

MOTORCYCLE MENACE

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We are wanting to address an issue that is affecting the quality of life for at least 11 neighborhoods.....Mt Auburn, OTR, Pendleton, Walnut Hills, East Walnut Hills, Northside, Corryville, CUF, CBD, Mt Adams, North Avondale....by the drivers of illegally modified or altered off-road vehicles....motorcycles and ATVs. ALL are illegally modified to blast excessive noise that continues all night often until 5:00 am.

We are offering here a list of problems, the laws that are being violated, some considerations and suggestions for resolutions but our bottom line is that it appears to us...and some CPD officers.....that we are doing a disservice to our officers and citizens by allowing them to be disrespected in not addressing this problem of a large group violating several laws..

The Problem

Riders(drivers) are creating dangerous conditions:

- Running red lights and stop signs
- Weaving in and out of traffic
- Pulling abruptly in front of motorists and doing wheelies
- Driving at high speeds
- Riding in groups of 30 to 50 or more
- Driving on pedestrian only roadways (i.e. Purple People Bridge)
- Damage to public property (i.e police cruiser, Smale Park)
- Excessive and disturbing loud noise
- **Traveling at night with no lights**

Numerous Laws Violated

The list of laws these riders violate are many, and long; all found in the Cincinnati Municipal Code (CMC) and Ohio Revised Code (ORC). The following identifies just a few.

- Reckless Operation (506-6 CMC)
- Speed (506-8 CMC)
- Traffic Control Device (502-19 CMC)
- Muffler (503-38 CMC)
- Noisy Muffler (511-16C MC)
- Unnecessary Noise (511-12 CMC)
- Disobey Police Officer Signal (502-9 CMC)
- Racing (506-30 CMC)
- Rules for Equipment of snowmobiles, off-highway motorcycles, and all-purpose vehicles (4519.20 ORC)
- Prohibited Acts (4519.40 ORC) – *Note: Refers to off-road vehicles which are not permitted on city streets.*

Law Violations - Not Enforced

The police are limited by two obstacles.

- 1) No Pursuit Policy prevents police officers from pursuing traffic violators and non-felony criminal violators.**
- 2) The riders, encouraging a pursuit, will flee from the police.**

A Police Officer seeing a pack of riders, will “monitor” the reckless and loud violations and maybe initiate a police broadcast for other officers to “monitor” the swarmers further on down the road. The performers ride on, unstopped and undeterred.

***Captain Doug Weisman and his team at the Police Central Business Section have made some genuine attempts to reduce the problem. They have met some of the bikers at one of their gathering places along the riverfront while the vehicles are stationary. His officers enforce vehicle violations when found. But these efforts have had limited effect on resolving the overall problem. Moving violations and many other equipment violations continue unabated.

WORK TOWARD SOLUTIONS

The No Pursuit policy has a solid foundation in public safety. Pursuits have proven to be dangerous and deadly, most often to innocent bystanders.

However, the Police and City Officials can not allow a policy to render them immobile; unable to protect citizens, unable to enforce the law. City Leaders must become creative and innovative. They can not allow themselves to be defeated by mob rule. Citizen safety and quality of life demand aggressive and effective resolution.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOLUTION

Research reveals the problems described are not unique to Cincinnati. Other cities have been burdened with similar vehicular mob unruliness for the past few years. Also consistent is the limitation of police response as a result of the No Pursuit policies (generally universal) and the advantage taken by the self-obsessed riders.

The following is presented as an *opportunity for more detailed research*. Cincinnati's Elected Officials or Police Officials could contact their counterparts in some of the other cities to learn if effective strategies were adopted. What worked, what didn't work? Creative and effective strategies could then be tailored to our city.

Very cursory Google research found the following, mostly news articles. Some were found using terms “Motorcycle Swarms” or Motorcycle Mobs.”

General Overview – Other Cities with similar problems

West Palm Beach, Florida (2017), Seattle (2017), San Francisco (2017), Philadelphia (2017 and 2018), Boston (2018), New York (2018), Hunts Point The Bronx (2019), Nashville (2019), Orlando and Orange County, Florida (2019), Chicago (2019), Atlanta (2019), Vancouver BC (2019), Washington DC (2019), Miami-Dade (2020).

