MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME PREVENTION AUTHORITY

PLAN OF OPERATIONS

PREPARED FOR THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024-2025

Texas Department *of* Motor Vehicles

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Created in 1991, the Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority (MVCPA) has become an integral part of and an invaluable resource to Texas law enforcement. In 2023, MVCPA will celebrate the 30th anniversary of issuing grants. The vision of the MVCPA is to empower local law enforcement agencies and communities to combat and prevent motor vehicle theft, motor vehicle burglary, and fraud related-motor vehicle crime so that all Texans will be free from harm and loss caused by these types of crime. Motor vehicle crime has debilitating effects on people's lives. The losses from these crimes total more than a billion dollars each year. To combat these losses, MVCPA funds 24 law enforcement taskforces throughout the state. These taskforces employ 232 [CJ1] law enforcement investigators who have highly specialized training in the detection of stolen motor vehicles and apprehension of criminals who commit motor vehicle crime. In 2022, MVCPA also provided funding to 40 law enforcement agencies for the purchase or lease of Automatic License Plate Readers.

This Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Plan of Operation informs the Texas Legislature of the status of the MVCPA and of the efforts of its statewide law enforcement network to reduce motor vehicle crimes. The statutorily required plan (see Transportation Code §1006.102) provides an assessment of the scope of the problems caused by motor vehicle crime, an analysis of methods of combating these crimes, a plan to provide financial support for programs, including the collection of funds from insurers, and an estimate of the amount of funds required to implement this Plan of Operation.

The MVCPA is led by a governor-appointed board, and the Director of the Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS) serves as an ex-officio member. The Authority is administratively attached to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) and staffed as a division of TxDMV. This Plan of Operation is submitted by TxDMV on behalf of the MVCPA.

Where we are
TODAY

ASSESSMENT OF THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

TYPE OF CRIME	NUMBER	VALUE OF LOSS	AVERAGE LOSS
Burglary from a Motor Vehicle and Theft of Parts	189,510	$ 244,341,346	$1,107
Motor Vehicle Theft	87,703	$ 1,126,632,738	$12,846
	CY 2020 Total Loss		$ 1,370,974,084

*Source: The Crime in Texas Report for 2020 and 2021, Texas Department of Public Safety, **CY= calendar year***

Victims of these crimes suffer additional hardships well beyond the financial losses. These include lost time, lost wages, lost business revenue, inconvenience of unplanned expenses, and the loss of community safety. Many additional losses to Texans (e.g. damage to cars during the break-in, the losses from fraudulent use of stolen credit cards, etc.) associated with these specific motor vehicle crimes get reported in different crime classifications with a higher degree of punishment.

Texans suffer losses over one billion dollars every year due to motor vehicle burglary and theft crimes.

CRIME REPORTING AND MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME

MVCPA is charged with combating Motor Vehicle Theft (MVT), Burglary of a Motor Vehicle (BMV), and Fraud-related Motor Vehicle Crime (FRMVC). The data from the reported incidents (or the presence of crime) come from local law enforcement agencies. All Texas law enforcement agencies voluntarily report all crime data to TxDPS. Calendar year (CY) 2019 is the last full year of crime data reporting. Texas criminal records submission processes were changed from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) process to the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) in 2019. More information about Texas crime reporting is found at https://www.dps.texas.gov/ucr/index.htm. This change and corresponding decisions about how crime is categorized and collected have decreased MVCPA's ability to report in the same manner as in the past for incidents and financial losses on BMV, and FRMVC.

The NIBRS methodology of crime reporting continues to track MVT as a major index crime. Larceny from a motor vehicle and larceny of motor vehicle parts were the two crimes that constituted BMV but are no longer listed as distinct categories under NIBRS. NIBRS includes the two larceny crimes generally under "Larceny/Theft" and includes additional types of theft as indicated in Texas Penal Code Section 31.03. Some agencies continue to collect this data locally because they have a high impact in the local community. For example, catalytic converter thieves are constantly looking for opportunities to remove, steal, and sell catalytic converters from vehicles and jeopardize the safety of vehicle owners if they encounter the thief during the commission of the crime. One of the MVCPA taskforces suffered a tremendous loss in 2022 when an investigator was killed while attempting to prevent the theft of a catalytic converter from his vehicle.

FRMVC is not identified as a single category under NIBRS (and was not previously identified under UCR). There are many types of fraud offenses not associated with FRMVC, making it difficult to obtain accurate numbers for title and registration fraud, vehicle finance fraud, insurance fraud and other types of criminal fraud associated with a motor vehicle. The MVCPA activity reporting will continue to show arrests, recovery of property, and fraud cases cleared through the grant programs.

> DON'T BECOME A VICTIM
> – "IF YOU LIKE IT – LOCK IT"

BASED ON TEXAS 2020 CRIME REPORTS, ON AVERAGE:

A MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT OCCURRED EVERY 5.9 MINUTES

