

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME PREVENTION AUTHORITY

GRANTS BUDGET and REPORTING (GBR)
COMMITTEE MEETING

Texas Department of Motor Vehicles
4000 Jackson Avenue
Lone Star Room
Austin, Texas 78731

9:03 a.m.
Friday,
November 4, 2022

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Julio Gonzalez, Chair
Sharon Jones
Dean Smith

STAFF:

Joe Canaday, Interim Director
David Richards, General Counsel

ON THE RECORD REPORTING
(512) 450-0342

I N D E X

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. CALL TO ORDER	
A. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum	4
B. Pledge of Allegiance (US and Texas Flags)	5
C. Comments from Committee Chairman	5
D. Comments from Committee Members	none
2. Selected Grantee Reports	
A. Burnet	76
B. Travis	99
C. Tarrant	6
D. Beaumont	28
E. Harris	59
F. Galveston	39
CLOSED SESSION	
3. The Committee may enter into closed session under one or more of the following provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Government Code Chapter 551: Section 551.071 Section 551.074 Section 551.076 Section 551.089	none
4. Action Items from Closed Session	none
5. Public Comment	none
6. Adjournment	112

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. GONZALEZ: Good morning. My name is Julio
3 Gonzalez, and I'm pleased to open the meeting of the
4 Grants Budget and Reporting Committee of the Motor Vehicle
5 Crime Prevention Authority.

6 It is now 9:03 a.m., and I am now calling the
7 committee meeting for November 4, 2022 to order. I want
8 to note for the record that the public notice of this
9 meeting, containing all items on the agenda, was filed
10 with the Office of the Secretary of State on October 27,
11 2022.

12 Before we begin today's meeting, please place
13 all cell phones and other communication devices in a
14 silent mode, and please, as a courtesy to others, do not
15 carry on side conversations or other activities in the
16 meeting room.

17 I want to welcome those who are with us for
18 today's meeting. When addressing the committee, please
19 state your name and affiliation for the record. There are
20 a few things that will assist in making the meeting run
21 smoother and assist the court reporter in getting an
22 accurate record: Please identify yourselves before
23 speaking; speak clearly and slowly; do not speak over
24 others; and please ask the chairman for permission to
25 speak and be sure to get recognized before speaking.

1 I would like to thank our court reporter who is
2 transcribing this meeting.

3 Before we begin today, I'd like to remind all
4 presenters and those in attendance of the rules of conduct
5 at our committee meetings. The committee chair has
6 authority to supervise the conduct of meetings. This
7 includes the authority to determine when a speaker is
8 being disruptive of the meeting or is otherwise violating
9 the timing or presentation rules I just discussed.

10 The posted agenda stated that a quorum of the
11 MVCPA Board may be present at this meeting; however, Board
12 members who are not members of the Grants Budget and
13 Reporting Committee will not vote on any committee agenda
14 items today, nor will any Board action be taken.

15 I don't see any other Board members present for
16 today's meeting.

17 Now we'll move on to agenda item 1.A, I'd like
18 to have a roll call of the committee members. Please
19 respond verbally when I call your name.

20 Member Jones?

21 MS. JONES: Present.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Smith?

23 MR. SMITH: Present.

24 MR. GONZALEZ: And let the record reflect that
25 I, Julio Gonzalez, am here too. We have a quorum.

1 We'll move on to agenda item 1.B, pledges of
2 allegiance of the U.S. and Texas flags. Please all stand
3 and honor our country and state with the pledges of
4 allegiance. Member Smith will lead us in the pledge.

5 (The Pledges of Allegiance U.S. and Texas Flags
6 were recited.)

7 MR. GONZALEZ: We will now move on to agenda
8 item 1.C, comments from the committee chairman.

9 I just want to say that there's inclement
10 weather coming from here all the way to Dallas. In fact,
11 they are expecting severe weather, so we are going to be
12 modifying the agenda order, and we'll be doing it by
13 distance, and so I want the task forces that have the
14 farthest drive to go first so we can get them on the road
15 before the afternoon weather hits, so the task forces that
16 are closest to here will go last. And that's just for
17 everyone's safety.

18 Also, if we could try to keep everyone to the
19 20-minute marker that was announced ahead of time, that
20 would be fantastic, and we can get everyone out of here on
21 time.

22 All right. We will now move on to agenda item
23 1.D, comments from committee members.

24 Members, do you have any comments that you
25 would like to make?

1 MS. JONES: No, sir.

2 MR. SMITH: No, sir.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: And we will now move on to
4 agenda item 2, selected grantee reports. We will start
5 off with Tarrant County, and after Tarrant County we'll
6 have Beaumont.

7 (Brief pause due to technical issues.)

8 MR. PEDERSEN: For the record, my name is Matt
9 Pedersen. I am the commander for the Tarrant Regional
10 Auto Crimes Task Force, and I'll be presenting, hopefully
11 in 20 minutes, speaking slowly for my court reporter, the
12 good works and a few of the challenges that we've
13 experienced in Tarrant County over the past year.

14 Just to put the discussion into context, I want
15 to just lay out a little bit of our operations as far as
16 how we're comprised. In 2023 our task force will actually
17 celebrate our 30th year of existence with MVCPA and prior
18 ABTPA funding, that sort of thing.

19 We are based in Tarrant County out of Fort
20 Worth, under the umbrella of the Tarrant County Sheriff's
21 Office. We are governed by a ten-member board of
22 governors, which includes the agency heads or execs from
23 each of our participating agencies, which are comprised by
24 two counties, several of our municipal cities, as well as
25 a special agent assigned from the National Insurance Crime

1 Bureau.

2 We also have an ex officio member of our board
3 of governors, which is the Texas DPS, who doesn't provide
4 us an agent anymore but the partnership is too strong to
5 not include, so they're also part of our board of
6 governors.

7 And then, of course, our coverage area, we have
8 a seven-countywide program area which encompasses
9 approximately 100 or so agencies, based on the ROI
10 numbers, within the seven counties that we cover.

11 A little bit of the framework of when we
12 complete our applications for grants: We operate
13 basically on five pillars of operations, and that is
14 investigations and enforcement, as well as intelligence,
15 education and prevention.

16 To give you an idea, because, of course,
17 throughout the year with the number of investigators and
18 professional staff and the size of our mission and program
19 area, this gives you kind of an understanding on how we
20 have to balance a few of the things that we do.

21 Of course, about 75 percent, I believe, of what
22 our investigators do is investigate and do proactive
23 enforcement. The rest of the 25 percent or is dedicated
24 to our intelligence gathering, our education component, as
25 well as our prevention.

1 Talking about some of the strengths and the
2 things that we've done well: Motor vehicle theft, which
3 includes our fraud-related motor vehicle crimes, tends to
4 be a little bit of our bread and butter. That's where we
5 do most of our investigations and also where we get most
6 of our assists from the agencies that are within our
7 program area. We've been able to identify several
8 criminal rings, as well as prolific offenders.

9 The philosophy when we judge on whether or not
10 we're going to adopt a case or when we help other agencies
11 is whether or not typically the problem involves multiple
12 suspects, jurisdiction and vehicles and that sort of
13 thing, so that we can kind of triage our assistance.

14 One of the other things that we've done fairly
15 well this year as opposed to last is with our fraud-
16 related crimes, communicating with our dealerships, and
17 I'll talk a little bit more about that later.

18 Our agency assists in collaborations; probably,
19 I'd say, greatest strengths as a multi-jurisdiction task
20 force. We have 1,700, you see, agency assists and
21 collaborations just with motor vehicle theft and fraud-
22 related motor vehicle crimes, which is an 18 percent
23 increase over last year.

24 And just a caveat to my statistics, so that I
25 have equal units to compare, I use the fiscal year or the

1 grant year versus the calendar, so those numbers may be a
2 little bit off from the numbers that MVCPA staff provided
3 you.

4 With those agency assists and collaborations,
5 we do many things from covert operations -- because most
6 of my detectives work in an undercover capacity -- as well
7 as deploying different resources. We'll adopt cases that
8 meet that multiple suspects, vehicles, and jurisdictions
9 criteria, as well as a lot of surveillance, and we'll talk
10 about inspections, which has been a huge increase this
11 year, which takes a little bit of time away from some of
12 the others, but we're trying to manage.

13 Intelligence sharing is another one of our
14 strengths and something that I'm personally proud of over
15 the last six years. We'll talk a little bit more about
16 that during the intelligence portion.

17 And then education, you see just in FY22
18 members of our task force taught 38 classes, those are
19 TCOLE classes, 751 students. That doesn't include some of
20 the maybe patrol and smaller classes that don't get TCOLE
21 credit. And then we educate from recruits to
22 investigators throughout the state.

23 As far as the weaknesses and some of the
24 obstacles and issues that we encountered, I would prefer
25 to say that we have a little more proactive investigations

1 in BMV and parts-related offenses, but we just have to
2 triage the importance of some of the cases and trends that
3 we're trying to work with.

4 Most specifically, this past year fraud-related
5 crimes have taken up a lot of our investigative time.
6 Also, you can see that when we had organized criminal
7 groups -- and I'm going to speak specifically catalytic
8 converter thefts -- we used to know in the beginning who
9 is committing the crimes, and then over time it started to
10 mirror BMV offenses, where it was any time of day, any
11 opportunist, and that sort of thing. So there's quite a
12 bit of opportunity so quite a bit happening out there.

13 Also, our BMV statistics, to be perfectly
14 transparent, is pretty much bait program dependent for us.

15 Because we have to triage some of the priorities of our
16 investigations, our arrests are equal to the number of
17 arrests for auto theft and our motor vehicle theft, but
18 the arrests for the bait car program come to us, if that
19 makes sense, versus the arrests with the motor vehicle
20 investigations and fraud take an extensive amount of
21 investigative time to reach a warrant and an arrest.

22 And then prevention, meaning community
23 outreach, is another perceived weakness on my part for our
24 task force, and that's just simply because our current
25 staffing model reflects more of an investigative team.

1 We'll talk about in another slide -- this slide, as a
2 matter of fact, how we have to kind of all wear a lot of
3 hats when we're completing our operations with that
4 framework of those five pillars.

5 So you know, it's a little counterintuitive for
6 undercover officers to be attending National Night Out,
7 but at this point we don't necessarily have a choice
8 because, for example, October is one of our biggest.
9 We've had a prevention event scheduled for every weekend.

10 With me today is Anne Marie Pena, who is my
11 administrative assistant, but also my prevention
12 coordinator and wearing those two hats, those are two
13 full-time jobs. So everyone in our task force, sworn and
14 professional, have to contribute to all five pillars in
15 some way or another.

16 And then, of course, all roads, I say, point to
17 funding, which we won't beat a dead horse with a stick,
18 but so that obviously will help but we're trying to figure
19 out and be creative with ways to maybe come up with a
20 dedicated fraud investigator, somebody who can do 100
21 percent prevention and that sort of thing to help out.

22 Discussion about our motor vehicle thefts
23 rates: Again, my numbers are a little different than
24 those provided to you by the MVCPA staff because I'm using
25 the grant year, but you can see that our program area, we

1 stayed relatively the same, relatively constant over the
2 last three years, and including those motor vehicle thefts
3 or the UUVs that are described by our participating
4 agencies.

5 A three-year grant comparison of our number of
6 cases for motor vehicle thefts specifically: We're
7 averaging about 35 cases a month with a clearance rate of
8 about eight of those, so for an average, our three-year
9 clearance rate is about 24 percent, which is a little bit
10 higher than historic. If you look at most CIDs and
11 agencies, it's 15 to 18 percent.

12 We've hovered just above the 20 percent mark,
13 and one of the advantages of being a multi-agency task
14 force is we can cherrypick, so to say, cases. We're not a
15 reporting agency, so we're able to adopt cases that
16 already have leads. They don't always go where we want
17 them to, but that allows us to at least -- our clearance
18 rate is a little bit higher because we get cases that are
19 the no suspects, no leads.

20 Some of the challenges for investigating motor
21 vehicle thefts -- and honestly, this could be just a
22 challenge in investigating any of the offenses that we
23 have. Our encumbered versus unencumbered time is a
24 constant balance of priorities. The increase in 68-A
25 inspections -- which I have a slide in a minute to show

1 the percentage -- we do quite a bit of administrative 68-A
2 inspections for titling for the Department of Motor
3 Vehicles.

4 As well as special projects that we do that
5 takes a little bit of investigative time, those are the
6 planned ones, but then we have a quite a bit of what we
7 call pack-and-go, which is you'll come in to the office
8 with a plan for the day's events, and then you get a call
9 from an agency two counties away that's in our program
10 area, and the whole team is running to do a search warrant
11 for the day and that sort of thing, so those are the
12 unplanned events that will take away a little bit of time.

13 The theft versus fraud cases in terms of a
14 challenge, traditional thefts could be potentially
15 investigated in a couple of days, a couple of weeks, and
16 of course, especially the dealership fraud cases can take
17 months.

18 We have one that's actually just over a year
19 old because of the number of players that are involved, so
20 the time and the amount of resource investigative time is
21 lengthening because we're taking much more fraud than we
22 used to.

23 Staffing shortages, that's a nationwide trend,
24 so I'm not going to talk too much about it, but two times
25 in this last fiscal year two of our investigators assigned

1 to the task force were required by their agency to fill
2 patrol or detention rotation. We were able to negotiate
3 one so it was overtime on the weekends so it did not take
4 away from grant activities. The other was a month-long
5 patrol rotation, in which case the agency did not get
6 reimbursed for the non-grant related time, but of course,
7 that's a month of one of my larger agencies, which affects
8 your overall numbers in the end.

9 Here's a slide just to talk about as far as the
10 amount of time. You can see that our 68-A inspections
11 this last fiscal year jumped to about 35 percent from the
12 previous, and our other inspections jumped 116 percent.

13 Basically the difference there, our 68-A
14 inspections is when we hand out a form to a citizen, and
15 the other is any time we look at a vehicle to identify the
16 true manufacturer's identification number for that vehicle
17 but it does not involve that administrative 68-A.

18 So if you add both of those together, we're
19 looking at about just over 4,000 inspections in a year,
20 which obviously take quite a bit of time away from those
21 other pillars of operation that we were talking about.

22 Discussing BMV, ironically, I kind of consider
23 it, like I said, a weakness because we're so dependent on
24 our bait program to help us out with that. The statistics
25 for BMVs in our program area are about a 7 percent

1 decline, but then whenever there's a little bit of
2 decline, you know that there's always an increase
3 somewhere, so if you look at our parts, then the catalytic
4 converters have reared their ugly head, of course, and
5 increased about the same percentage.

6 Again, when we look at helping other agencies
7 or taking on cases, if it's an opportunist or somebody who
8 is not necessarily on radar, then we usually allow the
9 agencies within our coverage area to handle those
10 investigations, but if it meets that multiple suspect
11 jurisdiction, vehicle type threshold, then we will adopt
12 the case and work hand-in-hand with those agencies.

13 So when you look at a clearance rate for our
14 BMVs, it's near 100 percent, and you say why does that
15 happen? It's because, again, we're pretty much dependent
16 on that bait car program, and all those are pretty solid
17 arrests and cases and none of them see the courtroom.

18 Once we get somebody arrested in a bait car
19 it's through the system. The few exceptions were a couple
20 of times where we took on some of the catalytic converter
21 operations and that sort of thing.

