



LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION (LEAA)

POLICE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REPORT

SUBJECT: Management Survey

REPORT NUMBER: 77-070/162

FOR: Decatur, Alabama, Police Department

NCJRS

NOV 28 1977

ACQUISITIONS

Population 43,500 (est.)

Police Strength  
(Sworn) 59  
(Civilian) 10  
Total 69

Square Mile Area 35 (city limits)  
115.5 (police jurisdiction)

CONTRACTOR: Public Administration Service  
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CONTRACT NUMBER: J-LEAA-002-76

DATE: October, 1977

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared in response to a request for technical assistance from the Mayor and City Council of Decatur, Alabama, in the form of a comprehensive survey of the operations and management of the Decatur Police Department. The consultant assigned was Mr. Bernard L. Garmire, and others involved in processing the request were:

Requesting Agency: Mr. Bill J. Dukes  
Mayor, Decatur, Alabama

State Planning Agency: Mr. Robert G. Davis  
Director, Alabama Law Enforcement  
Planning Agency

Approving Agency: Mr. John Gregory  
Police Specialist  
LEAA Region IV (Atlanta)

Mr. Robert O. Heck  
Police Specialist  
LEAA Office of Regional Operations

The on-site evaluation of the department was conducted September 5-9, 1977, and in the course of this visit the consultant talked with members of the police force, city officials, and community leaders; observed various police activities; and examined data on file, including records of calls for service and services delivered. The individuals who were interviewed included:

Mayor Bill J. Dukes  
Councilmen:  
Jack Allen  
Robert Patton  
Ray Nixon  
Max Patterson  
Arthur Faulkner

Barrett C. Shelton  
Publisher

Lee Sentell  
Editor

Paul Foreman  
Reporter

Henry G. Huerkamp  
Chamber of Commerce

Joe Davis  
Civic Leader

Gary Voketz  
Council of Governments

Frank Duke  
Director of Personnel

Pack Self  
Chief of Police

Travis Hill  
Captain of Police

Ernest Bowman  
Lieutenant of Detectives

Lewis Tapscott  
Lieutenant of Police

Eugene Slater  
Lieutenant of Police

Frank Shafer  
Lieutenant of Police

Doyle Ward  
Sergeant of Detectives

Brooks Ashcraft  
Sergeant of Police

Jep Tallent  
Narcotics Agent

Edgar Taylor  
Narcotics Agent

Judy Scott  
Chief's Secretary

Sandra Blackwood  
Clerk

Linda Reeves  
Police Clerk

In addition to the foregoing, several shop keepers and "people in the street" were also interviewed.

It should be noted that the study is not intended to be a comprehensive review of all elements relating to the management and deployment practices of the Decatur Police Department. This technical assistance project sought to identify readily observable deficiencies and make recommendations that would improve overall operations and expedite the

delivery of police service, based on a brief period of observation and a necessarily limited examination of data.

### Background

Decatur, Alabama, is a city of an estimated 43,500 people situated in the north central portion of the state; it is the county seat of Morgan County. Approximately 25 miles west of Huntsville, a city of over 100,000 people, it has a very viable economy based on the presence of many industrial plants, including those of the General Electric Corporation, General Motors, Monsanto, Truehauf, Prestolite, and others. The governing body of Decatur consists of an elected mayor and five councilmen. When a newly elected Council is organized, the councilmen are assigned different areas of prime responsibility. In the current council, Mr. Robert Patton has been assigned to oversee the operations of the Decatur Police Department.

The police department in any municipality usually requires more money, equipment, and manpower than most other departments, and Decatur is no exception. It also generates the greatest amount of community interest. The complexities of operating a police department are often difficult for the average layman to understand, and this, coupled with a certain amount of competition for municipal funds, frequently gives rise to undue criticism and an inordinate amount of observation and inquiry.

