How Patrolfinder Is Transforming Policing in Utica, New York

In the heart of Central New York, the **Utica Police Department** is embracing innovation to enhance public safety and accountability. At the center of this transformation is **Patrolfinder**, a technology platform that is reshaping how officers patrol the city's 17 square miles and serve its 65,000 residents.

Capt. Howard Brodt and **Sgt. Joshua Skibinski** of the **Utica Police Department** said the tool is helping them address crime, improve officer efficiency, and build trust with the community.

A Tool for Accountability and Transparency

One of the most immediate benefits Patrolfinder brought to Utica was the ability to track and verify patrol coverage.

"If a councilperson came to us and said they had constituents that were concerned that their street was not being patrolled enough by the Utica Police Department, we could come in and say we have this application now, it's called Patrolfinder, and we could actually tell you in fact there have been a number of patrols on that individual street and we monitor that and we track that," said Captain Brodt. "I think that's one big advantage to having Patrolfinder."

This level of transparency not only reassures residents but also protects officers by providing data that supports their work.

The system's GPS-based tracking and visual mapping allow supervisors to see which areas have been covered and which still need attention. Patrol officers also can see coverage in real-time in their patrol cars on the MDT (mobile data terminal), ensuring that no neighborhood is overlooked, even those that don't generate frequent calls for service.

Targeting Crime Through Hotspot Policing

Utica has long focused on hotspot policing to combat gun violence and other serious crimes. Patrolfinder enhances this strategy by helping officers consistently monitor and return to high-crime areas and helping leadership quantify the amount of time spent at each hotspot.

"We typically have about 12 active hotspots at a time that we're looking at," said Skibinski. These are identified through intelligence and data, often tied to incidents like shots fired, assaults, robberies, and burglaries.

The goal isn't simply to drive through these areas, but to spend meaningful, sustained time there, typically about 15 minutes, he said, adding "policing standard is to have about 15 minutes of dosage.

This strategy aligns with a well-validated hotspot-policing strategy known as **Koper's Curve** that focuses on a high-visibility presence to deter crime effectively.

"What we did with the hotspots was we made an attention point for that actual location and it was set for every hour. Once it gets driven by, it disappears but then an hour after that it reappears," Skibinski said. "The hope with that is it drives up the total amount of time spent at that location per day."

Added Brodt: "We use the term dosage for that. That's a big thing that we want to monitor. We really wanted to look at the dosage because that was important to us, not just are they driving by it but how much time are they spending at the hotspot because that's very effective in getting that hotspot to fade away."

Reducing Crime and Changing Behavior
Even early use of Patrolfinder has shown results. Hotspots have shifted throughout the city in response to officers utilizing Patrolfinder, he said.

"They're constantly changing," said Brodt. "When we saturate a hot spot and put the work in, we will change the dynamics of the neighborhood and what usually happens is our bad actors will move on to somewhere else. Hotspots change and there's this constant state of fluctuation to hotspots."

In addition, by combining Patrol Points – a digital documentation of where officers have been – with a hotspot-policing strategy, Utica PD is able to detect emerging problem areas earlier and intervene before they even develop into true new hot-spots. At the same time, officers are becoming more aware of their own patrol patterns, leading many to proactively adjust their routes and coverage to better serve the community.

"The officers are definitely more aware of what areas have been patrolled already and what areas still need to be patrolled within a timeframe because they can obviously see the dots on the map," said Skibinski. "They're more aware of that and they're probably hitting areas that they would have never gone to otherwise just because there's not necessarily calls that would bring them to those neighborhoods or streets."

Enhancing Officer Safety and Situational Awareness
Patrolfinder also improves officer safety by providing real-time information. Officers can see BOLOs (Be On the Lookout alerts) and add information with ease. The program also supports the display of floor plans for schools, and detailed maps of housing complexes.

Brodt related a past incident involving a report of an active shooter at a college campus, "We didn't know it was someone on campus with a cell phone. I was a patrol sergeant at that time and had I had Patrolfinder and a map of the campus with different buildings, that would have greatly aided me because I was kind of going to that campus blind, not knowing where the shooter allegedly was."

Patrolfinder would have given him insights into what he was facing.

"I think that's the huge advantage that Patrolfinder could give our officers," Brodt said, "mapping out certain areas so they know where they're going and they can get there in the quickest amount of time."
In addition, knowing where fellow officers are located is another safety benefit, Brodt said.

Improving Communication Across Shifts
Another advantage of Patrolfinder is its ability to bridge communication gaps between shifts. Officers logging in can immediately see which areas have been covered and which still need attention, assisting with continuity.

“The officers can log on once they settle in and see their respective assigned zone,” Skibinski said. “The dots would obviously tell them what they need to know as far as if certain areas haven’t been covered or patrolled.

Call volume doesn’t always allow them to take the time to address those things, but at least the information’s there that when they have the time to, they can act on it.”

Building Buy-In
As with any new technology, Patrolfinder faced some initial skepticism.

“There are obviously officers that thought they were being tracked by GPS. But really, we already had GPS in their cars. We could already track them and we had to explain that to them,” Brodt said. “This isn’t about that. This is really making sure that we’re hitting the city in its entirely and we’re hitting those high crime areas consistently and this is going to enable us to do that more efficiently.”

Over time, attitudes have begun to shift.

Brodt said there was pushback when body cameras were introduced into the department a decade ago.

“I wouldn’t want to go out on the street without a camera now,” Brodt said. “I feel completely covered if I have my camera on me. I think it’s one of our biggest assets now. You probably see that with this technology [Patrolfinder] too.”

Patrolfinder’s Big Potential
Brodt and Skibinski are confident in the Patrolfinder platform’s potential.

“Any police department out there who’s in the business of combatting crime should certainly take a look at Patrolfinder,” said Brodt. “I think there are a lot of advantages with Patrolfinder that would be beneficial to a police department in reducing crime in their jurisdiction.”

And one of the biggest advantages is accountability, “holding officers accountable and making sure that they’re doing their jobs properly. Accountability is a big word I’d throw out to any chief interested in the technology.”

As Utica continues to refine its use of Patrolfinder, the department is setting an example for how technology and data driven strategies can support modern policing—not by replacing human judgment, but by enhancing it with clearer information, insight, and purpose.

To learn more about Patrolfinder, email info@patrolfinder.com, visit https://www.patrolfinder.com or call 800-373-3609.