is locked, they might try to break the window and take it.
- Focus on the now. Try to eliminate distractions. Look around when you're walking to and from your car. You want to see something suspicious from afar before you walk right into it.
- Have your keys ready in your hand. That way you don't have to look for them. Keys make a pretty good weapon of opportunity in a pinch as well.
- Call 9-11- if you see anything suspicious. Nothing's too small and you won't be a bother. Cops need to know about these things. If it makes you uncomfortable, that's your survival instinct talking to you, so feel free to call.

Roanoke Prevention Alliance

MEDIA ADVISORY

Roanoke Police Department and Roanoke Prevention Alliance want you to Keep the Party Off the Road During the Holiday Season

What's Your Plan? Designate a Sober Driver!

- Drunk driving is a killer on the roads all year round, but data shows that the tradition of celebrating the holidays with alcohol leads to an increase of traffic crashes and resulting deaths and injuries.
- According to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, crashes involving alcohol increase during the holiday period, with about a 10 percent increase during the time between Christmas and New Year's Day.
- Nationwide, the holiday season is a particularly deadly time due to the high number of drunk drivers on the roads. In December 2014, 788 lives were lost due to drunk driving – one death every 57 minutes.
- Drinking and driving endangers yourself, your passengers, and those on the road around you. Whether you've had one or one too many, always hand the keys to a sober driver.

The Consequences of Driving Drunk Are Deadly Serious.

- Driving while impaired is a crime that seriously risks your safety and the safety of those around you. Whether you have had one too many or are way over the limit, drunk driving is not worth causing a traffic crash, serious injury, or worse—death.
- The legal and financial costs of driving while impaired can be significant. Drunk-driving violators often face jail time, the loss of their driver licenses, higher insurance rates, and dozens of other unanticipated expenses ranging from attorney fees, court costs, car towing and repairs, and lost wages due to time off from work.
- Refusing to take a breath test in many jurisdictions results in immediate arrest, the loss of your driver's license on the spot and the impoundment of your vehicle. Also, there's the added embarrassment, humiliation, and consequences of telling family, friends and employers of your arrest.

WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?

- Even one drink can impair your judgment and increase the risk of getting arrested for driving drunk—or worse, the risk of having a crash while driving.
- Plan a safe way home before the festivities begin:
  - Designate a Sober Driver and have them pick you up
  - Know who to call before you are impaired and have the numbers programmed into your phone
  - Call a taxi, a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation to get home safely
  - Make arrangements to stay with the party hosts
- If you know someone who is about to drive impaired or ride with someone who is impaired, help them make other arrangements
- If a friend is drunk and wants to drive, don't let it happen, even if it means taking the keys away
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, contact your local law enforcement

For more information contact:
Scott Leamon, phone: (540) 853-6884, mail to: Scott.Leamon@RoanokeVA.gov
Ray Bemis, Director, Roanoke Prevention Alliance, phone: (540) 529-6103, mail to: RBemis@BRBH.org
###

We continued to hit the messaging home by releasing to the media our planned holiday saturation patrols, which started in mid-December, with a news release from our partners at the Roanoke Prevention Alliance, a copy of which is to the left. This release went out to all media and traffic safety partners on December 14, 2015.

ENFORCEMENT:

