



The Bell Road Fast and Furious Project

Reducing Street Racing on the Bell Road Corridor
In Glendale, Arizona

Contact:
Sgt. Julie Love, Project Coordinator
Street Racing Enforcement Project
Glendale Police Department
6835 N. 57th Drive
Glendale, AZ 85301

Tel: 623-930-3173
Email: jalove@glendaleaz.com

ILLEGAL STREET RACING ENFORCEMENT A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO ILLEGAL STREET RACING PREVENTION IN GLENDALE, ARIZONA

GLENDALE POLICE DEPARTMENT, 2006

<p>THE PROBLEM</p>	<p>In the fall of 2005, patrol officers noticed an increase in illegal street racing on W. Bell Road in Glendale, Arizona. Speeding complaints, with an emphasis on racing, increased and merchants were complaining of “car clubs” sitting in their parking lots at night causing problems. The street racing was occurring primarily on the weekends late at night. In addition, patrol officers noticed an increase in the violence of traffic collisions. When cars crash at high speeds, the cars tend to explode with car parts spread over a large area. Along with the violence of the collisions, fatalities also increased. The illegal street racing effected several police agencies who all shared the W. Bell Road corridor as it ran from one city to another. Many of the street racing vehicles have stolen parts, stolen engines, and stolen frames.</p>
<p>ANALYSIS</p>	<p>The Glendale Police Department and the City of Glendale approached the problem from four sides. Research was done to see what type of enforcement could be done and what was needed logistically to work scheduled enforcement weekends. Round table discussions involved how to educate the car clubs and how to steer them to the legal racetracks. The Glendale Mayor’s Youth Alliance wanted to educate high school drivers and junior college drivers and researched the best technique for accomplishing this. Last was the city and juvenile court system. It was important that plea agreements be kept to a minimum with an emphasis on full prosecution.</p>
<p>RESPONSE</p>	<p>First the patrol officers contacted the car clubs who were sitting in the private business parking lots and educated them about trespassing, traffic laws, vehicle equipment violations, city code violations, liability in the parking lots, and the complaints from the merchants. They also met with the businesses to educate them on the liability of allowing the clubs to sit in their lots. Second, focused enforcement nights were scheduled to attack the problem. These weekends involved patrol officers, traffic motorcycle officers, undercover auto theft detectives, detention officers, records personnel, city volunteers, other allied agencies, a contract tow company and the Arizona Rangers. Fourth, contact was made with the city court prosecutors to educate them of the problem and discuss enforcement, fines, and working out no plea agreements. Fourth, a video was produced by the city for showing at the high schools and junior college. The video was written and produced by the Mayors Youth Alliance Council to help educate young drivers of the consequences of street racing.</p>

ASSESSMENT	During the year, the Glendale Police Dept. and participating allied agencies worked focused campaigns and succeeded in reducing illegal street racing on the W. Bell Rd. Corridor and surrounding streets. While the problem has not gone away entirely, it has significantly decreased. Patrol and the motors units continue to hold a zero tolerance stance to anyone found racing. We will continue working with the other agencies involved showing a united front. The project will continue quarterly or until no longer needed.
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Scanning

Since the beginning of car time, racing has been around. The need for speed and the desire to know who is the fastest and the best drives the young males to try newer more dangerous tactics. The latest thrill is street racing in heavy traffic. The average illegal street racer is male and approximately 17-14 years of age. Encouraged by the “*Fast and Furious*” movies, street racing video games, and the challenge of the street race, these young drivers are spending a lot of time and money on their cars and taking to the streets to race against each other. New technology has increased the performance of the engines with computer aided air intake, fuel intake, and cooling systems. The use of hydrous oxide is very common which only makes the car more dangerous when it crashes.

Although street racing has been around a long time, it is usually done on a street in the country where there is little to get in the way and no law enforcement to stop them. The city street racing was new to the city of Glendale and we had no statistics to back us up. What we did have were the observations and concerns of the patrol officers working the area and the increase in racing complaints on W. Bell Rd.

The street racers congregated in two local areas on the weekends. An all night restaurant at 4400 W. Bell Rd. and a Sonic Drive-In at 3400 W. Union Hills which is just a mile north of Bell Rd. On any weekend night, it is not unusual to see 150 to 200 cars parked in the area at each location with the drivers standing around discussing who is the fastest and best. In addition, many of the street racing car clubs would congregate in empty business parking lots along W. Bell Rd. comparing cars, parts, stories and videos.

Vehicle thefts in Arizona rank the highest in the nation. Many of the vehicles, mostly the trucks and SUV’s end up in Mexico to be resold, stripped or parted out. But most of the common street racing cars and motorcycles are stolen for parts and are taken to garages for stripping, etc. to fix street racers who have crashed or burned up their engines. Undercover auto theft detectives started specializing in stolen parts, especially in the street racers.