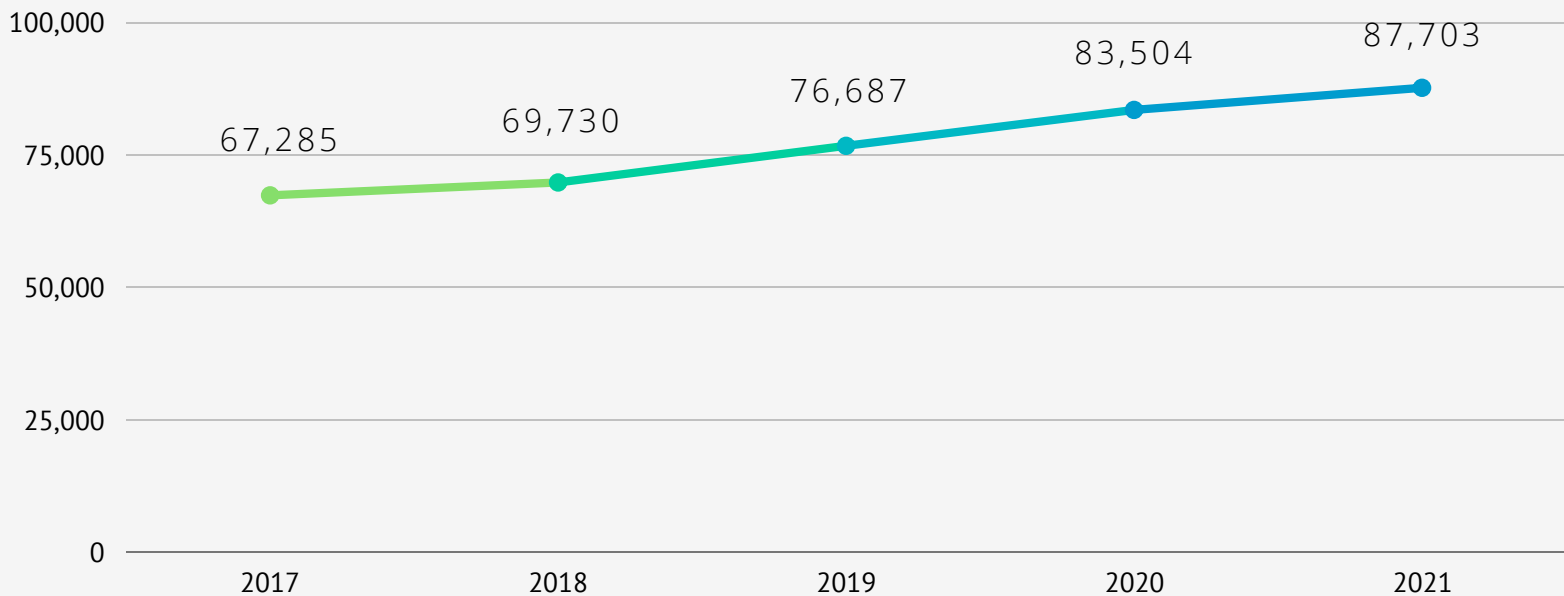A BURGLARY OF A MOTOR VEHICLE OCCURRED EVERY 2.7 MINUTES

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

The Texas Department of Public Safety annual report "Crime in Texas," defines Motor Vehicle Theft as " … the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle. A motor vehicle is defined as a self-propelled vehicle that travels on the surface but not on rails…" Beginning in 2019, NIBRS allowed multiple crimes in one incident to be reported together. Under the previous UCR hierarchical system only the most serious crime (e.g., murder, kidnapping, etc.…) was reported when it occurred simultaneously with a motor vehicle theft. Because of this change, reported incidents of MVT and losses greatly increased in 2019. TxDPS also reports that the average dollar loss per MVT was $12,846 in 2020, down from $16,696 in 2019. A disturbing trend is that the number of stolen vehicles recovered has been trending downward. About one-third of stolen vehicles were recovered in 2018, but less than 20% were in 2020. The change may be caused by reporting issues in the new method but lines up with anecdotal information from communities of fewer recoveries.

BASED ON THE TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY 2021 CRIME IN TEXAS REPORT,

"THE TOTAL VALUE OF STOLEN PROPERTY IN 2021 WAS $1,529,548,089 WITH $673,474,193 (44%) OF THAT RECOVERED.

AUTOMOBILES WERE THE HIGHEST VALUE CATEGORY OF STOLEN PROPERTY AT **$1,043,025,836 STOLEN**. OF THAT AMOUNT, $634,014,380 IN AUTOMOBILES WAS RECOVERED, THE HIGHEST VALUE OF THE RECOVERED PROPERTY."

CRIME VOLUME FROM YEAR TO YEAR - MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

100,000

75,000

50,000

25,000

0

67,285

69,730

76,687

83,504

87,703

2017   2018   2019   2020   2021

*Source: The Crime in Texas Report for 2021, Texas Department of Public Safety, **CY= calendar year***

2020-2021 % CHANGE

↑ **5.0%**

2017-2021 % CHANGE

↑ **30.3%**
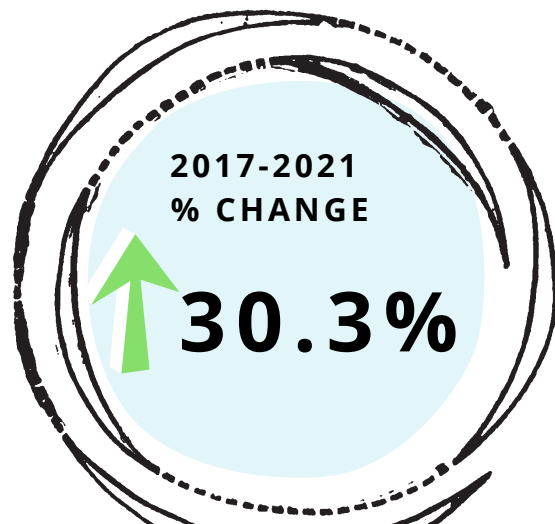
MVT occurs throughout Texas but is highly concentrated in urban areas. The 20 counties that reported the highest number of motor vehicle thefts are closely aligned to the highest in population. These 20 counties represent almost 90% of all MVT incidents in Texas. In the chart below, the five largest counties in Texas also have the highest incidents of MVT. The other 15 counties below may move up or down slightly but remain consistent year after year within the top twenty rankings.