Decatur is fortunate in having Councilman Robert Patton assigned to oversee the police function. Mr. Patton has been closely associated with police activities for several years, having been in the Morgan County judicial system prior to his election. In that earlier capacity, he developed first-hand knowledge of the police function. He also was privy to how other police departments operated and was in a position to make comparisons. He is convinced the Decatur Police Department needs to develop more modern approaches and practices in attempting to cope with current exigencies. He thus was the moving force behind the council's request that resulted in this technical assistance project.

## II. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

The area surrounding Decatur is predominantly agricultural with cotton being the main crop. Adjacent to the city, however, is a very large industrial complex employing approximately 11,000 people. According to the Decatur Chamber of Commerce, Morgan County, of which Decatur is the county seat, has the fifth highest retail sales volume in the state, \$350,427,000 in 1976. The same source estimates the overall rate of increase in business and manufacturing volume in 1976 was nearly 100% over 1970's figures. The atmosphere of the community, except for the inner city area, is one of a booming economy.

The area which was formerly the "downtown" is in a rather sad state of affairs since retail business has gradually moved into shopping centers which are generally to the south. There is much business and residential development to the southwest, within the city limits.

The fact that industry has generally located outside of Decatur has kept the city from adding this development to its tax base. All efforts by the City to annex the industrial area have met with defeat primarily because annexation must meet with the approval of the area to be affected.

Salaries and wages paid by industry are generally above those paid to employees of the city, and this has caused a rather high attrition rate, especially in the police department.

### The Police Department

The police department has an authorized strength of one chief of police, one captain, five lieutenants (one of whom is designated as Detective Lieutenant), nine sergeants (one of whom is designated as Detective Sergeant seven detectives (two of whom are designated as Narcotics Agents), and 36 patrol officers. In addition to the foregoing sworn personnel, the department has three police clerks, two clerical employees, three jailers, and two utility workers. The latter are assigned to a sign shop which erects and maintains all traffic control signs in the city. A total of 69 people is authorized in the "personnel expense" item of the police budget. Two of these positions probably should not be included. They are the utility workers who spend full time on a function which cannot be construed as a police function. Even including them in the overall number of police employees, the ratio of police employees per 1,000 people in Decatur is 1.586. The Uniform Crime Report published annually by the Federal Bureau of Investigation indicates a ratio of 1.9 police employees per 1,000 people is the average for the United States. If Decatur had an equivalent ratio, it would have 83 police employees, a difference of 14 employees.

### Expenditures

The fiscal year of the city of Decatur runs from October 1 through September 30. The budget request presently before the mayor and council for the year beginning October 1, 1977, is \$1,194,137. This figure includes

the expenses of maintaining the city recorder's court, estimated at \$50,000 although this is clearly not a police function. Nevertheless, that figure is included in arriving at a cost per capita for police services. The per capita cost for police services as proposed in the 1977-78 budget is \$27.45 per year or 7 1/2 cents per day. Average per capita costs for police service in cities of comparable size throughout the country is not available; however, it is generally conceded that \$30 is a reasonable figure.

#### Police Activities

Although there is no recapitulation of work loads according to accepted record procedures, manual tabulation of available data indicates the following:

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>
Calls for Service	11,817	12,889	14,185
Part One Crimes	*625	880	993
Traffic Collisions	**1,820		2,100
Hazardous moving citation	3,010		3,716
Arrests	2,434	2,506	2,661

\*Partial reporting for 1974.

\*\*Indicates number of collisions reported by Decatur police. There was no record of collisions with personal injury. Only the number of persons injured was available. It is presumed one personal injury collision results every 10 collisions. Therefore, personal injury collision totals would approximate 182 in 1974 and 210 in 1976.

The enforcement index in 1974 was 16.54; in 1976 it was 17.7. An enforcement index is arrived at by dividing total number of personal injury collisions into total number of hazardous moving violation citations issued. An index of between 15 and 20 has proven effective in controlling the traffic collision rate.

During 1976, according to the Decatur Police report to the FBI Uniform Crime Report Center, the crime rate for the city was 22.82 per 1,000 population. The crime rate for the east south central states was 30.12, and for the state of Alabama it was 34.72 (the latter includes rural areas). If the data provided this consultant was accurate, Decatur enjoys a very low crime rate by comparison to its part of the country.

