

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME PREVENTION AUTHORITY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Inn of the Hills
Hotel & Conference Center
1001 Junction Highway
Kerrville, Texas 78028

8:00 a.m.
Thursday,
June 15, 2023

BOARD MEMBERS:

Mike Rodriguez, Chair
Charla Brotherton
Julio C. Gonzalez
Sharon Jones
Rebecca Cantu Serrano
P. Dean Smith
Katherine "Kit" Whitehill

STAFF:

Joe Canady, Director
David Richards, General Counsel

ON THE RECORD REPORTING
(512) 450-0342

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(8:19 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good morning. My name is Mike
4 Rodriguez, and I am pleased to open the meeting of the
5 Board of the Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority.

6 It is 8:19 a.m. and I'm now calling the Board
7 meeting for June 15, 2023, to order. I want to note for
8 the record that the public notice of this meeting,
9 containing all items on the agenda, was filed with the
10 Office of Secretary of State on June 2, 2023.

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

16 I want to welcome those who are with us for
17 today's Board meeting. If you wish to address the Board
18 or speak on an agenda item during today's meeting, please
19 complete a speaker's sheet at the registration table.

20 Please identify the specific items you are
21 interested in commenting on, your name and address, and
22 whether you are representing anyone or speaking for
23 yourself. If your comment does not pertain to a specific
24 agenda item, we will take your comment during the general
25 public comment portion of the meeting.

1 In accordance with the department's
2 administrative rule, comments to the Board will be limited
3 to three minutes. To assist each speaker, a timer has
4 been provided at the podium. The timer light will be
5 green for the first two minutes, yellow for one minute,
6 and then red when your time is up.

7 Individuals cannot accumulate time from another
8 speaker. Comments should be pertinent to the issues
9 stated on the comment sheet. When addressing the Board,
10 please state your name and affiliation for the record.

11 There are a few things that will assist in
12 making the meeting run smoother and assist the court
13 reporter in getting an accurate record: please identify
14 yourself before speaking, speak clearly and slowly and do
15 not speak over others, and please ask the chairman for
16 permission to speak and be sure to get recognized before
17 speaking.

18 I would like to thank our court reporter who is
19 transcribing this meeting.

20 Before we begin today, I'd like to remind all
21 presenters and those in attendance of the rules of conduct
22 at our Board meeting. The Board chair has the authority
23 to supervise the conduct of meetings. This includes the
24 authority to determine when a speaker is being disruptive
25 of the meeting or is otherwise violating the timing or

1 presentation rules I just discussed.

2 And now I'd like to have a roll call of each
3 Board member. Please respond verbally when I call your
4 name.

5 Member Jones?

6 MS. JONES: Present.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Member Whitehill?

8 MS. WHITEHILL: Present.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Member Smith?

10 MR. SMITH: Present.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Member Gonzalez?

12 MR. GONZALEZ: Present.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Member Brotherton?

14 MS. BROTHERTON: Present.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Member Cantu Serrano?

16 MS. CANTU SERRANO: Present.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And let the record reflect that
18 I, Mike Rodriguez, am here too. We have a quorum.

19 Let's go to agenda item 2, Pledges of
20 Allegiance - U.S. and Texas. Please stand and honor our
21 country and state with the pledges of allegiance. Member
22 Dean Smith will now lead us in the U.S. Pledge.

23 (The Pledges of Allegiance - U.S. and Texas
24 were recited.)

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Member Smith, for

1 leading us in the U.S. Pledge and Texas Pledge.

2 Agenda item number 3, Chair's reports. Pretty
3 much spoke a lot during our conference and we spoke a lot
4 about the bills that came our way -- or actually that are
5 coming our way. We spoke about the funding, we spoke
6 about a lot of things that we're going to be discussing
7 today, so I won't take too much time in trying to put out
8 what we've said during this conference.

9 I do want to say thank you to everyone, again,
10 for being here. And I'll make sure that once we leave
11 today that everybody here has their answers and everybody
12 here goes to their respective agency with the right
13 answers to your chiefs or your sheriffs. So make sure
14 that during this meeting where we discuss, to where if you
15 do have a question and you might want to ask one of us
16 later to please do so, and that way you can have the right
17 response.

18 Members, we will now take up item 3.A.,
19 Approval of transcript from our April 19, 2023, meeting as
20 minutes.

21 Members, if everyone has reviewed the
22 transcript, would anyone like to make a motion?

23 MS. WHITEHILL: Member Whitehill. I move that
24 the Board adopt the transcript as minutes from the
25 February 22, 2023 meeting.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Motion from Member Whitehill.
2 Is there a second?

3 MS. BROTHERTON: Member Brotherton. I second.

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I have a motion from Member
5 Whitehill and a second from Member Brotherton. Is there
6 any other further discussion?

7 (No response.)

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hearing none, I will now call
9 for the vote. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

10 (A chorus of ayes.)

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All opposed say nay.

12 (No response.)

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Let the record reflect that I,
14 Mike Rodriguez vote aye. The motion passes.

15 Agenda item 3.B., Chair's reports. Again, at
16 this time I have no comments.

17 We'll go to agenda item number 4, MVCPA
18 director's report. Members, Joe Canady and designated
19 staff will present a briefing on various topics in this
20 agenda item.

21 Director Canady.

22 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, members. Jana
23 Ybarra and the hotel staff worked tirelessly in the
24 preceding months leading up to the conference to ensure
25 that everything was in place and prepared for the MVCPA.

1 Staff were open to event room changes, food and beverage
2 requests and room availability to ensure that the MVCPA
3 staff, Board and attendees had the best experience that we
4 could have this week.

5 But I'd also like to thank Texas DMV for
6 providing staff to assist us with this conference. It was
7 very well appreciated and we couldn't have done some of
8 the things that we were able to complete this week without
9 them, specifically Monica Hernandez, Claudia Leal, Zach
10 Warden, and our manager's wife, Kim Pence. We appreciate
11 everything that everyone did this week to make this a
12 successful week.

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any
16 questions for Director Canady?

17 (No response.)

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, we will now move to
19 agenda item number 5, Legislative update. We will now
20 hear from Director Keith Yawn, director of Government and
21 Strategic Communications, and Director Joe Canady.

22 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, if we could go back
23 to item 4.B.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So we're going back to 4.B.
25 Director's Report, Joe Canady, again, director of MVCPA,

1 and Texas DMV staff.

2 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, members, this will
3 be a two part for 4.B and 4.C. Mr. Hayden and Mr. Yawn
4 will continue on agenda item 5, so if you'll just be
5 patient with us briefly.

6 The 88th Legislative Session convened in
7 regular session January 10, 2023 and adjourned on May 29,
8 2023. The General Appropriations Act and the Supplemental
9 Appropriations Bill include a proposed budget of
10 \$24,190,500 for the MVCPA. Of this amount, \$22,879,972
11 are available for grants. The budget amount does not
12 include appropriations from a contingency rider for Senate
13 Bill 224 at this time.

14 May I move to agenda item 4.C?

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

16 MR. CANADY: Agenda item 4.C, these
17 appropriations will allow for an increase in MVCPA staff
18 to include an administrative section, a grant compliance
19 unit consisting of auditor and grant specialists, a fee
20 collection unit, public awareness and education unit, as
21 well as a law enforcement training unit.

22 And that's all I have on agenda item 4.C.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any
24 questions for Director Canady or designated staff?

25 (No response.)

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Now we're moving to agenda 5.
2 So agenda item 5, we'll now hear from Director Keith Yawn,
3 director of Government and Strategic Communications, and
4 Director Joe Canady.

5 Thank you, Keith, for being with us here today.

6 MR. YAWN: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members.

7 Thank you for having me this morning. My name is Keith
8 Yawn and I'm the director of Government and Strategic
9 Communications for the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

10 Agenda item 5 is an update on recent
11 legislative activities since your last Board meeting. As
12 Joe just mentioned, the legislature completed the 88th
13 Regular Session on May 29, and the governor's veto period
14 ends this Sunday, by which time we will know for certain
15 which bills will become finally law.

16 The department tracked 531 individual pieces of
17 legislation this year, completed analysis of 413 of those,
18 and reported 162 fiscal impact estimates. The legislature
19 passed 70 bills that impacted either core or
20 administrative department operations, including those of
21 the MVCPA activities.

22 This was, by any definition, as was mentioned
23 at this conference already, an incredibly productive
24 session for MVCPA. Chris Hayden, Texas DMV deputy chief
25 financial officer, will be reviewing funding and staffing

1 increases in more detail received by the program in just a
2 moment, but in addition to those budget increases, several
3 bills passed that alter motor vehicle crime enforcement
4 activities.

5 I'd like to review a couple of those now. The
6 first being, of course, Senate Bill 224, and others at
7 this conference throughout the last several days have
8 spoken much more eloquently and in detail on this than I
9 will, but for those watching the livestream, I'll provide
10 a brief summary of this. Senate Bill 224 addresses recent
11 increases in catalytic converter theft and related crimes.

12 MVCPA is the central administrator for the
13 bill's implementation, and the bill charges MVCPA with
14 developing and implementing a multi-agency catalytic
15 converter crime detection and prevention plan due by the
16 end of this year. The bill also increases the insurance
17 fee by a dollar to fund MVCPA grants for efforts related
18 to catalytic converter crimes.

19 Additionally, the legislature provided specific
20 appropriations for the implementation of the bill's
21 provisions, including four new full-time equivalent
22 positions. And this bill is, of course, the topic of an
23 additional later item to discuss in more detail for the
24 implementation requirements.

25 House Bill 914 amends the Penal Code to clarify

1 that temporary tags are governmental records and tampering
2 with one is a Class A misdemeanor. The bill also allows
3 cite and release for this offense. These changes take
4 effect September 1 of this year.

5 Another of the very large and involved bills
6 that the department tracked and worked on during this
7 legislative session was House Bill 718, which replaces
8 paper temporary tags, one-trip and 30-day permits with
9 metal license plates. The change from paper to metal will
10 take place during the summer of 2025.

11 The related implementation requires an
12 expansion in the use of existing metal plates, the
13 creation of several new types of metal plates, and
14 development of a new plate inventory management system, as
15 well as the reworking of numerous registration and
16 licensing processes, including a change to have license
17 plates remain with a vehicle at the time of transfer.

18 These are notable changes from current
19 operations and the department will be working closely with
20 tax assessor-collectors, dealers and the law enforcement
21 community on the rulemaking and process changes related to
22 this large implementation. Rule adoptions have their own
23 due date of December 2024.

24 House Bill 2195 adds a covering to the existing
25 offense of altering or obscuring the letters and numbers

1 on a license plate and sets a \$300 fine with potential
2 penalty enhancements for repeat offenders. The bill also
3 adds that the plate will be checked during a vehicle's
4 safety inspection and the vehicle will fail the inspection
5 if its plate is in violation of these changes. The change
6 takes effect on September 1 of this year.

7 And finally, House Bill 3297 eliminates safety
8 inspections of non-commercial vehicles but retains
9 emission inspections in certain counties. This change
10 takes effect in January of 2025 and will require revisions
11 to department computer systems and policies to allow for
12 registration of certain vehicles without the current
13 safety inspection, while still collecting an inspection
14 and replacement fee. The department plans to release
15 public awareness communications leading up to the
16 effective date. The Department of Motor Vehicles will be
17 working closely with the Department of Public Safety and
18 the Commission on Environmental Quality to implement these
19 changes.

20 Mr. Chairman, this concludes my presentation
21 unless there are any questions.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Keith.

23 On the committee that needs to be put together
24 or the agencies that have to come together to create that
25 reporting and the things that we need to do, by when do we

1 need to do that? The TDLR, DPS and DMV.

2 MR. YAWN: For the safety inspection
3 elimination?

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: For the catalytic converters.

5 MR. YAWN: For the catalytic converters. The
6 plan that is required by that, in collaboration with those
7 other entities that you mentioned, is due by January 1 of
8 2024, so by the end of this year.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So we have very little time.

10 MR. YAWN: There is a limited amount of time to
11 complete that work.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So members, can we discuss how
13 we are going to be approaching this during this agenda
14 item, or do we need to bring it back?

15 MR. CANADY: It will be done during that agenda
16 item.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay, perfect. Thank you,
18 Keith.

19 MR. HAYDEN: Good morning, Chairman, Board
20 members. For the record, I am Chris Hayden.

21 I am the deputy chief financial officer for the
22 Texas DMV, and I'm here to provide a high level summary of
23 the Appropriations Bill. And so I'm just going to go real
24 high level and I'll go in a little more detail as well.

25 On May 29, the 88th Legislature passed the

1 '24-25 budget for \$653.5 million for the department. Some
2 of the highlights include: Phase I of the Registration
3 and Title System replacement; two additional regional
4 services, one each in Dallas and Houston; our Camp Hubbard
5 renewal project. We also received 46 additional FTEs for
6 the base bill, including six for MVCPA.

7 We also received additional funding for MVCPA
8 to meet the full statutory requirement for funding, as has
9 been discussed many times this week as well. We also
10 received some contingency appropriations that I'll also go
11 into a little more detail.

12 As Keith mentioned, we still have a few more
13 days. These are all contingent on final approval by the
14 governor. House Bill 1 has not been signed off by the
15 governor at this point.

16 So a little more detail. The Conference
17 Committee budget includes the RTS which is \$6.8 million,
18 our regional service centers is \$3.5 million, our Camp
19 Hubbard renewal project is \$143 million. We also have
20 additional authorized FTEs of \$3.7 million, and then your
21 MVCPA funding to bring you up to statutory authority is an
22 additional \$14.3 million for the biennium. Like I said,
23 you'll receive an six FTEs as a result of this.

24 And then I wanted to go into the contingency
25 riders. Keith already mentioned a discussion of them but

1 I was going to go over the financing side.

2 Senate Bill 718 for temporary tags includes an
3 additional \$35 million in appropriations. Senate Bill 224
4 is approximately \$55 million, and that's the catalytic
5 converter bill and that includes an additional four FTEs
6 for MVCPA. Lastly, Senate Bill 505 which is for the
7 electric vehicles, and that's \$214,000. And these are
8 contingency bills and these are included in the original
9 number which I gave you, \$653.5 million.

10 There's two other items I wanted to point out.

11 \$2.6 million of general revenue has been appropriated
12 directly to the Department of Criminal Justice for
13 additional license plate production, and also we are
14 required by rider to do a long-range planning of our
15 regional service centers, and submit that no later than
16 December 1 of 2024.