22 But unfortunately, and I understand as the
23 commander, if it's dependent on the bait car program, if
24 we have vehicles down -- for instance, one of our trucks,
25 we put it on the side of the highway to help three

1 jurisdictions on two truck thefts, our suspect stole it,
2 we got several cases connected, but we got our truck back
3 without a catalytic converter so we can't deploy it now --
4 so there are issues that come across, and I understand
5 that if for some reason our bait car program starts to
6 sink, then so do our numbers, but I have to triage.

7 As far as fraud and related motor vehicle
8 crimes, one of the things I think several task forces,
9 especially up in North Texas, was our need for training.
10 Sergeant Schlosser, with Houston PD, obviously had become
11 the subject matter expert, in my opinion, and when he came
12 up to the Dallas-Fort Worth area, our team attended his
13 training, where we made some really good connections with
14 some of our local dealers, which eventually led to an
15 increased communication with our North Texas Automobile
16 Dealership Association.

17 And through that we started partnering with
18 them, we started issuing dealership alerts. You do have
19 one example of those alerts in the end of your packet
20 there, but those dealership alerts have really contributed
21 to an increase of in-progress offenses where we can set up
22 stings and arrest folks who are committing these offenses.

23 But more importantly, when we send out these
24 fraud alerts, we think that we have one or two of these
25 offenses in the Metroplex and then, lo and behold, when we

1 send it on the VCC or we send it statewide, we're
2 connecting by photo these fraudulent IDs and these
3 identification cards.

4 With our prosecution -- excuse me for going
5 quickly; I'm watching my time tick away here -- as far as
6 our prosecution effectiveness, this is one of the things
7 that I'm probably most proud of.

8 I had the same type of frustrations and
9 problems in the past where we'll have investigators that
10 will spend months on investigations only to sometimes not
11 make it through intake because of an issue here or there.

12 In fiscal year '22, we were able to add a full-
13 time district attorney, assistant district attorney, Zane
14 Reid, and he is a full-time grant-funded member of our
15 task force. We sent him to several of our auto theft
16 trainings because it's important for him as the DA to
17 understand what an ECM swap is or the type of
18 sophistication that's involved in VIN switching and that
19 sort of thing, so giving him the technical knowledge.

20 Now he can speak the lingo and understand the
21 blood, sweat and tears that not only our task force, but
22 the other three in North Texas, as well as all of our
23 participating agency auto crime investigators are dealing
24 with.

25 He attends our weekly staff meetings, so that

1 gives us an opportunity during our staff meetings to ask
2 particular questions, go over court cases, issues with
3 warrants and that sort of thing, and he also accepts auto
4 crime cases from not only our task force specifically but
5 also Tri-County.

6 Of course, these are cases filed in Tarrant
7 County, but our task force, Tri-County, as well as several
8 of the auto crime investigators that comprise our intel
9 network up in the area.

10 I provided some numbers for you that Zane
11 provides to me on a quarterly basis. As of yesterday, his
12 current open cases were 164 cases with 81 defendants. A
13 little bit of a discrepancy in defendants and cases is
14 actually a good thing, because he concentrates on those
15 cases that involve prolific or gangs so we have more than
16 one suspect, typically, per case.

17 There's a couple of glimpses of success. I
18 will allow you to read that, and looking at my time clock
19 here, give you an opportunity, but the Cliff Notes version
20 of that is, you know, when you have a case that's stagnant
21 four years in the district attorney's office and then
22 within three months of an assigned investigator, we get it
23 disposed, as well as the 60 cars that are in our
24 possession that we've held onto for that long, get those
25 things disposed, that's a big benefit to us.

1 And then, of course, ECM swaps up in North
2 Texas have been rampant for the last 18 months to two
3 years, and we were able to get a successful prosecution of
4 20 years, which is kind of unheard for auto crimes,
5 because of the efforts of our assistant district attorney.

6 With recoveries, you see that we've stayed
7 fairly consistent over the last couple of years. Of
8 course, in FY20 there's a dip because of the pandemic's
9 effect on proactive efforts, going out into the public.

10 There's a 1 percent difference between the last
11 couple of years, but when you look at the next slide,
12 you'll see the recoveries has increased, and we think
13 that's a direct result of the fraud-related motor vehicle
14 crimes.

15 You know, it's not the \$3,400 old pickup truck
16 or the traditional theft, but maybe the \$90,000 Hellcat
17 that's been stolen by fraud from a dealership, so that's
18 why our numbers there have gone up.

19 Talking about these recoveries and how we break
20 it down, before I hit my task force, you'll see our
21 participating agencies, which are the seven agencies,
22 recovered about 1,600 vehicles, averaging 135 a month.
23 Our coverage agencies -- which I was able to pull the
24 stats for the 51 that report -- about 2,000 recoveries,
25 averaging 171 a month.

1 If you look at our task force recoveries,
2 you'll see that we had 743 recoveries, averaging 62 a
3 month. Of those recoveries, LPR led to approximately 64
4 percent of those recoveries, which kind of gives you a
5 good number on how if we leverage technology how well that
6 can help us out in terms of our investigations.

7 There's a difference a little bit, maybe, of
8 how I define recoveries and direct touch than there may be
9 some other agencies or task forces. By direct touch I
10 don't necessarily mean physical touch; we're not out there
11 touching a car, but for example, there are a lot of times,
12 because we have seven or eight investigators that cover
13 seven counties, if the information that we provide or
14 collaborate with another agency leads them to a recovery
15 that otherwise would not have occurred, then we will claim
16 that recovery.

17 For example, if you go out on an LPR and you
18 recover the car, that's a physical touch. If you're at a
19 chop shop and you recover ten vehicles, that's ten
20 physical recoveries. If two of you are interviewing a bad
21 guy in the jail and he confesses to some offenses and
22 directs you to four stolen vehicles that are still in the
23 community, we may be able to go get those four, but if
24 not, we might have to collaborate with another
25 investigator or agency to go pick those up, and because of

1 the direct effort and intelligence of our investigators
2 leading to that recovery, we will claim those.

3 And part of the reason, also, is because we
4 want to make sure that we are accounting for the time and
5 resources that we're spending, spending the MVCPA's and
6 the state's money, because it could take a full day to get
7 those three vehicles recovered even though we weren't
8 actually out on scene. So that's how we claim our
9 recoveries.

10 I've 30 seconds, but just give me a couple of
11 minutes here for intelligence. As you can see with our
12 intelligence component, again, one of the things that I'm
13 most proud of over the last six years or so, we have been
14 able to work with the North Texas Auto Crimes Intelligence
15 Network, something that we created, and we continue to
16 maintain with monthly meetings, as well as eBlasts for our
17 bulletins.

18 There are so many different ways that we can
19 develop and distribute our intelligence. Individual
20 investigators, of course, attend patrol briefings and
21 share with their respective agencies; we get a lot of
22 intelligence from our jail interviews, and then those
23 personal relationships, not only with investigators and
24 folks from agencies but also some of the bad guys, we've
25 used information, of course, and they'll continue to

1 contact us, or previous victims will contact us.

2 As far as our team activities, we do a weekly
3 staff meeting in which we share all of the information,
4 and even though we're under the same roof, it's surprising
5 sometimes how one person is working a case with the same
6 suspect, so we want to make sure that those don't fall
7 through the cracks.

8 Monthly agency meetings first Wednesday of
9 every month. We organize the North Texas Auto Crimes
10 Intelligence Network meeting. We have about 130 active
11 members on that, we average about 30 at a meeting, but
12 when we send out our eBlasts, it reaches fusion centers,
13 crime analysts, as well as investigators.

14 And then other resources: We routinely contact
15 fusion centers, we use the VCC, of course, networking with
16 all of our agencies in our program area, and then those
17 eblasts or the bulletins that are to our auto dealerships
18 as well as to the law enforcement side.

19 I have provided three copies of some
20 intelligence bulletins, as requested by the MVCPA staff,
21 in your handout. And then for intelligence sharing, this
22 here shows you the percentage of increase this year
23 compared to previous, and that's just because our intel
24 network is growing.

25 I will say that there is a small percentage of

1 the intelligence that we send out locally that makes it to
2 the VCC, because I don't want to inundate the VCC with
3 information that's just Dallas-Fort Worth specific, so if
4 it's information that I know may stretch outside of our
5 immediate North Texas area, especially fraud-related, all
6 of that stuff goes to the VCC.

7 And like I said, I provided three examples of
8 the intelligence bulletins that we send, but we also act
9 as a conduit to our other agencies. For instance, if
10 Grapevine or Dallas or any of these agencies send us
11 intelligence bulletins, we send them out to all of our
12 auto crime network so that everybody has the information.

13 And though we've been doing this six years, and
14 not everybody likes meetings, I will tell you it never
15 ceases to amaze me how often we connect offenses and bad
16 guys in every single month just meeting face to face and
17 talking about the trends, so it's super relevant and
18 something that I'm pretty proud of.

19 I'm sorry I'm over a little bit on my time, and
20 that was pretty fast, but certainly open to any questions.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, are there any questions
22 for Commander Pedersen?

23 MR. SMITH: No, sir. Good job, Matt.

24 MS. JONES: I like the fact of having the ADA
25 as part of the team and also the fact that you're

1 utilizing grant funding for the salary, which means that
2 the DA does not have to worry about where to get money
3 from to spare a person, so I think that's an excellent
4 idea. Perhaps other task forces could try the same thing
5 and see what works.

6 And then I know you're over, but for those who
7 do not have the privilege of having your investigations,
8 can you just give a quick brief overview of the three
9 investigations you submitted to us, if you can discuss
10 them openly?

11 MR. PEDERSEN: Sure. If you don't mind, I'm
12 going to take a quick look. I included the most recent.
13 Okay. If specifically we want to talk about the about
14 theft investigation and there is some information on there
15 that you can read versus putting it in the official
16 record.

17 MS. JONES: Absolutely.

18 MR. PEDERSEN: But say for the September 23
19 bulletin, in that case one of our investigators just
20 received some information from one of those personal
21 relationships on somebody who called and said, hey, a
22 vehicle was stolen with a bunch of tools, and we have a
23 GPS capability.

24 So we were able to coordinate and respond,
25 identify where the truck went, identify the location where

1 they were offloaded, and not only were able to get the
2 tools and a stolen vehicle recovered back, but we were
3 able to send out the information to our intelligence
4 network, and of course, lo and behold, in the next day or
5 two we started to get other investigators saying we've had
6 the same suspect vehicle involved in our thefts.

7 And then in that particular jurisdiction where
8 that address is, the patrol officers were able to do some
9 follow-ups of their own after they now know that there is
10 a particular address to put some emphasis on and several
11 other crimes were solved and/or prevented at that point.

12 One more, if that's okay?

13 MS. JONES: Sure.

14 MR. PEDERSEN: If you see the dealer alert,
15 that is the public version, because it went to dealerships
16 of the law enforcement version of the bulletin that we
17 shared on the VCC as well as with our network.

18 This particular individual, we were contacted
19 by a dealership general manager because of our
20 relationships that we had built, and they said we believe
21 we have a fraud in progress, so we sent patrol officers of
22 that particular agency to the dealership where they were
23 detained, and then we sent one of our investigators out to
24 conduct an interview.

25 Come to determine that that suspect is a

1 financial manager of a dealership in one of our larger
2 cities committing offenses by fraud at dealerships in
3 other cities. You know, that makes you a good criminal if
4 you have that inside knowledge on how to go about doing
5 it, but because of that partnership with the dealerships,
6 we were able to intercede and locate that individual.

7 And it's now starting to spread among co-
8 workers in this dealership, and of course, the dealership
9 is sweating a little bit because of the problem, but at
10 least we were able to determine and help out in that
11 sense.

12 MS. JONES: Excellent report.

13 MR. PEDERSEN: Thank you.

14 MR. GONZALEZ: Commander Pedersen, I just
15 wanted to say I've always felt that your task force is
16 kind of the standard, but I feel that multi-agency task
17 forces should be -- I mean, in terms of intelligence
18 sharing, I don't know of another task force that has that
19 collaboration and that organizing aspect that you all
20 have. Fantastic work.

21 Regarding your fraud UUV, thank you for really
22 taking the lead on those efforts. You know, the
23 legislature did add that to our mandate here at the MVCPA,
24 and so it's great to see that you all are taking it and
25 running with it.

1 I noticed on your presentation you put on there
2 you need a fraud investigator. Please apply and ask for
3 that in your upcoming application.

4 MR. PEDERSEN: I'll definitely through that
5 application. I'm not sure which agency will be willing
6 with the staffing shortages, but that's something I'll try
7 to work out.

8 MR. GONZALEZ: And with that said, if there's
9 anything that the board can help with in the event that we
10 have a situation like that where the agency wants to pull
11 back their investigator to do patrol, obviously that's
12 their purview and everything like that, but maybe we can
13 kind of convince and maybe we can be a little bit
14 influential with respect to their grant funded status and
15 whatnot. Maybe we can help out, so please let us know.

16 But overall, I think you're very forward-
17 thinking. I like to say, you know, with fraud UUV, it's
18 an evolution of auto theft, and I think that we're going
19 to see less and less of your steering column and your
20 flathead screwdriver, and you're going to see more
21 innovative ways of stealing vehicles, like fraud UUVs, ECM
22 swaps, computer programming, and all the other ways that
23 these guys are thinking of to steal cars, but in the end
24 the goal is still the same, stealing cars, and it's
25 important that our task forces adapt and overcome to these

1 new methods.

2 Thank you, sir.

3 MR. PEDERSEN: All right. Thank you,
4 appreciate it.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. And we will now move
6 on to the next agenda item, next grantee, Beaumont.

7 MR. KARR: For the record, I'm Ken Karr. I'm a
8 sergeant supervisor at the Southeast Texas Auto Theft Task
9 Force in Beaumont.

10 I practiced this. I do not have a very
11 thorough presentation; mine probably does not meet that
12 standard. I wanted to say that we are a multi-
13 jurisdictional task force. We cover Hardin, Jefferson,
14 Jasper and Orange counties. We have four participating
15 agencies: Hardin County, Jefferson County, Beaumont PD,
16 and Port Arthur.

17 In reference to the first question that you
18 asked about what we have performed well and what we have
19 not, I like to think my task force does a very good job at
20 everything they do, but as in anything, there is always
21 room for improvement, and we're always looking for those
22 ways to do that. All our grant targets were met this year
23 so we didn't have any deficiencies.

24 Things we did well: Identification of groups
25 of motor vehicle offenders and collaborative efforts with

1 other agencies, units and divisions. We worked an
2 extremely large case; it's not come to conclusion, still
3 ongoing, but there's a number of things that I can talk
4 about with it.

5 It was accepted in September by the U.S.
6 Attorney's Office in the Eastern District, filing a
7 federal RICO case on a white supremacy criminal gang.
8 That started off with the theft of more than 50 heavy-duty
9 trucks, F250s, 2500s, 3500s.

10 These trucks were stolen from mostly Beaumont
11 and the surrounding our coverage area. Hardin, Jefferson,
12 the more rural areas had a spike, a real big spike -- I'll
13 show that in the slides later -- but their numbers were
14 lower, but it doesn't take much to make those numbers
15 high.

16 And yes, I am a little nervous.

17 During this investigation, I had two
18 investigators assigned to it, Hardin county and one of the
19 Beaumont officers/investigators. There was more than 63
20 search warrants run. Only one of them was residential.
21 They were cell phone, Facebook and cell phone records.

22 More than 173,000 pages of evidence that had to
23 be sorted through by our investigators, during which they
24 uncovered virtually every crime that exists, beginning
25 with motor vehicle theft, burglary of a motor vehicle,

1 aggravated robbery, aggravated assault, insurance fraud.
2 It entailed the surveillance operation which we used
3 numerous resources for to observe a meeting of this
4 organization.