Top 20 Counties - Motor Vehicle Theft 2019 -2020

	Agency Name	CY 2019	Agency Name	CY 2020
1	Harris County	20,796	Harris County	24,166
2	Dallas County	15,889	Dallas County	17,375
3	Bexar County	8,623	Bexar County	10,071
4	Tarrant County	5,953	Tarrant County	6,792
5	Travis County	3,547	Travis County	5,238
6	Lubbock County	1,313	Lubbock County	1,235
7	Nueces County	1,018	El Paso County	1,153
8	Potter County	1,017	Nueces County	1,050
9	El Paso County	945	Montgomery County	971
10	Collin County	896	Denton County	967
11	Montgomery County	866	Collin County	929
12	Galveston County	779	Potter County	892
13	Hidalgo County	757	Hidalgo County	850
14	Denton County	754	Fort Bend County	773
15	Jefferson County	733	Galveston County	754
16	Ector County	617	Bell County	743
17	Bell County	590	Jefferson County	672
18	McLennan County	570	McLennan County	594
19	Fort Bend County	558	Williamson County	527
20	Brazoria County	472	Brazoria County	467

Compiled from data published by the Texas Department of Public Safety

TASKFORCE REPORTED - SIGNIFICANT MVT TRENDS

MVCPA taskforce commanders complete operational and progress reports as a part of the grant administration process. Each year, they provide an additional year-end summary to help identify trends about MVT. The consistent pattern for well over a decade reported by taskforces is that owners leaving their keys inside of or near the vehicle makes it extremely susceptible to theft. Many taskforces report that owners leaving their vehicle running at home or stores is also a major contributor to theft. An alarming trend in vehicle thefts facilitated with a key is that Texas has a high number of unrecovered vehicles in which the theft was facilitated with a key. A possible explanation for this is the number of borders and ports in Texas which allows opportunities for criminals to export a stolen vehicle before it is reported stolen. One in five taskforces report that fraud is an element associated with the crimes they investigate. Tied closely with this is the reliance on social media by criminals to sell the stolen vehicles. Almost 60% of the taskforces identify the use of social media by criminals as playing a significant role in MVT. Over half of taskforces report that stolen vehicles are used in the commission of other crimes. This is consistent with the International Chief of Police Association - Motor Vehicle Crime Committee findings that many crimes start with a stolen vehicle. In Texas, human trafficking continues to be a major use of stolen vehicles.

Source: International Chief of Police Association Motor Vehicle Crime Committee

A prevalent element of MVT is the use of various technologies to defeat secure ignition systems. MVCPA taskforces report in most larger jurisdictions the use of modified vehicle components to allow entry and to start and steal vehicles. These illegally modified components allow criminals to bypass the manufacturers' security programs and systems, especially in newer vehicles. Some criminals have developed methods to clone keys or the key signal. About 40% of taskforces report the increased use of technology to defeat manufacturer technology as a trend. Almost all large urban areas have seen the use of this technology to steal vehicles. The recovery rates of vehicles stolen in this manner are increasingly low. When these new cars are recovered, they are often dismantled. Evidence from taskforces ties the use of these technologies to gangs and organized crime. Taskforces report gang and organized crime play significant roles in MVT in Texas. Taskforces report a heavy concentration of vehicles being stolen from vehicle dealerships using distraction techniques to swap the key fobs, insider employee jobs, and fraudulent purchases.   Fraudulent purchases are discussed under FRMVC.

BURGLARY OF A MOTOR VEHICLE

Burglary of a motor vehicle (BMV) is a prevalent and costly crime in most communities. Many incidents go undetected, unreported, or classified as other crimes. BMV is comprised of incidents and losses reported to TxDPS by local agencies under the categories of larceny from a motor vehicle and larceny of motor vehicle parts. As discussed above changes in NIBRS will impact future analysis and reporting of this criminal activity.

Calendar year 2020 data show that there were 189,510 incidents statewide of BMV. While this is a decrease in reported incidents statewide from the prior year, the financial losses associated with BMV crimes continue an upward trend. Losses increased by $29 million to an estimated $244 million. This could be attributed to increases in value of vehicle parts and types of property stolen such as catalytic converters, cash and guns.

Reported incidents of BMV and the losses tend to vary over time indicating that this crime may be tied more closely to other factors. These factors can include community choices of prosecution, implementation of curfews, or community economic levels. BMV tends to be pervasive in some jurisdictions such as large cities and cities along the US border with Mexico. In other communities and outlying subdivisions, BMV is often random and episodic with dozens or hundreds of cases at once. For instance, the Northeast Texas Taskforce (Paris PD) reported dozens of BMVs tied to a single gang from Florida that moved into the tri-state area. Travis County Sheriff's Combined Auto Theft Taskforce reported one gang training its members to focus on weapons theft.

TASKFORCE REPORTED - SIGNIFICANT BMV TRENDS

MVCPA taskforce commanders complete operational and progress reports as a part of the grant administration process. Each year, they provide an additional year-end summary to help identify trends about BMV.

Doors left unlocked or belongings laying in clear view inside the vehicle tend to be the biggest causal motivator in BMV. Eighty percent of taskforces report that owners left their vehicle unlocked in most cases of BMV. Forty percent of taskforces report that people left belongings in plain view. Over 50% of the taskforces indicate that car hopping/car flipping is the most prevalent method used by criminal actors. Hopping/flipping is when criminals seek lots of cars together (e.g. parking lots or crowded residential streets) and quickly "flip" as many door handles as possible (check handles for unlocked cars) and then enter and steal contents from the cars left unlocked.