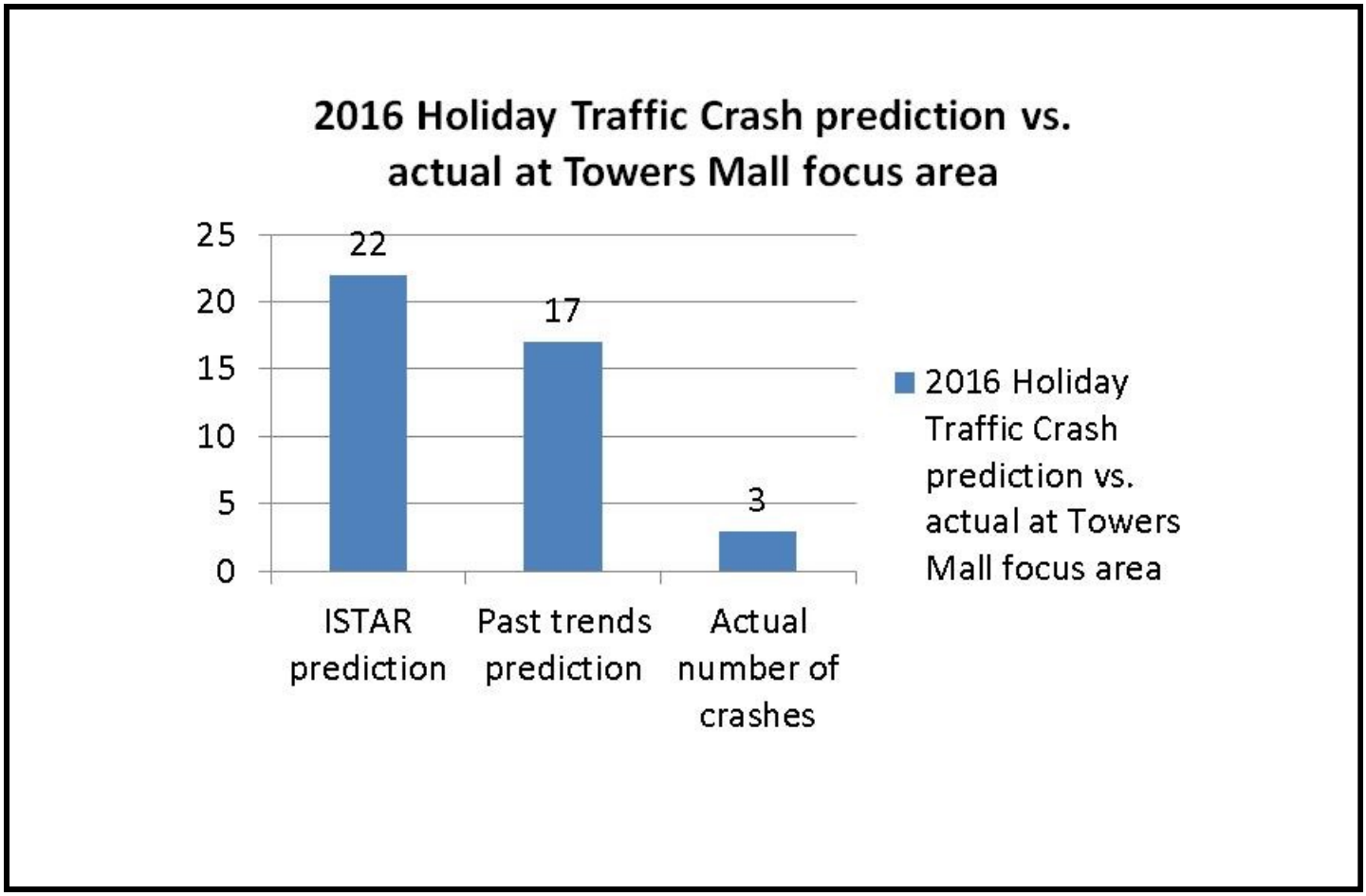
This project was exclusively a regular duty-time project. Approximately 150 regular duty hours were focused on this project over the course of the four week time frame. Officers were assigned to have a visual presence in the area and conduct enforcement activities when the call load permitted.

No grant funded overtime was used.

- 25 citations were issued. All were issued in the target area and during the target times of November 27, 2015 to December 31, 2015.
- Contacts included traffic stops, citations, and public education contacts with businesses in the target zone. The total number of contacts was estimated at 300.

OUTCOMES:

The follow-up plan called for crime analysts in ISTAR to analyze crash statistics from the strategy's start date, Black Friday 2015 [November 27, 2015] to New Year's Eve 2015. The follow-up examination determined there were three crashes during that time period in 2015, **an 87-percent reduction in crashes in the target zone surrounding Towers Mall when compared to 2015 crash prediction and past trends [see graph below]:**



Overall, the plan helped **reduce shoplifting by 47-percent in the target zone** during the holidays in 2015 compared to the same time frame in 2014.

In 2013, command staff approved the Harold F. Wallick Traffic Safety Excellence Awards to be given to the officers who go above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to traffic safety. Award winners must meet certain criteria outlined in policy. The award's namesake, Retired Officer Harold F. Wallick, served the department for 25+ years and was known for his extensive legal, prevention, and enforcement knowledge in traffic safety.

2015 Harold F. Wallick Award for Traffic Safety Excellence winners:

- **Officer Kenneth Wilkerson**
- **Officer Cynthia Berrman**
- **Officer Gregory Benton**
- **Officer Billy Wood**
- **Officer Jacob Hawkins**

All of these officers assisted in this project.

Two of our ISTAR analysts also presented a conference in Massachusetts on the success of this project in early 2016.