5 During this, for interview purposes and
6 furthering the investigation, there were 13 of the motor
7 vehicle theft offenders identified. These 13 worked in
8 various different combinations so I could have put a
9 million -- it's almost like Whataburger, you can just take
10 a couple of ingredients and keep mixing them up -- but we
11 identified 13 prolific.

12 Thirteen strategic arrest warrants were issued
13 for those individuals so that we could interview them and
14 further the investigation. As I said, the U.S. Attorney's
15 Office accepted it in September.

16 This probably will be ongoing. The FBI has
17 picked it up as well. They're going to deal with the
18 possibility of other things going on, so they're going to
19 address some of the crimes that we chose not to, which we
20 tried to stick exclusively -- not exclusively, but as
21 close to motor vehicle theft as we could, and the
22 insurance fraud, obviously.

23 Those collaborations with the FBI, DEA was
24 involved somewhat but we didn't work directly with them, a
25 lot of our intelligence from this investigation went to

1 them. We collaborated bunches of times.

2 I didn't look at the percentages but it was
3 extremely high the amount of times that we collaborated
4 with the FBI and with the rural areas in our coverage
5 area. All those agencies, Hardin County, Jefferson
6 County, Jasper County, Orange County, and all the police
7 agencies, municipalities in there, those lines of
8 communication, we always keep those open and that's how we
9 get our intel.

10 Most of our intel is local. We do
11 occasionally -- because we have I-10 running through
12 Beaumont, we do occasionally have issues from Houston or
13 from Louisiana, but most of the stuff that we do and that
14 we collaborate with are in our coverage area.

15 Room for improvement: burglary of motor
16 vehicle numbers and law enforcement TCOLE and non-TCOLE
17 public interaction. Due to COVID, our numbers were down
18 on burglary of motor vehicle, but as soon as the kids and
19 everyone was back out, they went right back up.

20 In 2021 we had 984 cases assigned with 81
21 cleared; in 2022 there were 1,056 cases assigned with 91
22 cleared. Part of the problems there are identifying the
23 offenders. As always, we get a lot of videos, 99 percent
24 of it is tops of heads or hoodies. Occasionally we do get
25 lucky and get some facial that somebody knows.

1 A lot of these are juveniles, so there's not
2 really any record, fingerprints aren't on file yet, and
3 that's one of our biggest issues right now. And of
4 course, prosecution and sentencing are difficult. You get
5 slapped with BMV, even as an adult, you're probably not
6 going to serve any time, you're going to get probation.
7 Prosecutions we usually build great cases. We don't have
8 a problem getting convictions; we just don't keep them in
9 jail.

10 We've done this for years, been working with
11 our juvenile division in Beaumont trying to identify these
12 juvenile offenders as they come up and reach maturation,
13 because we're trying to look at trying to hit them and
14 target them, as soon as they're adults we want to start
15 putting them in jail. Obviously they need to do something
16 wrong, we're not saying that.

17 The TCOLE and non-TCOLE hours and public
18 interaction. We hadn't done a TCOLE class in probably two
19 or three years. We just did one in grant year 2022, we
20 put together a new TCOLE class.

21 We had good attendance but manpower shortages,
22 not unlike every agency in Texas and probably the nation,
23 only allowed for 17 to attend, which I was not -- I wanted
24 more, a lot more. We did several roll call trainings in
25 the past for Beaumont, and we had pretty good numbers

1 there, but this year we've already passed those numbers
2 for roll call training, so we're getting stuff out to
3 these guys as quick as we can. As soon as we get
4 intelligence, it's hitting the street.

5 For the future, we have already planned agency
6 roll calls for other agencies within the coverage area and
7 without if they want it, outside the coverage area. We're
8 doing more neighborhood association meetings this grant
9 year.

10 We also are participating in numerous -- our
11 department sponsors Funday in the Park for kids, so we're
12 doing a lot of cops and kids events, and we're doing more
13 presentations for civic and police-related organizations.

14 The Citizens Police Academy, we do that yearly, actually
15 biannually.

16 The PIP, this is Lamar University Students that
17 we're putting on a class for instructing in auto theft,
18 basically telling them, and it's a good recruiting tool as
19 well. We also partner with the clergy in our area. We
20 have the CAPP which is Clergy and Police Partners, we do
21 presentations for them as well.

22 The Beaumont Police Department's Citizens
23 Advisory Board, I was recently invited to do one there,
24 went great and it was the first time we were invited, so
25 hopefully we'll go back again. Also the neighborhood

1 association meetings.

2 We do this every time, but the task force is
3 always concentrating on identifying and targeting the
4 prolific motor vehicle offenders. Through the years I've
5 been there -- I've been there -- in January will be eleven
6 years -- we have become more effective at targeting motor
7 vehicle theft offenders.

8 We are better at our jobs than we were when I
9 got there, and I hope we get even better, but that seems
10 to be the most effective way for us to -- and efficient to
11 target these people is the way that we're catching them.
12 The only time it really comes up is when we have outside.

13 If we're local, we usually will have an idea of who it's
14 going to be, if they're from outside, then we have a hard
15 time identifying them.

16 Prolific offenders are identified by
17 intelligence information received from other CIs, stuff
18 like that. When arrests are made, the special offenders
19 always get the special emphasis, so we usually walk those
20 through to the DA's office and see if we can make sure
21 that they get extra-special treatment. A lot of times it
22 works, sometimes it doesn't.

23 We're planning on moving ahead just like we've
24 been doing; it seems to be pretty successful. Like I
25 said, we can always get better, and that's what we're

1 looking for, and as soon as we figure out a better way, we
2 do it that way.

3 Motor vehicle thefts. The challenges there,
4 obviously if everybody keeps leaving their keys in the
5 car, we're going to keep having the same problems we've
6 had, which is why now we're going to concentrate a little
7 more on the public.

8 We're shooting for making virtually every
9 neighborhood association meeting we can to get the word
10 out. We've done numerous, numerous media outreaches, and
11 we seem to not really have a huge effect. I guess
12 probably everybody has the same issues that we do there.

13 The juvenile offenders, again, a big problem.
14 We've had several cases, I think we're up in the ten-ish,
15 twelve-ish, of the Kias. Almost every one of those so far
16 that we've identified have been juveniles. We got really
17 lucky in our patrol division, arrested probably the two
18 that were assisting with most of the Kia thefts in the
19 City of Beaumont. We've not had any in the outlying areas
20 at this point.

21 The other challenge is we have successful
22 prosecutions, but we have a problem getting the time for
23 these people to stay, because it's just like they're in
24 and then they're right back; it seems like within months
25 we're having the same offenders.

1 The auto theft rate. Hardin County, Jasper
2 County, Jefferson County and Orange County, they're all
3 down. I will move to the next slide. There was a 42
4 percent drop in the auto theft rate in Hardin County.

5 A lot of that is going to be attributed to that
6 RICO case. That's where many of the trucks were stolen,
7 same thing with Jasper County. Jefferson County had a 6
8 percent drop, that's where Beaumont is actually located in
9 Jefferson County. And Orange County had a 3 percent drop.

10 So we're down in our coverage area, substantially in two
11 of the counties, but those are more rural counties.

12 Task force clearance rates. We have seven task
13 force investigators, myself and then our commander,
14 Lieutenant John Cross. We had a total of 2,026 cases
15 assigned, 730 UUMV cases assigned, we had 88 cleared by
16 arrest, and we average about 14 exceptionally cleared
17 cases per month, and four unfounded per month. Our
18 investigators average seven UUMV cases filed per month.

19 We have a good rapport with our DA's office in
20 Jefferson County. Orange County, we hardly ever get to
21 deal with them and they rarely will take a UUMV case,
22 rarely. Any time that anything is recovered over there,
23 that district attorney opts to use the "it was stolen over
24 there; they can prosecute it over there."

25 But Jefferson County and Hardin County, we have

1 a really good working relationship with the DAs, and we
2 don't really have a problem getting cases through, but
3 sentencing, again, is not in our control, and that's where
4 we have the issue.

5 Recoveries. We average about seven stolen
6 vehicles per month recovered, and all vehicles are direct
7 touches. We don't count anything that we don't actually
8 touch. If we get called out to a recovery, we'll count
9 it; if patrol recovers it, we do not count it. We will
10 assist, we may count the arrest if we talk to the
11 individual and put them in jail, we will count that arrest
12 but we don't count the touch.

13 The way we develop intelligence, probably the
14 same way pretty much everybody does. Our task force
15 personnel are great, our investigators are awesome at
16 getting out, talking to people, working CIs, getting
17 information from their representative agencies that they
18 work with.

19 Outside agencies, we're in contact with them
20 all the time, other outside agencies in and out of the
21 coverage area. We try to get out as often as we can,
22 caseloads are somewhat prohibitive at this point, but try
23 to do surveillance.

24 We use the BPD crime analyst occasionally. Our
25 chief usually has him tasked with numerous other things,

1 so I'm thinking you're looking probably mainly at the main
2 guy that does the crime analysis. Any information we get
3 from arrests, about or surrounding it, citizens, Crime
4 Stoppers, anonymous tips, obviously with corroboration,
5 and CIs.

6 Sharing intelligence. Phone calls, emails and
7 face-to-face meetings is pretty much the way we do all of
8 it. We do use the VCC. We had a problem accessing that
9 up until, I think, June. We had a problem with our lead
10 coordinator getting us hooked up, but we're finally on
11 there, so y'all will see more and more from us.

12 I try not to -- not unlike Tarrant County, I
13 don't want to fill y'all's VCC full of stuff that has
14 absolutely no relevance outside of our local, but anything
15 that I think was headed to Houston or Dallas or whatever,
16 it goes on there.

17 We also meet with every unit in the Beaumont
18 Police Department weekly to discuss patterns and suspects,
19 ongoing events, incidents, and anything that might be
20 related to something that we're working or one of our guys
21 is working in Hardin or Jasper County will relate that.

22 Task force personnel are contacted on a daily
23 basis and nightly basis for and by other agencies for
24 intelligence, physical assistance, general information,
25 and we will assist anybody in our coverage area or outside

1 of our coverage area as much as realistically possible.
2 We will not turn anybody away, and if there is a way to do
3 it and they don't know, we'll try to instruct them how.

4 Some of our latest bulletins that we've put
5 out, most of these are shared with the Beaumont Police
6 Department. I did not pull Hardin County's, they put them
7 out too. This was a local stolen ATV, check with Beaumont
8 Police Department, and my last VCC post, and that was an
9 tractor that was on a trailer that went stolen from
10 Beaumont. The tractor was apparently pulled off in Cove,
11 Texas because it's still pending there, I don't think they
12 ever found it, but it was headed westbound to Houston on
13 I-10.

14 And that's all I've got.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: Any questions for Beaumont?

16 MR. SMITH: No, sir.

17 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Thank you, sir.

18 MR. KARR: Thank y'all, appreciate it.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: And up next we'll have
20 Galveston.

21 MR. BARROW: Good morning. I'm Lieutenant Hal
22 Barrow with the Galveston County Sheriff's Office,
23 assigned as the task force commander for Galveston County
24 Auto Crimes Task Force. I've been there 36 years. I know
25 y'all probably think I'm crazy still being here.

1 (General laughter.)

2 MR. BARROW: Let me see if I can figure out how
3 to work this; that was pretty easy.

4 All right. So we're a multi-agency task force.
5 We have La Marque, City of Galveston, Sheriff's Office,
6 that makes up our multi-agency task force. I'm trying not
7 to repeat everything that everybody else went over,
8 because I know it gets a little boring.

9 I'll give you an example of what we do in the
10 mornings. We come in at eight o'clock in the morning, we
11 sit down around the table, we have a liaison program where
12 I have each investigator assigned to certain areas of the
13 county, multiple counties, because it covers Brazoria
14 County, Matagorda, southern Harris, way southern Harris
15 County, and Galveston County.

16 There's police agencies in them areas for the
17 liaison program which I have contacts for each one of the
18 police departments and investigators. So they come in
19 every morning, and in briefing we go over what's going on
20 and somebody has had burglaries, somebody had motor
21 vehicle thefts, catalytic converter thefts, so we gather
22 that intel and then that's the way we target what we're
23 going to do for the day, basically try to move with the
24 trends, because motor vehicle theft changes every day.

25 68-A inspections, we did 644. We're scheduled

1 two months out now. We should be doing them two days a
2 week, but that's not really what MVCPA has us tasked to
3 do. The statutory stuff is what we need to be focusing on,
4 but the DMV and the citizens still need these 68-As, so we
5 move forward with that.

6 Recovered stolens, we had 295, and I've seen
7 that there is a different definition between everybody of
8 touching, investigating, resources, so maybe that's
9 something that needs to be established of what actually
10 needs to be done.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: I'm sorry' I'm going to go ahead
12 and address that really quickly. So I was having a
13 conversation with the interim director here about that,
14 and I'm thinking maybe we need like a subcommittee to kind
15 of take a look at these definitions, and so that's
16 something that we'll be discussing, and glad to hear
17 you're going to volunteer for it, and Commander Pedersen.

18 (General laughter.)

19 MR. GONZALEZ: But I really think that we maybe
20 need to take a look at some of these definitions:
21 clearance rate, touch, what that means, and provide some
22 further guidance for our grantees.

23 MR. BARROW: Yes, sir.

24 MR. GONZALEZ: Sorry about that. Go ahead.

25 MR. BARROW: And to give you an example of kind

1 of what we do, I look at this way, if we're spending
2 MVCPA's money and we're doing something on that case, if
3 we're identifying it, if the analyst is working it, if the
4 investigator has to go out and identify or has to touch it
5 any way, if they're taking their time that's MVCPA's
6 money, we should be able to claim that stat, and that's
7 where we come up with our 295.

8 Vehicles recovered for just the task forces, \$4
9 million, a little over \$4 million. I'm going to get into
10 personnel and stuff in a little bit. Our arrests, we've
11 had 37 that we've done. Motor vehicle theft assists is
12 1,616. That's calls coming in, analysts, us too. But you
13 look at citizens, it says down below, is 3,449.

14 I should have put in all the analyst's stats
15 because it's unbelievable. The phone starts ringing at
16 8:00 and it don't stop till 5:00, and that's not including
17 we have an on-call 24/7. In that on-call it's law
18 enforcement only, and we get calls all the time during the
19 night. I'm probably speaking to the choir here some.

20 Motor vehicle burglary arrests, we had eight,
21 assists there were 107. On that point on burglary of
22 motor vehicles, everybody has the same problem, we get a
23 lot of video, we get a lot of LPR data.

24 And I've talked to several people about this,
25 but we used to do DNA swabs and we used to send it to DPS

1 lab. Well, DPS lab does not want to see swabs for
2 burglary of motor vehicles or auto theft, but it is one of
3 the best things to put somebody in that car. So I would
4 suggest that somebody gets a private lab, a contract with
5 them, and us start doing some of them to target at least
6 the prolific offenders, because we've taken before some
7 prolific offenders with the swabs and made cases on them.

8 Because fingerprints, everybody has figured out,
9 fingerprints they can wipe them away, they wear gloves;
10 DNA they can't wipe away, so I think it's a real good
11 source from that.

12 Do y'all have any questions?

13 MS. JONES: We will.

14 MR. GONZALEZ: Think you're on to something
15 there, so might be on another subcommittee.

16 MR. BARROW: And I tried to address all the
17 questions that were submitted to us. I didn't do the
18 graphs and all that stuff, I kind of show the percentages.