Weapons are often stolen. This was identified by two-thirds of the taskforces as the most prevalent trend in their communities. The car flipping method mentioned earlier is used throughout the state to steal guns, but many jurisdictions in southeast Texas are also seeing a new predatory theft method used to pursue victims. "**Gun jugging**" occurs when criminals monitor activity at gun ranges, gun shows, or spot vehicles looking like they are returning from hunting excursions. The victims showing signs of guns in the vehicle are followed to other stops and even home. Then, the thieves quickly break into the parked vehicle. Since BMV is only a misdemeanor, taskforces believe that the reward-to-risk ratio is driving the increase of these occurrences.

"Bank jugging" events are when criminals surveil activity at financial institutions and observe persons leaving with large amounts of money. The criminal follows a person and looks for an opportunity to confront the person or break into the vehicle and steal the money. This type of crime is increasing across the state.

Additional factors identified by the taskforce commanders in combatting BMV: 1) over one-third identify drugs involved in their cases; 2) over half identify organized crime and gang involvement; 3) over half report a high juvenile and youthful offender involvement in these crimes; and 4) the thieves rely on social media to coordinate the crime or sell the items stolen.

In the last two years, there have been more than 65,000 reported incidents of stolen vehicle parts in Texas totaling in excess of $95 million. The two major items stolen as reported by taskforces are tailgates and catalytic converters. Both parts are difficult to trace once removed from the vehicle. MVCPA has seen significant increases in catalytic converters stolen from school buses and RV storage facilities as the cost of precious metals used in these parts have skyrocketed.

IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, THERE HAVE BEEN MORE THAN 65,000 REPORTED INCIDENTS OF STOLEN VEHICLE PARTS IN TEXAS TOTALING IN EXCESS OF

$95 MILLION.

FRAUD RELATED MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME (FRMVC)

Various crimes constitute FRMVC offenses. These crimes are not reported under a specific crime category like motor vehicle theft. FRMVC are powerful tools that criminals and organized criminal enterprises use to convert stolen property into funds or illegally export vehicles out of Texas. Combating fraud-related motor vehicle crime was added to the responsibilities of MVCPA by the 86th Legislature. In the first year of this expanded responsibility, taskforces reported over $3 million in losses from these crimes. Taskforces often pursued these crimes in the past along with co-occurring motor vehicle theft since MVCPA was not authorized to fund programs for these purposes until FY20. No additional funds were provided with the expansion of responsibilities. While the taskforces priority remains motor vehicle theft, MVCPA taskforces are pursuing more fraud-related crimes.

While these crimes take place throughout the state, the largest impact occurs in the larger metropolitan areas. Urban areas have higher concentrations of vehicles, transactions and people that make it easier to hide the illegal activity. Emission inspections are generally limited to urban counties thus raising these fraudulent transactions only in those areas.

The training and expertise that MVCPA-funded law enforcement investigators (and those trained by the MVCPA) have are invaluable to identifying these crimes. Only motor vehicle crime investigators are authorized to have unqualified access to the proprietary and confidential databases owned by vehicle manufacturers and managed by the National Insurance Crime Bureau (NICB). Taskforce investigators often work closely with TxDMV to solve these crimes and protect Texans.

Types of motor vehicle fraud are:

Title Fraud – Criminals provide fictitious paperwork for stolen vehicles. Non-English-speaking communities are the most vulnerable to receive these fake titles. These crimes also cost the State of Texas millions of dollars in taxes and highway funds each year while defrauding consumers of proper ownership documents. Filing false liens against vehicles is common in title fraud cases. In some jurisdictions, these crimes have been reported to negatively impact the local vehicle sales market due to lost transactions.

Registration Fraud – This crime reduces highway revenue to the State of Texas and undermines state air quality attainment goals. When vehicles cannot pass emissions inspections or cannot be registered due to title issues, owners often resort to purchasing false registration documents or illegally issued temporary permits. This allows polluting vehicles to remain on roadways and deprives the state of highway dollars. Fraudulent paper tags and permits are commonly used by criminals to hide the identity of the vehicle used in the commission of crimes. This is common in theft, narcotics, robbery, and other fraudulent criminal activity.

MVCPA has coordinated with TxDMV to enhance protocols to deny access to TxDMV systems for dealers involved in selling fraudulent temporary tags. Maximum tag issuance limits were established and implemented in early 2022. Fingerprinting requirements were established for new vehicle dealer license applicants and dealers seeking renewals of dealer licenses. Enhanced security elements are part of redesigned temporary tags which should allow law enforcement officers to quickly recognize and confirm when a tag is valid.

Insurance Fraud – Taskforces often receive reports of stolen vehicles and upon investigation quickly determine that the person reporting the theft or a family member is committing insurance fraud. The vehicle may have been illegally exported, hidden or sold prior to the insurance claim. The NICB says that insurance fraud costs thousands of dollars to customers in increased insurance costs. Other motor vehicle insurance fraud is committed by companies performing fake repairs and using fictitious liens to seize vehicles. Often insurance industry investigators work with MVCPA taskforces. The NICB special agents are embedded in many taskforces to fight both insurance fraud and help recover stolen vehicles and other property.

