

# **Commish Says Take Home Cars About Public Safety**

John Patti, Anne Kramer, and Associated Press, *WBAL-Radio* June 10, 2009

Almost two-thirds of Baltimore city employees who are assigned take-home vehicles live outside the city and many commute to homes outside Maryland.

An analysis requested by a City Councilman William Cole and obtained by the Baltimore Sun shows that fuel for the 247 assigned vehicles costs \$313,000 annually, plus the wear and tear on the cars and trucks.

Only 18 of the police department's 149 take-home vehicles are assigned to staff who live in the city and 22 are assigned to employees who live in Pennsylvania.

One police major commutes daily from Dover, Delaware, about 174 miles round trip, and the police department's public information officer commutes from Alexandria, Virginia

Councilman Cole says he wants to meet with Mayor Dixon who he believes shares his concern over the matter. Cole says he would like to propose some type of mileage limit for those who are assigned take home vehicles.

The councilman says taxpayers are paying for these employees to drive to and from work.

Officials say in recent months they've cut the number of assigned vehicles and surrounding counties have more.

The report did not cover elected officials, some of whom have city cars.

Baltimore Police Commissioner Fred Bealefeld tells WBAL Radio are a resource to fighting crime.

Bealefeld says there are 150 take home vehicles in the police department's fleet. he says those who have them are available to fight crime 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

"I have to be creative and work with the resources I have available (to fight crime) and we are working our tail off to do that," says Bealefeld.

As for the police major who drives back and forth from Delaware using a take home vehicle, Bealefeld tells WBAL Radio Major Melvin Russell spends far more time in the Eastern District in the city than he does in Dover. Bealefeld adds that when Russell can get home there are times when he has to come back to Baltimore.

The costs of fueling the cars is about a quarter of a million dollars according to Bealefeld. He says those employees with on-duty status may have their tolls paid by the department but he could not provide any figures.