A total of 14,185 calls for service were responded to by the Decatur department during 1976. This represents an increase of 9 per cent over the preceding year and 20 per cent more than in 1974, an average increase of about 10 per cent.

Considering the relatively low number of calls for service recorded by the Decatur Police Department, it seems probable that the police are not being called on every problem.

#### Organization and Deployment

The department is organized in accordance with an exceedingly flat table of organization. It consists of a Chief of Police and a Captain, who ostensibly is the assistant chief of police, a traffic section, a detective section, and three patrol sections. Each of the sections is commanded by a lieutenant, and each operates independently, answering directly to the chief of police. The jail operation is handed by three jailers, who answer to the chief of police. Each patrol section consists of a lieutenant in command, two sergeants, 11 patrol officers, one police clerk, and one jailer for a total of 14 people on each shift. These shifts assignments are permanent. The Detective Section consists of a lieutenant in charge, one sergeant of detectives, five detectives, and two drug control officers. The traffic section consists of a lieutenant in charge, two sergeants, one in charge of each of the two shifts, and two shifts of three patrolmen each. In addition, the lieutenant of traffic is in charge of a sign shop which employs a foreman and two utility workers. The school safety patrol unit is assigned to the traffic lieutenant and consists of 13 part-time school guards. The City of Decatur has no traffic engineers, and this responsibility is assigned to the lieutenant of traffic.

The clerk-stenographer acts as secretary to the Chief of Police and maintains personnel records. She also recaps basic data at the end of each month.

The clerk-typist employed by the department is essentially a clerk of the city court and spends most of her time on court work. The patrol activity is carried out by three equally staffed units working the traditional 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift hours. There is no rotation of shifts, and it is not unusual to interview a person who has been on the night shift for many years. Each of the units is designed to be independent of the others. The police clerk answers all incoming calls, records them, and then passes them on to a police officer who acts as a radio dispatcher. There is no civilian radio dispatcher because the Chief of Police considers this assignment to be a good training spot for police officers. However, it is not unusual to find sergeants, lieutenants, and even the captain attending to these duties.

The department uses two men in each patrol car and is fortunate to be able to field five cars on any given shift. Considering the area to be covered, 35 square miles in the city plus an added 80 miles outside the city limits, this is a minimum number and probably is too few to give adequate coverage.

Police clerks, in addition to handling all incoming calls, are expected to maintain and prepare important records. For instance, the 3 to 11 police clerk is responsible for the preparation of the Uniform Crime Report each month.

The traffic section deploys a sergeant and three solo motorcycles two shifts each day, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. It is responsible for traffic enforcement and the reporting of all traffic collisions.

The detective section is responsible for the follow-up investigation of all crime coming to their attention and for an ongoing drug enforcement program. This consultant is not convinced that all reports of crime come to the attention of this section. There is no way of following the report of a crime from its inception through to its ultimate solution as a recorded clearance by any means. The workload is not distributed according to crime category, and there is no special emphasis on the juvenile delinquency problem. Since no accountability control could be found, the actual follow-up effort may or may not be very effective. It appears, however, that only the more serious crimes are given attention.

#### Communications and Records--Information Management

The department maintains a modern radio communications base station, KT2473 operating on an ultra high frequency of 450.460. It is well integrated with the state network and other nearby police communications systems. It has a terminal for the reception of the Alabama Crime Information Center, which is an integral part of the National Crime Information Center. Each motor vehicle is equipped with a mobile receiver and transmitter. In addition, the department has 10 portable units (walkie-talkie).

The department monitors 165 burglar alarm terminals. These systems are installed in vulnerable businesses throughout the city and produce an average of 60 false alarms each month.

The telephone system appears to be adequate, since several calls to the station by this consultant during peak periods produced a response upon the first or second ring.

#### Records

The department operates with six basic report forms:

- The Complaint Report
- The Offense Report
- The Juvenile Arrest Report
- The Alabama Uniform Traffic Accident Report  
(furnished by the State of Alabama)
- The Private Property Accident Report
- The Stolen and/or Recovered Bicycle Report

Four other report forms, required by the Alabama Crime Information Center, are used whenever there is need to use the system.