17 This concludes my presentation, and I am here
18 to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you very much.

20 Anybody have any questions?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yessenia, are there any public
23 comments for this agenda item?

24 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you.

1 Moving on to agenda item number 6, MVCPA
2 Grants, Budget and Reporting Committee Report. We will
3 now hear from Director Canady, Committee Chairman Julio
4 Gonzalez, and designated staff on agenda item number 6.

5 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, members, Joe Canady,
6 for the record, director for MVCPA.

7 The MVCPA authorized the issuance of FY 2024
8 and 2025 requests for applications at its regularly
9 scheduled meeting held on February 22 of 2023. MVCPA is
10 authorized in statute to provide grants to local law
11 enforcement to combat motor vehicle theft, burglary from a
12 motor vehicle and/or fraud-related motor vehicle crime.
13 Eligible applicants may request funds for program
14 operations by submitting an application consistent with
15 the information, including the requirements and conditions
16 stated in the request for applications.

17 The request for applications was posted in the
18 *Texas Register*, as required by law, for at least 30 days
19 prior to the due date for the applications. Twenty-six
20 applications were submitted for FY 2024.

21 To be eligible for consideration for funding, a
22 task force grant application must have been designed to
23 support one or more of the following MVCPA program
24 categories: law enforcement detection and apprehension;
25 prosecution, adjudication or conviction; prevention,

1 anti-theft devices and automobile registration; reduction
2 of the sale of stolen vehicles or parts; educational
3 programs and marketing. The enabling statute provides
4 that the Authority shall allocate grant funds primarily
5 based on the number of motor vehicles stolen in or the
6 motor burglary and theft rate across and the number of
7 fraud-related motor vehicle crimes committed in a state
8 rather than based on geographic distribution.

9 Under Texas Transportation Code Section
10 1006.151, in addition, the following grant features will
11 be given priority consideration in evaluating new grant
12 applications: continued funding programs in compliance
13 with MVCPA grant conditions; programs to combat organized
14 economic crime; border security; use of technology; theft
15 of parts of a motor vehicle; and dedicated prosecutors.

16 Twenty-four task force grant applications and
17 two equipment-only applications were received, for a total
18 of \$23,120,974 in MVCPA funds requested -- the breakdown
19 of funds requested with personnel, professional and
20 contractual and equipment being the largest categories.
21 Just to clarify, for professional and contractual, these
22 are sub-grantees is what that is, the category for the
23 personnel and fringe and other related items that the
24 sub-grantees will require.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and

1 Board members.

2 The task forces have requested a combined total
3 of \$23,120,984. We only have \$22,879,922 budgeted for
4 task force grants. This creates a deficit of \$241,062.

5 The Grants, Budget and Reporting Committee has
6 the responsibility to present viable options, and most
7 importantly, a balanced budget to the Board for
8 consideration.

9 One significant type of expense requested by
10 task forces are the purchase of new vehicles. The task
11 forces requested a combined total of \$1,473,671 in new
12 vehicle purchases. It is my recommendation that the Board
13 not fund the purchase of new vehicles, rather we fund the
14 lease or rental of new vehicles needed by task forces.

15 We have analyzed the financial impact of lease
16 versus purchase, and leasing new vehicles at a maximum
17 rate of \$1,500 per month per vehicle would result in a new
18 \$969,761 savings, placing us under budget for the upcoming
19 fiscal year.

20 It should be noted that there are various line
21 item costs requested by the task forces that should be
22 reviewed and discussed by the Board for consideration, in
23 addition to the previous lease versus purchase
24 recommendation that I just gave.

25 That concludes my report, Mr. Chairman.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, any questions or
2 discussion?

3 MR. SMITH: Member Smith, for the record.

4 I guess is this a discussion, Lieutenant, about
5 approving that, or has this been approved by the Grants
6 and Budget Committee.

7 MR. GONZALEZ: That's a great question. So
8 what you have in front of you is a sheet that has all of
9 the task forces' requested items and so that is one
10 budget. It is over budget.

11 And then you also have on another column the
12 net savings if we were to go through the lease program.
13 And obviously that is a decision up to the Board; the
14 Board is free to adopt or reject any proposal that they
15 would want.

16 MR. SMITH: I just want to make sure that
17 that's not a recommendation of the Board, because I
18 disagree with that. So I think under the rules weren't
19 there some stipulations regarding in-kind cash matches for
20 leases above certain amounts of money?

21 MR. GONZALEZ: Certainly. So the task forces
22 would be free to have purchases in their cash match.
23 We're talking about MVCPA funds dedicated to the purchase
24 of vehicles.

25 MR. SMITH: Some of these I don't see any cash

1 matches that have been established, or perhaps we need to
2 establish what those in-kind matches are going to be if
3 allowed to spend up to \$1,500 a month for a lease. Does
4 that make sense? It's stipulated in the Grant Handbook.

5 MR. CANADY: Joe Canady, director MVCPA.

6 Member Smith, grantees are required to have a
7 minimum 20 percent cash match. The match is listed for
8 each grantee here, what they have put in their
9 application.

10 The match, some of them do it two different
11 ways. Some of them will take all of the funds and apply
12 their match to certain areas. Some of them will allow the
13 system to calculate the match which is distributed out
14 equally across the different line items in the budget.
15 Some have done both.

16 The match funds that are listed here in this
17 table is for the application, and those funds we
18 anticipate there's going to be funds left in there in that
19 match section that the grantee would be allowable to
20 adjust around in areas that they need. Some of this would
21 be from vehicle purchases that match was included, so
22 there's going to be a little extra funds there, as well,
23 for them to adjust as needed.

24 It's also that a grantee may decide to not
25 lease a vehicle, but use the amount of funds that were

1 awarded to them for the purpose of leasing vehicles to put
2 that together with additional match to purchase a vehicle
3 versus being tied into a lease.

4 MR. SMITH: So are we leaving the option of
5 purchasing a vehicle up to the grantee?

6 MR. CANADY: I think that the option should be
7 there for them to be able to purchase with the amount of
8 funds that were provided for that section if it were based
9 off of leased vehicles. Some grantees have a large
10 program income balance that they can put that additional
11 match in, or they may have areas of the budget that they
12 can adjust and move those line items over if the solution
13 to purchase a vehicle works better for them.

14 MR. SMITH: Okay. You know, this has come up
15 before. I believe it was when the City of Dallas had
16 requested additional funds to lease vehicles within the
17 last year or so, and there was a lot of discussion about
18 the reality of \$1,500 a month vehicle lease and whether
19 that was a pragmatic decision or not.

20 At the end of the day, I think \$1,500 a month
21 is excessive. I don't think there's been a lot of
22 homework been done about that rather than just put a
23 number out there at \$1,500 a month and say that that's
24 okay. I don't think anybody in this room probably under
25 their normal business or personal situation would spend

1 \$1,500 a month on a vehicle lease, and I don't know that
2 the optics of it are all that good.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Gonzalez, for the record.

4 So, Member Smith, I should say that I am an
5 employee of the City of Dallas and the department does pay
6 for a rental as my city vehicle, which it's a Toyota
7 Avalon, and the total cost of it is about \$1,200 per
8 month. That's just the going rate for what it is in our
9 contract.

10 But with that said, that \$1,500 a month is
11 simply what MVCPA would be providing; task forces would be
12 free to include any remainder within their cash match.
13 But let me give an example of how it is that this concept
14 would result in a savings.

15 So you'll see in the grant applications that
16 there is one task force that requested about \$400,000 in
17 the purchase of new vehicles for about four cars. We can
18 fund, we can give \$400,000 and say, Here you go, here's
19 the money for those cars. Or we could set aside \$1,500 a
20 month in a rental or lease and that equates to \$72,000 of
21 MVCPA funds. So they get the same amount of cars except
22 instead of us issuing \$400,000, we give \$72,000.

23 In addition to that, the maintenance is already
24 covered when you are renting the vehicle. And I should
25 also note that with purchasing a vehicle with MVCPA funds,

1 it is very difficult to get rid of that car once it has
2 reached the end of its life. There are state rules
3 because the state has a vested interest in that car and it
4 has to be traded in.

5 Am I correct, Director Canady? And there's
6 quite the process that once a car that we purchased has
7 200- or 300,000 miles, it's not very easy for these task
8 forces to get rid of these vehicles.

9 And I'll let Director Canady expand on that.

10 MR. CANADY: Joe Canady, MVCPA.

11 Member Gonzalez, that is correct. For a
12 grantee to dispose of an asset there are two options.
13 One, concerning a vehicle, they can trade it in on the
14 purchase of a new vehicle which will reduce the price of
15 that new vehicle. Or if they decide to sell that, then
16 grant payments must be deducted from the sale of that
17 vehicle, the proceeds that are obtained.

18 Does that answer your questions?

19 MR. SMITH: So leasing versus buying creates an
20 extended liability across the board for multiple years,
21 and I think it's wise for the Board to consider that.
22 Have we considered that, thought about that? Spending
23 \$18,000 a year on a leased vehicle, that's going to come
24 up again next year.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Correct. And so one of the

1 concepts with rentals and leases versus purchasing -- I
2 mean, we don't know how much we're going to be
3 appropriated in the future. The rental can be canceled at
4 any time and returned in the event that we don't have the
5 appropriations moving forward.

6 MR. SMITH: But that puts us in the same boat
7 we're in today then, and that is there's not enough cars.
8 Correct?

9 MR. GONZALEZ: It's certainly difficult to be
10 purchasing vehicles these days through a dealership, but I
11 have not had any difficulty renting my vehicle through
12 Enterprise. So that's my personal experience.

13 MR. SMITH: Well, what's just been said is that
14 if we lose funds in the future, it's easy to turn one back
15 in. That puts us again in a problem where we're short of
16 vehicles again because there's no money.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: First of all, we don't have the
18 money to fund everybody's request on vehicles. Chairman
19 Rodriguez, for the record.

20 So we need to be responsible in trying to bring
21 a balanced budget to this Board and to make sure that
22 where the monies are granted that it's in a responsible
23 way. So at this point we do not have the money to fund
24 everybody's requests for those vehicles, and we're not
25 going to be reducing the amount of FTEs versus vehicles.

1 Bottom line, we're not going to do that.

2 I think that would be irresponsible for us to
3 do something like that. So I think we have to get
4 creative in the way that we're going to be giving these
5 task forces their vehicles to go and do their normal
6 duties and their operations.

7 And one thing that I'm looking at that I also
8 think it is a good idea, go to renting or leasing vehicles
9 versus purchasing right out a vehicle. I saw some
10 applications with a cost of \$87,000 per vehicle. That for
11 me is not going to happen.

12 We need to make sure that we are responsible
13 enough to make sure that we reduce that number. If we're
14 going to purchase vehicles we're going to have to get
15 creative; if we're going to go to leasing, that's what
16 we're proposing. But this is the reason why we're here to
17 discuss this and make sure that we get the right answers.

18 But I think at this point we should have this
19 conversation because we do not have the funds to put
20 everybody in the vehicles that they requested.

21 MR. SMITH: Mr. Chairman, in Monday's board
22 meeting there didn't seem to be a shortage of task force
23 commanders that were willing and able to purchase
24 vehicles. Certainly there were some that didn't seem
25 expensive in terms of cost. They had done their homework

1 and were prepared to cite the expense of, say, a Ford F-
2 150 four-wheel drive, and they certainly weren't
3 80-something thousand dollars.

4 So there have been those out there that have
5 done their homework and have found a source for vehicles.

6 I guess I'm having a hard time understanding why some
7 have a hard time finding vehicles while others haven't,
8 and is that a smart move for the Board to allow that to
9 happen.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I think the approach to this
11 would be if somebody would want to purchase a vehicle, you
12 know, and they have a sole source or a government purchase
13 contract that they have already in place with their
14 agency, that makes it easy for them to purchase these
15 vehicles. Usually the bigger agencies have that. We have
16 a lot of small agencies that do not have that luxury, and
17 I think that's where that gap is at.

18 MR. SMITH: Most of them -- a lot of them are
19 smaller agencies that have managed to come up with an
20 agreement or a price point for a new vehicle. And just as
21 an example, Paris seemed to be very reasonable in what
22 their request was.

23 I'm just putting this discussion out there
24 because, again, I agree with you, Chairman, that we need
25 to be fairly cautious about how that money is spent and

1 how much money is spent, because at the end of the day,
2 would any of us do that on our own. And if the expense is
3 much higher than that, what is the justification for it
4 and we be able to answer that question.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I agree. And I'll tell you
6 this, during my analysis of every application that came
7 our way and reading some of these applications, what I saw
8 is, okay, this is what we've been wanting all this time
9 when we did not have the money to request. We needed
10 cars, we needed computers, we needed, you know, a couple
11 of other items.

12 But I didn't see anything in those applications
13 that brought, hey, I need this equipment to bring the
14 numbers down. The majority of the applications were
15 vehicles, overtime and things like that, but at the same
16 time, I did not see a new approach to reducing the number
17 of auto thefts. And it doesn't go for everyone, I saw
18 some that there was justification there. But a lot of
19 them were -- I'm going to be very honest with you, a lot
20 of them were just about I want new cars, I want new
21 computers, I want uniforms.

22 Things like that to me, you know, we've been
23 working with the minimum, and what I wanted to see was,
24 okay, now that we have this money, now we'll be able to
25 reduce the number of auto thefts; this is an idea that I

1 have, LPRs, cameras, cameras in vehicles, LPRs in
2 vehicles. Even if you would have asked for LPRs in a
3 patrol car that you would just be able to put it on your
4 patrol squads in certain areas, especially small
5 communities, that would have been gold for me, that you
6 can just send a unit out there with LPRs and they can
7 capture vehicle license plates during their rounds at
8 hotels or neighborhoods or things like that, but I didn't
9 see any of that. The majority, like I said, was requests
10 for vehicles, requests for laptops, uniforms and things
11 like that.

12 So again, going back to the vehicle issue, we
13 do need to be very responsible with that. And I think we
14 can continue the discussion right now; we can bring Dan to
15 the table and kind of find out numbers, leases versus
16 purchases. But at the same time, we do not have the money
17 to fund everybody for vehicles, and we need to be very
18 responsible.

19 Now, keep in mind, guys, this is just for the
20 auto theft part, auto burglary part of the grant. The
21 other catalytic converter money, we're not even discussing
22 that right now, so that's totally different. That's going
23 to be a different plan, different goals, and we're going
24 to come back to the table on that.

25 But for this, we do need to come up with a

1 solution to what we have here. We need to bring in a
2 balanced budget.

