

13 January 2020

Mark Samuelian, Commissioner

c/o CITY OF MIAMI BEACH COMMISSION

Subject: Bicycle Security Recommendations

Dear Commissioner Mark Samuelian:

Thank you very much for your serious interest in the Miami Beach Police Department's 'Taking Bicycle Theft Seriously' and 'Partnering With The Public' programs.

I promised you I would make a few recommendations summarizing the research I made into the local version of the international bicycle theft epidemic that is bound to grow unless the negligence of owners and budget restraints is somehow effectively addressed. You shall find them below or attached, and I also attach a DOJ report on the subject.

Miami Beach is allegedly leading the way in sufferance of the international bicycle theft plague. Far more bikes are stolen than reported. I believe the value of stolen bicycles reported and unreported in our city may approach a million dollars in a year.

It is far more time consuming to handle hundreds of bike thefts than the theft of twenty or so nice cars, not to mention priorities such as protecting the public from knife-wielding maniacs in South Beach. But relatively inexpensive measures can be taken to mitigate thefts and make enforcement more efficient.

Chief Ricky Clements has informed me that budgeting can indeed be a constraint on adoption and implementation of needed improvements. I note that the city has borrowed \$439 million dollars plus carrying costs for improvements around the city, and has already paid \$35 per square foot for green paint to paint several miles of bicycle lanes, a cost I am told will be cut in half in the future by painting alternate squares of green with bicycle symbols in them.

It is reasonable to assume that funds be allocated to secure the bicycles themselves from theft to encourage people to use them instead of their cars.

Wherefore I pray that you and your colleagues on the commission will provide the financial and political means for the city to lead the way with best practices to address the bicycle theft pandemic in this nation.

David Arthur Walters

BICYCLE SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve Communications with Public

- Create a Bicycle Safety Circular for distribution on Social Media, at Bicycle Shops, Police Station Bike Registrar, Apartment Buildings
- Publish an interesting front-page article in the Miami Beach Magazine about bicycle theft and security to be circulated to every household.
- Convert One-Way MBPD social media posts to Two-Way communications by answering commentary to posts and otherwise engaging in conversation instead of posting "take it or leave it" information. Such social media conversation would accord with the new chief's Public Partnering Program.
- Create an online Suggestion Box with suggestions for officers and others to consider and comment on.
- Hire a social-media savvy person to assist Chief Clement's Public Information office to handle the above.

2. Encourage Full Utilization of Bicycle Registration

MBPD has currently justified local registration as a means of identifying owners *after* bicycles are recovered. Over the last five years, however, only 6.32% of bikes reported have been recovered and arrests have been only 6.07% of total recovered. Of course, most recoveries were at time of arrest, and the owners were already known. Further, less than half of bicycles stolen are reported because of a lack of faith in recovery.

- Require bicycles to have visible license tags.
- Set up occasional free identification-engraving sites.
- Make sure stolen bikes are marked 'stolen' on the registry.
- Encourage bicycle purchasers to check the registry for bike ownership before making purchases to ensure the bike is not stolen.

Professional thieves take stolen bicycles out of the city, state, and country for sale. Bicycle theft is considered a low-risk enterprises, and stolen bicycles are becoming a form of currency among criminals because their fair market value is known and can be readily disposed of.

- Promote registration of stolen bicycles with Garage 529, a private registry with nearly two million bikes registered at this time throughout the United States. That way, bicycles stolen in Miami Beach can be identified at their destinations throughout the country. This registry has been praised by police departments in the United States and Canada.

3. Improve Parking Furniture

- Investigate and use better parking furniture in the future. The FBI has designated the parking hoops presently in use as inferior to the 'M' type furniture where frames and wheels of a bike may be easily secured with safer locking mechanisms.
- Make sure the parking furniture is cemented into the concrete base. My investigation discovered that the city stopped using cement to secure bolts to sidewalks because that made it difficult for the city to remove the parking hoops without cutting them off with a heavy saw and leaving stubs in the pavement or sidewalk, the concern being with city convenience instead of citizen security. The bolts fastening the hoops to the pavement may be easily removed with a hand tool, and bike and hoop carried away or thrown in a truck to take to a location where the crossbar can be removed.
- Discourage the use of flyparking, locking bikes to sign posts, where parking furniture is available on the same block, by posting warnings on bikes attached to signs. Some cities where that is illegal do not prosecute offenders because it inspires hatred for police among usually law abiding people. The current reason given to me by the MBPD for prohibiting flyparking was that it inconvenienced disabled people. This limited reasoning should be expanded to include safety for all bicycle owners. Bicycles are very easily removed from sign posts with a power wrench, or diamond edge saw, or, when the post is in dirt, it can be pulled out with a pickup truck and the bike tossed into the back. Signs removed to steal bicycles or for the minimal salvage-value of the metal have resulted in the death of motorists.

4. Improve Disposition of Abandoned Bikes

- Consider employing the Code Compliance Department rather than the Police Department for identifying and removing abandoned bicycles, some of which are stolen, from the streets, and to perform other duties related to stolen or abandoned bikes.
- Audit the collection and disposition of found bicycles in the police garage. Rumors are circulating that some unclaimed bikes are distributed not to charities but to favored persons.

5. Bicycle Legislation

- Lobby for legislation that would require bicyclists to have a Bicycle Driver's License, and provide that unregistered bicycles be seized and held for payment of fine and registration.