



# City of Cambridge Police Department

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**Robert C. Haas**  
*Police Commissioner*

**Richard C. Rossi**  
*City Manager*

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager  
From: Robert C. Haas, Police Commissioner  
Date: Tuesday, July 8, 2014  
Ref.: City Council Order #14, dated June 30, 2014

Dear Sir:

As requested, I am responding to City Council Order #14, dated June 30, 2014, which relates to the feasibility of placing a hyperlink on the department's web-site that would bring bicycle owners to the National Bike Registry Program. Also, the order calls for the department to use the National Bike Registry as a means of identifying the owners of recovered bicycles.

With respect to adding a hyperlink for the National Bike Registry on the police department's website, we have posted this link to our Bicycle Safety and Registration page located under the Community Resources section of our website. You can access this page directly by going to the following URL:  
[www.cambridgema.gov/cpd/communityresources/bicyclesafetyandregistration.aspx](http://www.cambridgema.gov/cpd/communityresources/bicyclesafetyandregistration.aspx).

It has been our experience that despite this national website, comparatively few bike owners take the time in registering their bicycles. In fact, we often find that many times, bicycle owners who are reporting their bicycles stolen do not have the identifying information that is necessary to enter the stolen bicycles into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) System.

What seems to be a more promising approach is an endeavor that is being undertaken by a small group of CRLS students, who are developing a regional web-based bicycle registration site. We were first introduced to these students several months ago by Denise Jillson, who is the Executive Director of the Harvard Square Business Association. Denise became acquainted with these students when they had entered into a contest proposing new business concepts. Although their project was not selected, it impressed Denise enough to have the students meet with me talk about their concept.

These students also recognized the problem of bicycle theft in the area. They too realized that many bicyclists don't take the time to register bicycles on the National Bike Registry, and when bicycles are recovered, the police quite often cannot identify the rightful owners. In 2013 alone, the Cambridge Police Department recovered 138 bicycles, many of which were considered unclaimed because the department was unable to identify the property owners.

The students developed a web-based registry program designed to be accessible to local police departments so that if a bicycle is stolen, the police would be able to reunite the recovered bicycle with its owner. The students were particularly thoughtful about making the website relatively easy to use and intentional in keeping the registration cost low as an added incentive in registering the bike.

We have met with these students over the last few months to talk about strategies that could be used in marketing the registration site, encouraging greater utilization of the registration program, and ways to have their enterprise underwritten. We also organized a meeting with some of the area police chiefs to provide feedback on their approach, solicit their use of the website once established, and to talk about possible marketing strategies.

Some of the concepts we developed as a result of these meetings included the following:

- First looking to various bicycle retailers within the region to gauge their interest in registering the bicycles at the point of sale. Recognizing that they need to develop a large enough database for the initial kickoff;
- Meeting with the incoming freshman at the various regional college and universities during their respective orientations to encourage them to register their bicycles. Also, have the local college and universities to feature the bicycle registry site in their crime prevention literature;
- Having the students attend various community events to encourage bicyclists to register their bikes on line;
- Developing a logo, which clearly identifies the bike as being registered, and hopefully serve as an additional deterrent;
- Providing exclusive access to the participating police departments when attempting to identify a recovered bicycle, or have the information that could be entered into the NCIC system.

In terms of our efforts to identify the owners of the bicycles that are recovered, all bikes are processed by checking the National Bike Registry (which we haven't had much success with), coupled with a search of our own internal database for the report of the stolen or missing bicycle, and finally a search through the NCIC system.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert C. Haas  
Police Commissioner  
RCH/kb