3 At the same time, I do want to say, going back
4 to Midland-Odessa, we have not discussed that and we do
5 need to discuss it. That's our responsibility to make
6 sure that we reach out to that jurisdiction and say, hey,
7 you have a problem. Here we are, we're here to help. And
8 if we can help them, I think it's incumbent on us to do
9 that.

10 MR. SMITH: Mr. Chairman, I guess to kind put
11 the end of my comments out there on record, I don't
12 believe that there is a cost savings to anybody purchasing
13 versus leasing. With leasing we don't own anything,
14 nobody owns anything, there's no asset. We're paying to
15 use a vehicle and in my mind, leasing is generally a sign
16 of the economic times that we go through.

17 The vehicle market is going to start softening,
18 or has softened a bit. Interest rates are rising. I
19 think it's wise to take a look at purchasing because of
20 those reasons.

21 Vehicle inventories are up a bit more now; I
22 don't think they're as hard to get as they were two years
23 ago during COVID. So it's just hard to convince me that
24 there's a cost savings to the program by leasing versus
25 buying, and I'll just leave it at that.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I think what if these
2 agencies just get created, they just do a lease to own, a
3 dollar buyout at the end of the three years that we're
4 paying for the vehicle, but right now do not dish out the
5 whole amount of money and we're left in the red. I say
6 get creative, do a lease to own, a dollar buyout. In
7 three years, it will be theirs.

8 MR. SMITH: Yeah, I agree. There was no
9 discussion in the applications that I saw about the
10 breakdown of the terms of the lease, whether it's a five
11 years and out, is there a residual value to that vehicle.

12 Because at the end of the day, it's beneficial for the
13 leasing company to force the lessor to cover the residual
14 cost.

15 That's how they make money. That doesn't exist
16 in a purchase agreement, it exists in a different way in
17 the pricing schedule how a vehicle is priced.

18 So again, leases are good for some people, not
19 good for others. I'm fairly fiscally conservative, and
20 again, I just don't think that over the short term or the
21 long term that there is a financial savings by leasing
22 over purchasing vehicles.

23 And I appreciate the Board's time in having
24 this conversation.

25 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, if I may? I've seen

1 some movement in the audience. Some of the commanders, I
2 believe they are probably filling out comment cards.

3 It might be a good idea to ask them if they do
4 comment, allow them to provide what works best for their
5 agencies as well, too. There may be some things that
6 we're not looking at.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Every agency has five minutes
8 to present something to us, so why don't we just starting
9 bringing them up.

10 Board members, are you all right with that?

11 Are we okay with that?

12 We'll start with City of Austin.

13 MR. SIMONEAUX: Good morning. Sgt. Simoneaux
14 with Austin PD.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Sarge, good morning.

16 So I'm going to get Sharon and Julio to start
17 the conversation with each agency and then that way the
18 Board can continue with that.

19 MS. JONES: Sharon Jones, for the record.

20 Each agency has a five-minute presentation, or
21 they should, and so in the presentation they can address
22 whatever they feel they need to address, including lease
23 or no lease.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I know that if you have
25 vehicles in your application, this is the time to kind of

1 go back and forth as to why is it that you prefer
2 purchasing or why your agency is moving towards purchasing
3 versus leasing, or if you would prefer which one or the
4 other. It's just for conversation.

5 MR. SIMONEAUX: We do not have vehicles in our
6 application, but one thing it brings to mind is how do you
7 put a light package in a rented or leased vehicle. That's
8 something I think that needs to be taken into
9 consideration, because our vehicles are not just used to
10 go from point A to point B; we use it in a police-related
11 fashion. So how could you per that lease modify the
12 vehicle to fit your needs as a task force is a question
13 that comes to my mind.

14 MR. SMITH: Mr. Chairman, that's my
15 understanding is that they're not allowed to modify those
16 vehicles, permanently attaching equipment to that vehicle
17 if it is indeed a lease or a rental. That's my
18 understanding.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And I know some agencies do the
20 outfit on vehicles. I know some agencies request that and
21 need that, but in the investigative component of MVCPA --
22 because every task force here is an investigator, we do
23 undercover work, we do the operations that we need to do.

24 I can ask mostly everybody here, when you do an op,
25 you're always going to include patrol, you know.

1 You're always going to have that marked unit in
2 case you engage in a 1080 and a pursuit. You're not going
3 to engage in a pursuit in an unmarked vehicle. That's
4 mainly mostly everybody's policy.

5 And so my vision of providing unmarked vehicles
6 is not to outfit them with a cage to transport prisoners
7 or suspects. It's not to outfit them with lights and
8 siren because we're going to be going 80-90 miles an hour
9 after a car. That's dangerous, we're not going to do
10 that.

11 At the end of the day, something does happen,
12 the liability falls on the agency and MVCPA because that
13 is going to be an MVCPA-funded vehicle. So we do not want
14 to engage on 1080s, on pursuits in an unmarked vehicle
15 because that's not the way it works.

16 I know that the request has been let's outfit
17 the vehicles with lights and siren but it's still going to
18 be unmarked. Unless you're specifically requesting a
19 marked unit, and you're going to have a uniformed officer
20 on your task force, that changes the story.

21 I can tell you this, some of the briefs that
22 I've gotten from a lot of the agencies that we have here,
23 a lot of their work has been done with unmarked units, a
24 lot of their work -- we have agencies here with Camrys but
25 yet I see in applications Tahoes, and not LS, LT Tahoe,

1 very expensive.

2 So how is that going to bring the numbers down?
3 How is that going to help us with our mission to reduce
4 the number of auto thefts and do your work? And I can
5 tell you here there are several agents here, they don't
6 use marked units with cages and lights and siren.

7 But again, the investigative component of what
8 we do every day, I just strongly feel and believe that you
9 don't need an outfitted car. Yes, maybe some lights just
10 in case, but not lights and sirens, not a cage, not a full
11 blown MDT. If you're here with a beard and tattooed up
12 and making yourself as an undercover agent for ATF and
13 then you get there with lights, cage and an MDT in your
14 unit, you're not doing that work, we're not doing that
15 work.

16 So I'm going to be very honest with you, I've
17 been in this business for a long time, we do not need
18 those kind of vehicles, we don't. We can do our jobs with
19 regular vehicles, unmarked, just to get us from point A to
20 point B.

21 And if we're going to do a tactical
22 surveillance, those are the vehicles you need, you need
23 Camrys, you need a Blazer, not an Explorer because
24 everybody knows that you're a cop. But those are the
25 types of vehicles that we need to do those types of

1 operations. Those are the operations you guys are doing.

2 So again, outfitting vehicles is going to cost
3 us a lot of money. I myself as the chairman, I would not
4 support that. I'm going to be very honest with you. Not
5 full blown lights and siren, not a cage, not a full blown
6 MDT with GPS and everything in there.

7 So that is my belief. I'm opening it for the
8 other Board members to see if they have any comments to
9 say. Julio? Sharon?

10 MR. GONZALEZ: I agree, Mr. Chairman, and there
11 are options. You know, there are several items from the
12 task forces in requested funds for make-ready and for
13 updating in the tens of thousands of dollars to put in
14 MDTs specifically. I have no problem with getting
15 Toughbooks and air cards so the folks can have a computer
16 in there, but when you combine those costs, it puts us
17 over budget.

18 I mean, the fact is there's 29 cars here that
19 the task forces want, 29 cars at a total combined value of
20 \$1.51 million. Switching to leasing changes that cost to
21 \$522,000. This is easy.

22 That's all I have.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So for Austin I noticed you
24 didn't put a line item for overtime.

25 MR. SIMONEAUX: Correct.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is there a reason why,
2 Sergeant?

3 MR. SIMONEAUX: Because right now we haven't
4 had an issue being paid by the city itself. They've been
5 funding the overtime.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: The city has been funding the
7 overtime.

8 MR. SIMONEAUX: Yes, sir. I'm sure at some
9 point in time that will dry up, but at this point in time
10 we've been funded with overtime.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you for that.
12 Anybody else have any questions for the
13 sergeant?

14 (No response.)

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You want to say a little bit
16 about your task force for the Board here, what you guys do
17 and what it's composed of?

18 MR. SIMONEAUX: Sure. We consist of ten
19 detectives and two sergeants. Some of the problems or
20 issues we've had, of those ten we've only had seven
21 working detectives because of medical reasons, FMLA, et
22 cetera. And we've had one that's been out for two years,
23 another that's been out for a year, and one that's been
24 out for three months, so that's caused some issues.

25 Within the department itself, we've had to

1 justify our existence. As you know, Austin PD is short on
2 patrol, so there's been rumors, talks about eliminating
3 certain units. Many units have been eliminated since the
4 defunding, and we've been put on the chopping block on
5 occasion. Luckily we've been able to justify our
6 existence and I think the grant has helped with that a
7 lot, seeing that it's funded by the state, partially
8 anyway.

9 Other issues that we've come into, an extremely
10 high caseload. Auto thefts in general are up 33 percent
11 in our area. A lot of it has to do with the TikTok
12 challenge, of course. So having the manpower to combat
13 that has been very difficult.

14 Our cases are currently about 1,000 behind in
15 assigning cases which has put us about two months --
16 because we're averaging about 500 cases a month. Some of
17 the things that we have done to help with that issue is we
18 did a grant adjustment recently and we're going to be
19 hiring retired officers to come back on a part-time basis
20 to help with the case assignments.

21 Because of the shortage of manpower, it limits
22 our ability to work our bait program, but some of the
23 things we've done to combat that is we've empowered
24 patrol. We've given them the option to come up with ops
25 plans which is monitored and guided by us, and we're

1 hitting hotspot areas with the use of patrol. They
2 basically do all the fun work and my detectives handle the
3 paperwork when it comes to arrests, search warrants,
4 arrest warrants, et cetera. So we've doubled our bait
5 deployments compared to last year based on this tactic.

6 We've also used the bait vehicle to help other
7 units within Austin PD, which has helped also justify our
8 existence. We've helped such organizations as homicide,
9 setting up on suspects to verify their location before
10 SWAT hits it. We've helped our violent crime task force
11 with deploying vehicles and monitoring certain areas.

12 Sex crimes we also assisted with. They had a
13 prolific sex offender that was committing robberies and
14 sexual offenses in a particular complex. We set the bait
15 vehicles up there for monitoring and was able to capture
16 him on the bait vehicle video which helped identify
17 actually who he was.

18 We've worked with other outside organizations
19 with deploying vehicles, such as with DPS and Kyle PD.
20 We've been successful with other units such as human
21 trafficking, the crash unit, and just surrounding agencies
22 in general. So our bait program, even though we're
23 limited in our capacity to work it as detectives, has been
24 pretty successful.

25 That's about all I have.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Sarge. I know a
2 couple of commanders from Austin PD and I know the morale
3 is at an all-time low there, and I just want you to hang
4 in there.

5 You know, I remember back in, what, maybe five-
6 six years ago, you guys were the agency to look up to and
7 kind of everybody wanted to be in Austin PD at your pay
8 rate, what you guys were getting, and something just
9 happened and completely went south on that.

10 MR. SIMONEAUX: It's called defunding.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And I think just hang in there,
12 there will be some changes, hopefully soon. Just hang in
13 there, I know it's tough for you guys.

14 And that was the reason why I was asking about
15 the OT because I know you guys are running on fumes and I
16 didn't see the line item from Austin. I appreciate
17 everything you guys do there and we're here for any
18 support that you need.

19 MR. SIMONEAUX: Thank you. We are getting the
20 LPR back so that's some good news.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Sarge.

22 City of Beaumont.

23 MR. KARR: For the record, Sgt. Ken Karr with
24 the Beaumont Police Department, Southeast Texas Auto Theft
25 Task Force.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good morning, Sarge.

2 MR. KARR: Good morning, sir. Good morning,
3 everyone.

4 MS. JONES: Good morning.

5 MR. KARR: I am the designated grant program
6 manager for the Southeast Texas Auto Theft Task Force in
7 Beaumont.

8 Southeast Texas Auto Theft Task Force has been
9 a part of this program since virtually the beginning.
10 This is our 30th year, and we've always tried to do
11 everything we can to reduce auto theft and auto burglary.

12 We always try to set our goals high and try to go above
13 and beyond that, when possible.

14 Just a few little stats. Over the last 2-1/2
15 years our task force has recovered 283 vehicles valued at
16 \$5,475,251; 24 weapons valued at \$13,600; other properties
17 which is trailers, ATVs, stuff like that, valued at
18 \$670,000; and 22 pieces of equipment, tractors,
19 excavators, et cetera, valued at \$1.2 million, for a total
20 of \$7,453,750.

21 We also had 95 arrests, and these are actual
22 hands-on arrests. We were not counting warrants, any of
23 that, which will change.

24 But over the last five years I did figure up
25 that we've had 231 hands-on arrests and 438 cases filed

1 resulting in warrants for motor vehicle theft or burglary
2 of a motor vehicle, 360 other cases filed resulting in
3 warrants issued for other charges relating to other cases
4 handled by the task force, such as theft, fraud, et
5 cetera. That's a total of 1,029 arrests and warrants
6 issued for the last five years.

7 In the last 2-1/2 years we've also conducted
8 2,133 68-A inspections. Many of those were from out of
9 our area, our coverage area. That is due to the
10 overwhelming need for these 68-As. We get overflow from
11 Harris County; we get overflow from everybody around us.

12 Right now the task force is comprised of the
13 Beaumont Police Department, Jefferson County Sheriff's
14 Office, Port Arthur Police Department. We just lost
15 Hardin County Sheriff's Office as a participating member
16 due to budgetary -- I don't know if it was budgetary, more
17 of a manpower issues, according to the sheriff.

18 We plan on continuing to aggressively target
19 and pursue offenders involved in motor vehicle theft and
20 burglary and we plan on doing that the way we've been
21 doing it: obtaining information, intelligence from case
22 intake/arrests; information received from followup
23 investigations; other law enforcement officers, agencies
24 and task forces; analyzation of crime data to determine
25 trends and patterns; information received from the public,

1 anonymous tips, informants and internet sources; and task
2 force personnel will work to identify those offenders.

3 Once the intelligence is gathered, it will be
4 acted upon using all tools available, surveillance, covert
5 operations, internet stings, repair and salvage
6 inspections, search warrants, trackers, LPRs to identify
7 the offenders and further identify other offenders that
8 are involved as well, with the goal of thorough
9 investigation and presenting a case to the DAs -- the best
10 case possible to the DAs. We also work with our DAs in
11 our coverage area and make sure that they understand motor
12 vehicle theft and auto burglary, hopefully resulting in
13 more convictions and longer sentences. But that part we
14 have no say on.

