Agency: **Weslaco Police Department**

Workshop Attended: **Weslaco, Texas (May 2, 2016; August 17, 2016)**

Date of DDACTS Implementation: **May 2016**

Agency Demographic and Background:
Weslaco is a city in Hidalgo County, Texas. The population is estimated to be at 37,601 as of the 2014 United States Census. It is located at the southern tip of Texas in the Rio Grande Valley and is part of the Southern United States. It is 14 miles wide and near the Rio Grande, across the border from the Mexican city of Nuevo Progreso, Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas, and is about 59 miles (95 km) west of South Padre Island and the Gulf of Mexico.

Weslaco Police Department, located at 901 N Airport Drive, Weslaco, Texas, has 64 sworn staff and 22 civilian staff.

The May 2, 2016 DDACTS workshop was well attended and included an excellent cross-section of the agency. Present were the Patrol Captain, Lieutenant, 3 Sergeants (different shifts), a Peace Officer, the Internal Resource Manager, and the Crime Analyst.   While the Chief was not in the training for the entire day, he was there to support his team throughout the day (open until close of the department). He was also very receptive to any suggested changes made in order to achieve the goal of effective DDACTS implementation. The Chief showed to be very supportive of the training, indicating a forward drive to implement DDACTS, reevaluate how current resources were being utilized, and to make adjustments based on a Data-Driven Approach.

During the technical assistance portion of the workshop, Weslaco PD's crime analyst and assistant made great strides in moving toward effective data collection and analytical support for DDACTS. At this time, they established an open data base connection from PTS to a Master Access Database in Microsoft Access, configured master files/queries including CAD, incidents, crashes, and motor vehicle stops. DDACTS instructors developed several queries and added date and time expressions to facilitate in future query development. Also explored were data sources and solutions for sex offender data, probation/parole data, citations, and warrants. Finally, the Chief was open to the idea of tapping into the City's ArcGIS system (paying a maintenance fee if needed) to provide better mapping capacities to the analyst, who was using Google maps at this time.

In a testament to the agency's commitment to having the most successful implementation of the DDACTS model as possible, the Chief made arrangements, at

the agency's expense, for the remainder of department personnel to attend a DDACTS workshop. Notably, Weslaco was one of only 2 agencies in the entire country who requested and funded the cost of ensuring every member of the agency be trained in DDACTS. During the follow-up on-site visit on August 17, 2016, the remainder of sworn staff was trained in the DDACTS model and additional one-on-one technical assistance was delivered to Crime Analysis.

Prior to Implementation:
Weslaco was considered the "most dangerous city" in Texas. Although Weslaco has half the population and five times less the area of Harlingen, they had equal violent crime rates. Media blasts noted Weslaco as a small town with big crimes. The stigma riddled the community. The new Chief was hired in May 2015 to help turn this trend around. The His success in reducing crime and CAD calls in Harlingen, TX was what assisted him in the buy-in needed for implementation at Weslaco. Harlingen had implemented and seen great success with the DDACTS model. Similarly, other Texas communities who had established DDACTS routines had also seen decreases in crime and crashes (For example: Cleburn, TX saw a 32% reduction in Part 1 crime from 2013 to 2016 and a 12% reduction in crashes; Midland, TX saw a 34% decrease in crime in the DDACTS zones from 2015 to 2016, and Grand Prairie saw a 38% reduction in crime from 2011 to 2015).

Immediately upon hire, the new Chief began to implement several aspects of DDACTS, and saw immediate reductions in crime. From the 5 year mean, 2015 violent crime in Weslaco decreased 40% (321 to 193), and in 2015 property crime decreased 21% (2,665 to 2,099). Specifically, murder stayed the same, rape decreased 15%, robbery decreased 6%, aggravated assault decreased 48%, burglary decreased 33%, larceny/theft decreased 17%, and auto theft decreased 53%. Overall, there was a 6% reduction in calls for service. In May 2016, Weslaco Police Department worked with DDACTS staff to further develop, train on, and implement DDACTS strategies. The effort was focused on tightening up implementation strategies to include developing DDACTS strategies relative to baseline data.