In addition to the above, the department is in the process of adopting a uniform traffic citation.

The complaint report is prepared whenever a call for service comes to the attention of the police clerk. There is adequate provision for the necessary basic information concerning who, what, when and where. The unit assigned to cover the complaint is noted by the dispatcher. There is no numerical control, but the pertinent times of where the dispatch was made, the arrival at scene, and clearance are provided for.

The offense report is used in all cases where an investigation is made either by uniformed personnel or follow-up investigators. The only control contained in this report is the complainant's name and the location of the complaint. The report does contain a place for the time and date the investigation was made.

The Juvenile Arrest Report is used whenever a juvenile is taken into custody. It is a uniform type report form commonly used by police agencies throughout the county. It is comprehensive and contains all that is needed for the juvenile authorities to be informed of the circumstances surrounding the arrest.

The Alabama Uniform Traffic Accident Report is a standard report used universally throughout the country. It is compiled at the scene of all collisions investigated by the Decatur Police on public right of ways.

Private property collisions are not investigated by Decatur police. However, whenever they respond to a request or make an on-scene discovery, they provide the involved parties with a copy of an executed private property accident report. This is a courtesy and the nearest thing to a community relations effort in the department's operation.

The stolen bicycle and/or recovered bicycle report is a 3x5 salmon-colored card. The title is self-explanatory, and its use is limited to bicycle incidents.

The collating, collection, and compiling of meaningful data is virtually impossible under the system being used. It provides neither management information nor accountability and produces questionable statistics.

In preparing the monthly reports necessary for the Uniform Crime data by the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. police clerk, it is necessary for her to take the word of several people. These oral reports are frequently at variance.

#### Equipment

Personal equipment for all personnel is furnished by the city, and a \$300.00 per year clothing allowance is provided all plain-clothes personnel. In addition, cleaning, pressing, and repair are provided. As a result, personnel are very presentable at all times and make an excellent impression on the public.

Office equipment is excellent, although in very limited supply. This consultant was impressed by the lack of the usual number of business machine.

Armament appears to be in adequate supply. The heavy duty weapons are quite old but are in an excellent state of maintainances.

The department has one of the finest fleets of automotive equipment to be found in a department of its size. It consists of 30 pieces of well-maintained equipment, and the automobiles are replaced at approximately 60,000 miles. This commendable practice undoubtedly saves the considerable maintenance costs required to operate an auto beyond this mileage.

Nine motorcycles are operated by the department; six are Harley Davidson, and three are Hondas. They, too, are in excellent condition.

### Personnel

The personnel of the Decatur Police Department from the Chief of Police down to the newest recruit are very impressive. They are articulate and presentable and the average member has one and one-third years of college. Within the ranks are nine officers with bachelor's degrees, seven with three years of college, and 10 with associate degrees. Several members are presently enrolled in a nearby college, in spite of the facts the department has no educational incentive program and its salary schedule is not competitive with those of nearby industries. All members of the department are caucasian. Many attempts have been made to secure black recruits, but the department has been unsuccessful in its efforts.

Entrance requirements are the usual--21 years of age and high school graduate or the GED equivalency. Each applicant must pass a written examination administered by the city Personnel Department, which counts 50% of score, and an interview with the Chief of Police which counts the other 50%. From the aggregate of these, an eligibility list is compiled and submitted to the Chief, who recommends one of the top three for appointments.

Promotional procedures are similar to those used elsewhere with one exception. A person must be in grade for two years before becoming eligible to take the examination. The examination consists of a written test which must be passed with a score of at least 70%. This admits the applicant to an interview with a board of senior officers. Scores awarded by this board count for 50 per cent of the overall test score. This procedure make for dissension within the ranks of the department. It is contended by those eligible that the present oral-interview board provides a built-in bias. They also contend it perpetuates tunnel vision and stifles progress, while encouraging cronyism.