15 We'll also work to educate the law enforcement
16 in our area, giving the latest information on trends in
17 auto crimes and methods to use to detect offenders and
18 locate and recover stolen vehicles or property. Also
19 conduct public awareness and education presentations to
20 educate the public, both individual citizens and
21 businesses, on methods to decrease the chance of becoming
22 a victim of motor vehicle theft, burglary or theft of
23 parts. Those presentations will include the most
24 up-to-date information on crime trends in an effort to
25 make the public aware of things to look for to protect

1 themselves and their property.

2 On the administrative side, the program
3 director and program manager will be diligent in making
4 sure that all MVCPA reports or requests which they're
5 responsible for are submitted or responded to in a timely
6 manner, and ensuring that they're accurately documented.

7 One of the things that we are most proud of are
8 our efforts to collaborate with other agencies and task
9 forces all over the state -- our coverage area especially,
10 but all over the state and the nation, for that matter.
11 We'll make information, intelligence and resources
12 available when called upon, if it's feasible to do so, and
13 if it's not feasible, try to come up with a resolution for
14 a favorable outcome for everyone involved, in the name of
15 reducing motor vehicle crimes.

16 We've served our communities and our coverage
17 area for over 30 years -- well, yes, over 30 years, and
18 we've had a huge impact on our communities. Our
19 investigators have the wherewithal -- we have great
20 investigators, I guess is what I'm trying to say.

21 They have the ability to build rapport rapidly
22 with our community, anybody in our community. We go to
23 the rural areas, we get great information there; we go to
24 the cities, we get great information there. That high
25 standard that we have will continue.

1 In closing, I'd just like to say I appreciate
2 the work that went into funding MVCPA this time, to all of
3 y'all that were involved, everyone. And it's nice to have
4 these conferences back. I was only able to go to one or
5 two before they quit, and I think this is a great thing,
6 especially for the networking and it makes me feel like
7 part of the team again. So thank y'all.

8 That's all I've got. Any questions?

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I have some questions, Sarge.
10 There was a line item on your application for warehouse
11 lease. Is that a warehouse lease or an office lease?

12 MR. KARR: It's both. It's attached to our
13 office. That's where we pull all our stuff in for
14 inspection, storage of our seized vehicles till there's a
15 disposition from the court. That's what we use that for.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And your office is there?

17 MR. KARR: Our office is adjoining that
18 warehouse.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Have some questions?

20 MS. JONES: Sharon Jones, for the record.

21 You have about \$15,000 in uniforms. Is it the
22 city PD uniform or your task uniforms?

23 MR. KARR: The \$15,000 is what we are paid to
24 maintain. That should have been listed as an in-kind
25 match, I think, or a cash match. It's our clothing

1 maintenance.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: Sarge, I'm looking at it and it
3 shows the MVCPA funds requested for \$12,500, but in
4 addition to that I have a question that it says: Uniform
5 and clothing allowance provided by the City of Beaumont
6 \$12,500, in accordance with the collective bargaining
7 agreement for six Beaumont officers.

8 So is the City of Beaumont obligated to provide
9 a clothing allowance?

10 MR. KARR: Yes.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That was a cash match?

13 MR. GONZALEZ: No. It was \$12,500 in MVCPA
14 funds.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: But that's a contract issue
16 with the City of Beaumont and the Beaumont PD?

17 MR. KARR: That's our collective bargaining
18 agreement.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Can we fund that? Is that
20 acceptable?

21 MR. GONZALEZ: So Sarge, if it's required by
22 the City of Beaumont, why isn't this considered a fringe
23 benefit?

24 MR. KARR: I don't know that it couldn't be. I
25 did not handle that part of the budget, our finance people

1 did. They wanted to add that to the grant.

2 This is the first time we've done that. I
3 don't know that it was anything other than the finance
4 people looked at it and said we need to add that to it.

5 MS. JONES: I just need to know from those who
6 have been here a lot longer than me if it's allowable.
7 That's all I need to know. If it's allowable, then no
8 problem.

9 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, members, it has been
10 allowed before on applications. Certainly this is an item
11 if the Board wishes to go back and request that the city
12 include that as an in-kind item as well, that's certainly
13 up to the Board.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I just think if it's a contract
15 between the city PD and the city, the city should make
16 that expense under that obligation that they have with
17 that collective bargaining agreement. It shouldn't be put
18 on the MVCPA to fund that just because we're funding FTEs
19 or through your application.

20 I know, Sarge, you don't deal with any of that.
21 I understand that.

22 MR. KARR: Yes, sir.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: But I think it's something that
24 has to be taken care of with the director and your finance
25 people. I just want to make sure that it's something

1 that's allowable from us to do an expense like that.

2 Even if we did it in the past, just because we
3 did it in the past doesn't mean that we need to continue
4 doing it. We have to make sure that it's allowable and
5 that it's legal to do from MVCPA.

6 MR. KARR: I understand.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any other questions for
8 Beaumont?

9 (No response.)

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You have a truck at \$39,000,
11 Sarge.

12 MR. KARR: Forty-eight.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Forty-eight?

14 MR. KARR: I think it's what I put on.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Forty-eight thousand.

16 MR. KARR: That might be less our cash match.

17 That's less our cash match, yes, sir.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So \$48,000.

19 MR. KARR: That's what we asked, yes.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: What kind of vehicle is that?

21 MR. KARR: A four-wheel drive pickup.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: King Ranch?

23 MR. KARR: No.

24 (General laughter.)

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's a 4X4?

1 MR. KARR: Yes, sir.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And you're outfitting it too?

3 MR. KARR: Yes, sir. We pretty much put lights
4 and siren on all of our vehicles.

5 I understand what you're saying. We also have
6 instances where we have to light things up, drive up on a
7 wreck, whatever it might be. We try not to but there are
8 times we have to. Not as far as pursuits, we don't try to
9 pursue in those.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: But you said you drive up into
11 a ranch, that's what you said?

12 MR. KARR: Drive up on a wreck.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Oh, on a wreck.

14 MR. KARR: Yes, on the freeway, try to direct
15 traffic, get things squared away, just for safety
16 purposes.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Sarge, if I'm looking at your
19 budget here, you are also requesting funds for leases. Am
20 I correct?

21 MR. KARR: We have two leases, yes.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: So this is already an acceptable
23 way, I mean, if you already have two.

24 MR. KARR: They prefer to buy, to purchase
25 through the City of Beaumont. Our fleet handles that. We

1 do occasionally have leases. Those leases came up when
2 there was a shortage of vehicles.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: Got it.

4 MR. KARR: One lease we've had for a long time
5 and that's basically a vehicle that we use as a pool car,
6 as a relief car.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any other questions of
8 Beaumont?

9 MS. JONES: No, sir.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Sarge. Appreciate
11 you.

12 MR. KARR: Thank y'all.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: City of Brownsville.

14 MR. DELGADO: Mr. Chairman, members, Sgt.
15 Humberto Delgado and Lt. John Jones. I am the program
16 manager and he is the program director for South Texas
17 Auto Theft Enforcement Task Force.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Can you give us a little
19 background on your task force, what your coverage and your
20 daily operations look like down in the Valley?

21 MR. DELGADO: Of course. So in Cameron County,
22 we are the agency, Brownsville PD. That task force does
23 include Hidalgo County which we have McAllen, Pharr and
24 Edinburg at this time. We are hoping to incorporate Donna
25 PD, hopefully after this session goes by.

1 We do cover that project area which holds
2 approximately eight bridges points of entry. Just in
3 Brownsville, we have three of them. As we've all
4 discussed, I think, throughout this whole conference, a
5 lot of the traffic does move south so it does end up in
6 our project area, whether it would be in Cameron County or
7 Hidalgo County.

8 Brownsville PD, we have six investigators and
9 myself as a sergeant. McAllen has five and a sergeant,
10 Pharr PD has two investigators, and Edinburg PD has two
11 investigators. For Donna we are hoping to incorporate one
12 investigator for them.

13 MR. JONES: Good morning. Lt. Jones,
14 Brownsville PD.

15 If I could, just to circle back to the leased
16 vehicle which the gentleman was speaking of. We currently
17 lease five Nissan Frontiers at this point and we're paying
18 roughly \$550 a month for those vehicles. Now, a Nissan
19 Frontier, depending on the body type or whatever, is not
20 the largest vehicle in the world, obviously, but we do not
21 deck those vehicles out.

22 They're base models in most cases and our
23 investigators do very well with them. Our policy does not
24 allow us to pursue in unmarked vehicles either, so we did
25 not see the need.

1 Now, before I start getting the bad looks from
2 the people in the crowd who have requested other vehicles,
3 I see the need for that as well. But to the gentleman's
4 point, when these leases run out and the vehicles have to
5 be turned back in, the "then what" scenario pops into
6 place.

7 We ourselves have run into a situation where we
8 don't have vehicles to replace those leased vehicles, so I
9 see the benefits of purchasing a vehicle as well. So
10 while the leased vehicle program has worked out well for
11 us in recent years, we've also run into instances where --
12 not under the current contract that we have with our
13 leased vehicles, but in years past -- we've had mileage
14 restrictions on those vehicles as well, where those leased
15 vehicles were sitting parked in our parking lot because we
16 couldn't go over the mileage to have to pay for that at
17 the end of it.

18 So there are pros and cons in both that I can
19 see. At the current time it is working out for us based
20 on our needs, but we do represent multiple agencies within
21 the Valley. So whether that is feasible for them and
22 their needs as far as their departments are concerned,
23 that might be something completely different.

24 But I do see the pros and cons for both, just
25 like I said, to circle back to what he was getting at

1 earlier.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, LT.

3 Can we expand a little bit? As to daily ops,
4 what you guys do?

5 MR. DELGADO: Sure. So we are now working
6 bridge operations, where we try to schedule at least one
7 every week where members from each agency does attend.
8 That way we can go to the bridges, do inspections, if we
9 have to do some sort of surveillance waiting for some sort
10 of lead to cross through, and that way we also help other
11 divisions from the department or their departments as well
12 if there's some sort of BOLO that we need to keep an eye
13 out.

14 Obviously we do work the auto theft cases,
15 burglaries, UUMVs and such. Recently here in our area --
16 and I'm talking about Brownsville -- we have been hit, for
17 lack of a better word, with GMC Denalis. So this has been
18 ongoing for a good while now, I want to say at least the
19 end of last year, 2022.

20 But however, with the hard work of the
21 investigators, we have been able to take down at least
22 three groups and we were able to identify who they were,
23 and also they were working with people from the other side
24 in Mexico. So the investigations and interviews have been
25 productive. They have been giving good information in

1 reference to the operations that they are carrying on that
2 side as well.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: Sarge, LT, I know that I've
4 asked y'all's task force to look into the deployment of
5 license plate readers either on the bridge or going up to
6 the bridge. Can you give me a status update on where
7 you're at with that?

8 MR. DELGADO: Yes. Actually, we do have some
9 LPRs already. We have an LPR trailer that has been
10 deployed, as well as portable license plate readers.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: Outstanding.

12 MR. DELGADO: I know that recently there was a
13 compromise with the system that had been employed so we
14 did take them offline just to make sure that there was no
15 vulnerabilities in reference to that, but now we're having
16 them back online.

17 MR. GONZALEZ: I just want to say that it's
18 incredibly important that we deploy those license plate
19 readers. The area that you cover is of huge significance.
20 We know from these briefings that these cars are being ran
21 into Mexico.

22 And so I can't stress the importance enough of
23 deploying those LPRs at every bridge and point of entry as
24 we can. Thank you.

25 MR. JONES: If I could, just to expand on that

1 a little bit. We have -- through the grants provided
2 through this Board, like the Sarge was saying, we have
3 purchased LPRs. We've also used other grants at our
4 disposal to purchase additional license plate readers,
5 both mobile and fixed, to place within the City of
6 Brownsville so that we can get that coverage.

7 Because as you state, Brownsville is a large
8 city, as well as the Rio Grande Valley, and we've been
9 working very well collaboratively with the different
10 agencies throughout the Valley that are part of the task
11 force to get a lot of these issues covered and taken care
12 of. So we do have additional LPRs that we have ordered
13 and that are coming in, both mobile and fixed. We do have
14 some LPRs that are on patrol cars at the moment that we
15 use through our STEP program and other means to run plates
16 and things of that nature as well.

17 So we are getting that coverage where we need
18 it, and it's always an ongoing process where we'll
19 constantly reevaluate and adjust and go from there.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: Outstanding.

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

22 Sergeant, we talked about on Monday during the
23 committee meeting about possibly realigning some of the
24 positions throughout or moving resources that might be
25 better served. Just for example, you talked about McAllen

1 had five investigators and a sergeant.

2 MR. DELGADO: Yes, sir, it's very stretched.

3 MR. CANADY: And correct me if I'm wrong, but
4 Pharr PD and Edinburg have two investigators each?

5 MR. DELGADO: Yes.

6 MR. CANADY: But they have almost double, if
7 not triple, if you compare to Edinburg, the problem for
8 motor vehicle theft in those jurisdictions.

9 MR. DELGADO: That's correct.

10 MR. CANADY: Would it be better aligned to --
11 or better to align some of the personnel where the
12 situation is the worst?

13 MR. DELGADO: Right. So in reference to that,
14 we had mentioned on Monday maybe reallocate one of the
15 investigators to the agency that way that could help them
16 out with the caseload as well.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How is your structure there?
18 How is the command in that jurisdiction?

19 LT, you're the one that supervises the entire
20 task force?

21 MR. JONES: Correct.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do you have monthly meetings,
23 biweekly meetings? How are you handling the connection
24 with McAllen, Edinburg and Pharr PD?

25 MR. JONES: I am the overall commander of the

1 task force down there. We do have meetings. The sarge
2 meets with the different agencies, what is it, weekly?

3 MR. DELGADO: Right.

4 MR. JONES: And they do get together. They do
5 meet. And as he stated, we do do these bridge operations
6 where everybody is required unless there's some kind of a
7 circumstance where they can't attend.

8 We will travel up the Valley, they travel down
9 to Brownsville so that we can have coverage at the bridges
10 for outbound traffic. So there is constant communication
11 within the different departments there in the Valley, if
12 not weekly, then every couple of weeks or at least monthly
13 we try to meet and discuss what's going on.