19 Galveston County showed a decrease in motor
20 vehicle theft in FY22 by 6.9 percent. We had increased
21 recovery, LPR and commercial data, because we get
22 commercial data from Vigilant Systems that we pay for.

23 It costs us about \$10,000 a year, it is
24 unbelievable how many hits we get off of that, and that's
25 just our area. Some of my guys try to encroach on Harris

1 County because there's a bunch of them around the area,
2 but we try to stay south and take care of our stuff.
3 That's another good resource to recover cars. If we had
4 DNA, we could develop suspects.

5 Bait vehicle deployments will increase in FY23
6 because we finally obtained a vehicle from the Galveston
7 Police Department. It's rigged out now, we're waiting on
8 a sim, and as soon as we get that sim, our bait vehicle
9 program will be back at work.

10 Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force, we try
11 to follow the trends in developing motor vehicle theft,
12 and that comes back to our briefings in the morning of
13 where we're going to work and what we're going to do.

14 Let's see, what challenges do you have in
15 addressing motor vehicle theft? We had 769 motor vehicle
16 thefts in Galveston County, that's including the police
17 agencies, which we had a reduction of 6.9 percent, in FY21
18 we had 826.

19 You have limited time to work due to all the
20 other activities. If you look at our progress report --
21 and I understand you try to track everything you do, but a
22 lot of that stuff is not the specific mandates from the
23 legislature, so you end up doing all this other stuff, and
24 it takes away from investigations, things like 68-As.
25 There's a lot of things in there we do that kind of cross

1 over, and it looks like we could kind of merge that stuff
2 together some and reduce some of the progress report.
3 That's just my opinion of it from being a commander.

4 We usually have three to four per month arrests
5 on motor vehicle theft. We had, like I said, 769 thefts
6 in our jurisdictions.

7 Fraud-related. We get a lot of VIN-switched
8 vehicles, and I don't want to pick on Houston but, man,
9 they must be running a shop in Houston because we get
10 unbelievable 80-, \$90,000 trucks they're selling on
11 Facebook, Offer Up, and these poor people are going in and
12 paying cash for these cars.

13 They've got so good now, we've got two that
14 went to a dealership, a big dealership in Houston that
15 went through their used car department, sold to people.
16 They were VIN switches, stolen. We recovered them, their
17 finance people made good on the deals, so them people came
18 out all right, but the dealership took a hit on the cars.

19 That's how good these VIN switches are getting, and I
20 mean, that's 80-, \$90,000 a pop, that's not good.

21 Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force has
22 been successful in reducing motor vehicle thefts and
23 burglaries of motor vehicles. We will continue with our
24 current activities and remain flexible with changing
25 trends in motor vehicle theft.

1 It says how effective is your grant program on
2 obtaining prosecution and convictions? Well, that's a
3 whole 'nother matter to itself. Everybody knows district
4 attorneys are elected, they decide what goes through and
5 what don't. I do like the idea, like Tarrant County was
6 talking about, of having an ADA assigned, even if we
7 shared one with Harris County and Galveston County, to
8 prosecute motor vehicle crimes. I think it's an excellent
9 idea; it all comes back to money.

10 I mean, it don't matter how we prepare that
11 case. We can present that case and then the come with,
12 oh, it's an innocent purchaser, or it's this or it's that,
13 how do you even put them in the car.

14 It's always something they're trying to find a
15 reason to throw the case out. Violent crime is on the
16 rise, property crimes take the backseat to it, and that's
17 the deal with the prosecution. They want to go through
18 stuff and plea bargain, because it keeps our conviction
19 rates high, and we're trying to remove the criminals off
20 the road to reduce this stuff, and that's not what they're
21 talking about, the sentencing, them staying in jail, well,
22 we've got the jail overcrowding, they're going to be
23 trying to get rid of them. So as soon as they get out --
24 we've got people that we've arrested and put in jail, the
25 next week we're arresting them again for the same stuff.

1 I know that's no control of us or y'all, but it is to the
2 district attorney's office.

3 How many stolen vehicles reported and the task
4 force recovered each month. We've got an average of about
5 24 per month, and a lot of that is due to LPR data, Flock
6 systems; Vigilant System, which is commercial data, and we
7 have a Vigilant System in one of our units where we read
8 plates. There's that direct touch again. My personnel, I
9 explained the definition of that. Galveston County Auto
10 Crimes Task Force also claims recoveries we have direct
11 involvement in. We talked about that.

12 How many other divisions in the grantee's
13 agency? Well, I try to find how many people track
14 recoveries. Well, the Galveston County Sheriff's Office
15 has 105 from their patrol. I called the Galveston PD and
16 talked to the agents assigned to us; they don't do
17 recoveries unless somebody is in the car, and if they find
18 a stolen, they just have it towed and sent to the wrecker
19 service and have it picked up, so they don't follow up
20 anything, it's just towed, sent to the agency.

21 And that's not part of their policy; their
22 policy says they'll do a recovery report, but that's
23 another whole animal we have to approach. I think every
24 car picked up should be a recovery so somebody can follow
25 up with it.

1 VCC. I'm on the same page with Tarrant because
2 the VCC, I believe in putting in good intel; I don't
3 believe in putting trash in, because trash in, trash out.

4 And I think there's some rules that need to be
5 established that, hey, if this is good intel that's
6 affecting other areas and stuff, we absolutely need to put
7 it in. Just putting stuff in from the local area, I don't
8 agree with. I don't know how the board feels about that.

9 Describe your services and interactions that
10 support coverage agencies listed in your grant
11 application. Well, we provide investigative, 68-A
12 inspections and other resources to coverage agencies. If
13 you look at a burned car, this is not a 30-minute ID, this
14 is something that might take all day, if not two days, to
15 identify a burned vehicle. Jet skis, boats, marine, we do
16 all of it. Trailers, if it wasn't for our analyst -- and
17 I think all the task forces can speak to this -- if it
18 wasn't for her knowledge and ability, there's a lot of
19 these trailers wouldn't be identified.

20 We are working towards a deal maybe with the
21 DMV or the board, there's a database -- I forgot what it
22 was called, it's their main database, you can get access
23 to it, Texas DMV says it will cost us \$5,000 for access to
24 this database, which don't make sense to me because we're
25 doing the 68-As for DMV, so why should MVCPA pay \$5,000 to

1 get access to that database to identify these vehicles?

2 And that has registered vehicles that have
3 purged out of the system, so I don't know if that could be
4 approached some way in some form, but it would help our
5 analysts and it would help if we get other analysts
6 throughout these other task forces, because the workload
7 is definitely there.

8 Heavy equipment, and these are all things, like
9 heavy equipment there's no fee collected on that stuff;
10 maritime, I don't think there's any fees collected on
11 that. I don't think it's ever been approached by the
12 legislature, so these are things that we're doing that
13 really the insurance companies are not paying, it's motor
14 vehicles that are paying.

15 Commercial vehicles, commercial trucks, I don't
16 know if they pay that fee or not, but we do work
17 commercial vehicles also. So there's a lot of other
18 things that should be collecting fees too that we're not
19 collecting, but we're putting work into it to reduce the
20 thefts.

21 The Virtual Command Center, we try to share
22 intelligence. Like I said, we have a liaison program, we
23 get it out to the other agencies that way. We collect the
24 information that way. We try to target our offenders on
25 what's going on.

1 Like right now we have the motorcycle rally
2 going on in Galveston. So we have the Lone Star
3 Motorcycle Rally, we go from a normal population to a
4 massive amount of people, and all of them ride
5 motorcycles. So tonight and tomorrow we'll be working
6 that motorcycle rally with all the rest of us down there.
7 Stolen bikes, we'll get seven or ten out of Galveston
8 every year.

9 Let's see what else I've got here. So the
10 intelligence sharing, we try to get it out. We
11 collaborate with DPS, we collaborate with other agencies,
12 we collaborate with Houston PD. We're always interworking
13 with each other all the time on the street.

14 And even in my position, I work the street too.
15 I do investigations because we don't have enough people,
16 and try to do the management side of it too.

17 What do we need from MVCPA? Overtime money,
18 more money for technology and databases. And that's where
19 I'm getting into the DMV, getting that main data from
20 them.

21 Equipment funds, I think it's been the last ten
22 years since we've had any money for equipment. It's been
23 salaries, and we've lost two people over the years due to
24 budget cuts and stuff.

25 What are the things we do good? We know how to

1 manage on a shoestring budget. And I'm glad that we have
2 a lot of help from some other agencies that pay for some
3 things on the side that help us get through vehicles,
4 manpower, investigators, the analyst.

5 And what I want to get into there about
6 manpower and stuff, I had two people out on medical
7 leave -- because I have an older group of investigators --
8 one of them had two knee replacements and they were off
9 twelve weeks. The other one had a baby, another twelve
10 weeks. Had another guy who had 150 hours of comp time and
11 they won't let us carry but 30 hours of comp time; had to
12 let him off for a month.

13 That all impacts us when there's only two or
14 three of us working cases, investigations. And I know
15 it's kind of whining a little bit, but I mean, we do a lot
16 of stuff for a few people. And I'm not including
17 vacations, comp time off, you know. You end up with a
18 very limited staffing to complete these tasks.

19 I've almost burned up 20 minutes, I'm trying.
20 Do y'all have any questions?

21 MR. SMITH: I'll wait.

22 MS. JONES: Was that the end?

23 MR. BARROW: That was the end.

24 (General laughter.)

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, are there any questions

1 for Galveston?

2 MR. SMITH: I've got one. Member Smith, for
3 the record.

4 What type of equipment are you guys needing
5 these days?

6 MR. BARROW: I've got a bunch of high mileage
7 vehicles right now. When Bryan Wilson was the director,
8 we traded two trucks out. We had two that were like
9 120,000-plus on them.

10 They were really getting costly to maintain, so
11 the sheriff gave us two with 80,000. So them two now are
12 starting to get high mileage again. My deal of managing
13 is to keep personnel. If it's vehicles, if I have to go
14 to the sheriff and ask for another vehicle, something
15 used, seized, we're going to do that to keep personnel.

16 I really don't want to reduce the people we
17 have because then we're going to be backing up from what
18 we've accomplished over the years, 24 years now that we've
19 been in.

20 MR. SMITH: Sure. That makes sense.

21 MR. BARROW: Overtime would be great, overtime
22 money, because we work 8:00 to 5:00 and then we get called
23 out in the middle of the night and stuff. And then when
24 you get called out, all that's comp time, so then I end up
25 having to let people off. So then you're back short

1 again.

2 That's not even including the vacation time and
3 other comp time and medical leave. And these other
4 agencies are running short. They want to pull their
5 people back because they can't make patrol shifts.

6 Well, we tell them that, hey, MVCPA really
7 don't like that. They want them to be here, this is what
8 they're being paid for. 100 percent of your time is
9 supposed to be working the grant.

10 MR. SMITH: So it's more of a vehicles and
11 personnel, as opposed to equipment.

12 MR. BARROW: That and the databases. I mean,
13 like I say, I don't think that MVCPA should be paying
14 Texas DMV for the data. That just don't make sense to me,
15 they're all the same government agency of the State of
16 Texas. I don't know if anybody could work on that.

17 MR. SMITH: I'm guessing we're going to talk
18 about that.

19 MR. BARROW: Okay.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: Mr. Canady, I don't know if you
21 can provide further insight to that.

22 MR. CANADY: For the record, Joe Canady.

23 We had received a request from Galveston County
24 in reference to this in reference to access to the DMV
25 master list, specifically to do searches and queries for

1 utilizing a partial VIN search. A lot of the vehicles
2 they are recovering or looking at during 68-A inspections
3 are trailers that oftentimes -- the majority of the time
4 the mylar stickers have been removed but they may have a
5 partial stamped number. But it could be a four-digit
6 number that's not long enough to build a full VIN off of
7 utilizing databases from NICB.

8 So utilizing this master list can search old
9 and previous records to build that full VIN and
10 potentially recover a stolen trailer or identify it to
11 eliminate the need for a consumer customer having to get a
12 bonded title. So we are looking into that with DMV on
13 what we need to do moving forward to have access to the
14 analyst in Galveston.

15 MS. JONES: Is part of your discussion
16 regarding not having to pay for it?

17 MR. CANADY: We haven't got that far yet. In
18 the discussions, the information come about recently here
19 in the last couple of weeks. And with other things going
20 on, we haven't got that far. But we will, yes, ma'am.

21 MS. JONES: Thank you.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Smith?

23 MR. SMITH: I don't have any other questions.
24 Thank you for bringing that up.

25 MR. BARROW: Thank you.

1 MS. JONES: My hesitancy to ask Beaumont
2 questions had to do with the touch, direct touch, don't
3 touch. Right? And I do agree that we need to provide
4 guidance and direction so that the reporting numbers to us
5 are the same, and also, not just those types of numbers
6 but recoveries, what is a recovery.

7 To me a recovery is you recover it, it's like
8 very simple, that's a recovery. It was stolen, it's no
9 longer stolen, that's a recovery. So I think those are
10 discussions and a committee that needs to be formed to
11 make some decisions there, present some ideas to us.

12 I love the private lab idea simply because in
13 Beaumont's presentation theirs is linked to -- one of
14 their investigations, he didn't go into details, but most
15 of us, if not all of us, already know where that
16 investigation is leading to. And I've said from the very
17 beginning when I got on this board, if we can link auto
18 theft to other crimes, auto theft is in every crime.

19 You're going across the border, they're
20 stealing vehicles to get drugs from the border. Weapons
21 are going to the border; money is going to the border.
22 Stolen vehicles are coming from Texas. They're going in
23 to the border.

24 They're coming back across. They're bringing
25 children that are being trafficked, they're smuggling,

1 even just in our own state they're also linked to
2 kidnappings, different types of crimes. So I think it's
3 important for us to be able to show the linkage to other
4 crimes.

5 With that said, we don't have enough funding.
6 There's not enough funding, even with the funding that
7 we're given and allocating to the task forces. Like just
8 about each one who has presented to us, there's still a
9 financial need. So that's an issue, is getting enough
10 funding to make sure that we can take care of our
11 grantees.

12 MR. GONZALEZ: I just want to say that this is
13 the purpose of these presentations is to hear directly
14 from the task forces as to what it is that they need, and
15 I think that you have brought up some really great ideas.

16 You know, with respect to the crime lab, I
17 completely understand. And I remember having a
18 conversation with my crime scene administrator about, like
19 you said, violent crime is the priority. So I think a lot
20 of it is going to depend upon appropriations in the
21 upcoming legislative session, but certainly that seems
22 like something worthwhile for us to take a look into.

23 I would encourage you to apply for a Rapid
24 Response Strikeforce Grant. I know overtime is an
25 eligible expense. I don't know if reimbursement for DNA

1 services would be eligible, but that's something that we
2 can look into.

3 I know it's expensive, but to me it is -- you
4 were talking about the prosecutors and providing DNA
5 evidence is a pretty solid piece of evidentiary value. So
6 that can, again, lead to accomplishing the goals of the
7 MVCPA. So we're definitely going to look into that.

8 Thank you.

9 MR. BARROW: I appreciate it. Thank y'all.

10 MR. SMITH: Dean Smith, for the record.

11 I've got one question. It may be directed
12 towards board members as opposed to anybody else -- or in
13 fact, anybody else that might be here. Do we know what a
14 DNA swab these days costs to process?

15 MR. BARROW: I do not.

16 MR. SMITH: Sharon?

17 MS. JONES: No, not directly, but it's more
18 than just having to get it swabbed because you need to
19 have a contract with companies in place, the processes.