The cost of collisions continues to rise. Not only in the insurance rates but in the cost to the victims and the families. When street racers crash it is usually at a high rate of speed and the cone of debris is very large. Many times they run red lights or stop signs and collide with innocent people. The crash almost always ends in a fatality. The street racers are young and inexperienced and when the car starts to edge out of control they

don't know how to bring it safely back. In addition, the reaction from the surrounding drivers when they see street racing around them is unpredictable. Many normal drivers crash trying to avoid the racers. Fatal collisions involve many man hours for the police departments. Fatal investigative teams are called out, the road is shut down, and countless man hours are spent putting the collision together. The families are left trying to move on without a family member due to a senseless act that should never have happened.

The significant rise in illegal street racing in Glendale demanded attention. As the agency with the largest portion of the W. Bell Rd. corridor, Glendale Police took a look at the issue and the contributing factors.

Analysis

The first stage in the analysis was to meet with the patrol officers, motorcycle officers and with the surrounding agencies to determine the extent of the problem. The patrol officers noticed a significant increase in street racing during the summer of 2005. The majority of the racing was on W. Bell Road and proved to be a high risk to anyone traveling in the area in the evenings on the weekends. The officers could afford little enforcement due to the large amount of high priority calls normally worked on those nights that kept their attention focused elsewhere. The motorcycle units were often pulled for the DUI task forces and other details and could not focus the attention needed. As the summer went on, the street racing problem grew and the complaints grew with it. The officers were feeling helpless to be able to focus on the issue. What was worse, the racers seemed to understand this. At times, the racers would stop traffic completely and race three across in the wrong direction or they would take the risk and not stop traffic at all. While the speed limit on Bell Rd. is 40mph, the racers would reach speeds of 80, 90 and 100 mph. The problem continued to grow. The other agencies concurred with the same issues. Phoenix Police department has a unit designated to cruising and street racing but it was a small squad tasked with the entire city. They too, were frustrated with the inability to focus on W. Bell Rd. Peoria Police Dept. had the same problems but did not have the manpower to address the problem. The Department of Public Safety patrolled the state highway and dealt with the racers as they were exiting onto Bell Rd. or entering the highway to continue their race. They, too were low on manpower.

The question prevailed, "why W. Bell Rd.?" The W. Bell Road corridor in Glendale, Arizona is listed as one of the number one places to race on most of the street racing web sites. The Bell Road Corridor runs east and west across the city and has over 200 restaurants in a 3 mile stretch. There are numerous bars, a large theatre complex, a large shopping mall, and many other businesses along the stretch. The street is well lit and heavily traveled. There are three lanes in each direction with a raised center median. The number one and two "starting" locations, according to the websites, are the intersections of N. 51st Ave and N. 59th Ave on Bell Rd. Both intersections are monitored by traffic lights. Places to gather, many people to watch them, a wide road, and lots of stop lights all contributed to the ideal location for street racing.

One of the issues that did arise in the discussions was what to do with the racer when contacted. Street racing, exhibition of speed and excessive speed are criminal offenses which meant the drivers could be arrested. The problem with the arrest was that the officer would be taken off the focused enforcement for approximately two hours. This would hurt any large numbers arrested.

After meeting with the officers, command staff and the other agencies the following actions were decided:

- Coordinating any enforcement nights with the other agencies
- Training and education for law enforcement personnel and the courts in regards to street racing laws.
- Specific, scheduled enforcement nights with all involved
- Public education in two areas – the general driving public and how they should respond when street racing occurs around them and the young drivers who choose to street race
- Develop a zero tolerance towards any street racing
- Identification of stolen vehicles and stolen parts
- Devise a plan where the officers are kept off the road for a minimal amount of time during an arrest.

Response

Based on the analysis completed, the first step was to speak to the car and motorcycle clubs who were parking in empty parking lots at night. The motorcycle riders were doing tricks in the parking lot. All of the clubs were playing loud music, leaving trash behind, and drinking alcohol. Patrol officers and Crime Prevention Specialists met with the clubs and with the businesses and spoke to them about the problems. Most of the businesses did not know this was occurring in their parking lots and those that did were not aware of the liability to them. Letters of trespass were drafted and all of the car and motorcycle clubs were warned that they could not stay in the parking lots any longer. This eliminated a large audience to the street racers.