14 We have been working very well amongst
15 ourselves to get this information disseminated,
16 intelligence gathering and so forth. We've had instances
17 where we've made arrests in Brownsville that were a direct
18 result of information we received from agents up the
19 Valley from us.

20 So these rings, they don't tend to stay in one
21 place. They move around quite a bit. As soon as we take
22 one ring down, it seems another one pops up.

23 So we work very well together and we share that
24 information on a daily basis if needed, as the case
25 dictates it, and we try to disseminate as much of that

1 information as possible.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do you have MOUs, interlocal
3 agreements to work specific jurisdictions? For example,
4 can Brownsville go down to McAllen and help McAllen and
5 Edinburg with a situation? You have all that in place?

6 MR. DELGADO: Yes. There is an interlocal
7 agreement where that is steered.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So one of the things that I
9 would like to see is reduce the numbers for Edinburg. I
10 know everybody has their numbers, but when you're looking
11 at 40 for McAllen and then you're looking at 100-plus for
12 Edinburg, you know, I think that should get a reaction
13 from you and say, hey, we need to tackle this area and see
14 what's going on. Obviously there is something going on
15 that's different from the other jurisdictions around.

16 So I would like to see more of that coming from
17 you as the fiduciary agency and your command and kind of
18 see where we can tackle that problem that way. And any
19 hotspots that you get, whether it's Brownsville all the
20 way to Hidalgo County, any of those jurisdictions, kind of
21 react to it as fast as possible. Because I saw that their
22 numbers are just way high compared to the rest, and they
23 only have two assets there so we definitely have to work
24 something out there.

25 Also, there's a big gap between Brownsville to

1 those other jurisdictions, and I see Weslaco is not in
2 there. Is there any conversation happening there between
3 you guys and Weslaco PD to kind of have that tightness in
4 that area?

5 MR. JONES: That conversation has been had
6 before. I can't tell you as to why Weslaco is hesitant to
7 come onboard with it, that's a discussion that's had at a
8 much higher level than mine. I know that overtures have
9 been made to Weslaco to come onboard, it just hasn't
10 happened up to this point for whatever reason.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Also, I've had some
12 conversations with the regional director for DPS in that
13 area, Victor Escalon -- you probably know him. He has
14 offered any time that you guys need special agents from
15 DPS or a DPS trooper to work any operation, you just need
16 to raise your hand and say, hey, we need your help here.

17 I know that corridor right there with 83 from
18 Brownsville all the way to that jurisdiction is about
19 what, 30-40 minutes?

20 MR. JONES: Easily.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Easily, right. So we're
22 missing that coverage, and if we can force multiply by
23 bringing DPS in the picture, that would be something that
24 would pay dividends for us. So just kind of putting it
25 out there for you guys. But he has told me that they're

1 ready to roll if you ask, just need to raise your hand.

2 MR. JONES: Will do.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Number of arrests you guys had
4 for last year?

5 MR. DELGADO: I do not have the exact number
6 with me, but I know that there were several arrests made
7 again in conjunction with the vehicle thefts of the GMCs,
8 the GM product that were for groups that were coming down
9 from Houston. But there were several arrests made
10 throughout the end of the year of 2022.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do you have year-to-date?

12 MR. DELGADO: Right now approximately there
13 have been about 50. Some of those arrests, though, they
14 are multiple charges for the same person.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: For the same person.

16 MR. DELGADO: Correct.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And this is on both auto theft
18 and burglary?

19 MR. DELGADO: Yes.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any issues with the *Cártel del*
21 *Golfo*? And you also have PRM in there, right? Any issues
22 with those that has a nexus or them having a nexus to auto
23 theft?

24 MR. DELGADO: We did get some information
25 through some of the interviews that they are requesting

1 the trucks. So with the situation that is going on right
2 now, for example, in Matamoros, there's those
3 confrontations with the military, and it has been
4 explained throughout the conference that they lose a
5 vehicle, they request a vehicle. So whenever those
6 gunfights happen over there, if they lose a couple of
7 vehicles, that's when we see the uprising here where they
8 start taking the vehicles.

9 Investigators are proactive. Whenever the
10 report is received, obviously most of the time it is
11 sometimes hours later after it has been taken, but
12 nevertheless, we look through those reports. If there's
13 any type of lead, whether it be a witness or video, we do
14 go out there and try to retrieve it as fast as we can. If
15 there's any information that we can use, we will put out a
16 BOLO to our patrol, our surrounding agencies, as well as
17 to bridge operations which they have been helpful
18 throughout this whole tenure.

19 There's some times when they see vehicles
20 trying to go outbound and they see something suspicious or
21 based on the conversations that we had with their
22 personnel, you know, look for damage on the door handle,
23 maybe they have a broken window, the sliding window,
24 things that pop out. They will give us a call, agents
25 will respond and we will take over the investigation in

1 reference to that.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So I've seen some of the KNR
3 reports -- you probably get them too through DEA -- and I
4 know that some of those photos are there. Some of the
5 things that are happening in your jurisdiction across the
6 border. Some of those vehicles, a majority, have Texas
7 license plates and you know they're stolen.

8 So some of the intel that I've received is that
9 Corpus is getting hit with a lot of auto thefts and
10 they're going somewhere and we need to identify where
11 they're going. But I'm venturing to say that it's going
12 your way.

13 So this is what we're here for, right. We said
14 networking. Get together with Corpus, find out -- and
15 this is the conversation that we're going to have also
16 with Corpus -- try to find out, hey, what can we do to
17 kind of bridge that gap that we have between Corpus and
18 the cars going that way. Again, there's a substantial
19 amount of auto thefts happening in Corpus and it's
20 concerning, but again, this is something that we need to
21 address just so it doesn't get out of hand.

22 But I know that a lot of those photos that I've
23 seen on social media and those reports that I get, they're
24 all Texas license plates. And you know very well they're
25 going to be stolen.

1 So again, thank you for everything that you do.
2 That's all the questions that I have, unless
3 any other member has questions.

4 MR. CANADY: Can you talk about the supervisory
5 level of the sub-grantees, such as Pharr and Edinburg and
6 McAllen and the rest of those? That's from the task
7 force, your position, and Lieutenant, you too, how y'all
8 supervise those agents assigned to the sub-grantees.

9 MR. DELGADO: So as we had mentioned, the
10 lieutenant is the task force commander. I am the program
11 manager. I'm the one that deals with the sub-grantees the
12 most.

13 They do submit a progress report to myself at
14 the end of each quarter which is reviewed, and anything
15 that needs to be changed, I will let them know. The
16 sergeant in McAllen, he oversees McAllen, obviously. But
17 due to there being those three agencies in the Hidalgo
18 County area, he is also there available for the other two
19 agencies should there be some sort of issue that needs to
20 be brought up so that he can also contact me more directly
21 should there be a need to do so.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Sarge. Thank you,
23 LT.

24 We're going to take a ten-minute break. It is
25 9:52; we'll be back here at 10:02.

1 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Everybody, please take your
3 seat. It is 10:10 a.m. and we're now back in session.

4 City of Burnet -- Burnet County.

5 So we're going to keep it to five minutes,
6 guys, just because some of us have flights right after the
7 meeting. And I know at the pace we're going we'll
8 probably be here till 5:00 a.m. -- 5:00 p.m.

9 (General laughter.)

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So we'll keep it to five
11 minutes. So Earl is going to have a clock over there and
12 he's going to say time, and then we're going to cease it
13 there.

14 MR. STINEHOUR: Mr. Chairman, Board, thank you
15 for having us here. And I want to give thanks to the
16 coordination of the conference. We're all excited, we're
17 glad this is incorporated into this deal, and the MVCPA
18 staff for putting this on, and all the talk around is
19 really good news, and hopefully we can continue with this
20 in the future, like you're saying every year. So thank
21 you for that.

22 My name is Howard Stinehour. I'm the commander
23 of the Heart of Texas Auto Theft Task Force. We're housed
24 out of Burnet.

25 We cover an area from south of Hillsboro, I

1 guess you could say, all the way down to Austin, that I-35
2 gap, all the way into the Hill Country, back through Fort
3 Hood. We assist Fort Hood CID; we have an agreement with
4 them to work with their CID when things come off post,
5 back through Coryell County, Lampasas County, all the way
6 up to Hamilton-Mills County, back in that area. Mainly
7 about 14 counties that we respond to requests for
8 assistance.

9 We have MOUs for the majority of those. Of
10 course those MOUs are going to grow substantially with the
11 assistance in our coverage area.

12 What we're asking for, as y'all see, a
13 investigator, which is -- our biggest need would be
14 McLennan County Sheriff's Office, Waco, I-35. We've been
15 trying to get that for years. Our task force originated
16 up in the Waco area so we're in desperate need of that
17 coverage. We have to commute two hours sometimes to meet
18 up as a unit to investigate or work on cases in the Waco
19 area.

20 We're also trying to get an investigator in the
21 Williamson County area, which used to be part of SCATTF.
22 But they've kind of -- over the years, in transition of
23 staffing and sheriffs, that kind of fell off the radar.
24 So they're asking to jump back on.

25 We already have an MOU with that county. We

1 have investigators that have been trained in auto theft
2 already, they assist us with 68-As already, so they're in
3 and they're excited and they're hoping they can join our
4 task force with an investigator.

5 Basically, I'm trying to also ask for an admin
6 back, I guess you could say. We had one before we had to
7 cut due to funding in the past. I'm kind of the project
8 manager, the admin, the commander.

9 And it's taxing for me to be an investigator
10 also because I still go out on the street with the guys, I
11 go to those locations, I do the 68-As, we do the multi-
12 jurisdictional investigations together. But we do need
13 some help, so I'm asking hopefully we can get that
14 approved.

15 McLennan County has a population of 263,000 and
16 they had 536 vehicles stolen in 2022. And a lot of those,
17 when they're multi-vehicle thefts or multi suspects, Waco
18 Police Department, McLennan County Sheriff's Office,
19 Robinson, all those towns, they'll call on us to assist
20 with our databases, our resources. Because, as everyone
21 knows, those investigators are property crime
22 investigators and those cases are not even assigned. The
23 majority of them, they're just put in a file.

24 So when they can reach out to us -- we do
25 nothing but auto theft, burglary, title fraud. They do

1 it, and we're grateful and we enjoy it, so we have a good
2 rapport with McLennan County area.

3 The Williamson County for 2022 had 505 stolen
4 vehicles, 1,742 BMVs in '22 and they're desperately asking
5 for help. Once they got their new sheriff in, we had
6 meetings and it was conveyed immediately how do we get on,
7 so they're desperate. We already do all their search
8 warrants for any repair shops, chop shops.

9 Any time they have anything auto-related, they
10 call us for joint investigations. They have staffing
11 problems, so we enjoy doing that. So that's another
12 problem there.

13 Back to the analyst position, this analyst, if
14 I could get that back -- or admin, I guess you could say,
15 I'm trying to get this person -- if I could get one, would
16 be the admin/analyst. We rely on Gina with Galveston; we
17 call on her weekly for analyst information to help.

18 When we use NICB or Fusion Center or things
19 like that, there's delays. If you're out on an active
20 case and you need information, we need that source that
21 can have all those databases available to help provide
22 that to you live, so that's a plus for an analyst. We
23 could send that person to training.

24 As we tried in the past with our previous
25 admin, we were going to try to integrate all that as one.

1 It was in motion but then budgeting, of course, hurt
2 that.

3 That admin would also cover compiling the
4 quarterly reports, all the finance, all the things that
5 comes with admin. So there's plenty of work to be done to
6 help out to get me back out on the street to help out on
7 some of these things.

8 MS. BENAVIDES: Sir, your time is up.

9 (General laughter.)

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: What kind of car are you
11 applying for for the \$25,000 that you requested?

12 MR. STINEHOUR: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. We
13 asked for two vehicles, if this is approved, for McLennan
14 and Williamson County.

15 As of right now, the last two purchases I've
16 made are through the Texas Sheriffs Association, and if
17 you click on procurements under there, there are vehicles,
18 all makes and models, pickup trucks, SUVs, everything,
19 \$34- to \$37,000 a vehicle. We're buying them at that
20 cost.

21 We're trading in our older vehicles so I bought
22 a '22 Tahoe, unmarked, for out the door \$24,000. I gave
23 them a pickup which was an MVCPA pickup which had 160,000
24 miles on it but it had transmission issues. Took it to
25 Tomball through that Sheriffs Association, they gave me

1 \$10,000 off the price of the \$34-, so we made out.

2 I bought Coryell County a Z71 crew cab pickup,
3 couldn't pass it up, it was an offer for \$34,000. I mean,
4 it's four-wheel drive, what we needed. They didn't have
5 any of the standard pickups so they said we have Z71s,
6 we'll give it to you at that price. That's how they're
7 listed on the site today.

8 There's Chargers, Durangos, all of this in the
9 Dallas area. I just quoted pricing, if this was to go
10 through, just trying to get a feel for what we could get,
11 there's Chargers and SUVs for the same price in the Dallas
12 area.

13 So the Sheriffs Association goes through kind
14 of regional, kind of where you're at. If you're in the
15 Houston area, they have dealerships in that area. If
16 you're in the Dallas area, they have dealerships there.
17 And that's another option if the lease thing doesn't work
18 out, if it's too much.

19 We do have leased vehicles, not with the grant
20 but the Sheriff's Office has a couple of leased vehicles
21 that the jail used with Enterprise, and we haven't had any
22 issues with those. So either way you go, it's just kind
23 of the pricing. You've just got to negotiate, because
24 Enterprise is a negotiating type, what you want in that
25 vehicle.

1 If you want to drill a hole for a microphone or
2 put lights in it or put striping on it or whatever, they
3 allow that, but there's just different packages as to what
4 those come out to. So that's the vehicle issue.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So now it makes sense, it's a
6 trade-in.

7 MR. STINEHOUR: Yes, sir.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Anybody have any questions?

9 (No response.)

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

11 MR. STINEHOUR: Thank you.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Corpus Christi.

13 MR. LIAROMATIS: Good morning. Mr. Chairman, I
14 took your advice last night, went out and found a suit, a
15 little bit more appropriate today.

16 (General laughter.)

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for that.

18 MR. LIAROMATIS: My name is Andrew Liaromatis
19 with the Corpus Christi Police Department. I am the
20 program manager.

21 MR. TULEY: Lt. Mark Tuley, the auto theft task
22 force commander, Corpus Christi, Texas.

23 MR. LIAROMATIS: So I know we're on the clock
24 here so I'm going to try and just go through some of the
25 information that y'all requested of us pretty quickly.