20 MR. SMITH: Sure, but on a per-incident basis
21 we don't know what the expense of having a swab processed
22 is.

23 MR. BARROW: I mean, if you had like the State
24 of Texas go into a private lab and make a contract, it's
25 going to be cheaper than it is one agency because then

1 they're going to be higher.

2 MR. SMITH: Right.

3 MR. BARROW: The swab itself is pennies; it's
4 the backside work for the chemist.

5 MR. SMITH: Oh, yeah, an out-the-door report
6 from a lab, you know, we probably ought to figure out what
7 those things are costing these days.

8 MS. JONES: Does anyone?

9 MR. STINEHOUR: We've tried before to do this.
10 The cost of getting a contract, the cost of sending them
11 in -- if you send one or if you send a hundred, there's a
12 minimum of \$2,000 just to ask for a swab and to have it
13 run by the doctors or whoever does all that stuff. But
14 we've tried, we've asked.

15 We've asked our DA's office. Our DA's office
16 tells us don't do them unless you have a persons crime,
17 severe, you know, major. Any property crimes we can't get
18 a contract for that.

19 So we don't know of anybody who would even pick
20 that up if we pay the \$2,000 because they're so
21 overwhelmed with persons crimes. So I don't even know of
22 any private contractors who do property.

23 MR. SMITH: Thank you for that, appreciate it.

24 MS. JONES: Great point. The labs are
25 inundated. There are a lot of crimes that heinous and we

1 understand that has to be the priority. We understand
2 that, but also, we do know that property crimes are linked
3 to heinous crimes.

4 So we'll do some research. We're not saying
5 yes or not. We'll do some research and see -- we'll have
6 some ideas.

7 And he's correct, we can find a lab that will
8 say yes, I'll take it, but what are the prosecutors going
9 to take? We'll do some research.

10 MR. BARROW: Yes, ma'am.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

12 MR. BARROW: Thank y'all.

13 MR. GONZALEZ: It is now 10:30, we will go into
14 recess for ten minutes and reconvene at 10:40.

15 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

16 MR. GONZALEZ: We are now back from recess at
17 10:43, and we will now hear from Harris County.

18 MS. CHAPA: Sandy Chapa. I'm a lieutenant with
19 the Harris County Sheriff's Office Auto Theft Unit.

20 So our unit investigates all the vehicle
21 thefts, the theft of motor vehicles, the BMVs, catalytic
22 converter thefts, the jugging, the bank jugging, all the
23 vehicle fraud-related crimes. On average we receive about
24 1,000 to 1,200 cases per month.

25 In addition to the arrests and investigations,

1 we also conduct proactive investigations and operations
2 which include the covert surveillance operations, bait
3 vehicle operations, and buy bust operations. In addition
4 to conducting investigations, we're also tasked with the
5 68-A vehicle inspections, vehicle identification, salvage
6 inspections, respond to LPR hits, recovery of stolen
7 vehicles, and educational awareness.

8 In section 3 of the fiscal year '22 MVCPA task
9 force grant application, the grant, the grantee provided
10 specific functions they would perform if funded by the
11 MVCPA per the statement grant award. Select tasks were
12 done well. In fiscal year '22 the HCSO Auto Theft Unit
13 had tremendous success despite staffing deficiencies and
14 increased responsibilities.

15 The unit achieved increases in numerous grant
16 goal categories compared to fiscal year '21. Some of
17 these increases include vehicle recoveries increased 25
18 percent, the value of recoveries was 90 percent, deploying
19 LPR readers was 94 percent, responding to LPR alerts 206
20 percent, the number of LPR alert recoveries was 353
21 percent.

22 The covert ops targeting motor vehicle theft
23 was 45 percent, bait vehicle operations 38 percent,
24 arrests for motor vehicle theft 31 percent, arrests for
25 BMVs 76 percent. The total charges filed increased 11

1 percent, our social media was 133 percent, and information
2 sharing personal attendance was 738 percent. Information
3 sharing written was 285 percent, 68-A vehicle inspections
4 28 percent, VIN verifications 294 percent, and law
5 enforcement training 275 percent. That was compared to
6 fiscal year '21.

7 What tasks were done well? The task force
8 filed 308 criminal charges in fiscal year '22. The
9 proactive group which conduct the covert operations and
10 such, that group alone which is comprised of four
11 investigators, filed 148 charges, many of which were on
12 viewed. They were typically the in-progress type
13 investigations, covert operations where they were
14 conducting surveillance at a bank, conducting surveillance
15 at a high crime area for BMVs, so a lot of those were on
16 viewed.

17 Another thing they've done really well was the
18 task force regularly communicates with other agencies to
19 share information and assist with investigations. The
20 proactive group has established an excellent rapport with
21 other agencies. They frequently exchange information and
22 collaborate on operations.

23 An example of the successful collaborations is
24 a large multi-agency investigation into catalytic
25 converter theft. Several covert operations were conducted

1 along with local, state and federal law enforcement
2 agencies. A total of 14 arrests were made, \$534,694 were
3 seized and finally was recovered 455 catalytic converters,
4 2,857 O2 sensors, one stolen Dodge Hellcat, and 29
5 firearms.

6 I bring that up because that was a complete
7 total collaboration between DPS, HSI, HPD. There were
8 many local agencies in there. It was small undercover
9 operations that basically led up to the big one, so there
10 were constant operations that were being done. It was a
11 complete total collaboration, and so I mention that.

12 Another thing that was done well, and this is
13 kind of segueing into current, is we're working with AAA
14 of Texas to start a program with the catalytic converter
15 etching. They're reaching out to businesses and getting
16 them onboard to offer the catalytic converter etching free
17 to their customers. So we're cooperating on that and
18 we're starting to push that program forward. That's
19 something that just came about in the last week or two.

20 I should also mention, as I'm talking about the
21 numbers that we're putting up and the successes that we
22 had in fiscal year '22, we also only have -- we're
23 supposed to have 17 investigators. Right now we have 12,
24 eight of which do the reactive investigations, four do the
25 proactive investigations, the rolling surveillance and

1 that such. Because we are short five investigators, three
2 of which have been vacant for a year due to staffing
3 shortages.

4 I am being told right now that they have some
5 that are in patrol that are being trained, some of the new
6 ones coming into patrol, and the plan is as they get those
7 they're going to start getting them backfilled to us, so
8 I'm being told help is on the way. So all of this said,
9 all of the increases that we've had have actually been
10 with five less people.

11 What was not done well? We had a 68-A backlog,
12 which also goes back to the manpower and staffing. A lot
13 of it started with COVID when we weren't doing them, then
14 we had an inclement weather days, the death of Darren
15 Armendarez, so we are now -- we have been working on that
16 backlog.

17 So instead of doing them half days on
18 Wednesdays, as we have done forever, for a while now we've
19 been doing them full days and increased the amount of
20 appointments that we're doing by double. So that's what
21 we're still working on.

22 What we're also not doing well is the paper
23 tags and the DMV cases that we get because we are so
24 short. And we already have a backlog of about anywhere
25 between 3,500 and 4,000 cases that are sitting in our

1 backlog, so it's hard to take on more work when they refer
2 investigations to us. And like the paper tags, we don't
3 really seek out those things proactively because we're
4 already inundated with what we've got.

5 Fraud investigations is something that we have
6 done better at, but I still want to improve on that. We
7 have been working with HPD and Darren Schlosser. We had
8 an investigator already selected that was going to
9 basically do the same thing and work with HPD, but until I
10 get the position backfilled, I can't take him out of his
11 regular duties.

12 He has done a lot of work. He has done
13 tremendous work doing that, while still having to take on
14 his current responsibilities too. So once we can get his
15 position backfilled, the plan is to have him designated to
16 do that full-time; we just can't get there yet. And the
17 why is just the staffing deficiencies and then the
18 inspections backlog.

19 Task force's impact on our jurisdiction motor
20 vehicle involved crime rate. So in fiscal year '22, the
21 HCSO saw an increase of 202 stolen vehicles compared to
22 fiscal year '21. While that is an increase, it's not as
23 bad, and then when you compare that number to fiscal year
24 '20, it's only about 100 more than in 2020.

25 A little while back, actually, our numbers were

1 down. We had actually seen a decrease, and then they kind
2 of started climbing back up.

3 The unit increased bait vehicle operations and
4 covert operations. In fiscal year '22 they did 20 motor
5 vehicle theft bait vehicle ops, 100 motor vehicle theft
6 covert operations, including five buy bust operations, and
7 from that 47 auto theft UUMV type charges were filed.

8 The unit conducted several joint covert
9 operations with other law enforcement agencies, just as
10 HPD, Pearland PD, Galveston, Montgomery County SO, and
11 DPS, nearly all of which were successful. Just in the
12 past six months to a year, we have gotten a significant
13 increase in other agencies reaching out to our proactive
14 unit -- like Pearland saying, We have got this auto theft
15 crew, can y'all help us conduct surveillance, can y'all
16 help us connect this operation -- and nearly all of them
17 have been successful in that they have actually on viewed
18 the crime and it resulted in arrest.

19 What challenges do we have in addressing motor
20 vehicle theft? Like everyone who has touched on the
21 evolving technology as well. The VIN switches are really
22 good, the frauds are getting better, and there's a lot of
23 times when we don't even know how a vehicle was stolen
24 because there are things that we're still trying to figure
25 out ourselves.

1 We don't have an adequate amount of
2 investigators considering the caseloads and the amount of
3 crime that we're dealing with. And then the recidivism
4 and the prosecution, or lack thereof, we do see a lot of
5 like other people have touched on.

6 Getting charges accepted is a challenge, and
7 when you get charges accepted, when you look back on it
8 you'll find out it's been dismissed, got thrown out in PC
9 court when PC completely existed. So I think we all deal
10 with the same thing because there is definitely a huge
11 court backlog. Harris County is still under construction
12 from Hurricane Harvey when it destroyed the court
13 building, and then COVID hit.

14 I was the lieutenant over the courts when all
15 that happened, so they're still dealing with the backlog
16 of that. So even a case that's already sitting there are
17 getting just backlogged and that's our main challenge.

18 How many motor vehicle thefts occurred in your
19 grant jurisdiction? We had 5,531, we had 156 charges
20 filed, 68 of which resulted in arrest, a physical arrest.

21
22 How many motor vehicle theft cases did your
23 task force file each month? On average about 13, give or
24 take. It goes up and down.

25 Impact on BMV and fraud-related crime. In

1 fiscal year '22 the HCSO saw a decrease of 101 BMV
2 incidents compared to fiscal year '21. The unit increased
3 BMV bait vehicle and covert operations and focused hard on
4 catalytic converter theft.

5 The proactive unit that we're speaking of, we
6 had them direct a majority of their attention to the
7 catalytic converter thefts and the rings while they were
8 still doing the auto theft stuff and BMVs. So they were
9 focusing a lot of attention on the BMV crews and were
10 highly successful. So we're hoping maybe that had
11 something to do with the numbers going down, but who
12 knows.

13 The unit conducted 27 BMV bait vehicle ops,
14 five of which were successful. This is not including, a
15 lot of them are just where they're connecting surveillance
16 and actually watching the crime occur. We might not
17 necessarily have a bait vehicle out but we're connecting
18 the surveillance.

19 And we had numerous covert operations for BMVs,
20 including two successful buy bust operations, three
21 successful bait jugging operations, and six successful
22 catalytic converter theft surveillance ops. Out of that,
23 44 BMV related charges were filed.

24 With that, I would bring up in the grant goals,
25 the way it's worded with covert operations it specifically

1 states motor vehicle theft. So it doesn't say like and
2 BMV and then there's not one under the BMV category.

3 So as far as like documenting our BMV covert
4 operations, the category doesn't technically exist. So we
5 combined the bait vehicle categories to the BMV and auto
6 theft, but there was just the covert operations that
7 specifically states motor vehicle theft. So a lot of that
8 is not documented in there.

9 The unit conducted several joint law
10 enforcement operations with other law enforcement
11 agencies, such as HPD and DPS, nearly all of which were
12 successful. And the catalytic converter theft incidents
13 began to decline after the large multi-agency operation.

14 A caveat to that is we would like to think that
15 had some impact on it, which I would think it would
16 because it was so enormous and we blew it pretty good.
17 But as you'll see in one of the bulletins, our analyst had
18 sent one around -- it may have been coincidental timing,
19 but around that time the price of metal had started to
20 decline as well, so that might have had an impact on the
21 numbers going down too. But we would like to think it's
22 our hard work that we did.

23 MS. JONES: I'm sure it was.

24 MS. CHAPA: For BMVs in fiscal year '22, we had
25 7,765 which is 101 less than fiscal year '21. Charges

1 filed was 80 which is a 60 percent increase from fiscal
2 year '21, and 68 of which were arrests. That's a 13
3 percent increase. Why we're having more arrests for BMVs
4 is from our proactive unit actually on viewing and
5 witnessing and seeing these, so we're able to get more
6 arrests that are happening in progress.

7 I just included -- these are some of our recent
8 things. We put a lot of stuff on Twitter. This is just a
9 couple of days ago where our proactive came across a
10 stolen vehicle. They recovered it, got him in custody.

11 Just to give you an idea of the kind of work
12 that they do, they didn't note it in here but this was a
13 bait vehicle op where they stole our trailer and that's
14 our UTV, and arrested them. This is what I was talking
15 about with AAA where we're going to partner with them on
16 catalytic converter etching. Another deal from our
17 proactive unit where they surveilled a catalytic converter
18 thief and watched them cut the catalytic converter, and
19 then arrested two.

20 This is for a bank jugging which we've just
21 here recently been seeing a huge increase in bank jugging.
22 So are people tearing away from catalytic converters and
23 going into bank jugging? That's what we're trying to
24 analyze and figure out now, but we've actually done
25 several successful bank jugging operations recently.

1 Another catalytic converter operation. Just
2 some little nuggets of things we've done recently.

3 How effective is our program in obtaining
4 prosecutions and convictions? It's kind of already been
5 said, but the investigators do frequently express
6 frustration with getting the charges accepted and then
7 later learn it was dismissed and usually with no
8 notification, no explanation. So we're trying to contact
9 the court to find out why your charge was even dismissed
10 and hope that you can get to someone else and have them
11 let you refile it. Our unit doesn't maintain data on
12 convictions and due to time constraints and the court
13 backlog, we'd have to follow up on all of those cases so
14 we don't follow them all the way through the court system.

15 How many stolen vehicles reported did your task
16 force recover each month? Our task force recovered in
17 fiscal year '22 383, about an average of 32 a month. We
18 don't report them unless we actually do the recovery,
19 unless our investigators go to the scene and actually do
20 the recovery themselves.

21 Recoveries by other divisions within the
22 sheriff's office, there was 2,098 but we don't report
23 those unless we actually do the recovery. And then by
24 other jurisdictions, I wasn't exactly sure what the
25 question meant so I just did other jurisdictions within

1 Harris County. So other agencies within Harris County is
2 1,676. That includes the other constables agencies and
3 such that are within Harris County.

4 How we develop and share information. We rely
5 heavily on -- we call it CAID. It's our Crime Analyst
6 Intelligence Division. They're the ones who put out
7 bulletins.

8 They oftentimes will do it proactively, like
9 noticing the price of metals, or we reach out to them and
10 request them to put out a bulletin or look into this.
11 We'll give them suspect information and have them do some
12 digging or location. And so we rely heavily on them to
13 gather intelligence for us, and that information gets
14 distributed to us and then other investigators.