There are two very alarming harbingers of future personnel trouble. The attrition rate of the department was 25 per cent in 1976 and a projected rate for 1977 indicates an attrition rate of 23 per cent. During this consultant's interviews with numerous younger patrolmen, it was learned that the attrition rate may go even higher in the near future. In addition to the attrition rate, the sick leave rate is also a matter of much concern. In 1976, a total of 645 sick days were taken. This amounts to an average of

about 10 days per year per person, which is far above the average for most police departments. The departmental sick leave program provides for 12 sick days annually, accumulative up to 120 days. Once a person has accumulated the maximum, there is no incentive to add more days, and the tendency is to use the sick leave. Two basic moral barometers in any police department are attrition rate and sick leave. An attrition rate exceeding 12 per cent and an average sick leave rate exceeding five days per year are indications of trouble.

#### Extraordinary Situations

The City of Decatur maintains a municipal court, locally referred to as the City Recorder's Court. This is not unusual except for the manner in which it is operated and funded. All funds for the operation of the court are contained in the police budget, including the salary of the judge and assignment of personnel necessary to operate the court. The captain of police spends an estimated 50 per cent of his time on court-related matters, police officers act as prosecutors and witnesses in the aggregate of one full officer's time, and the equivalent of two clerk-typists' time is expended on Recorder's Court matters.

Because the City maintains a court it becomes necessary for the police to operate a jail. This operation further dissipates police budgetary resources by requiring the services of three jailers.

The cost of operating the court is estimated at \$84,450 in the 1977-78 police budget. This figure includes jail maintenance. Should the City of Decatur decide to use the District Court of Morgan County situated across the street, it could save an appreciable amount of money and bring the police budget into a truer perspective.

The second extraordinary situation concerns traffic engineering and signs. The police department must perform all traffic engineering and maintain all traffic signs from budgetted funds. The lieutenant of traffic is responsible for all engineering, and although he is not trained in this area does an acceptable job. There is evidence, however, that if more adequate engineering were performed, traffic would move more expeditiously and with fewer collisions. Signs are more than adequate, and there are numerous three-way stop intersections which should be eliminated.

The third extraordinary situation concerns the fact that Morgan is a dry county. Transportation of any kind of alcoholic beverage must be within the trunk of an auto. It is impossible to legally buy any type of alcoholic beverage in the county. Nevertheless, the Decatur Police Department arrests an average of 30 persons per month for driving while under the influence. The attempt to enforce this law places the police department in an untenable position.

### III. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Decatur Police Department is an excellent law enforcement agency. It excels in delivering a reactive service to the community, and the integrity of the department as a whole is unquestioned.

Interviews with key community leaders and with people in the street produced the distinct impression that the constituency has confidence in the department's ability to handle almost any situation. Unfortunately, there is somewhat of an air of dominating, "strict but fair" pervasiveness in the minds of most people. The attitude that the police exist to be of service and assistance does not seem to be prevalent. Probably one of the major contributing factors to this concept stems from the incongruity of the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. The police have a reputation of hard-line enforcement of this law. It is obvious the department needs a very comprehensive community relations and public relations emphasis program.

The development of a viable community relations program coupled with a more proactive posture would produce appreciable results both in crime prevention and improvement of the image and prestige of the department.

Probably one of the greatest contributing factors to the reactive hardline law enforcement image is the organization and management of the department. There is extremely limited delegation of authority, and a participative approach to problem solution is practically nonexistent. There is no effort made to solicit the cooperation of the general public, and in those areas where assistance to business is offered, no monitoring is evident. An example is the burglar alarm terminal situation. The 165 terminals produce an average of 60 false alarms each month. Conferences with the subscribers should be arranged in order to design a training program which would appreciably reduce this serious problem.

Reorganization of the department is clearly in order. Specialization within the department is excessive and is consuming an inordinate amount of manpower. Approximately 30 per cent of the entire department is assigned to either follow-up investigation or the traffic effort. The balance of the department is divided into three equal groups which work permanent shifts. This scheme provides for five different approaches to the common goal of delivering a uniform police service around the clock, seven days per week.