Odometer Fraud – Despite updated technology on modern vehicles, criminals often defeat secure systems to illegally increase the value of used cars by tampering with the odometer. A used vehicle with low miles on the odometer is generally worth more than one with high mileage. While odometer fraud is also a federal crime, thresholds for federal prosecution are high. MVCPA taskforces often discover odometer fraud rings connected to stolen vehicle investigations. These rings are usually organized criminal enterprises.

VIN Fraud (VIN switches/VIN Cloning) – This technique is used to generate higher sales prices and disguise the true nature of the title before an illegal sale. A stolen vehicle cannot be legally sold. Other vehicles, like salvage vehicles damaged in floods or wrecks, cannot be legally sold without a designation (brand) on the title. Taskforces have learned that a vehicle's identifying information can be fraudulently placed on a stolen vehicle. The stolen vehicle is then sold to an innocent purchaser. Taskforces regularly discover vehicles stolen in Texas and other states where a VIN switch was made in the attempt to sell the vehicle.

Identity Fraud Sales and Synthetic Identity Sales – Criminals and criminal enterprises have worked very effectively at avoiding detection at dealerships and rental car companies. These crimes rely on the delay between the transactions and the discovery and the report of a crime. With rental car companies, specific procedures must be followed, and notice sent giving at least a week, and sometimes up to a month, before the car is reported stolen. For dealer sales, the delay can be months as transactions and the report of a stolen vehicle may get lost between finance companies and dealers. Over 50% of the taskforces report that stolen vehicles are used in the commission of other offenses. These crimes involve fraudulent checks drawn on business accounts to purchase several vehicles, or some form of identity theft to defraud both the dealership and the finance company. The Houston Police Department has developed training for officers and dealerships to recognize transactions where fraudulent purchases are being made. This has created a **partnership between dealers and law enforcement to detect in-progress vehicle finance fraud** and arrest offenders before a loss occurs. These stolen vehicles are often quickly sold on social media sites for a quick profit. An increasing number are being VIN flipped and discovered at the TxDMV regional offices or local tax offices during the titling process. Many taskforces mentioned that these vehicles are used in human trafficking.

ANALYSIS - METHODS OF COMBATING THE PROBLEM

The vision of MVCPA is to empower local law enforcement agencies and communities to combat and prevent motor vehicle crime so that all Texans will be free from harm and loss caused by motor vehicle crime. The MVCPA is committed to be an evidence-based, strategy-driven, and community-centric network to support law enforcement taskforces, improve coordination, deploy equipment, and provide clear messaging to combat motor vehicle crime.

MVCPA implements this vision and mission by issuing grants to local law enforcement agencies (taskforces), providing law enforcement investigator training, providing educational information and materials to the public, and coordinating activities with TxDMV, TxDPS, the Comptroller of Public Accounts and other state agencies. MVCPA uses statutory operational performance measures to determine the effectiveness of the efforts of MVCPA and its law enforcement taskforces.

COLLABORATIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT FUNDING

The MVCPA provides financial support to law enforcement agencies for economic motor vehicle theft and fraud-related motor vehicle crime taskforces. These grants fund local law enforcement investigators in the law enforcement taskforces. The chart below shows the law enforcement taskforces funded in FY22-23:

MVCPA FY2022 – 2023 Grant Awards		
	Single/Multi-Agency Taskforce	FY2022 - 2023
City of Beaumont	Multi-Agency	$583,951
City of Brownsville	Multi-Agency	$1,020,922
Burnet County	Multi-Agency	$220,895
Dallas County	Multi-Agency	$544,454
Galveston County	Multi-Agency	$518,201
City of Houston	Multi-Agency	$1,251,130
Lubbock County	Multi-Agency	$446,785
City of Mansfield	Multi-Agency	$331,342
Montgomery County	Multi-Agency	$372,720
Potter County	Multi-Agency	$399,494
City of San Antonio	Multi-Agency	$815,785
Smith County	Multi-Agency	$357,474
Tarrant County	Multi-Agency	$1,332,593
Travis County	Multi-Agency	$697,075
City of Austin	Single	$411,300
City of Corpus Christi	Single	$429,518
City of Dallas	Single	$544,454
City of Eagle Pass	Single	$138,059
City of El Paso	Single	$975,265
Harris County	Single	$853,100
City of Laredo	Single	$756,565
City of Paris	Single	$117,857
City of Pasadena	Single	$83,940
City of Victoria	Single	$144,236

The 24 taskforces above represent **130 law enforcement agencies** and employ **232 law enforcement investigators** funded through the grants listed above. These taskforces routinely provide coverage and coordination to another 420 police departments and sheriff's offices because MVCPA grants allow and encourage them to work across their region and state. The law enforcement investigators perform numerous investigative duties as licensed peace officers coordinated by MVCPA.

Taskforces are operated locally through interagency / interlocal agreements. The investigators perform the statutorily required duties of the MVCPA, and their agencies report performance measures through the grant reporting process.

