

Program tracks bike criminals who 'take the bait'

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The Tulane University Police Department is hoping that criminals looking to steal bicycles on campus will take one that is equipped with a global positioning satellite tracking device. Beginning the week of Jan. 14, [TUPD](#) will install a GPS tracking device on numerous bicycles that will be parked on campus.



The Tulane University Police Department is deploying GPS technology to nab bike thieves, as this sign on the uptown campus warns. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The tracking device is activated once the bike is taken more than a few feet. The monitored bikes will be locked and parked in public racks along with other bikes on campus.

Highly visible signs will put potential thieves on notice that certain bicycles have been “baited” and those caught stealing them will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Under Louisiana law, bicycle thieves can face jail time.

“If the value of the bicycle is more than \$1,500, the penalty is 0 to 10 years; if the value of the bicycle is \$500-\$1,500, the penalty is 0 to 5 years. If the value of the bicycle is less than \$500, the penalty is 0 to 6 months,” says TUPD superintendent Jon Barnwell. He has used the program elsewhere with considerable success.

“In my experience, this program reduced bicycle thefts by more than 40 percent,” Barnwell says. “We have seen a rash of bicycle thefts in the past few months and we feel this aggressive program will discourage this criminal activity.”

The program sends alerts via email and text message if the tracked bicycle leaves the area or travels faster than 5 mph. The bike can be tracked on a map in real time with web browsers or smart phones, and location updates are sent every 5 seconds.

In addition, TUPD will supply stickers that say “this could be a bait bike” to Tulane students, faculty and staff members to display, warning criminals of the consequences.