The first focused enforcement night was held in September. All officers working the detail were either working in an overtime position or were scheduled to work the event. The command center was set up to the rear of one of the large businesses in the area. The detention van with at least 2 detention officers was staged at the command center. The DUI van was also staged at the command center with an officer designated to processing any alcohol related issues. Inside the command center were 2 records personnel who would type the report when the officers came in to dictate and a dispatcher dedicated to

working the event. The contracted tow company sent three trucks to work only the enforcement event. City volunteers were used to take care of towing the vehicles taking another 30-40 minutes off of the officer's time. Volunteers and the Arizona Rangers were used to keep the booking area secure while prisoners were processed. In order to keep the officers on the road doing enforcement the following procedures were put in place: The officers would stop a racing vehicle, arrest the driver, turn the car or motorcycle over to the volunteer to process for towing. The officer would transport the arrested subject to the command post where they would be turned over to detention for booking. The officer would go into the command post and dictate their report to the records personnel. The entire process took about 20 minutes and the officer would be back on the road to look for another arrest. This procedure made it very easy for officers to stay focused on enforcement.

One of the keys to the enforcement was to keep the marked patrol cars off of the main roads. The unmarked cars and motor officers would watch traffic and call in the patrol cars for additional stops and aid in transporting the suspects to the command post. With the marked patrol cars on the main roads, the racers would cruise the area and "posture" like they were going to race but would never follow through. When the racers thought the coast was clear they would be back to racing.

We also learned to move the command post to a new location for each campaign event. The racers started to send scouts around the businesses looking for us.

Each enforcement night grew in numbers of officers working and resources used. The statistics for each campaign are as follows:

Sept 2005 –

Agencies involved: Glendale PD, Peoria PD, Phoenix, PD, DPS, and MCSO

Civilians: Glendale Records, Glendale Detention, Glendale Dispatch, contracted Tow Company, police department volunteers, Arizona Rangers

7 hour enforcement campaign

- **18 racing arrests**
- **3 excessive speed arrests**
- **5 Driving while under the influence**
- **45 other misc. citations**

November 2005 -

Agencies involved: Glendale PD, Peoria PD, Phoenix, PD, DPS, and MCSO

Civilians: Glendale Records, Glendale Detention, Glendale Dispatch, contracted tow company, police department volunteers, Arizona Rangers

8 hour enforcement campaign

- **44 racing arrests**

- 54 excessive speed arrests
- 4 Driving Under the Influence with 3 being at extreme levels
- 8 reckless driving
- 2 minor consuming alcohol
- 4 warrant arrests
- 46 other citations
- 78 parking citations – when the volunteers were not busy towing a vehicle, they drove the neighborhoods near the command post and worked parking enforcement

January 2006 –

Agencies involved: Glendale PD, Peoria PD, Phoenix, PD, DPS, and MCSO
Civilians: Glendale Records, Glendale Detention, Glendale Dispatch, contracted tow company, police department volunteers, Arizona Rangers, donated private helicopter

8 hour enforcement campaign

- 45 racing arrests – 4 over 100 mph
- 44 excessive speed arrests
- 5 Driving under the influence
- 5 warrant arrests
- 6 curfew
- 2 Aggravated assault on an officer
- 400 other citations – hazardous and non-hazardous

April 2006 –

Agencies involved: Glendale PD, Peoria PD, Phoenix, PD, DPS, and MCSO
Civilians: Glendale Records, Glendale Detention, Glendale Dispatch, contracted tow company, police department volunteers, Arizona Rangers
 We also used our new Unified Command Vehicle which gave us the ability for all agencies to communications – total interoperability

8 hour enforcement campaign

- 41 racing arrests
- 13 excessive speed arrests
- 11 Driving while Under the Influence – 7 at extreme levels
- 7 curfew arrests
- 94 other hazardous citations
- 64 non-hazardous citations
- 9 liquor violations

In addition to the focused campaign events, regular patrol officers and motor officers focused on W. Bell Rd. whenever they had time. Command staff asked that we continue the zero tolerance rule and provide enforcement whenever time would allow. **This resulted in an additional 98 racing arrests and 84 excessive speed arrests within the past 9 months.**

Assessment

In the past 9 months, officers have seen a dramatic decrease in illegal street racing along the W. Bell Road corridor. While illegal racing continues in the area, the racers have spread the word that they will be arrested and their cars will be towed. We still see some racing and we will continue to enforce the zero tolerance policy.

The video produced by the Mayors Youth Alliance Council was sent to all of the high schools and can also be seen on the local cable channel to educate the public of the dangers, the risks and the consequences.

The alliance between the affected agencies is strong and as each sets up an enforcement night, we will support each other in the effort to stop illegal street racing in the cities. We are bracing ourselves for the next wave of street racing since the new movie, *The Fast and Furious: Tokyo Drift* recently hit the theaters. The movie is on making the cars “drift” when they corner. We anticipate many collisions as the street racers practice this new trick.

The enforcement campaigns have been a success. The racers try to find new streets to test and we follow them to those locations. We will continue to hold the enforcement campaigns quarterly or until they stop street racing in our city.