In the case of the uniformed patrol effort the department operates two-man patrol vehicles despite a very low crime rate and no history of police officers being killed or injured in altercations.

By reducing the number of specialized assignments, developing a training program designed to equip the officers to cope with all police problems, eliminating the two-man patrol car, and assigning specific areas of patrol responsibility, much more police service could be delivered by the present number of personnel.

The delivery of a diversified approach to a common goal creates confusion and uncertainty within the community. The lack of regular staff meetings for all key personnel contributes to this. Staff meetings may be held every three months, depending upon the perception of the Chief of Police. Departmental meetings are seldom if ever held. Staff meetings and departmental meetings are helpful in exchanging ideas, planning, and developing a unanimity of approach. Departmental meetings provide for some participation by the lower ranks and give a sense of belonging, thereby developing esprit de corps.

Another way to participation in management and development of a united front is through a viable training program. Except for the minimum training required by the state of Alabama, there is no formal training given to personnel. The department has within its ranks three FBI National Academy graduates and several who have attended specialized courses throughout the nation. None of these has been called upon to conduct training programs within the department. A formal training program should be established with one of the more competent lieutenants in charge. In addition to training, some effort should be made to listen to the complaints and problems of personnel; this could be combined with the training responsibility.

Research and planning does not exist within the department, and there is virtually no management information available. Because of this, an objective approach to the assignment of personnel is lacking. The three equal shifts are evidence of this. It is inconceivable that the call for service load is equal at all times of each day. A cursory examination of the time of incidence indicates the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift is required to respond much more frequently than the other shifts. There is no evidence that nine people are necessary to conduct follow-up investigations. In fact, casual observation indicates a lack of work and an inordinate amount of make-work effort. If the patrol personnel were more adequately trained and assigned to specific areas, they could eliminate an appreciable amount of the work currently done by plaincloths people. The lack of management information makes specific recommendations virtually impossible.

There are a total of nine people assigned to the traffic function: one lieutenant, two sergeants, and six patrolmen. These people, except for the lieutenant, work exclusively in the area of traffic enforcement and collision investigation, two functions which could and should be performed as an integral part of the patrol function. If this were done, the two-wheeled motorcycles could be eliminated. Two-wheeled motorcycles are severely limited in application and are very expensive to operate. The nine motorcycles presently in service should be traded in on either conventional motor vehicles or three-wheeled vehicles. These could be applied to regular patrol districts, thereby providing personnel with more practical and versatile equipment.

It would be difficult to accomplish the foregoing with the current system of records and communications. It is conceivable that the present basic forms could accomplish what is necessary if adequate control was

maintained. There is no number control, and indexing and filing is not systematic to the extent of expediting retrieval. The information may be in the files, but to retrieve specific data would be extremely time consuming. Data concerning types of calls, time of calls, and service rendered is neither collated nor categorized. Cross-indexing does not exist, and the integrity of information contained in the reports is not accounted for. A basic control device is the complaint number. This number should be assigned to all complaints received from any source. All reports concerning a complaint should be identified by the assigned number. Once this is done, accountability can be maintained and cross-indexing and filing can be accomplished.

Geocoding is a very desirable method of identifying problem areas of the community in connection with deploying personnel. It simply consists of dividing the community into small (1/4 square mile) numbered areas. This number can be attached to the original complaint report at the time the complaint is received. Pinpoint data can be readily retrieved manually in order to determine shifts of emphasis useful in deploying manpower. In addition to geocoding, it is advisable to maintain a 168-hour clock. This is another simple but effective device used to determine when the calls for service are received. There are 168 hours in each week, and each time a complaint is received from any source, it is noted within a specific 15 minute period. By compiling this information, one can pinpoint times that calls for service are received and determine a sound basis for assignment of personnel.