1 We're the border port city of approximately
2 318,000 residents, serve about 900 square miles. In
3 fiscal year '22-23 we had six investigators, a crime
4 analyst and a program manager. We all served under Lt.
5 Tuley. We recovered 754 vehicles, had 220 arrests, and
6 recovered approximately \$12.4 million of vehicle units and
7 weapons.

8 We want to keep progressing and we're
9 requesting the resources to do so. Thanks to the MVCPA
10 and the hard work of all of you guys, we now have that
11 ability.

12 The RRS grant last year that was awarded to us
13 allowed us access to Vigilant ALPR for the first time in
14 our agency's history, and that has been tremendous. And
15 because of that, we now have a DPO working directly with
16 us proactively, looking for vehicles and cars and
17 addressing that vehicle crime problem that you mentioned
18 earlier.

19 Pressing forward, we want to remain aggressive
20 in attacking the motor vehicle crime problem along the
21 Coastal Bend. And so with our application we are asking
22 for an additional investigator and an intake specialist to
23 kind of bring us out of that defense mode and become a lot
24 more proactive. With those resources and that DPO that
25 we're now able to provide to the program as an in-kind

1 service, we believe that we can do that.

2 And just some of the highlights based off of
3 our application. It's going to include an increased
4 strength of LEO and of course the training that goes along
5 with it. It's going to increase the policing technology.

6 Now that we have the ALPR system, we're really
7 looking to expand on that with that with the L6Qs and the
8 LM5 that we have out in our direct patrol. And then we're
9 also going to increase the citizen response time because
10 as a larger city we do have a very large influx of calls,
11 requests, things like that that really, really take our
12 investigators that have to work the desk away from working
13 these crimes.

14 We're also increasing our proactive
15 strategies -- I know Lt. Tuley might touch on that a
16 little bit -- and we're also going to increase our public
17 awareness efforts to round out everything.

18 But we're excited and we look forward to fiscal
19 year '24, and if you guys have any questions for us, you
20 can beat us up now.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any questions from the Board?

22 MR. LIAROMATIS: I have all exits identified.

23 (General laughter.)

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So have you identified the
25 problem that you're having, where are those vehicles are

1 being taken after they're stolen?

2 MR. TULEY: Lt. Mark Tuley, for the record.

3 We have identified something here recently that
4 we think is problematic in our city. I don't want to get
5 too much into it in this area because it's just beginning,
6 but it has to do with regulated businesses. And one of
7 the things that we're going to do with an extra
8 investigator is dedicate one investigator -- obviously not
9 the new one -- but one of our investigators full-time to
10 regulatory inspections and compliance with salvage yards,
11 mechanic shops and that kind of thing. And I think that
12 that is going to have a huge impact on auto crime in
13 Corpus.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And one of the things also that
15 being a border city, before the general for Texas
16 Syndicate was in Laredo, now that person is in your
17 jurisdiction.

18 MR. TULEY: Yes, sir.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: The one that is in command for
20 Texas Syndicate is in your jurisdiction. And I know that
21 they work very close with the cartel. So I think that's
22 something that's alarming because they're always going to
23 ask for cars.

24 And I know you have your violent crime unit and
25 your gang unit, and that's something that I'm going to

1 propose to you that we can maybe talk to each other and
2 see. Because there's obviously something happening
3 because of the increasing numbers that you're having, and
4 I want to make sure that if you need anything from this
5 Authority, that you ask for it so that we can get it done.

6 Especially, as we said before, the LPRs, whether it's
7 Motorola or the Flock system -- whatever it is that we
8 need to capture the individuals driving those vehicles and
9 then we can spin off from there and having those debriefs
10 from him and see if we can get to the main guy. That's
11 the task here.

12 MR. TULEY: Yes, sir. I appreciate that,
13 Chief. Thank you.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any other questions?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you very much, Corpus.

17 MR. LIAROMATIS: Thank you.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: City of Dallas.

19 MR. RODEN: Good evening, Board. My name is
20 Bryan Roden with the City of Dallas Auto Theft task Force.

21 I won't talk for too, too long, throw out stats
22 or anything like that, because I want to make sure all
23 your questions are answered or anything like that.

24 Our task force has been trying to expand over
25 the last few years. Right now we have one office

1 assistant, nine detectives, me, and I'm trying to expand
2 to two patrol officers.

3 Our day-to-day operations are pretty typical.
4 We're pretty much a proactive unit. We've built two bait
5 cars over the last two years, Hellcats. We've got one GMC
6 truck that we built into a bait car.

7 And I'm open for any questions you guys have
8 about the program, the application I submitted.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Having the increasing numbers
10 in your jurisdiction, what is something you're going to be
11 doing differently this coming year that you think would be
12 something that would be reducing the numbers, at least by
13 one percent in that jurisdiction?

14 MR. RODEN: Well, we found out that the patrol
15 officers that we had assigned to our task force has been a
16 tremendous help. They've enabled us to alleviate some of
17 the strain we put on patrol officers when we're asking
18 them for help. Having those two uniformed officers with
19 us allows us to kind of quicker access, quicker attack and
20 target chop shops without asking for patrol help, make
21 traffic stops without asking for patrol help, and just be
22 a more cohesive proactive unit.

23 When we set out the bait cars, they're there to
24 be able to take down offenders without asking for patrol,
25 to have like a lot of uniformed presence. We're able to

1 conduct a lot of operations more quickly without having to
2 take resources away from patrol.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Within your agency, I know
4 you're an Intellenet police agency. Do you get the
5 reports on hotspots around your city and you respond to
6 those? Or are you actively looking at being proactive and
7 saying, hey, you know what, this is -- of course you're
8 handling your investigations but on the reactive part of
9 it, how is it that you're handling -- well, managing your
10 people?

11 How many investigators do you have under you?

12 MR. RODEN: I have nine detectives.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So I believe you're stretching
14 yourself too thin because of the fact that you do have
15 those long-term organized crime investigations, plus
16 you're also reacting to the hotspots in your city. City
17 of Dallas is huge. It's a monster, and we all know this.

18 And I wanted to see back -- when we come back
19 to the catalytic converter issue, you know, we can expand
20 your program into kind of reacting to those with a lot
21 more personnel than what you currently have. I know the
22 City of Dallas -- how many is the City of Dallas doing as
23 an in-kind?

24 MR. RODEN: Right now I think we moved three
25 over to our in-kind position.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: There are three?

2 MR. RODEN: There's four people in our in-kind
3 position.

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How many is MVCPA funding?

5 MR. RODEN: Seven right now. That's with the
6 expansion with the patrol officers. I put one funded as a
7 uniformed police officer in our program to help do that.

8 The expansion is what we've been trying to do.

9 It's always stretching ourselves thin. I don't know if
10 there's an agency here that can't say they're either
11 overwhelmed or overworked. I think that's just part of
12 the nature.

13 We do get updates on hotspots and things like
14 that, and what we do is try to target those with specific
15 actions. There's always a couple of detectives that are
16 geared towards those long-term investigations and that's
17 what they mainly handle, then there's detectives that kind
18 of gear towards striking with the patrol officers to
19 certain areas. The patrol officers allows us to be able
20 to analyze hotspots and we're able to go to there and
21 specifically target those areas.

22 We work with each unit, CRT teams, crime
23 response teams, out of each division and they'll let us
24 know what areas they're trying to target. If there's an
25 operation they want us to conduct, then we'll take the

1 bait cars out there and help conduct those operations.

2 It's always a shell game of trying to manage
3 the detectives' workloads to what's expected of the city.

4 And I don't know if there's ever going to be an answer
5 to that, but it's very time-consuming and it's just
6 something that we have to deal with.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's labor-intensive, we know
8 that, and that's why it's just food for thought. But
9 again, thank you for coming in today and presenting your
10 grant application.

11 Board members, any questions for Dallas PD?

12 (No response.)

13 MR. RODEN: I do want to say, Mr. Rodriguez,
14 that right now I know there has been some talk about --
15 and it always seems to come up, because I remember coming
16 before the Grants and Budget Committee and asking for the
17 exemption for the truck where we went up from like \$600 to
18 \$900. And I agree with you, we have two leased vehicles
19 right now and my plan was to give one back once we
20 completed the purchase from this current fiscal year's
21 vehicle.

22 Right now I'm able to get a Ford F-150 for
23 around \$1,000, which is a little bit cheaper than Mr.
24 Gonzalez, what he pays for his. That's what our contract
25 rate is. I feel like it's very important to be able to

1 kind of have both in your task force.

2 I understand the pros and cons of each one, but
3 there needs to be a distinction of leased vehicles and
4 rental vehicles. You can do more with a rental vehicle,
5 per se, than a leased vehicle, given the mileage
6 restrictions and things like that. The City of Dallas has
7 a contract to rent vehicles and we drove one rental
8 vehicle up here and another vehicle that the MVCPA
9 purchased for us a couple of years back, we drove it up
10 here too.

11 All the vehicles that we currently have that
12 are MVCPA-purchased, we have maintained those. And I know
13 there's been some talk about maintenance and there's a
14 line item category in my budget for maintenance.

15 So I do agree with you and I would support the
16 rental vehicles, but I also think that there needs to be
17 equal distribution of vehicles that are owned that a task
18 force can manipulate, do things with to whatever is going
19 on in their program, plus vehicles that are leased that
20 they can rely on, go places, do things with.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for that. And I
22 think it's always good to have both, but given the
23 situation that we have right now with budget, we're
24 looking at something that has to be a win-win situation.
25 We're here and we're looking at these applications and

1 some of them just do not make sense, and that's why I'm
2 just being honest here.

3 What Burnet stated right now where he traded in
4 a vehicle that was MVCPA and they got something out of it
5 and the vehicle cost us \$25,000. That's something that's
6 not going to give us heartburn. But at the end of the
7 day, if you're bringing in an application that you're
8 requesting \$85,000, \$87,000 for one vehicle, that will be
9 very irresponsible for this Board to approve.

10 But I agree with you, there has to be some of
11 them can be purchased, some of them can be leased. But I
12 can tell you this, for Laredo PD, we had two purchased
13 vehicles and they were 2008 Chevrolet pickups. They were
14 sitting there because one of them the transmission gave
15 out. After five years there was no more warranty, so it
16 was sitting there until the city decided, okay, we're
17 going to pour some money into it.

18 We poured some money into it and then something
19 happened with the electrical part of it. Again, it's
20 sitting there until the city decided to fix that, and then
21 we got it back on and then we decided to trade it in.
22 They gave us \$6,000 for it, and there we are.

23 And we have to offer it to MVCPA but we have to
24 be honest and say you're going to have trouble with this
25 vehicle. We cannot give it to another agency to make it

1 their problem.

2 So it's one of those that we have to bring
3 balance sometimes. And it's pros and cons, I want to say,
4 when it comes to purchased vehicles as well.

5 Thank you, Dallas.

6 Dallas County. Good morning.

7 MS. KNIGHT: Good morning.

8 MR. JONES: Good morning.

9 MS. KNIGHT: I am Cpt. Shelley Knight. I'm the
10 program manager for the North Texas Auto Theft Task Force.

11 MR. JONES: Sgt. Jerry Jones, Sheriff's Office,
12 task force commander.

13 MS. KNIGHT: I think the first thing I want to
14 do is kind of give you a little history of our task force.

15 We were formed in 1993. We've been here for a little bit
16 of time, and at one time we had eight full-time
17 investigators, a couple of sergeants, admin assistant and
18 some part-timers.

19 Now we're down to three investigators, one
20 sergeant, and two part-time people at 20 percent -- they
21 come once a week. The investigators spend most of their
22 time just recovering vehicles and performing 68-A
23 inspections every week.

24 Every Thursday we do our 68-As. I'd like to
25 say this year we've made 747 recoveries, totaling \$14

1 million, and we've made 12 arrests, and we've had 2,296
2 68-A inspections. We spend a lot of our time
3 collaborating and assisting other agencies when we're not
4 doing those recoveries. And I do want to say all of those
5 were direct touches on recoveries, that is not our patrol,
6 that is not anyone but my three investigators out there
7 recovering those vehicles, and they're working themselves
8 to death.

9 And in my grant application I've asked for six
10 more people which included six vehicles, which I think
11 there was a confusion because I am the one that asked for
12 400-something thousand dollars on vehicles, but it was for
13 six vehicles and a bait vehicle in that. Because we have
14 not been able to do covert operations or bait operations
15 because we haven't had the manpower to do it, not enough
16 to do it safely -- we'll put it that way -- and that's
17 something that we do want to get involved in.

18 We are over a five-county area. We have Dallas
19 County, Kaufman County, Rockwall, Denton and Collin
20 County. In my grant application I already have
21 confirmation that Kaufman County wants to join our task
22 force, Rockwall County wants to join the task force, the
23 City of DeSoto is wanting to come back and join the task
24 force.

25 And I've been in talks with Collin County and

1 they're actually going to send two officers to kind of
2 train and look at what we do to see if they'd like to
3 join. So we are trying to expand it back to the way it
4 was, so that we can give the coverage that is needed for
5 all of the counties out there.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, any questions?

7 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Gonzalez.

8 Captain, in your application you have in there
9 request for \$60,000 for a bait car. Have you tried
10 working with the insurance companies to try to get the
11 particular vehicle it is that you need?

12 MS. KNIGHT: No, sir, we have not. I didn't
13 know how to go about doing that. I put it in there
14 because y'all said put what you need, what you would like,
15 and that's why we did that, but I'm willing.

16 I've been learning -- I've loved this
17 conference because I've been talking to a lot of people.
18 In fact, the one from Burnet County, he told me about the
19 Sheriffs Association to go and look on the procurement.
20 I'm all for doing however we need to do it to find the
21 vehicles.

22 But also, DeSoto has since offered a vehicle.
23 They have a bait truck that they have also said that we
24 could use.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Smith, I believe that you

1 were discussing earlier wanting to be able to connect task
2 forces with the insurance companies, and so maybe that
3 would be a great opportunity to get started on that.

4 MR. SMITH: Member Smith, for the record.

5 I think that traditionally over the years bait
6 vehicles have, as many of you know, sources related to
7 property and casualty insurance companies that are out
8 there. And as I was mentioning -- I might have been
9 talking to Roland Luna last night at the table at the
10 meal -- COVID really hurt the ability to get insurance
11 companies engaged because of the market of vehicles and
12 the financial implications and so forth, but I think we're
13 behind that now.