Challenges
According to the Chief, the initial challenge was found in convincing the executive staff that high-frequency motor vehicle contacts would make a difference in crime/crash reduction. At the time, the executive staff was of the mindset that Weslaco police officers were not "Troopers", and therefore should refrain from traffic stops and instead focus on "catching crooks". The Chief then illustrated the reductions in crime and in calls for service and the other benefits associated with implementing the DDACTS model realized in similar agencies. Both in Texas and around the country, they began to understand the value of data-driven strategies. The next challenge lied with data collection. IADLEST and Justin Gracia (the agency's first Crime Analyst who was hired in 2016) were instrumental in addressing this issue through software purchase recommendations, in-house training, and the sharing of experiences. The agency was able to greatly minimize a lot of the usual officer/supervisor "buy-in" issues experienced in agencies around the country since all of them took part in a DDACTS workshop.

DDACTS Activities
While conducting the operational model's guiding principles of data collection and analysis, the department identified four prime locations that were clearly identified as DDACTS areas containing a disproportionate amount of vehicle crashes and selected crime, as seen in the maps below.

Weslaco's DDACTS zones were identified using over three (3) years of historical data (June 2013 through September 2016) that included crashes on roadways, robberies, burglaries, and are identified by the blue borders in Map 1 below. Map 2 represents a typical map presented during the weekly meetings as a tool to identify emerging trends within the hotspots.

Map 1
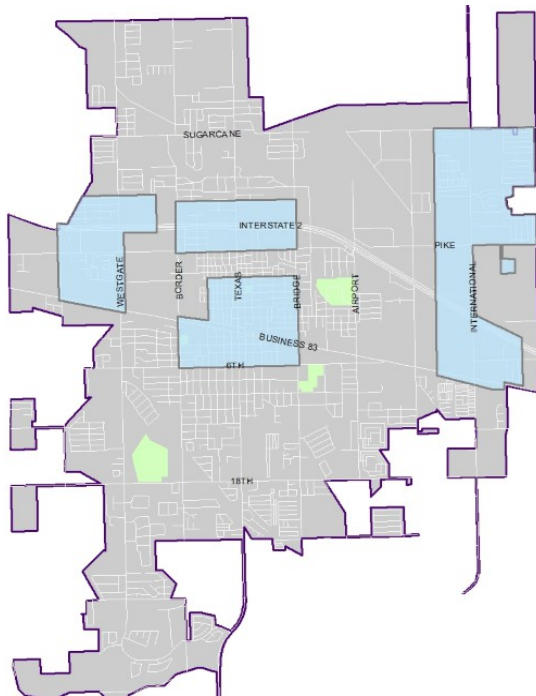
Map 2
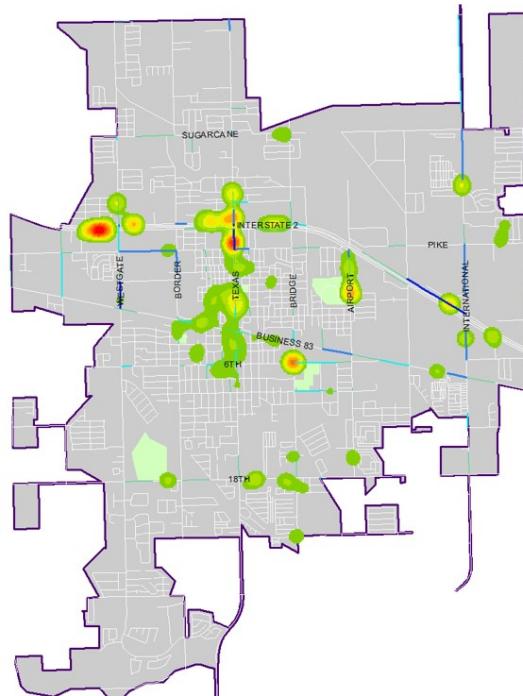
The primary objective consisted of reallocating resources to the DDACTS areas through proven enforcement efforts including high visibility of patrol and increased contacts via traffic contacts. In addition, all patrol officers were instructed to respond to the DDACTS zones within their assigned sectors and shifts respectively. Finally, the Tactical Response Unit (TRU) Unit developed specific strategies within the DDACTS zones using the weekly analysis produced by Crime Analysis and discussed at weekly management meetings.