The personnel issue is a serious one, and there is evidence that several younger, well-educated members are considering leaving the department. Although salaries are very low, this is not the only problem confronting these people and does not account for the high attrition rate and the sick leave problem. Young people who enter police work usually are idealistically inclined and realize they sacrifice in the area of salary and even in the fringe benefit category. They are not usually prepared to accept the traditional regimentation and "because we have always done it that way" syndrome. They like to think they are part of an organization and are contributing to its progress. In the Decatur department they are not afforded these opportunities, in their opinion. They cite the lack of training, failure to provide incentives for higher education, and permanent shifts as complaints. They are very concerned about the present promotional procedure and the lack of participation in management. These could be readily overcome by establishing a good training program and changing the oral board phase of promotional examinations. It would seem more logical to have an oral board of community leaders than of tradition-oriented senior officers of the police department. It would appear that one police representative on the board should suffice.

There are two functions currently assigned to the police department which should be reassigned; the City Recorder's Court and the traffic engineering effort. Discussion with knowledgeable people indicates the Court function could be abandoned and transferred to the District Court. If this were done, revenues derived would approximate current revenues and police personnel could be released to perform police duties. The integrity of the police budget would also be enhanced. Should the transfer of the Court not be feasible, then the Court function probably should be shifted to the City Clerk's Office as a separate department of the city.

Traffic engineering is not a police function and should be transferred to the city engineer's office or some other department closely allied to the public works effort. This also applies to the sign shop.

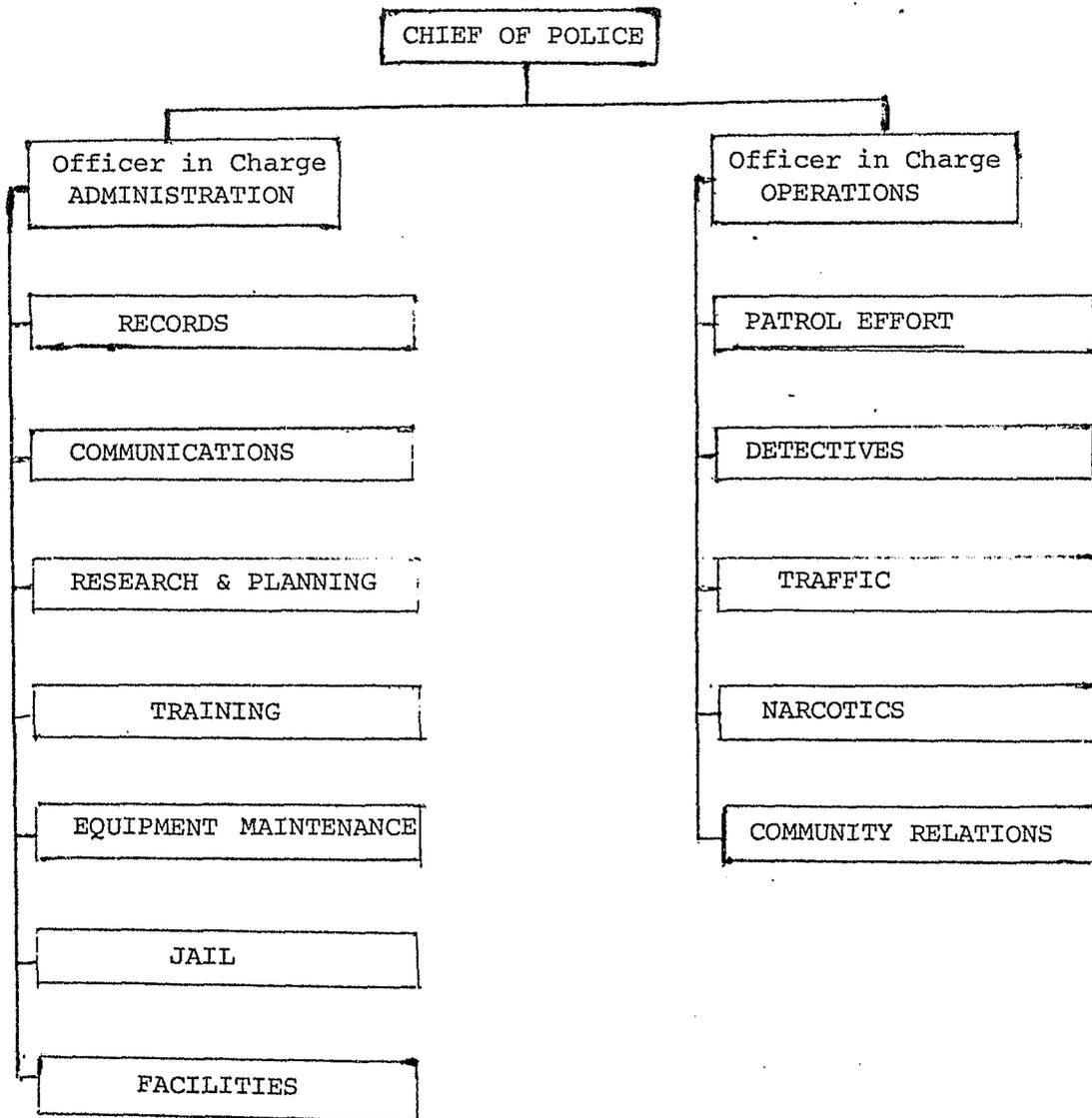
#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Decatur, Alabama, Police Department is an excellent department possessed of above average and dedicated personnel. It has the necessary ingredients to provide a well-rounded police service to the citizens. There are several areas where the service could be improved so that an image of total police service could be projected. Practically all changes could be accomplished internally; some, however, will require the cooperation of the Mayor and Council and other city departments.