In 2022 MVCPA provided financial support to 40 law enforcement agencies to purchase Automatic License Plate Readers through one-time funding with an MVCPA Auxiliary Grant (MAG). The chart below shows the law enforcement agencies that received a MAG in FY22:

Aransas Pass City of	$20,000	Goliad County	$20,000	Pearland, City of	$20,000
Balcones Heights City of	$20,000	Gonzales County	$20,000	Penitas, City of	$20,000
Blue Mound City of	$20,000	Grapevine, City of	$20,000	Port Aransas, City of	$20,000
Buda, City of	$20,000	Gregg County	$20,000	Red Oak, City of	$20,000
Cedar Hill, City of	$20,000	La Porte, City of	$20,000	Richland Hills, City of	$20,000
Chambers County	$20,000	League City, City of	$20,000	Robstown, City of	$20,000
Cherokee County	$20,000	Marshall, City of	$20,000	Rockport, City of	$20,000
Conroe City of	$20,000	Mesquite, City of	$20,000	Schulenburg, City of	$20,000
Decatur, City of	$20,000	Midland, City of	$20,000	Seabrook, City of	$20,000
Diboll, City of	$20,000	Navasota, City of	$20,000	Temple, City of	$20,000
Fannin County	$20,000	Odessa, City of	$20,000	Texarkana, City of	$20,000
Fayette County	$20,000	Palmview, City of	$20,000	Tomball, City of	$20,000
Waller County	$20,000	Webb County	$20,000	White Settlement, City of	$20,000
		Wilson County	$20,000		

MVCPA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The MVCPA has performance measures set by statute (see Transportation Code §1006.151). Taskforces funded by the MVCPA are required to track recovery of stolen vehicles, cleared cases, and persons arrested. The table below shows the statutory performance measures reported by taskforces in FY20:

SUMMARY OF STATEWIDE FY21-22 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS REPORTED BY TASKFORCES

MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT PERFORMANCE MEASURES

COMBINED EFFORTS OF 232 GRANT FUNDED INVESTIGATORS

Activity	FY 2021	FY 2022	Percentage Increase
Recovered Stolen Vehicles	11,540	12,497	8.29%
Cleared Motor Vehicle Theft Cases	15,835	9,373	-40.81%
Persons Arrested Motor Vehicle Theft	3,171	2,655	-16.27%
Burglary of a Motor Vehicle Performance Measures			
Activity	FY 2021	FY 2022	Percentage Increase
Cleared Motor Vehicle Burglary Cases	1,762	2,315	31.38%
Arrested Burglary of a Motor Vehicle	663	632	-4.68%
Fraud Related Motor Vehicle Crime			
Activity	FY 2021	FY 2022	Percentage Increase
Cleared Fraud-related Motor Vehicle Crime Cases	224	331	47.77%
Persons Arrested Fraud-related Motor Vehicle Crime	78	119	52.56%
68A-Inspections performed by taskforces	23,590	28,582	21.16%

In addition to the statutory performance measures, the MVCPA collects other data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs. The grant report data elements are the same for all taskforces, but responses vary based on location and type of grant program. Over the last three years taskforce investigators have reported the following performance measures:

1) $180 million worth of stolen vehicles, parts and equipment recovered.
2) $5.9 million worth of stolen vehicles repatriated back into the US from Mexico.
3) 1,200 pounds of illegal drugs confiscated.
4) 848 weapons associated with motor vehicle crimes recovered
5) Over 8,000 covert operations to interrupt criminal enterprises.
6) Over 67,000 vehicle identification number (VIN) inspections for citizens needing certain title transactions.
7) Over 20,000 vehicles were inspected prior to entering Mexico.
8) Responded to 8,741 license plate reader alerts indicating the location of a stolen vehicle.

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

The MVCPA supports and coordinates with the taskforces to provide excellent skills-based training for current motor vehicle crime investigators in Texas. The MVCPA curriculum was developed in coordination with TxDMV, TxDPS, NICB, and the Texas Association of Vehicle Theft Investigators (TAVTI). The training uses the most knowledgeable instructors and subject matter experts from the taskforces to teach the latest motor vehicle crime investigation techniques and technology. The investigators who complete the training become specialized motor vehicle crime investigators and receive access to the databases required to perform VIN inspections to determine the accuracy and identity of vehicles and reduce the number of vehicles fraudulently titled. This training and the VIN inspections lead to a significant number of recoveries of stolen vehicles. The MVCPA plans to develop additional training classes and provide instruction to more law enforcement officers to reduce the number of stolen vehicles in Texas. Significant increases in VIN inspections have caused a need for additional law enforcement to decrease backlogs and increase the availability of timely inspections for citizens.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS EFFORTS

Informing the public about motor vehicle crime prevention advances the MVCPA's statutory obligations. As reported above, taskforces have identified owner behavior (cars unlocked, key in vehicle or car left running) to be a large contributor to MVT and BMV. Thefts with keys increased by over 16% nationwide in 2020 according to the NICB. New reporting by the NICB shows that Texas is one of the top states where motor vehicle theft occurs due to key fobs being left in vehicles. This is often referred to as "victim assisted" theft. Public education also plays an important role in helping the public protect their vehicles from catalytic converter thefts.

MVCPA uses social media to educate, inform, and disseminate information based on examined data, verifiable and reliable news sources through Facebook, Twitter, MVCPA TxDMV website, and linking to taskforces across the state. Taskforces also use their social media platforms to increase the coverage and impact of motor vehicle crime prevention messages.

MVCPA also distributes through its law enforcement taskforces educational items and brochures that further engagement with the public. Taskforces perform educational outreach with trade show exhibits, booths at community events, vehicle displays and other outreaches across the state.

When funds are available, MVCPA does statewide public education and awareness media campaigns. The MVCPA is currently partnering with the Insurance Council of Texas (ICT) (a statewide trade association serving property and casualty insurance carriers and their customers with education on Texas insurance issues) on a statewide public education campaign. The partnership funds the development of coordinated messaging to use in communication for internet advertising, social media, broadcast media, and print media. ICT is also conducting an outreach to MVCPA Taskforces in the joint execution of education programs. This includes events in key Texas markets emphasizing the campaign's creative concept of "Lock It Down."