14 And so it's my intention to try and get the
15 interest of as many of my colleagues that are out there
16 back into the thoughts of getting bait vehicles back in
17 the field. It's something that's needed, and without
18 them, your efforts -- I mean, you've got to have it.

19 You know, TAVTI may be a great place for us to
20 have those conversations as we move forward. Insurance
21 carriers have kind of shied away from TAVTI in the later
22 years because of some perceived restrictions on
23 confidential information and who's entitled to information
24 at training and who isn't. But I think that's an easy
25 hurdle, take a little time, but, yeah, it's a great place

1 to start.

2 And so maybe visit with Jamie Vignali or
3 whoever you're doing business with within NICB and start
4 having those conversations because they're really a great
5 starting place.

6 But I will admit that recoveries from insurance
7 carriers who know that you have something recovered that
8 may or may not have some value as a bait vehicle, it's
9 worth reaching out to the carrier and just asking is there
10 any way that we can keep this vehicle for use as a bait
11 vehicle. You can get some traction out of that for sure,
12 but you've got to ask.

13 And so insurance carriers generally are not
14 going to have bait vehicles in the lot and say, okay,
15 today we're going to give out five of them and who all
16 needs one. That's not the way that those things are going
17 to materialize.

18 So, yeah, feel free to start looking into those
19 options because that's really where you're going to get
20 some traction in terms of getting a bait vehicle. It may
21 not always be what you want. Everybody has their idea
22 about the ideal bait vehicle, but sometimes you get it and
23 sometimes you have to work with what you've got, and we
24 understand that.

25 And again, it depends geographically about

1 where your problems are. So I understand the issues and
2 the problems that you run into with that.

3 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir. Thank you.

4 MR. GONZALEZ: And I also want to point out
5 it's my understanding, Sgt. Roden, didn't State Farm reach
6 out to you about donating some bait vehicles. Am I
7 correct?

8 MR. RODEN: (Inaudible response from audience.)

9 MR. GONZALEZ: And so I would encourage you to
10 work with, Captain, here since we're kind of in the same
11 backyard and maybe we can set up some kind of sharing
12 agreement, I don't know. But regardless, at least
13 information sharing about contacts.

14 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir. Thank you.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: I do want to see a different
16 strategy coming from Dallas County. I know that the
17 recovery part is good, but I've always told my guys we're
18 not a recovering agency.

19 If patrol finds a vehicle, let them pick it up
20 through what we call the 75 Report, a recovered vehicle
21 report, and let them handle that. I want them to task
22 themselves to invest their time in investigations, because
23 here we are just recovering vehicles but all these people
24 that are stealing the vehicles are just there stealing the
25 vehicles.

1 So I want to see more from Dallas County in
2 regards to investigations. I know that you requested for
3 that to happen, but at the same time, we're looking at
4 numbers of recovered vehicles. And I don't want Dallas
5 County to be a recovering agency, I want Dallas County to
6 be a very proactive agency with investigations and coming
7 forward with more arrests than what you have.

8 And I'm not putting a quota, don't get me
9 wrong, but I'm just saying we have agencies here with
10 multiple arrests, multi-jurisdictional investigations, and
11 here we are with Dallas County, a very big county, with
12 just recovered vehicles.

13 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir. And I do want to say
14 that we have been changing our focus to dealership fraud,
15 more fraud case work. That's one of the things. In fact,
16 we took the class that was offered at the car show in
17 Dallas earlier this year and since then we've already made
18 three arrests where the dealership has called and we were
19 there and were waiting, and we're doing that and we're
20 trying to build that up. And with more officers we'll be
21 able to actually respond to more dealerships and get more
22 of that going.

23 MR. GONZALEZ: Captain, I have a question for
24 you. Does your task force seize vehicles?

25 MS. KNIGHT: We have not recently, but yes, in

1 the past we have.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. And what do y'all do with
3 these seized vehicles?

4 MS. KNIGHT: I couldn't tell you. I wasn't
5 there when they did it. It's been a long time ago when
6 they actually seized a vehicle.

7 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. And I guess where I'm
8 going with this is if you were to seize a vehicle again,
9 am I correct that you would be able to modify it?

10 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: And so you would be able to put
12 an LPR on there, if you want to drill a hole.

13 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir. And we have LPRs, my
14 three detectives and the detective that's in Corsicana and
15 we also have one on a patrol car.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: It seems to be pretty common
17 practice, at least I see quite a few task forces that
18 because of car shortages and because of funding, these
19 seized vehicles are used by investigators and for covert
20 operations and whatnot. And so I just want to point out
21 that drill a hole, put an LPR on there, whatever you need
22 to do, go out there and seize a car, do some cop work.

23 That's all. Thank you, Captain.

24 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir. Thank you.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Anybody else have any more

1 questions?

2 MR. CANADY: Cpt. Knight, Joe Canady, for the
3 record.

4 In reference to the Kaufman County deputy
5 constable position, is that 100 percent?

6 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir.

7 MR. CANADY: Historically I'm under the
8 understanding that constable positions have statutory
9 functions that they have to do. So will this position be
10 able to be dedicated to the task force without having
11 other statutory functions to complete for their duty?

12 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir.

13 MR. CANADY: Okay.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And do you have a contingency
15 plans for your vehicles, if we go into the direction of
16 leasing, whether you have a contingency plan if this does
17 not get approved?

18 MS. KNIGHT: Yes, sir.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You have vehicles right now?

20 MS. KNIGHT: Not for those six, but they're in
21 the budget talks now and my chiefs are working on that
22 currently. Yes, sir.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you, Dallas
24 County.

25 MR. JONES: Thank you, Board.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Eagle Pass.

2 MR. CARDONA: Sgt. Rene Cardona with Eagle Pass
3 Police Department, and this is --

4 MR. FUENTES: Lt. Gerardo Fuentes, the program
5 manager.

6 MR. CARDONA: Eagle Pass, border grantee, we're
7 currently working with the staff of one sergeant, which is
8 me, and I have two full-time detectives. We are applying
9 for an additional detective, along with two additional
10 vehicles.

11 Currently what we have accomplished and
12 established as far as collaboration with other agencies,
13 we go from the Federal Government down to local entities.
14 We work very well with U.S. Customs and Border Protection
15 in our bridge port operations. That has somewhat shifted
16 since we acquired LPRs.

17 So that, in and of itself, has opened up a new
18 trend and a new strategy that we have to steer to in the
19 sense that we are detecting vehicles coming into our area
20 of responsibility by different corridors that go into
21 Eagle Pass. And the crooks themselves have shifted to
22 avoid those LPR detections, so we're constantly moving
23 forward to keep up with all these trends.

24 One particular story behind that is we have
25 been monitoring a series of license plates that have been

1 cloned, like every other task force has experienced. And
2 that's how we've been able to detect through LPR readings
3 vehicles that are with false registration or improper
4 registration, rather. That, in and of itself, has led us
5 to arrests from the San Antonio area, Houston area and
6 stuff like that that is directly linked to human
7 smuggling. So the acquiring of the LPRs has really
8 increased our activity tremendously.

9 And as far as our participation with the
10 outbound operations, we have moved personnel from actually
11 being at the bridge to actually acting as a second tier
12 during these outbound operations. So we do somewhat
13 counter surveillance and the interdiction coming into our
14 jurisdiction.

15 So we still tend to the bridge port operations,
16 in and of itself, but directly touching the vehicles at
17 the bridge while going out, we rely on our friendly forces
18 which is U.S. Customs, sheriff's office and so on. And
19 that's pretty much where we're at.

20 Because of those LPRs, we are requesting
21 Toughbooks, the laptops to assign to personnel to have a
22 quicker response, be able to look at the LPR readings and
23 so on and so forth, ISO claim search, and easier access.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And these are going to be
25 attached to the units?

1 MR. CARDONA: Yes, sir.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How are we doing with
3 recoveries in Eagle Pass?

4 MR. CARDONA: Our recoveries are pretty much
5 steady, the same as we're going from last year. We're a
6 little bit low, but what I attribute that to is the
7 changing in trends, being that we have the LPRs and so on,
8 so we have to adapt to all of that. We've been dealing
9 with the paper tags that are not picked up by the LPRs, so
10 we're shifting to more aggressive stops by our patrol guys
11 and us being involved in fully identifying the vehicle to
12 match whatever it's displaying.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any questions from the Board?

14 MS. JONES: Member Jones for the record.

15 On your 91K for the two trucks, can you give us
16 your position on lease versus purchasing, what your
17 thoughts are?

18 MR. CARDONA: We have never leased vehicles as
19 a department. The HIDTA grant has done that. What I feel
20 that hasn't been done with our department is because of
21 the life expectancy that we have assigned to one
22 investigator and so on -- so our oldest unit right now I
23 believe is a 2013, and it barely went into the mechanic
24 shop because of transmission problems and so on, and it's
25 been there for over a month. As far as us looking into

1 that, we would need to study it.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: So I'm sorry. You said HIDTA.
3 Does Eagle Pass participate in HIDTA?

4 MR. CARDONA: There is a couple of officers
5 assigned to the DEA task force.

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Can you speak a little bit about
7 what HIDTA is?

8 MR. CARDONA: The High Intensity Drug
9 Trafficking? He would be able to --

10 MR. GONZALEZ: Yes, high level.

11 MR. FUENTES: Yes, it's the High Intensity Drug
12 Trafficking Area. We have seen a decrease with our HIDTA
13 program. We went down from six -- we lost the lease
14 program and we went down from six assigned TFOs to three.

15

16 I know that the city in itself last year did a
17 study in trying to get the city as a whole to go to a
18 leasing program, but that hit a wall somewhere and they
19 kind of put it to sleep for now. They may release it next
20 year.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: But on a high level, what HIDTA
22 is, it's a grant program for law enforcement agencies to
23 be able to combat narcotics and drug trafficking. Am I
24 correct?

25 MR. FUENTES: That's correct.

1 MR. GONZALEZ: So it's a very similar program
2 to the MVCPA, whereby we fund fighting motor vehicle
3 theft. Am I correct?

4 MR. FUENTES: That's correct.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: And so what y'all mentioned is
6 that the HIDTA program does leases and it works out just
7 fine.

8 MR. CARDONA: If I may answer to that. As far
9 as us directly having control over the grant, we don't,
10 that's on the DEA side.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: Got it.

12 MR. CARDONA: So that would be more like a
13 finance question.

14 MR. GONZALEZ: Got it.

15 MR. CARDONA: I would need to really study it
16 be able to comfortably answer your question.

17 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So HIDTA does have different
19 options: they have lease, they have purchases. I know
20 with DEA in Laredo -- because HIDTA does have different
21 representatives, you've either got HIDTA task force
22 officers with DEA, HIDTA task force officers with FBI, or
23 HIDTA task force officers with HSI, so the three agencies
24 that we have representatives on through HIDTA.

25 And I can tell you that we've purchased

1 vehicles through HIDTA because it's allowable, but we also
2 do lease vehicles through HIDTA because it's allowable.
3 It just depends on the situation.

4 And with HIDTA there's a representative from
5 every agency and they justify their purchases, they
6 justify their personnel. It's a different system,
7 mechanism that they have for HIDTA versus MVCPA, but at
8 the end of the day, it's the same mission. For them it's
9 to reduce the narcotics part and for us it's to reduce the
10 auto theft. But the options are there, it's just options
11 leasing versus purchasing, so it's something that's
12 doable.

13 I think you were missing the lieutenant's name
14 for the record?

15 MR. FUENTES: Gerardo Fuentes, G-E-R-A-R-D-O
16 F-U-E-N-T-E-S.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Anybody else has any more
18 questions?

19 (No response.)

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Eagle Pass.

21 El Paso.

22 MR. PORRAS: Good morning. I'm Ricardo Porras,
23 for the record. I'm the task force commander for the El
24 Paso PD Auto Theft Task Force.

25 MS. COSTA: Good morning. I'm Officer Jessica

1 Costa, also with the El Paso Police Department Auto Theft
2 Task Force. I'm going to speak very quickly since we are
3 limited on our time.

4 Our task force is comprised of 24 sworn
5 personnel. Of those personnel, we have two field teams.
6 Each field team consists of six officers each.

7 Having those field teams enables us to provide
8 more coverage throughout the city and in the county, which
9 we also cover. We usually can provide coverage from 8:00
10 in the morning to midnight. That also allows us to assist
11 multiple other agencies that we cover throughout El Paso
12 County.

13 Having field teams lets us be more proactive.
14 We locate, identify trends, respond to such trends,
15 respond to LPR hits, identify and target prolific auto
16 theft offenders, we conduct surveillance, do take-downs,
17 any subsequent arrests, also deal with any subsequent
18 crimes stemming from those arrests. Any of those could be
19 anywhere from drugs, weapons, financial crimes, crimes
20 against children, and human smuggling.

21 Collaboration is really big for our area
22 because we are a very large metropolitan area which
23 actually has a population of about 2.5 million people.
24 That's considering all of El Paso County, Fort Bliss,
25 Juarez, Mexico, and Las Cruces, New Mexico.

1 We border actually two different counties in
2 New Mexico to our north and there's no other task force
3 within 400 miles. That makes us the go-to for any auto
4 theft or motor vehicle crime related issues. We regularly
5 collaborate with agencies such as Border Patrol, DPS, Las
6 Cruces, New Mexico, and even Mexico.

7 These relationships that we've been able to
8 make throughout this collaboration has really enabled us
9 to further investigate even the out-of-town recovered
10 vehicles. We don't just recover the vehicle that's been
11 reported stolen in another jurisdiction, we contact that
12 other agency, we locate the victim, and then we still
13 pursue criminal charges against that individual who was
14 driving that stolen vehicle now in our jurisdiction.

15 LPR is really big for us, not only in our
16 investigations but in assisting other units within our
17 department. Our department has also purchased Axon LPR
18 cameras for all the marked units, which has multiplied our
19 workload.

20 We also used mobile LPRs. Everyone in our unit
21 has it on their cell phone and we're able to do LPRs
22 throughout our entire workday.

23 But moving forward, we are looking at putting
24 fixed LPR cameras at the bridges, as well as also in the
25 future on the roadways coming into our jurisdiction from

1 New Mexico. Also, with Albuquerque not too far north,
2 that is a very large auto crime area.

3 Also looking to the future, because we are so
4 busy during our regular duty days, we would like to
5 designate overtime operations through MVCPA funds where we
6 can actually target some of the issues that we're having
7 in our area. Some of these targeted operations, which we
8 would create ops plans, would aim at obviously reducing
9 auto theft and motor vehicle related crimes. We would
10 focus on bridge operations of which we have four ports of
11 entry within our city limits and one in the county.