1. The department needs reorganization in order to provide for a more equitable distribution of authority and responsibility. (See Figure 1, a chart.)
2. Establish a records system designed to complement management efforts in distributing manpower, retrieving information, and developing accountability factors. This can be done with present forms by using serial numbered complaints. Numbers should be assigned by the dispatchers.
3. Develop a comprehensive training program designed to increase capability of patrol officers to conduct thorough investigations at scene of complaints.
4. Eliminate use of two-man patrols.
5. Establish patrol districts.
6. Increase the number of patrol vehicles in service in order that no car has more area than it can effectively patrol.
7. Establish priority of back-up car use. Certain complaints should automatically require two or more cars.
8. Require all patrol officers to be alert to traffic violations and take indicated action. Traffic collision reporting should be routinely assigned to the nearest district car.
9. A community relations program should be started immediately, designed to make citizens aware of what police services are available. Further, citizens should be made aware of their personal responsibility in crime prevention.
10. The practice of assigning police officers as radio dispatchers should be analyzed. It may be a training device for new officers, but the practice of assigning ranking officers to the task is questioned. Civilians could do a very efficient job, thereby releasing police officers for street duty.

Figure I

SUGGESTED ORGANIZATION PLAN  
DECATUR, ALABAMA, POLICE DEPARTMENT



11. Transfer all work with regard to traffic engineering and signs to a city department capable of handling it.
12. Abandon the City Recorder's Court and transfer its functions to the County District Court.
13. Discontinue practice of the Captain of Police acting as a clerk of the court.
14. Provide prosecutorial aspects of court trials. The practice of police officers acting as both prosecutor and witness places an undue burden on both the police and the court.
15. Reduce the present number of follow-up investigators (detectives) from the current nine to a more realistic number, about five. If the patrol effort is all it should be, then the number of complaints requiring follow-up would drop dramatically.
16. In promotional examinations the oral board should consist of one supergrade police officer with the balance representatives of the constituency.
17. Establish educational incentive programs and encourage members of the department to participate. Whenever possible, shift schedules should accommodate college attendance.
18. Shift rotation should be considered. Most departments have learned that quarterly rotation is most desirable. The advantages are many, such as uniform application of policy, younger members are able to work the day shift, and cliques may be prevented.
19. Revise and update Rules and Regulations Manuals.
20. Establish departmental policies and publicize them for the citizens' consumption. This clarifies the police role and attitude and is conducive to better mutual understanding.
21. The city of Decatur covers 35 miles of area. This is considered extensive by most standards and taxes any police departments ability. Decatur has sufficient personnel to handle the City's problems. It does not have enough to adequately cover the extra police jurisdiction. It is therefore recommended that the additional area in the police jurisdiction be removed.



**END**