PLAN FOR PROVIDING FINANCIAL SUPPORT

MVCPA adopted the following strategies and tactics to improve its service to all Texans. MVCPA has prepared new grant types to implement these strategies and tactics and make a meaningful, positive impact on combating the escalation of motor vehicle crime, decreasing the use of stolen vehicles in the commission of other crimes, and increasing stolen vehicle recoveries.

Law Enforcement Support
Add more trained motor vehicle crime investigators to cover Texas
Provide funds for new technology and specialized motor vehicle technologists
Provide motor vehicle crime prevention equipment, technology, and overtime
Develop funding methods that promote law enforcement stakeholders to engage in combating motor vehicle crime on a regional basis
Provide secure web-based command and communication systems to improve collaboration, intelligence gathering, and data sharing among taskforce investigators and state agencies
Provide full-time specialized motor vehicle criminal intelligence analysts for all regions
Provide more training for investigators and crime prevention specialists
Provide for increased availability of VIN inspections to the public
Develop and fund a statewide taskforce
Develop and fund a statewide Automatic License Plate Reader Program
Improved Prosecution
Fund specialized motor vehicle crime prosecutors
Fund fraud-related motor vehicle crime training to local prosecutors
Engage the Public to Prevent Motor Vehicle Crime
Conduct coordinated effective education campaigns
Improve education programs and content for the public
Provide clear messaging to end motor vehicle crime
Provide Experimental Equipment to Assist Motor Vehicle Owners
Identify, promote, purchase, and distribute new technologies such as immobilizer systems and personal use tracking devices
Develop connectivity of databases between inspection stations and toll systems to law enforcement stolen lists
Prevent Stolen Motor Vehicles from Entering Mexico
Support local law enforcement efforts to host voluntary self-registration tracking or title management technology to allow vehicle owners to prevent removal of their vehicles from the US
Provide funds to expand law enforcement agencies intelligence sharing along US / Mexico border
Improve Fee Collections and Refund Process
Develop a dedicated unit to oversee the collection of the MVCPA insurance fee and promote equity in fee collections across the motor vehicle insurance industry
Improve and streamline the process for insurers that overpaid to obtain a refund

GRANT FUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY

Grants are a reliable and cost-effective method to encourage local law enforcement agencies to pursue the state strategy and interest in combating motor vehicle crimes. MVCPA makes reimbursement only grants so that local law enforcement agencies receiving grants lay out the funds and receive reimbursement only for allowable costs. Because the MVCPA grant program has had reduced funding, city and counties have increased their funding over the last ten years as state funding has diminished. The MVCPA and its local taskforces are committed to continuing the critical work and coordination to address motor vehicle crimes. MVCPA has the strategy and network to reduce these crimes and make deep impacts into the criminal networks harming all Texans.

The MVCPA conducted a survey of chiefs of police and sheriffs as well as existing taskforce commanders. The three groups communicated solutions that focus on meeting the challenges to reduce motor vehicle crime over the next few years. The consensus of strategies that MVCPA can employ are focused on increasing paid time available to investigators, more detection and surveillance technology that can support investigations, and tools to increase agency coordination. Law enforcement is changing and the ability of departments to recruit and expand taskforces is limited. The options left to respond to increased motor vehicle crime are present through a grant program structure based on outcomes that augment the existing taskforces. The use of technology, rapid response strikeforce funding, targeted overtime, saturation patrols, community-oriented solutions and some expanded or new taskforces will help address future needs and reduce motor vehicle crime.

IMPROVE COORDINATION

The MVCPA is committed to continuing to improve coordination among stakeholders to leverage existing resources to fulfill its mission. Three TxDMV investigators are placed with MVCPA taskforces and TxDMV personnel and materials are included in MVCPA law enforcement training. Also, the MVCPA has coordinated with TxDMV to provide training sessions for the NICB auto theft schools. The TxDMV has coordinated through the MVCPA with taskforces to work closely to combat title fraud and other methods of converting stolen motor vehicles into economic gain.

The MVCPA is committed to improving grant program data collection and analysis. The MVCPA has improved and streamlined the reporting processes associated with its grants. A greater emphasis on statutory performance measures and program and fiscal monitoring has been established between the MVCPA and its taskforces. The border and port security performance measures will continue to improve. Better communication between TxDPS and the MVCPA has produced an increased understanding regarding vehicle recovery, arrest data, and cleared cases. The need for coordinated operations between taskforces and other law enforcement agencies is evident. The MVCPA will also help taskforces and other law enforcement agencies improve and develop communication tools by promoting virtual command centers and regional intelligence briefings.

CONTINUE PROMOTING AND PROVIDING MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME INVESTIGATOR TRAINING

The MVCPA will continue to provide the Intermediate and Advanced Motor Vehicle Crime Investigator training and develop new training programs based on current trends and needs of law enforcement agencies. These courses are free and available to all qualifying law enforcement. One identified need is increased training of patrol officers to identify and recover stolen vehicles. The MVCPA, in partnership with TxDMV, TxDPS, NICB, and TAVTI, will update materials as needed. The increasing complexity of motor vehicle crimes results in the need for continued training of law enforcement personnel to successfully investigate and reduce motor vehicle crimes.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS EXPANSION

MVCPA plans to continue public education and awareness initiatives similar to the "Lock It Down" Campaign currently underway by awarding performance and activity-based grants for statewide multimedia campaigns to educate Texans on their role in mitigating vehicle crime. MVCPA will continue to partner with taskforces to leverage web-based and social media tools, as well as support the efforts of taskforces to perform public awareness outreaches.