DDACTS Results:
By way of this assessment, the author remotely accessed Weslaco's crime, enforcement, and crashes datasets with the assistance of the crime analyst. It appeared as though the data set was connected correctly. In addition, to the satisfaction of this author, the crime analyst was instructed to generate random statistics to ensure proper data pulling processes. The analysis below is based off of the counts later provided by said crime analyst as well as through information gathered from Weslaco's public website, a direct questionnaire, and review of DDACTS past assessments.

Table 1

	Mean	2015	2016	% Change

	Average (2011-2015)			from Mean Average
Violent Crime	320	193	171	-47%
Property Crime	2,539	2,099	1,937	-24%
Traffic Stops	NA	9,506	32,506	NA
Arrests*	2,613	2,585	2,807	7%
Crashes	1,083	1,286	1,590	47%
Traffic stops resulting in arrests	NA	425	1,037	NA
Part 1 Crimes	2,846	2,292	2,108	-26%

Arrest mean = 2012 -2015; no arrest data was available for 2011.

Using the DDACTS's philosophy that increased officer visibility is a deterrent, Weslaco officers greatly increased the number of traffic contacts made in 2016 and 2017, particularly in the DDACTS zones. Weslaco Police Department's DDACTS implementation efforts have shown to be implemented as intended based on analyzed outputs. Table1 reflects a degree of performance measures captured pre and post DDACTS implementation. The time period reviewed includes a 5 year mean average (years 2011 through 2015) compared to 2016. Please note that no arrest data was available for 2011, therefore the mean average for arrests included years 2012 through 2015. Reportedly, violent crime was down 47% from the average. Property crime was down 24% from the average. Arrests increased 7% from the average. Crashes increased 47% from the average. To better understand this increase in crashes, a review of the 2016 annual crime report yielded the following written by Assistant Chief of Police Ted Walensky:

"Crashes have steadily increased over the last five years. This includes the period of time when we had a very active traffic unit of four motor officers with a productive enforcement in the form of tickets. This had little effect on the motor vehicle crashes historically. Unlicensed drivers, speeding, use of turn signals (or lack thereof), following too close, driver inattention/distraction in vehicle also known as a phone, and the worst by far, driving while intoxicated. In 2012 Texas led the country in DWI crashes and fatalities and continues to do so. By way of comparison, California, a larger populated state of 38.06 million had 774 alcohol related fatalities and Texas with a population of 26.09 million had 1,216 alcohol related fatalities. Awareness campaigns and enforcement continue to be our counter to this issue. The fact is until the driving community (and Texas as a whole0 fully accepts individual responsibility when operating a motor vehicle this issue will unfortunately continue. I wish I had more to offer, as this cost is not only in property damage but lies and injury. The Weslaco Police Department is participating in the state grant funded Impaired Driving Mobilization to enforce drunk driving laws. The use of the Data Driven Approach to Crime and Traffic Safety to increase traffic stops is beneficial in correcting bad driving behavior thus reducing motor vehicle accidents. Nine traffic related fatalities and this increase annually in crashes requires public education in the form of traffic contacts to gain compliance and reduce crashes."

In addition, Part 1 crimes notably decreased 26% average. Prior to 2015, data was not available for traffic contacts. However, when comparing traffic contacts from 2015 to 2016, traffic contacts increased 242%. In addition, traffic contacts resulting in arrests increased 144% from the prior year. This indicates further enforcement has been directed toward the identified DDACTS location – suggesting Weslaco Police

Department is working smarter not harder in regards to enforcement and officer initiated investigations.

DDACTS Year-to-Date Results:
This section examines year-to-date results for arrests, crimes, and crashes. Chart 1 details that, in accordance with DDACTS efforts, traffic contacts increased 241% from 2015 to 2017 (note data prior to 2015 was not available; therefore average mean could not be calculated).

