

# A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PENNSYLVANIA STATE TROOPERS

## Report Highlights

State law limits the size of the Pennsylvania State Police force to 3,940 Troopers, not including those assigned to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The most recent adjustment to the statutory cap occurred in 1972 when it was raised to its current level. In 1996, and again in 2000, the LB&FC directed its staff to examine the impact of the cap on State Police functions. We found that:

- As of April 2001, the PSP employed 4,119 Troopers: 3,891 in the county troops and 228 assigned to the PA Turnpike (Troop T). The PSP also employs 1,483 civilians.
- Increased workload and service demands continue to deplete the PSP's patrol resources; as of April 2001, only 1,979 Troopers, or less than 50%, were available for patrol duty.
- On average, about 64% of a patrol Trooper's work time is "obligated" (committed), thereby limiting the time available for proactive, or preventive, patrol work. After adjusting for "obligated time," the equivalent number of Troopers available for proactive patrol work is only 712. Although no standards exist to define the optimal percentage, many law enforcement officials believe that at least 50% of each shift should be unobligated.
- The PSP has made progress in recent years in "civilianizing" certain positions formerly held by Troopers. Since 1996, this has resulted in the return of 163 Troopers to full-time law enforcement activities. The potential remains, however, for converting approximately 200 additional positions. Additional civilians at PSP Stations would free even more Troopers from non-law enforcement tasks.
- As part of its multi-year *Information Technology Strategic Plan*, the PSP has engaged in major technology initiatives to increase Trooper efficiency and return additional Troopers to patrol duty.
- Because the PSP lacks adequate civilian staff, 170 Troopers are being used to cover communication desk shortages. Consolidated dispatching should make approximately 130 of these Troopers available for full-time law enforcement duties by late 2003.
- Despite a 170% increase in the number of vehicles using the PA Turnpike, the number of Troopers assigned to patrol the Turnpike has declined slightly since the early 1970s.
- In addition to patrol, PSP officials also cite a need for additional Troopers for criminal investigations and drug law enforcement.
- The estimated costs to train and equip a new Trooper are approximately \$106,000. The PSP can train about 150 new Troopers every 30 weeks, or about 450 every two years.
- Many Troop and Station facilities cannot accommodate more Troopers, and new or renovated facilities would be needed.
- The PSP has 81 separate Stations within 15 Troops. Station consolidation holds potential for future staffing benefits.

**Conclusion and Recommendations.** Current efforts toward civilianization, automation, and consolidated dispatching should increase Trooper efficiency and, in some cases, return Troopers to patrol duty. However, these efforts will take several years to accomplish and represent only a partial solution to the staffing issues facing the PSP.

We therefore recommend the Legislature consider eliminating or increasing the statutory cap on the Trooper complement and instead control the size of the force through the budget/appropriation process. If the Legislature wishes to maintain a statutory cap, we recommend that it be increased to at least 4,320. At this level, 380 over the current cap, the average time Troopers are available for proactive patrol activities could be increased from 36% to approximately 50%. We also recommend the PSP consolidate its field operations after its current civilianization and automation initiatives are complete.