INSURANCE INDUSTRY COOPERATION TO COMBAT CRIME

Insurance companies and associations often provide taskforces with resources such as bait cars, targeted grants, equipment, and crime prevention parking lot signs. The MVCPA will coordinate with insurance companies and associations to promote the best use of resources and to determine areas that the grant funding and operations can be coordinated for maximum effectiveness. The MVCPA will also work with the insurance industry to develop education programs and to implement new technologies that potentially provide insurance cost reduction for consumers. For example, if the MVCPA demonstrates through a pilot program that new technology was effective, then coordination with the insurance industry may result in discounts or incentives for consumers to help expand the technology and reduce motor vehicle crime.

BORDER AND PORT SECURITY IMPROVEMENT

MVCPA taskforces provide enhanced border and port security for jurisdictions located in designated counties through routinely performing activities to intercept and prevent stolen vehicles from crossing the border. MVCPA taskforces will continue to expand their capabilities in apprehensions, indictments, vehicle recoveries, and drug seizures. The presence of taskforces would be greatly improved with automatic license plate readers, signal jamming detection technology, surveillance equipment, criminal intelligence analysts and additional personnel to increase the hours available to monitor bridges, perform port inspections and assist local agencies with investigations involving the use of stolen vehicles to commit other crimes.

PROMOTING INSURER COMPLIANCE WITH THE MVCPA MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE FEE

State law requires a $4 fee on each year of motor vehicle insurance issued in the state. The MVCPA works closely with the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA) and the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) to identify non-payers and non-filers of the MVCPA insurance fee. MVCPA submits non-filers to the TDI which pursues enforcement investigations and actions. Statute (Transportation Code §1006.153) requires that 20% of the fees collected by MVCPA shall be appropriated to the MVCPA. Another 60% is deposited to the designated trauma facility and EMS account. The remaining 20% is deposited to the general revenue fund for criminal justice purposes.

The MVCPA is requesting 3 additional staff to improve insurance company compliance with paying the fee. Examination of records maintained by the CPA indicates that there may be at least $2.5 million per year not being properly collected. Also, in many requests for refunds by insurers, fees have likely not been calculated correctly. MVCPA has never had staff dedicated to the collection of the fee and requests the authority to hire three additional staff as submitted in the legislative appropriations requests submitted by TxDMV on behalf of the MVCPA.

INTERCONNECTIVITY BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

MVCPA has become the standard for providing regional solutions to combating all forms of motor vehicle crime. Without MVCPA funding, coordination and training, small jurisdictions would not have the capacity to handle the complexity of most elements of motor vehicle crime. Vehicles stolen in urban areas often are moved to a rural staging area for border crossing or disposal. The MVCPA will continue to provide state resources to encourage regional approaches. Local law enforcement always coordinates with each other but do not generally allow officers to work cases regionally unless the state provides most of the funds. MVCPA monthly grantee webinar meetings, regular coordination and funding provide effective ways for urban and rural law enforcement to solve the statewide motor vehicle crime problem together.

ESTIMATE OF FUNDS REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT PLAN

The Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority adopted the FY24-25 Plan of Operation elements to reduce harm and loss from motor vehicle crime, promote effective community-based law enforcement, and provide to insurers fair and stable fee collection and refund business processes.

Another priority is to improve the motor vehicle crime prevention network through secure intelligence sharing, improved investigation, and better prosecution of motor vehicle crimes. Many of the crimes that MVCPA covers are extremely complicated, document intensive, and are often difficult for local prosecutors to pursue. When overwhelming prosecutor dockets cause motor vehicle crime cases to be deprioritized, the State of Texas as a whole loses.

Texas Transportation Code 1006.153(e) requires that 20 percent of MVCPA insurance fees collected be appropriated to the MVCPA. FY 2021 fee collections totaled $104 million, which should have resulted in MVCPA appropriations of $21 million for the year. However, the program was appropriated $12.8 million (12% of revenue) in FY 2021 and $15 million in FY 2022 (14% of FY 2021 revenue collections).

MVCPA proposes that with the funds required to be provided in Transportation Code 1006.153(e)(1) and the six (6) additional FTEs listed below both submitted on its behalf by TxDMV to the Legislative Budget Board, the MVCPA can implement the entire plan of operation.

FY24-25 MVCPA PLAN OF OPERATION FUNDING REQUEST

Items of Appropriations	FY24	FY25	Biennial Total
TxDMV - Base Funding Appropriation Request			
Protect the Public			
Strategy B.2.1. – Automobile Theft Prevention	$14,979,605	$14,979,605	$29,959,210
Full Time Equivalents (FTE)	5	5	
Exceptional Item Requests			
Expanded Coverage	Due to the inability to access funding at statutorily prescribed levels, some areas of the state are not served by the specialized, trained investigators and equipment provided by MVCPA grants. The program does not have sufficient resources to fully combat stolen vehicles used for human trafficking or reduce the number of stolen vehicles leaving the state through border areas and seaports. MVCPA has also not been able to fully engage the public through its statewide education efforts to inform motor vehicle owners of effective methods to prevent motor vehicle crimes.		3 FTEs
Fee Collection Unit	Authorize 3 FTE to improve awareness and compliance with the MVCPA Fee requirements. Positions will also provide analysis, audit, outreach, and education to insurers. Funding will be covered by the MVCPA base appropriation for FY 2024-2025.		3 FTEs
	FY24	FY25	Total
Total MVCPA Appropriation Request FY24-25	$21,943,815	$22,268,108	$45,211,923
FTE Total	11	11	Rounded