15 Our investigators constantly interact with
16 other agencies internally and externally, and a lot of it
17 is just informally via email, phone. Other agencies are
18 always calling asking about suspect information and such.

19 Informal meetings are frequently held to collaborate and
20 share information as needed. Bulletins, Bolos are
21 exchanged internally and externally.

22 Recently we worked on getting a space dedicated
23 to catalytic converter theft within an application called
24 SmartForce, and it's utilized by law enforcement agencies
25 to facilitate ease of exchange of information among

1 investigators and analysts. I learned that TAG had been
2 using this application and I could make the argument that
3 catalytic converter theft is directly related to violent
4 crime and gangs, so they allowed us to use this
5 application. And it's super easy to use.

6 Because we were using another one that HPD
7 found for us and it was just people weren't using it and
8 it was just kind of difficult to use and it was difficult
9 to get registered. So this is super easy and super user
10 friendly. Exchanging pictures, you can search it,
11 analysts are putting in information, so we just got that
12 going about a month or two ago.

13 And then our proactive group, as discussed
14 earlier, frequently communicates with other agencies and
15 conducts joint operations.

16 Examples of our bulletins is this one that our
17 crime analyst division came up with about the metal prices
18 decreasing, and then the number of catalytic converter
19 theft incidents have decreased along with it. This
20 bulletin was shared within the agency and on the VCC. It
21 was not shared in the MVCPA meeting yet because we just
22 got it a few days ago.

23 Another example is bank juggling suspects that
24 were identified; that is distributed interagency and on
25 the VCC. It has not been shared with MVCPA meeting yet

1 because it just occurred.

2 Here's just another example that our sergeant
3 goes through the VCC to make sure, because we tell the
4 investigators to do it all the time but they don't always.

5 So we found some good information that was on the VCC.
6 This was posted by Corpus, but they had a Channelview
7 address which is in our jurisdiction. So just an example
8 of us passing on the information to our other
9 investigators.

10 And what do you need from the MVCPA? Money,
11 funding for more investigators, as everybody, I'm sure,
12 and equipment with updated technology. Right now I'm in
13 the process of getting some quotes for different VIN
14 readers.

15 There's another one, I think it was
16 Investigator Scott from the last Corpus meeting, or
17 conference, some equipment with VIN readers and such. So
18 we're actually getting two different quotes for different
19 types of technology to help us read VINs, detect VIN
20 switches. Like one dealer was showing you could not tell
21 that there was anything altered, and then when ran through
22 this machine it was clear that the number had been
23 altered, so things like that.

24 And the Flock cameras. We have been using
25 Flock cameras a lot. That has become a huge tool for

1 everybody.

2 Our proactive unit uses it extensively and they
3 will go and set up in an area. And they have gotten a lot
4 of arrests off of that just knowing what vehicles they're
5 looking for and relying on the Flock camera. So that's
6 been a great tool for us, so getting a whole bunch of
7 those would help.

8 And that's all I have, and then my last slide,
9 and that's it.

10 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, are there any questions
11 for Lieutenant Chapa?

12 (No response.)

13 MR. GONZALEZ: LT, I've got one question. How
14 does your task force define the number of motor vehicle
15 theft cases cleared?

16 MS. CHAPA: Those are the ones that we're
17 closing, that we're clearing, that we're putting away.

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. And I say that because on
19 your progress report it reported about 2,000 cases
20 cleared. But then during your PowerPoint, I was looking
21 on there, and it says your motor vehicle clearance is 156
22 charges.

23 MS. CHAPA: That's how many charges were filed.

24 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. And I guess this goes
25 back to our larger conversation that I was having with the

1 interim director of my definition of a cleared case is the
2 FBI UCR and NIBRS definition -- was it cleared by arrest
3 or was it cleared by exceptional arrest. And so I'm just
4 wondering how we got to this 2,000 figure of cases
5 cleared, that's all.

6 MS. CHAPA: Okay.

7 MR. GONZALEZ: But again, I do think that we're
8 going to need a subcommittee on this.

9 Go ahead.

10 MS. JONES: In reference to the subcommittee,
11 in Lieutenant's presentation, something to note for that
12 subcommittee, in her presentation she has recoveries by
13 the task force, recoveries by other divisions, and then
14 recoveries by others -- which whatever other means are.
15 But it still had a total.

16 It still had the big picture. Even though it
17 was the touched/untouched, it still had a big picture, so
18 I did like that. That's something to consider for whoever
19 is on the committee.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: And then I also wanted to say I
21 love y'all's social media program. I follow you guys on
22 social media and I see those posts frequently.

23 And I know that the types of operations that
24 you're doing are, one, very manpower intensive and very
25 time intensive, so it's not just you need a lot of folks

1 doing a lot of surveillance but you need to be sitting
2 them out there for quite some time. So kudos to the
3 proactive operations that you guys are doing.

4 MS. CHAPA: Thank you very much.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Thank you, ma'am.
6 And up next we'll have Burnet County.

7 MR. STINEHOUR: Good morning. For the record,
8 my name is Howard Stinehour, commander of the Heart of
9 Texas Auto Theft Task Force.

10 Just to kind of start out, geographically the
11 area that we cover is just tremendous. The mileage on our
12 vehicles is out beyond. We cover the Waco area which is
13 I-35, which we no longer have an investigator up there
14 which is really a struggle for us. We have to commute
15 from Burnet to Waco on Wednesdays; we isolated Wednesdays
16 for our days to go up there.

17 I've got two investigators that work for me.
18 One in Coryell County, which is north of Fort Hood,
19 Killeen area. And then my investigator with me in Burnet,
20 we work together.

21 We all work the streets. I'm not the office
22 guy. We're shorthanded, so I'm out there doing the same
23 thing altogether as a joint unit here.

24 Some of the things that we work on, the biggest
25 thing that we've picked up that takes most of our time are

1 these LPR reads, the commercial data reads from Vigilant
2 that we've got a contract with. We'll get on our phones
3 all night long these hits.

4 We immediately, as soon as we start our day
5 when we're on duty we recover those vehicles. And 99
6 percent of those are abandoned, LPR reads from a tow
7 truck, a commercial business that goes out and reads them
8 during the night for repos and it doesn't tell them
9 they're stolen, it tells us. So we'll go and follow up on
10 each of those and we get the recovery off of that.

11 The majority of those are unoccupied so we
12 don't get an arrest so that hurts our stats. But I feel
13 like we still need to serve the community and the
14 insurance companies to get these things off the street.

15 We do a ton of 68-As. I talked to Mr. Canady,
16 I think we're second in the state. For three guys, that's
17 a pretty substantial amount.

18 I'm going to throw in there real quick, I'd
19 like to be part of one of these committees. Hopefully we
20 can get on something because the miscommunication or the
21 communication with 68-As, it's not the same across the
22 board. If you go to Houston, they do it a certain way.
23 You have to be the owner of the vehicle, it can't be towed
24 in, it has to be this, it has to be that. If you go to
25 Dallas you have to do this or you have an appointment.

1 And we're hearing it from the citizens and the
2 DMV, hey, go to the middle of Texas, they'll do them,
3 there's no wait. So we have increased from \$2,000 a month
4 to \$16,000 a month just on 68-As, which adds up at \$40 per
5 vehicle. We have lines of them at the Baylor Stadium that
6 we've had to allocate.

7 We had to move from the regional office, which
8 we work well with the regional office, because the
9 manager, Sarah, there at the DMV regional actually comes
10 out and participates in the 68-A process. So we know what
11 they need and they know what we want to do this. With
12 those 68-As, weekly we're recovering stolen vehicles,
13 three this Wednesday alone.

14 It's just these VIN swaps -- and someone said
15 it earlier -- Houston, 90 percent plus of our vehicles are
16 coming out of Houston, high-end vehicles, Super Duty,
17 Denali. The victims -- we have two victims. You have the
18 victim of the theft of the vehicle, then you have the
19 victim who went on social media and bought this vehicle
20 for \$40-, \$50-, \$60,000 cash in a remote parking lot. And
21 I'm too compassionate and I feel for them, so my guys, we
22 investigate it.

23 So that vehicle comes up in the line. We take
24 that vehicle, we pull it aside, we do the VIN information,
25 get all that information off of it. We take statements

1 from that person, so now we're doing all this work for
2 another agency which doesn't have the time to pick up that
3 crime and follow up on it.

4 So we hurry up and get video from where the
5 transaction occurred, whether it's in Dallas, Houston,
6 wherever it is, because they're selling them all over but
7 they're bringing them to Waco to get checked. We get all
8 that information for those agencies, the values, all that
9 good stuff.

10 They're all title frauds. They bring fake
11 titles to the DMV, the DMV tells them to come to us on
12 Wednesday, and it's just a sad situation because the
13 majority of them are Hispanic, the majority of these sites
14 are cash only in a remote parking lot. And it's a messed
15 up situation, just to say the least of it.

16 I like that we can help them out. We've
17 partnered with Austin PD and Department of Public Safety.

18 We have one agent with DPS who is now -- after pushing
19 really hard to get a Hispanic officer to help us because
20 all these are Hispanic, so we have an officer at Austin PD
21 who is not part of our task force and is not part of the
22 Austin task force, he's just an investigator there that
23 can speak Spanish. So we said, hey, can you help us.

24 So what we do is we'll have him go on Facebook,
25 he buys the vehicle, he goes to look for it, DPS will go

1 with us, and most of these are in Austin. We'll go down,
2 we'll get enough units, Austin PD units, whoever we need
3 to be on the outskirts. We'll let the Hispanic officer
4 make the contact, and they're able to make the arrest on
5 the person.

6 So it's a good collaboration that we've got
7 going. It's starting to work, but I'm trying to get
8 somebody on a task force in the Austin area in SCATTF's
9 part, but of course, everybody is busy so it's kind of
10 hard to get everybody on the same page.

11 But I'm proud of that thing that we've got
12 because it's a redundant issue that we're not fixing
13 because all we're doing is recovering a stolen vehicle,
14 calling a tow truck, and we're working for an insurance
15 company, and we're claiming a vehicle. And the insurance
16 company, thank you, we got our car back, and the case just
17 falls away.

18 Darren is our lifesaver with the Houston area
19 because he's able to do facial recognition, which leads
20 into another topic. All of our cases, we'll grab any
21 video, we get still pictures, we send that to Houston or
22 to DPS Fusion to say can you identify this person.

23 Which leads me into databases and task forces,
24 MVCPA as a group having access to different databases and
25 different procedures and different ways to do things. I'd

1 like to ask if there's a way to get a single database to
2 where -- like DEA task forces, they all have one records
3 reporting database. I don't care if you work for Austin
4 PD or Dallas PD, you all go in the same database, you put
5 your information in there, all your suspects are there,
6 everybody can see the same suspects.

7 I have to call Houston and say, Can you run
8 this picture? Oh, yes, we have it. Can you give me that
9 case information? Now we've got them identified, now we
10 can link them to all these stolen vehicles coming out of
11 all over Texas coming down for our 68-A, which we can make
12 a ton of cases on.

13 Each task force has different procedures of
14 operating, and I don't like it because I'll call one place
15 and they'll say, well, this is the way we do it. And I
16 say, okay, but is anybody doing this and this to try and
17 solve this. Well, this is all we have because it costs
18 too much to get access to run this.

19 The VCC is a tremendous help now. It's changed
20 to where we're communicating a lot better. We're able to
21 see some of those things and we'll post something that
22 would assist out of just our coverage area.

23 So we try not to put stuff on there that's just
24 occurring in Burnet, Texas, or wherever. We try to put
25 something on there that's good. So I like the way that

1 works.

2 I'd like to go on a committee for any of those
3 topics discussed today because I think those committees
4 should involve the street officer that's actually working
5 those cases and coming across those issues, that we need
6 to try to collaborate and build as one group instead of
7 each agency doing their own thing.

8 Moving on, we do annual TCOLE training for the
9 Texas Parks and Wildlife. Every time they have a police
10 academy they ask us to come up there and teach them,
11 because they do boats and trailers. So we do these
12 trailers, and as Gina knows with Galveston, trailers are a
13 big thing because of the partial VINs.

14 So the Parks and Wildlife they pull us and they
15 beg us to come teach their new recruits how to identify
16 all these trailers, because trailers go in the water,
17 those stickers come off. If they're not stamped, hey, can
18 you identify it because now the DMV says identify it
19 before we can give it a title, because all these trailers
20 are titled. They weren't in the past, so it causes a
21 backlog on that.

22 Moving on from there, things that I think we've
23 done really good. Stolen vehicles, the numbers, the 105
24 and the 144 do not match what DPS reports. And I've been
25 fighting this fight since day one because -- and I've made

1 a complaint, I've had meetings with TCIC control in
2 Austin, the NCIC manual that you go to procedures for a
3 dispatcher to confirm a stolen vehicle.

4 We take a vehicle, my officer has got his hands
5 on it, he sends for confirmation, but he works for Coryell
6 County Sheriff's Office. That vehicle is confirmed to
7 Dallas PD. Dallas PD sends the confirmation back, but
8 they click a little button or put a checkmark for LV,
9 located vehicle.

10 So now when you go look at the DPS report,
11 Dallas had the stolen vehicle. Dallas got the recovery.
12 Well, Dallas didn't have hands on that vehicle. We got
13 that stolen vehicle, so it hurts our stats.

14 And I've tried to get TCIC to change it because
15 I was able to get my dispatcher to change it, but that
16 kicked them in the butt and they got reversed. So the
17 meeting with TCIC control was can you change the
18 procedure, change it from locate vehicle so I've got a
19 vehicle and my patrol officer is out on it or whoever is
20 on it, you click the locate, the dispatcher does, and then
21 you send the confirmation.

22 Well, TCIC says the manual is written send for
23 confirmation, once you get the confirmation then you can
24 send the locate. Well, it's causing these other bigger
25 agencies to say confirmation locate, when we can click on

1 locate real quick and then they don't have the option to
2 do it because we've already taken it.

3 So I'm trying to get that changed. They said
4 they were going to have a meeting but it had to be like a
5 board type meeting with Austin to get that corrected, so
6 hopefully we can get that corrected in the future. That
7 skews our numbers big time because these bigger agencies
8 hurt my numbers a lot.

9 The 68-As, we talked about that.

10 Community awareness, some of the things that we
11 need improvement on. Of course, everybody knows COVID
12 hurt. We really didn't get any out during the COVID time.

13 We were basically told from our higher-ups,
14 hey, people aren't even coming to work, they were working
15 from their homes, so that hurt us a lot. We do do the
16 National Night Out. We'll put banners on tables, we put
17 some of the MVCPA items out and a lot of kids get that,
18 and you're telling the parents to lock and hide when the
19 holiday seasons are coming so we do that a lot.

20 We have like festivals. Like the Bluebonnet
21 Festival, we'll send an officer down to kind of speak on
22 that.

23 We did get some social media sites. I'll
24 reference one called the Hill Country Scanner. It's a
25 Facebook website, it's kind of a news media thing.

1 They do lock and hide, and it's 9:00 p.m.
2 routine, lock your car, hide your belongings, so it just
3 puts it out all the time, every night. If you're on
4 Facebook, like everybody scrolls Facebook when they get
5 home, it just lets the public know and kind of get the
6 word out there: quit leaving your keys in your car and
7 lock your car. So it's little blips, little cartoon blips
8 they'll put on there, that helps us out a lot.

