

Hundreds of violators stopped in Bend Parkway traffic enforcement blitz

by Cheryl McDermott

Wednesday marked the completion of the first Multi-Agency Traffic (MAT) team traffic enforcement blitz on the Bend Parkway. In just short of five hours, 15 officers from four different law enforcement agencies issued 85 citations and gave 125 warnings. According to Bend Police Sgt. Ron Taylor, speeding was the most frequently seen violation. 50 drivers were given speeding tickets, he said. Of the 50, the "slowest" violator was traveling 63-mph in a 45-mph zone, and several others were clocked in the mid-70s. Other citations issued included following too closely (7), disobeying a traffic control device (4), and failing to maintain a safe distance from an emergency vehicle (8). One person was arrested for driving with a suspended license (a misdemeanor), and four vehicles were impounded when the drivers were found to have a suspended license or were driving without insurance, the sergeant said. Law enforcement personnel were out in force from just after noon to just before 5 p.m. Three Bend Police motorcycles and one patrol car, two Redmond Police motorcycles and two patrol cars, four Deschutes County Sheriff's Office patrol cars, and three Oregon State Police (OSP) patrol cars participated in the operation. Sgt. Taylor said that by the end of the enforcement period officers had noticed that speeds had reduced. "We hope this isn't just going to occur on the enforcement dates, but that it will be a constant reminder for people to pay closer attention to their driving habits and drive safely all the time," he said. "Most of the violations that cause traffic crashes are related to speed and following too closely." Taylor said credible research shows that drivers are far less likely to be involved in a traffic crash in months following receipt of a citation, when compared to a driver who isn't caught or receives a warning only. "So," he said, "an officer issuing a citation can make an impact on traffic crashes and driving behavior." When asked if, in his opinion, the Bend Parkway MAT team operation was successful, the sergeant said that comments received from the public are the best indication of success. "So far most comments have been very positive," he said. "There was one negative comment that I have been made aware of, and that person had received a citation." Sgt. Taylor said that he hears numerous complaints about speeding and dangerous driving that people witness on the Parkway daily. "The last time I was checking speeds on the Parkway with my laser, a woman stopped and asked me when ODOT changed the speed limit to 70," he said. "She told me she is very conscientious about going the speed limit, but every time she drives that stretch of road she feels someone is going to hit her from behind or cut her off." Sgt. Taylor said there are lots of people who drive reasonably and within the speed limit on the Parkway. "Unfortunately, if you mix those individuals with ones who are traveling 20, 30 and even 40 miles per hour over the limit, that is a mixture for disaster." The next MAT team operation is tentatively scheduled for Friday, May 25, selected specifically because it precedes the typically dangerous Memorial Day weekend. OSP has requested the other involved agencies to enforce primarily speeding violations over a large stretch of Highway 97. The details are still being solidified, but it is expected one group of officers will be assigned to the area near Lava Butte, another group to the area between Bend and Redmond, and a third group north of Redmond to the Rex T. Barber Memorial Bridge. As in all of the MAT team operations, other observed violations will also be enforced.

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