Some of these discussed injuries and death from accidents or violent encounters. In Nashville (2019), a police officer was injured after being dragged by a three-wheeler during a swarming event. The article indicated Nashville was working on a plan. In the Bronx (2019), the bikers formed a threatening circle around a police officer.

More Recent Articles – Cities that Implemented Plans

A second round of research found more current articles (March and April of 2020) reporting on actions taken – creative and aggressive – by some cities to return the streets and the quality of life to their law-abiding citizens.

The cities, news article sources, dates and headlines are provided in alphabetical order (by city). Internet Search links can be provided, if needed.

- Allentown, PA (The Morning Call, May 22, 2020) – *Allentown Police Cracking Down on ATV, Dirtbike Riders*
- Boston, MA (Masslive, May 20, 2020) – *Boston Police Confiscate 30 Off-Road Vehicles, Arrest 18 people*
- Bridgeport, CT (Patch, May 13, 2020) – *Bridgeport Crackdown Leads to Seizure of 9 ATVs*
- Camden, NJ (Camden County Public Safety, May 26, 2020) – *Public Safety Campaign Targeting Illegal Off-Road Vehicles Has Resulted in 70 Impounds to Date*
- Chicago, IL (Chicago Tribune, May 23, 2020) – *Chicago Police Announce Crackdown on Motorcycle, Memorial Day Weekend Speeders*
- Hartford, CT (WTNH, April 28, 2020) – *City of Hartford, PD Crush Seized ATVs, Dirt Bikes as Part of Ongoing Enforcement Efforts*
- Lake County, Ohio (Cleveland News 5, May 4, 2020) – *Lake County Cracks Down on Illegal Use of Off-Road Vehicles after Property, Railroads Suffer Damage*
- New York, NY (Patch, April 27, 2020) – *Cops Snatch 20 Off-Road Vehicles ‘Terrorizing’ NYC Streets: NYPD*
- Miami, FL (CBS Miami, January 16, 2020) – *South Florida Law Enforcement to Crack Down on “Wheels Up, Guns Down” Reckless Riders*
- Springfield, MA (WAMC Public Radio, July 10, 2019) – *Police Use New Tactics to Pursue Illegal Dirt Bikes Operators*
- Syracuse, NY (WSYR-TV, May 26, 2020) – *Syracuse Police Crackdown on Illegal Dirt Bikes, ATVs*

Strategies and Tactics for Consideration

The following is an overview of some strategies and tactics to consider. Most were employed by some of the aforementioned cities.

- Partnership among: Elected Officials, Police Officials and Citizens
- Meeting of Law and Public Safety to Develop Strategies – Discuss Existing Laws
- Increase Fines to be hefty
- Impound and Destroy Vehicles (if Illegal or Ownership Unproven)
- Enlist Support and Assistance from the Public – Citizen Partnership
 - e.g., Where are vehicles stored and garaged?
- City Social Media or Twitter Page dedicated to the problem and Citizen info exchange
- Public Announcement of Plans (a warning to the violators)
- Public Announcement of Results (the Public knows something is being done)
- Police Create Special Task Force of Officers to Address the Issue
- Plain Clothes Officers to follow swarms rather than pursue
- Infiltrate
- Social Media Intercept to Monitor Groups in Advance of a Swarm
- Hand Held Decibel Readers for Police
- Stationary Sound Devices in high incident areas
- Stationary Cameras in high incidence areas
 - Cincinnati: Real Time Crime and License Plate Recognition
- Helicopters to follow to homes or gathering places rather than pursue
- Drones
- Stop Sticks – Some made specifically for ATVs

CONCLUSION

The inconsiderate hordes are much more than just a source of nuisance or loud noise. The defiant riders are a dangerous threat to public safety and to the quality of life in this city. Ignoring them for fear of a pursuit is not a solution, it emboldens them. Allowing them to continue to mock and taunt police is embarrassingly unacceptable. It is not fair to the citizens of this city and not fair to the good men and women who work hard to protect us.

Cincinnati's Elected and Police Officials are limited only by creativity and the laws. We can be more creative and certainly smarter than the mob riders. Where necessary, laws can be – and should be – changed. Aggressive, definitive action must be taken to regain our city's streets.