9 Criminal indictments, everybody has already
10 said it, I'm not going to harp on that too much. We know
11 our biggest problem is when we get an unauthorized use, we
12 get an LPR read, we'll make a traffic stop on that, we'll
13 put the person in jail, we'll file the charge for
14 unauthorized use, theft of a vehicle, whatever. A lot of
15 our DAs, our DA for sure, likes to say, The offense
16 occurred in Abilene, that's where the car was stolen.
17 We're not taking the case, call Abilene, give it to them.

18
19 Abilene says, We can't put him in the car in
20 Abilene, we can put him in it in Burnet County, you file
21 the charge. It won't happen. A lot of those fall off to
22 the wayside. We got a person, we did put him in jail, but
23 the charges are dropped and they're released, so it hurts.

24 We don't get a lot of LPR active driving down
25 the road hits. If we had Flock or something like that,

1 that would work a lot better, but we don't. Our hits are
2 mainly coming from the commercial data, which we have to
3 pay for, which goes back to if we can create some kind of
4 a system instead of each task force asking MVCPA can I buy
5 this, can I subscribe to this.

6 My opinion is I wish we could be across the
7 board with all the task forces and say MVCPA offers
8 Vigilant, MVCPA offers TLO, these information research
9 databases. MVCPA offers a database -- and Mr. Canady
10 mentioned we talked earlier in the week about this
11 database to where everybody can input their suspects.
12 Maybe the VCC can create a tab off of that to where
13 everybody can dump their information and then we can see
14 it instead of calling each agency; it's time consuming to
15 do that.

16 Back to this. Business inspections, those were
17 down because of COVID. We do them, we do them with
18 success to a point. We find the problems with them, but
19 the difficulty we get into are recovering catalytic
20 converters that are laying in a pile over there. Nobody
21 can get charged with it.

22 I like the business inspections. Every so
23 often you'll get a stolen. We do get one out of a pile of
24 cars, but the time to actually go into a recycling -- a
25 fake recycling place because 90 percent of them are not

1 even real, somebody just started one in a yard somewhere
2 and they pay Midlothian to scrap their cars and crush them
3 and they don't report that to the state.

4 But to ask the state to file on these people
5 for not having the license to run these salvage yards,
6 that just falls on deaf ears, too. So it hurts.

7 Back to resources needed, we've got that. We
8 are short. I had a Limestone County investigator that
9 worked for us, he's moved on to another agency.

10 We need Limestone County or I would prefer
11 McLennan County. McLennan County has been on board. It's
12 the Waco area; they keep asking please put an
13 investigator, we have one available, we'll put him on
14 there.

15 The funding is not there. Every time I ask, we
16 can't get enough funding to put them at that pay scale.
17 So it hurts because if Coryell County is making \$38,000 a
18 year and McLennan County is making \$70,000 a year, we're
19 the grant-holder and it's kind of like saying, okay, can
20 you get funding to offset the contribution from each
21 county because it's going to be different from each county
22 because their fringe benefits are different.

23 So it hurts getting them on. But I'm asking to
24 see if in the future if any funding comes up to get the
25 Waco area covered for us, because it does hurt us a lot.

1 Back to we talked about the RMS database,
2 trying to get something where everybody has a central --
3 every agency that I've work, if you're multi-jurisdiction,
4 one uses Tyler group, one uses Odyssey, they all have
5 different databases. They don't interact with each other,
6 so getting that data is actually -- print your report,
7 email it to me, I'll try to put it in the system, and that
8 kind of tries to go into the progress report in some kind
9 of fashion that makes sense to everything.

10 But it skews all the numbers because there's so
11 many different RMS systems and there's not one database
12 that does this and it just kind of throws all the numbers
13 off and it doesn't look good on us.

14 '21 you can see 1,200 stolen vehicles in our
15 grant coverage area, which is mostly Waco, McLennan County
16 area. Burnet County has stolen vehicles, Coryell County
17 has stolen vehicles, your have the Fort Hood area so
18 that's a lot of people up there, there's a lot of stolen
19 vehicles.

20 Bell County is covered by SCATTF but the City
21 of Killeen has called on us to help them with cases, large
22 cases, which is not in our coverage area. So we don't
23 have an MOU with them so it hurts us to try to help them.

24 We don't want to step in anyone else's territory, so we
25 kind of try to stay away from it. But we do help out when

1 we can because we have an investigator that comes through
2 Killeen/Copperas Cove up there all the time.

3 Unauthorized use clearance rate, 51 cases
4 cleared in the jurisdiction, 40 cases submitted to
5 prosecution. Of course, nine convictions, I don't like
6 it, it's hard to deal with. But we have a huge case -- I
7 might have brought it up in one of the meetings before --
8 the case of Salado, Texas, we're up to 132 vehicles
9 stolen.

10 All of them are stolen from the Houston area.
11 They steal them from Houston, this guy buys a vehicle from
12 CoPart, takes that salvage vehicle, takes it to his shop,
13 takes the stolen vehicle, takes the VIN off the CoPart
14 salvage, puts it on there. These people are registering
15 vehicles all over Texas, even out of state, and we have to
16 go to all of those sites to try to verify the hidden VIN
17 numbers to recover those vehicles.

18 And that's a really sad case because we have so
19 much evidence, so much proof. We have confessions, video
20 confessions, and the DA's office is like: Can you tell me
21 that he put that mylar on that B pillar, that guy that
22 owns that business? Well, he says he's buying them from
23 New York, that's illegal.

24 So we've got the U.S. Attorney's Office in Waco
25 trying to help us to follow up with the New York issue,

1 just all the things that are going on. It's just a big
2 case that the DA's office won't take because they can't
3 say that this person or this business did it -- which we
4 can because we've got pictures of him doing it. We've got
5 him talking about it, but anyway, another one that we just
6 can't go with.

7 Unauthorized use cases filed, you see those.
8 It doesn't look good there, but our recovery rate is just
9 huge compared to people actually going to jail and getting
10 convicted in these things. I don't know, it's another
11 committee. I guess you could say it's a subcommittee we
12 could try to figure out.

13 The majority of our stolen vehicles that are
14 recovered are related to social media VIN swaps. We
15 talked about that. The majority of them are fraudulent
16 washed titles.

17 They'll get a title off of an old Mazda
18 somewhere and they'll use that title. They'll put their
19 new VIN number on there and they'll put the fake VIN
20 number, these guys will bring them to us, the DMV will
21 call us and say, hey, we had one bring in the title in,
22 can they come to you and get it done.

23 I've had some discussions on our monthly
24 meetings to try to get the TAC offices to work with MVCPA
25 or who all does 68-As to get us notified the moment that

1 person is in there with that washed title and the clerk
2 sees it's a washed title, it's not good, to call law
3 enforcement and say, Can you have an officer come out?
4 Bigger agencies, I understand it's a problem. I have a
5 good rapport with Waco, she covers all the counties in our
6 area so they call me immediately. They'll send me a
7 scanned copy of the title.

8 We're trying to get all the TAC offices to just
9 call us direct instead of calling Waco and then Waco says
10 send it to Austin. Well, it sits in Austin for three
11 weeks, and then Austin will say, hey, go get a 68-A or can
12 you go put eyes on the vehicle, do a VIN verification,
13 which we lose evidence, we lose video. Because I bought
14 it in August, by the time I got to you it's October and
15 there's no video anymore.

16 So I'm trying to push to get all the TAC
17 offices around to notify somebody immediately to go locate
18 that vehicle, gather their ID, just scan their ID card or
19 take a copy of it or something, a phone number. And then
20 don't tell them it's stolen, just say we've got to do some
21 more procedure work, and call us and we can get them.

22 Big pet peeve of mine, I think it's working,
23 it's starting to come together, we're just talking about
24 it and getting the word out there at our last conference
25 in Corpus Christi. I kind of brought it up a bunch to the

1 guys out there, and people are like opening some eyes
2 going this is a good idea.

3 Obtaining prosecutions, we talked about that.
4 That's that twisted metal case in Salado which is a big,
5 big problem for my guys that we did so much work on and
6 we're just like stuck.

7 Intelligence information. Fort Hood is a big
8 contributor of information because there's such a vast --
9 people are coming in and out of the area, coming through
10 there. They have a ton of stolen vehicles on Fort Hood
11 that are in the barracks parking lots. When soldiers come
12 in, those vehicles are left in those parking lots and
13 nobody goes and cleans those parking lots.

14 So finally we got them to allow a private
15 company to drive through Fort Hood through those lots and
16 scan them with the LPR reader, which tells us, hey, we've
17 got a stolen. So I've got a guy that works for Coryell
18 County who goes on to Fort Hood and he's got a good
19 contact. He used to be a soldier so he's got all that
20 taken care of. So that's a good thing.

21 I'm trying to convince Fort Hood to buy LPR or
22 Flock to put at the main gate entrances. One example was
23 we ran a plate on our truck that we got on the Strike
24 Force Grant. We had a plate that we ran and it came back
25 to terrorists.

1 Well, it happened to be on Fort Hood when the
2 hit hit, because it says terrorist gang activity, and of
3 course, that sets off all kind of sirens. He stops
4 immediately, he calls Fort Hood and says, Hey, I've got
5 the vehicle. I need y'all involved, we're on post, what
6 do we do?

7 Well, that upset the cart because what do you
8 mean it's a terrorist. How do you know? Well, Vigilant
9 is just saying -- we're just trying to do the right thing.

10 We've had meetings now. We've coordinated and
11 now we've got that under control. They understand the
12 difference of terrorist and gang activity.

13 So I'm trying to get Vigilant to fix that
14 problem because if I'm a gang member of some Crips or
15 something, I'm not necessarily a terrorist on Fort Hood,
16 Texas, which shuts down the whole post. It locked it
17 down. So we're trying to fix that problem. We're working
18 on that one.

19 We do attend meetings with McLennan County, the
20 entirety of McLennan County. So we do attend a bunch of
21 meetings. We're starting up a new one with Harker
22 Heights, Texas, a local agency and that covers into Bell
23 County and the SCATTF area, but we do share a lot of
24 information that way.

25 That's one of our social media things where we

1 caught an LPR read. Our investigator rolled in with a
2 truck with LPRs on it, scanned the plate. It came back
3 stolen, they were in the process at a hotel, meth, cutting
4 the catalytic converter when we rolled in.

5 Any questions?

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Any questions from the members
7 of the committee?

8 MS. JONES: Yes, sir. Member Jones.

9 When I was assigned to the Austin District for
10 DPS, we got regular calls from DMV with actual -- the cars
11 are there, the subjects are there. Unfortunately, there
12 was also a victim. It was rarely ever the truth.

13 And so it's horrible that you go in the back of
14 an alley or a parking lot, business parking lot and buy a
15 \$90,000 vehicle and you pay your last \$15,000 that you
16 scraped together. And at the end of it, you're not going
17 to get your money back and you're not getting a car. So
18 yes, that's definitely a concern.

19 Years ago we sent something out to the media.
20 Maybe something that we can attack as a whole, DMV, is
21 have some kind of awareness to don't buy a car on
22 Facebook, don't buy a car on Craigslist, maybe just kind
23 of educating, definitely put it in Spanish language. So
24 maybe that's something we can tackle as a whole for all of
25 the task forces. Just a thought.

1 And as far as the 68-A inspections, I do think,
2 again, it goes back to having committees to provide us
3 some guidelines. Because I get calls from citizens who
4 are upset because they've gone to different task forces
5 and they're given different information and so they go
6 into like a highway patrol office.

7 And by the time it trickles down to me, the
8 person is upset. And I'm texting Joe, like, Joe, here's
9 what's going on. So yeah, I do think we need to have some
10 guidelines to help assist our cities.

11 MR. STINEHOUR: We're doing 68-As -- and I'm
12 not wanting to throw anybody under the bus because of
13 COVID and personnel shortages -- we do 68-As from Denton,
14 Dallas, Fort Worth, Richardson, Frisco, all the way over
15 to Smith County, all the down to Montgomery County,
16 Houston, San Antonio -- the regional office sends them
17 north -- all the way through West Texas, all the way to
18 Brownsville.

19 I go to Goldthwaite because Abilene is so
20 backed up. Everybody is backed up and everybody just
21 says -- all the DMVs have now got this, the regional
22 offices -- just go to the middle of Texas, come to Waco,
23 they'll do them and get them done.

24 And I hate to say it, I feel for the people, so
25 I do them. And all the other task forces, wait a minute,

1 why are you doing this, just make appointments because
2 there's no way you can keep this going, this madness. I
3 said, I understand that and it's not about the money I
4 get, \$40 for a vehicle; it's if my family member needs to
5 register a vehicle I bought, hey, come back in February
6 and register your vehicle.

7 What do you mean? That's not the way this
8 works. I'm required to title my car and you're telling me
9 I can't title it. Well, that's when the DMV offices go:
10 Can you please, if there's anything we can fix this
11 madness with.

12 Back in the day, we all know, most peace
13 officers were able to do a lot of these VIN verifications.
14 DPS used to do them. So now it's gone to mainly task
15 forces.

16 Well, the word to us is, hey, 68-As are not
17 your priority. I'm an advocate of yes, they are, because
18 we get stolens every time. I mean, every week we get
19 stolens off 68-As.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: So I'll say one thing that at
21 least was beneficial with Dallas. If you collaborate with
22 another task force, that adds quite a bit of investigators
23 and you can have like a big event. And so if we can have
24 some collaboration there, that's more hands on deck and it
25 makes it more efficient when you have the numbers. So

1 that might be an idea.

2 MR. STINEHOUR: I think the hardest part is
3 Dallas does it one way, Houston does it one way, and a car
4 lot can't bring it in, it has to be the owner of the car.

5 We are just, hey, I don't care who's bringing the car,
6 you can be the thief, I'm going to do what I need to do to
7 identify that vehicle and get it done. But other places
8 you can't bring it in on a tow truck.

9 Well, they all call me. We can't even get it
10 to them because we're not allowed because we have to have
11 a state inspection to get the 68-A. Well, you can't have
12 a state inspection if you're trying to build a car and
13 make it to where it's serviceable.

14 So we take them all as long as it's a whole
15 car, which DMV requires and we meet that standard. And
16 then we get them done.

17 MR. GONZALEZ: The other thing that I just
18 wanted to also add was I understand your difficulty with
19 having to explain a VIN swap crime ring to a district
20 attorney's office, like I completely understand. What I
21 found useful was sending over Texas case law to the
22 district attorney's office of successful prosecutions
23 regarding the exact crime that we're talking about, you
24 know, where they are VIN swapping and then selling stolen
25 vehicles. It was like all of a sudden, you know, once

1 it's in case law format, they understand.

2 MR. STINEHOUR: What about under the assumption
3 of MVCPA has an ADA that works for a specific grantee, is
4 there any thought of maybe having an attorney who is
5 specialized in auto theft, auto fraud that is a call or a
6 go-to statewide for all the task forces, and then builds
7 up those references -- how to refer you to say I've got a
8 case in Ellis County and I need help but Ellis County
9 doesn't know how to prosecute it or they don't want to or
10 whatever that may be.

11 And that ADA, or whoever we call on that works
12 for all of MVCPA and say, okay, here's your contact. Let
13 me reach out. Let me get it screened.

14 Even as much as screening a case for you
15 saying, here, this is what you've got. Maybe get some
16 more of this. So it's a go-to as a prosecutor or an
17 attorney for all the task forces so we can all learn
18 together and come up with an idea that will get these to
19 the courts.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: I think that idea has been
21 tossed around and I think there might be some background
22 on that.

23 MR. STINEHOUR: To be able to cover the State
24 of Texas, all the counties.

25 MR. CANADY: For the record, Joe Canady, MVCPA.

1 This may be something that we could approach
2 with the Texas County and District Attorneys Association,
3 maybe get on their radar, have the Tarrant County or the
4 Houston PD prosecutors make presentations during their
5 conferences to increase awareness and get more information
6 out there to help these task forces and their prosecutors.