Chart 1

As a result, Weslaco achieved a 57% increase in arrests in 2017 from the 5 year average. Of note, of the 19,191 traffic contacts in 2017, 727 resulted in an arrest. This represents a 181% increase in traffic stops resulting in arrests as compared to 2015 (259) year to date of this report.

Chart 2

Overall, as a result of DDACTS activities, Weslaco continued to achieve significant results related to the reduction of crime. Chart 3 details the changes in violent crime, property crime, and overall Part 1 crimes from the 5 year mean average (2011-2015) compared to the current year (2017) (January 1 through September 30). Notably, violent crime decreased 54% in 2017 from the mean average, property crime decreased 35%, and all Part 1 crimes decreased 37%. A breakdown of specific Part 1 crime reductions are listed below. Of note, the City of Weslaco is no longer on the list of Most Dangerous Cities in Texas.

Chart 3

Specifically, Chart 4 details the changes in selected Part 1 crimes from the 5-year mean average (2011-2015) compared to the current year (2017) (January1 through September 30). Weslaco achieved significant decreases throughout each studied crime

type. Robberies decreased 43% in 2017 from the mean average. Burglaries decreased 67%. Burglaries to Motor Vehicles decreased 33%. Finally, Auto Theft decreased 51%.

Chart 4

Chart 5 details the crash counts for 2015 through 2017. Traffic crashes actually increased 37% in 2017 from the 5-year mean average. However, Weslaco saw a 4% decrease in crashes from 2016 to 2017 (January 1 – September 30). Weslaco has seen a continuous increase in crashes however, 2017 marks the first year a decrease has been achieved.

Chart 5

Current Challenges:
According to Chief Mayer, the greatest challenge was and can still be found with the community, City leadership and some elected officials not having a firm understanding of what the agency's focus is as well as what the DDACTS model represents. Once the dramatic increase of traffic contacts was realized by the citizens, the City leaders were bombarded with complaints of a perception of overly aggressive police officers who were only trying to increase revenue generation for the City at the expense of the underprivileged. When this occurred, the City's leadership began to question the necessity of high-frequency traffic contacts, and how those stops relate to crime and crash reduction. This lack of understanding of the agency's operational plan and a full appreciation for the benefits that high visibility traffic contacts provide to a community is not uncommon among agencies that have implemented the DDACTS model. This is especially true with those that have not yet even completed its first full calendar year of implementation, such as Weslaco.

To the Chief's credit, he acknowledges that the agency needs to continue as well as expand its on-going efforts to educate the community as a whole to the benefits that the DDACTS model affords them. The Chief's priority is to help the community better understand that the focus of the DDACTS operational plan is not to issue traffic summons or generate revenue. Instead, the focus is to use this national, research-based model of policing that has shown great benefits in areas experiencing historically disproportionate levels of crime, crashes and other social harms.

As of this report, the agency's increased effort at community-wide education and information sharing is already underway, and reportedly includes among other efforts: increasing the number of opportunities for members of the command staff to meet with community groups, leaders, etc.; the periodic release of agency statistical information related to traffic enforcement, i.e. the number of vehicle stops made vs. the number of traffic summons generated (which currently stands at 7 out 10 being a warning); and to

begin to disseminate informational flyers outlining what DDACTS is, how the agency has implemented it, and the benefits of the model to the community.

The Future:
In addition to the educational and information sharing outline above, the Weslaco Police Department will continue to monitor and evaluate process implementation and impact, and will adjust the department's efforts as needed. Weslaco's successful implementation has rested on many factors, but the addition of monitoring and displaying focused DDACTS enforcement through weekly meetings, as planned by the agency, will ensure Weslaco's resources stay on course.

The analysis conducted within this case study is an illustration of the analysis efforts being put forward during future scheduled weekly meetings. In addition, the crime analyst will continue to provide a thorough analysis of current trends and patterns related to crime and traffic. The TRU unit, patrol officers, and management will continue to use these reports to develop and evaluate strategies. Weslaco's successes in the early stages of DDACTS implementation, in addition to positive outcomes, should serve to fuel the DDACTS drive and motivate Weslaco to monitor, evaluate, adjust, and evolve their DDACTS model.