7 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

8 And now we will have our last presentation,
9 Travis County.

10 Actually, let's go ahead and break for recess.

11 It is 11:40. We'll have a ten-minute break and reconvene
12 at 11:50.

13 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

14 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. It is now 11:48 a.m.
15 and we will reconvene. We have Travis County up.

16 MR. TARRANT: Good morning. For the record,
17 Sergeant Neil Tarrant with the Travis County Sheriff's
18 Office, and I'm the task force commander with the
19 Sheriff's Combined Auto Theft Task Force.

20 Just to describe to everyone, we're a rather
21 unique task force. This is our coverage area. We do not
22 office together as a task force, unfortunately. All of
23 the agents, other than one, all will carry a caseload with
24 their respective agencies.

25 Besides myself I have eight agents and one

1 public awareness coordinator. Our northernmost
2 participating county is Bell, have an agent there. And my
3 furthest southeast county is Jackson County and there's an
4 agent there as well.

5 There's also agents in Travis, Hays, Comal and
6 Guadalupe counties. Sheriff's Combined Auto Theft Task
7 Force, that's a mouthful. You heard me say SCATTF for
8 short.

9 What tasks did the task force do well for
10 fiscal year '22? SCATTF agents -- and I listed the task
11 categories -- SCATTF agents were responsible for the
12 recovery of 228 vehicles, valued at \$4,320,161, 34
13 component parts valued at \$42,760, 49 pieces of equipment
14 valued at \$799,699. SCATTF agents were also responsible
15 for the arrests of 24 persons that were arrested for motor
16 vehicle theft, five persons arrested for fraud related to
17 motor vehicle crimes. Total number of all types of cases
18 presented to the prosecutor in fiscal year '22 was 66.

19 SCATTF performed well providing agency assists
20 for motor vehicle theft and motor vehicle related fraud.
21 SCATTF committed to the goal of 600 for fiscal year '22
22 and we performed 1,0987. And this is an increase of 83
23 percent from fiscal year '21. It was the highest number
24 of agency assists that SCATTF has completed since prior to
25 2018.

1 SCATTF also performed well conducting
2 confidential 68-A inspections. SCATTF committed to the
3 goal of 1,500, performed 1,846 in fiscal year '22. This
4 is an increase of 8 percent from fiscal year '21; it's the
5 highest number since fiscal year 2019.

6 SCATTF suffered from multiple month backlog of
7 68-A inspections due to the suspension during COVID.
8 SCATTF agents were able to erase the backlog of
9 inspections in fiscal year '22.

10 All right. Which tasks did the task force not
11 do well? The categories are listed.

12 SCATTF did not perform well identifying and
13 documenting prolific motor vehicle theft offenders.
14 SCATTF committed to the goal of 45 and only identified 14
15 for fiscal year '22. This is a decrease of 36 percent
16 from fiscal year '21. This is the lowest number of
17 identified prolific offenders since prior to 2018.

18 SCATTF also did not perform well deploying bait
19 vehicles to target motor vehicle theft offenders. SCATTF
20 committed to deploying bait vehicles 75 times and only
21 deployed bait vehicles 19 times. This is a decrease of 60
22 percent over fiscal year '21; it was the lowest number of
23 bait vehicle deployments since prior to 2018.

24 Last category is SCATTF did not perform well
25 conducting educational outreach events. SCATTF committed

1 to conducting 20 educational outreach events and only nine
2 were conducted. This is a decrease of 50 percent from
3 fiscal year '21 and it's the lowest number of events since
4 2019.

5 What resources were needed or what reasons kept
6 you from fully meeting the grant functions?

7 All right. So SCATTF agents saw a substantial
8 increase of motor vehicles crimes in the major
9 metropolitan areas of the task force jurisdiction. This
10 forced agents to become more reactive, less proactive.

11 Travis County Sheriff's Office is SCATTF's
12 grantee agency, the SCATTF agency with the most task
13 force personnel, also the agency with the highest
14 workload. Task force personnel in Travis County were
15 assigned a total of 1,341 cases during fiscal year '22;
16 this is an increase of 36 percent over fiscal year '21.
17 Sub-grantee agencies also saw an increase of caseloads.

18 Reacting to the increased number of cases being
19 investigated by the task force left little time for
20 proactive policing. This caused a decrease in
21 proactivity-related tasks being performed by the agents
22 that were being committed by SCATTF. To compensate for
23 the increase, our public awareness coordinator, she was
24 tasked with assisting with the recovery reports and no-
25 lead cases.

1 Light duty personnel and detectives from other
2 divisions have also been used to supplement the task force
3 agents to assist with these investigations. I also took
4 on a caseload during fiscal year '22, investigated 98
5 cases. At one point during fiscal year '22, one of the
6 task force agents that was assigned to Travis County had
7 just shy of 100 open cases.

8 SCATTF's bait vehicle was inoperable for nearly
9 all of fiscal year '22. Multiple offenders damaged the
10 vehicle, causing it to be out of service for several
11 months. The modem for the bait vehicle also became
12 obsolete after December 31 of 2021, rendering the vehicle
13 unusable for bait operations. Luckily, the replacement
14 modem was received last month, so we should be up and
15 running soon.

16 Let's see, our public awareness coordinator,
17 her position had several obstacles in fiscal year '22.
18 The public awareness coordinator was tasked with working
19 no-leads cases which took a substantial amount of time
20 away from her normal duties. The public awareness
21 coordinator was unable to complete her normal duties for
22 two months during fiscal year '22 due to an injury.

23 There were staffing issues for fiscal year '22
24 for the grantee, many sub-grantees and coverage areas with
25 the number of vacancies in the hundreds. Sworn personnel

1 were reassigned to patrol for shortages, and this led to
2 shortfall for staffing for support units that would have
3 normally been necessary for the public awareness
4 coordinator to perform many of her community outreach
5 events.

6 Talk about your task force impact on your
7 jurisdiction's UUV crime rate, and what have you done,
8 doing and planning to move forward?

9 SCATTF agents have become nearly 100 percent
10 reactive for the past two years due to high caseload.
11 This provides little impact for motor vehicle crime rates.

12 A major focus has been the use of technology to impact
13 the incidence of motor vehicle crime and the continued use
14 of stolen vehicles by suspects.

15 There's been an emphasis on the use of licence
16 plate reader systems to combat motor vehicle crime at the
17 patrol and investigative level and to provide LPR access
18 to multiple law enforcement agencies. The continued use
19 of Vigilant and the recent increase of Flock camera use
20 has made a direct impact on the recovery of stolen
21 vehicles and apprehension of vehicle theft offenders.

22 There's been a increased reliance on patrol to
23 recover these vehicles and make these arrests, which
24 they've done successfully. Unfortunately, the downside of
25 that is the successful use of technology has increased the

1 number of cases requiring investigation by SCATTF agents.

2 Continued use of non-traditional personnel to
3 supplement case investigations has provided a relief to
4 the SCATTF agents. Use of a functioning bait vehicle,
5 tracking devices and pole camera, along with a shift
6 toward proactivity should have an immediate impact on the
7 motor vehicle crime rate.

8 What challenges do you have in addressing UUV?

9 Prosecutors of several sub-grantee agencies
10 will not prosecute unauthorized use of a vehicle case if
11 the case involves a vehicle that is reported stolen to
12 another agency that is outside of their county. Vehicles
13 are increasingly stolen with keys. During the recovery of
14 these stolen vehicles involving keys, the suspect must
15 admit that they knew the vehicle was stolen for
16 prosecutors to accept the case.

17 The trend has been for defendants arrested for
18 motor vehicle crime theft or unauthorized use of a
19 vehicle, they rarely remain in jail. They're often
20 afforded release on personal recognizance within hours of
21 arrest. There are minimal repercussions, whether it be
22 time spent in jail or money paid for bond for motor
23 vehicle theft offenders. They're separated from society
24 for a short time so there's minimal interruption for
25 offenders so that they continue committing their motor

1 vehicle crimes.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: I want to pause right there. So
3 regarding confession when a vehicle is stolen with keys, I
4 get it. Totally have had that exact same conversation.
5 But again, there is case law that describes what is
6 necessary when a vehicle is stolen with keys, and there
7 are other factors that can be used when a suspect has the
8 keys and he's saying, you know, this is my cousin's car.

9 But like a broken window, damaged steering
10 column, all of these are factors and specifically listed
11 out in that case law to prove the evidence of theft. And
12 so again, that may be a conversation that you have with
13 your prosecutor that outlines this very specific issue.

14 Because I have had the same conversation with
15 my investigators that say, oh, well, the DA is not going
16 to take it because of this. When you have that
17 conversation -- this is the case law, this is how
18 established precedent is, it makes things a whole lot
19 easier. So if you like, I can forward that to you.

20 MR. TARRANT: That would be great. And if I
21 didn't mention before, I'm in Travis County with our DA.
22 It's not as easy.

23 MR. GONZALEZ: Understood, got it.

24 (General laughter.)

25 MR. TARRANT: But I'll take whatever you have.

1 Actually, MO is always welcome.

2 How many UUVs have occurred in your grant
3 jurisdiction?

4 So Travis County Sheriff's Office is our
5 grantee. They showed 744 reports of motor vehicle theft
6 and that also includes boat and heavy equipment and
7 unauthorized use of a vehicle. This is during fiscal year
8 '22. Sub-grantee agencies reported 374 for fiscal year
9 '22, bringing a total for all the grant areas to 1,118.

10 Talk about your task force clearance rate.
11 SCATTF agents cleared 302 cases for fiscal year '22, with
12 a clearance rate of 27. And how many cases do you file
13 each month? In fiscal year '22, agents referred 52 cases
14 which averages 4.3 cases per month.

15 Talk about your task force's impact on the
16 jurisdiction's BMV and fraud-related motor vehicle. So
17 SCATTF agents arrested five persons in fiscal year '22 for
18 fraud-related motor vehicle crimes. SCATTF agents don't
19 typically work BMV cases.

20 In fiscal year '21 we had an agent that was in
21 Wharton County. That was one of his duties, but he is no
22 longer with the task force and Wharton County is no longer
23 within our task force.

24 How effective do you think your grant program
25 is in obtaining prosecutions and convictions?

1 I believe SCATTF agents complete thorough
2 investigations, I believe that they present prosecution
3 packets that consistently provide facts that establish
4 proof beyond a reasonable doubt. Prosecutors often use
5 justification such as prosecutorial discretion to dismiss
6 cases that are presented.

7 Prosecutors also dismiss charges of motor
8 vehicle crimes to seek convictions on other crimes the
9 prosecutors consider to be more violent crimes since motor
10 vehicle crime offenders are often responsible for these
11 additional crimes. In addition, SCATTF do not monitor
12 cases; we don't monitor case resolution once it's referred
13 to the prosecutor.

14 How many stolen vehicles reported do your task
15 force officers recover each month?

16 SCATTF agents recovered 228 stolen motor
17 vehicles in fiscal year '22 which averages 19 motor
18 vehicles per month. And every one that we claim is a
19 direct touch.

20 How many other divisions of grantee's agency --
21 which will be Travis County Sheriff's Office? There's
22 been 401 stolen motor vehicles recovered by patrol and
23 other divisions within the agency. I tried to get
24 information on other jurisdictions but I wasn't able to
25 get that prior to today, so I do not have that

1 information.

2 How does the task force develop and share
3 intelligence information?

4 SCATTF agents develop and share intelligence
5 information via direct contact with other divisions and
6 with other agencies, distribution of informational
7 bulletins, roll call training and email correspondence.
8 SCATTF has a board of governors that I will contact either
9 via email or in person at a minimum quarterly, provide
10 information such as crime trends, DPS auto theft monthly
11 reports, MVCPA updates, grant updates, and training
12 opportunities.

13 Describe your service's interaction in support
14 of the coverage agencies listed in your grant application.

15 The primary services that SCATTF agents provide
16 to coverage agencies is the 68-A VIN inspection for the
17 citizens that live in the coverage areas. SCATTF agents
18 provide additional tasks to coverage agencies, including
19 guidance on motor vehicle crime related investigations,
20 resources and guidance for identifying vehicles with
21 tampered ID numbers, and also assistance on combating
22 crime trends by conducting bait operations.

23 Our most recent bulletins. So this is a
24 bulletin that I send out quarterly to our board of
25 governors. This information was provided to all 15

1 sheriffs within SCATTF jurisdiction so that they can
2 disseminate to their troops.

3 It was not shared on the VCC. This was very
4 local information sharing, and it wasn't shared during
5 MVCPA law enforcement webinars -- some of it was.
6 Specifically on this particular email bulletin went out
7 for Kia and Hyundai thefts that was shared on the VCC by
8 someone else, so I picked it up and shared it with our
9 board of governors.

10 And these are two bulletins that had recently
11 gone out. Both of them were believed to be very local
12 incidents so they were not shared with the VCC and they
13 were sent out to mainly Travis County Sheriff's Office
14 employees and then also sent out to the Austin Regional
15 Information Center to be disseminated to local law
16 enforcement.

17 All right. There's basically two things that I
18 need from the MVCPA, same thing that everybody needs:
19 patience and money. I think we've heard that from every
20 single person is going to be money.

21 So patience -- these are difficult times for
22 law enforcement in general, but specifically for SCATTF
23 agents and SCATTF agencies have been the staffing
24 shortages. There's also been the political environment
25 with our prosecutors, equipment issues and reporting

1 system changes that don't allow for an accurate picture of
2 the positive impact that our SCATTF agents make every day
3 for the citizens of Texas and for our law enforcement
4 partners.

5 As far as money is concerned, SCATTF's board of
6 governors meeting was held last week. Several
7 participating agencies and coverage agencies wanted to buy
8 into the task force more than they were in fiscal year
9 '22.

10 We all know that money talks. Money is not
11 going to solve all the issues faced by SCATTF agents but
12 SCATTF's current staffing level is insufficient to combat
13 the motor vehicle crime that's plaguing our great state.
14 So from our meeting last week, chances are when our
15 application comes around, we're going to request roughly
16 double what we got last year. So money talks.

17 Questions?

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Are there any questions from the
19 committee members?

20 MS. JONES: No, sir.

21 MR. SMITH: No, sir.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Sarge. Good job.

23 MR. TARRANT: Thank you, sir.

24 MR. GONZALEZ: We will not have a closed
25 session today so we are not taking up agenda items 3 or 4.

1 We will now move to agenda item 5, public comment.

2 Yessenia, are there any public comments?

3 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

4 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. Thank you.

5 We will now take up the next agenda item.

6 Members, unless there is further business, I
7 will entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

8 MR. SMITH: Member Smith. I motion that we
9 adjourn the meeting.

10 MR. GONZALEZ: Mr. Smith makes a motion to
11 adjourn. Do I have a second?

12 MS. JONES: Second. Member Jones.

13 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Jones seconds the motion.

14 The meeting is adjourned.

15 Thank y'all very much for attending, and please
16 drive home safely.

17 (Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the meeting was
18 adjourned.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

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MEETING OF: Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority
Grants, Budget & Reporting Committee

LOCATION: Austin, Texas

DATE: November 4, 2022

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages,
numbers 1 through 113, inclusive, are the true, accurate,
and complete transcript prepared from the verbal recording
made by electronic recording by Nancy H. King before the
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

DATE: November 16, 2022

/s/ Nancy H. King
(Transcriber)

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