12 We would do bait operations. We currently have
13 one bait vehicle, one bait motorcycle, and are in the
14 works with NICB to get another truck given to us. We'll
15 do surveillance, warrant roundups, salvage yard and
16 business inspections.

17 The amount of overtime rate for our unit is on
18 average \$74 per hour, so with all 24 sworn personnel, if
19 we could aim to do a six-hour operation twice a month,
20 that puts us at about \$250,000.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Gonzalez, for the record.
22 How much money in overtime did y'all spend last
23 year?

24 MR. PORRAS: In just our task force, Member
25 Gonzalez, we spent \$66,896 which comprised of late calls

1 and callout. So for late calls we had 341 late call hours
2 and 563 callout hours.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: So Commander, you're saying
4 we're going to go from \$66,000 a year in overtime to
5 \$250,000.

6 MR. PORRAS: That's what we're asking for. And
7 again, with the request comes additional responsibilities
8 on our part. So one of the responsibilities is we're not
9 just going to go out there and spend money, we're going to
10 be accountable for that money.

11 Hopefully we'll see a decrease because of the
12 overtime operations that are conducting in addition to our
13 regular work. And some of the operations, like Officer
14 Costa mentioned the bridge operations, for instance.
15 Right now we're limited as to the port operations that we
16 do during regular hours, so that would be in addition to
17 our regular duties.

18 And it sounds like a lot of money, but what it
19 comes down to for the unit, it's 24 operations over the
20 fiscal year. So it's two operations per month.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: And I want to clarify, I mean,
22 I'm not against giving you the money. I mean, that's a
23 400 percent increase in overtime. Would you be open to
24 something like -- let's say that we gave you a reduced
25 amount, and let's just throw a figure out there, like we

1 give you \$100,000 in overtime, and then if in the middle
2 of the grant year you have hit that amount, we can come
3 back and give you the rest. It's just one of these
4 things, a 400 percent increase in overtime, I'm just
5 wondering if that is going to happen, that's all.

6 MR. PORRAS: Absolutely.

7 MR. GONZALEZ: And I encourage you to do these
8 operations, don't get me wrong. That's all.

9 MR. GONZALEZ: Yeah, absolutely we'll work with
10 whatever allocation of money that we're given, and we're
11 privy to whatever recommendations the Board makes. We'll
12 definitely work with what we're allowed, and again,
13 hopefully with those 100,000 we could show some sort
14 progress and come back to the Board and show you that you
15 were getting a good bang for your buck, so to speak.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: I mean, I think that would be
17 great. And I want to throw that out to all the other task
18 forces also, I mean, if you need overtime money, just come
19 and ask.

20 But I also want to point out, Officer Jessica
21 Costa, you mentioned that NICB is getting y'all a bait
22 vehicle.

23 MS. COSTA: Yes, sir, that's correct. We've
24 already been in the process of getting that other truck
25 awarded to us through NICB.

1 MR. GONZALEZ: Outstanding. Would you mind
2 just kind of sharing that information with your fellow
3 task forces while you're here, or getting with Director
4 Canady and we can send out a blast on how you guys did it.

5 MS. COSTA: Absolutely.

6 MR. GONZALEZ: I think that's a great use of
7 resources. Good job, guys.

8 MR. PORRAS: Thank you.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: LT, what's your number of
10 arrests year-to-date?

11 MR. PORRAS: Year-to-date we have 97 theft of
12 vehicle arrests, which include theft of vehicle and UUVs.
13 We've had 687 recoveries with an approximate value of
14 \$9,646,000. We've had 12 recoveries from Mexico with a
15 value of \$412,137. And cases cleared using the UCR NIBRS
16 criteria, we've had 631 cleared cases.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All your units are outfitted
18 with Axon license plate readers?

19 MR. PORRAS: They're making the transition.
20 They started approximately three weeks ago, and I think
21 they're maybe three-quarters of the way.

22 And speaking to the Motorola people the day
23 before yesterday to the representative that was up front,
24 he was saying that there might be a way to incorporate
25 their data into Vigilant. So we're definitely going to

1 work with them, and of course, that's going to be a
2 multiplier for us as opposed to going out and buying a
3 bunch of LPRs right away.

4 But if we're allowed funding, by all means
5 we'll add stationary LPRs at the bridges and do more than
6 what we are allowed to do right now because of the lack of
7 funding.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So that's one of the projects
9 that we currently have on beta in Laredo. So we don't
10 have Axon, we have Utility, so they also came up with a
11 license plate reader for patrol calls.

12 And we have a real-time crime center and so
13 what we're trying to do is implement a total of seven
14 units with them as a pilot program. And as soon as it
15 picks up a license plate, it will alert the officer, of
16 course, that's driving the vehicle, but it will also alert
17 the other officers within the vicinity that there's a
18 stolen vehicle that a specific unit captured. It will
19 zoom in to the location and it will alert the officers of
20 that stolen vehicle, but everybody gets the alert within
21 the vicinity, so they do a geofence around that.

22 So one of the things that I wanted to kind of
23 put out there as pilot program was to maybe get a Kia, one
24 of those small vehicles outfitted with those license plate
25 readers, have the same access, but get students that are

1 in the criminal justice program to just drive around with
2 that vehicle. Same thing as a Google concept, just drive
3 around with that vehicle and whatever it's picking up, it
4 will create a response from the units within the vicinity.

5 They don't have to respond themselves because they're not
6 cops but it will do something like that, it creates
7 something like that, be innovative like that.

8 And that's something that I would like to test
9 to see if it works, but at the same time pay a lot less
10 because we're not funding a full-time officer, pay a lot
11 of less for a student that's going through a criminal
12 justice program, obviously vetted and do that background
13 for them, but get a civilian to drive around, and as soon
14 as it picks up those license plates. It's a very good
15 model for us to follow if it works, because right now
16 we're testing it, but if it's giving you the capability of
17 creating that geofence within the vicinity of the officers
18 that are around that area to respond to a license plate
19 that comes back stolen, that's a win-win for everybody.

20 But I think if we move forward with something
21 like this where we can inject civilians in driving around
22 and not engaging, just driving around and wherever it
23 picks it up, it will alert the officers and the officer
24 that creates a response -- that's something that we can
25 start doing and it will be a lot less costly than funding

1 a full-time officer and having an outfitted unit with all
2 the license, siren and all that.

3 The other thing also is that for us to outfit a
4 unit, a current unit that already has that Utility system,
5 it's only costing us \$3,800. So imagine if we can fund a
6 couple of units for \$3,800 apiece, that's great. Because
7 LPRs are very expensive, but \$3,800 apiece and it's yours.

8 It's not a lease, the maintenance is being paid by the
9 agency, the maintenance fee for the software is being paid
10 by the agency, so imagine if we can do something like
11 that.

12 And that's what I mean about getting creative
13 with what we have, with your current systems that you have
14 in place, something like that would be great. And with
15 Axon, with Motorola they already have an interface, I saw
16 it working and it's great.

17 MR. PORRAS: And Chief, it I may. That's what
18 we're hoping to do is integrate that system into our
19 system, and once that happens, it's going to be
20 outstanding for us. Because right now, unfortunately, the
21 patrol division is the only one that has access to the
22 Axon cameras. But if we get it integrated into the
23 Vigilant burn system, we'll have access to it.

24 As of right now, we've seen a dramatic increase
25 just with the number of units that are out there outfitted

1 with the Axon cameras because they do, like you were
2 mentioning, get that immediate response, notification, and
3 they have to take some sort of action. So we've been
4 seeing positive and great results with that.

5 And just to change a note, we've been
6 brainstorming maybe equipping our -- and again, it's just
7 a thought at this moment that I mentioned to our chief's
8 office -- maybe possibly doing garbage trucks because
9 garbage trucks drive throughout the city and outfitting
10 them maybe with these Axon cameras. Again, it's a city
11 entity and it would just be some sort of MOU between the
12 city and the different department. And again, it's just a
13 thought at this time, so it's in its infancy, but we try
14 to think outside the box whenever we can.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That's a great idea. And
16 that's what I'm talking about, thinking outside the box.
17 Get creative with what we have, you already have that
18 system in place.

19 I can tell you this that with Axon you can
20 request from your MIS guys to give you administrative
21 rights for those alerts through your phone, so you don't
22 really have to be part of the whole interface system. But
23 within the mobile phones they do have that capability, but
24 the administrator has to give you those rights for your
25 auto theft investigators to have. Just have to let them

1 know because sometimes administrators for the systems
2 don't like to do that.

3 So just let them know, hey, we want to make
4 sure that we get the alerts and that way they can do that
5 through your mobile phones.

6 MR. PORRAS: We'll definitely go back and talk
7 about that. Yes, sir. Thank you.

8 MS. JONES: The 250K is a huge jump but I do
9 not believe in just saying no just because of appearances.
10 It looks huge. Any task force, if you can justify it,
11 and the need and you're responsible -- I do like the idea
12 of incremental, but there's also an option to where for
13 any task force whatever line item we have concern with,
14 just make sure that we police that item. And at the end
15 of the year if someone is asking for 80K and at the end of
16 the year they have 30 less, instead of letting them spread
17 it out or adjust it, just bring it back.

18 We have options. I just don't want to for any
19 category just say absolutely not. We don't want to
20 cripple any task force.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And again, I'm all for anything
22 that's measurable. This is going to be measurable.

23 It's very simple, you ask for 250K, you come
24 back with one arrest, you know what we're going to say
25 next year. Very simple. It's not fuzzy math, it is what

1 it is.

2 But something that's measurable, I'm always
3 going to be for. So again, you're responsible, LT.

4 MR. PORRAS: All the time, sir.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Atta boy. Thank you, guys.

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Just to piggyback off of that,
7 again, like you said, \$250,000, we get one arrest for it,
8 well, next year we'll remember. My goal would be, hey, we
9 stop it at maybe \$100-, \$150,000 and we take a look at how
10 many arrests we're getting for our bang for our buck and
11 we're not out \$250,000, we might just be out \$150,000.

12 MR. PORRAS: Absolutely.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Not for one arrest, not
14 \$150,000 for one arrest.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: Exactly. We're on the same
16 page.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Absolutely. We are all on the
18 same page.

19 MR. PORRAS: We'll try to get more than that.

20 MS. COSTA: We will get more than that.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We're going to take another
22 ten-minute break and then we'll be back. It is 11:14 and
23 we'll be back at 11:25.

24 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's 11:40 and we're back in

1 session. So it looks like we're going to go through
2 lunch, so in a little bit we're going to break for lunch
3 and then we're going to resume back in session.

4 So for now I want to bring back Edinburg. I
5 know that that they have their cases and recoveries. So
6 is the Edinburg, South Texas Auto Theft Task Force,
7 Brownsville.

8 MS. ZUNIGA: Hi. My name is Liza Zuniga. I
9 work with Edinburg PD. I'm attached to the SIU, special
10 investigations unit, of the Auto Theft Task Force.

11 I just wanted to take this opportunity to
12 represent the Edinburg Police Department Auto Theft Task
13 Force and share some success stories and what we're doing
14 to address the motor vehicle crime in our city.

15 The City of Edinburg has a population of just
16 over 100,000 and our city has recently implemented a new
17 application and technology to identify the hotspots for
18 burglaries and thefts in an effort to take a proactive
19 approach to combat this issue. The application is live
20 and it's constantly tracking motor vehicle crime as it's
21 being reported, and that's very new for us.

22 We're also now using Evertel, which allows us
23 to have better communication with the surrounding agencies
24 and to be able to share intelligence quickly in reference
25 to BOLOs and suspects when we have hot calls and stuff

1 like that for auto thefts.

2 And I just wanted to share with you that in
3 2022 the Edinburg Auto Theft investigators identified five
4 males as prolific offenders involved in a string of
5 burglaries of buildings that included theft of several
6 vehicles and commercial construction equipment and
7 components and tools. The Edinburg Auto Theft Task Force
8 reached out to the local agencies to include DPS and
9 Weslaco and they provided manpower for surveillance and
10 shared intelligence which was vital to our cases. We
11 executed multiple search warrants and arrest warrants
12 throughout Hidalgo County which resulted in the arrests of
13 five males with multiple felony charges and the recovery
14 of \$2,645,823 of stolen equipment and vehicles.

15 In May of 2023, the Edinburg Auto Theft Task
16 Force investigators identified and arrested one male
17 subject who was responsible for over 50 burglaries of
18 vehicles this year, and this subject was apprehended and
19 arrested on 35 felony charges and three misdemeanor
20 charges. And my partner, Investigator Mata, secured a
21 search warrant which was executed and we recovered over
22 \$5,000 of stolen property.

23 We also face the issue, like most other
24 departments here, that we're short on manpower and we
25 currently have two units that are provided through the

1 grant, a 2009 and 2010 Ford F-150 with high mileage and
2 ongoing mechanical issues. Aside from my caseload, I am
3 responsible for the monthly and quarterly reports and the
4 68-A inspections.

5 And I did want to ask a question. If we are
6 granted an additional investigator, would we be able to
7 secure a unit for this position?

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So that would be, again,
9 something that we need to go back to each applicant and
10 see where we're going to be meeting in the middle. It's
11 not for sure that this is going to happen for every agency
12 what they requested.

13 But I do want to say -- I want to ask when you
14 have those issues in Edinburg, what does the task force do
15 for you?

16 MS. ZUNIGA: I mean, we pretty much share
17 information. Brownsville is kind of far from where we're
18 at and they had their string of cases. I know they've
19 been battling issues with the Denalis, the GMCs and stuff
20 like that, so we're just short on manpower.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So what about McAllen that's
22 right next to you?

23 MS. ZUNIGA: McAllen did actually have a couple
24 of those cases with those guys that were identified last
25 year, and we tried working together to share the

1 communication and jump on any cases that we had that
2 matched the MOs and stuff like that. We held multiple
3 meetings, briefings and stuff like that, and invited a
4 large part of the surrounding agencies -- Hidalgo County
5 Sheriff's Office, Weslaco, DPS was there. We try to
6 include everybody. It seems to be the same issue, short
7 on manpower or they have a lot of cases going on too.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So if McAllen has 40-something
9 cases of auto theft, right, and you guys have
10 100-something cases of auto theft, obviously you're the
11 hotspot. And my question is -- they can work their cases
12 and there's some followup on it and it's something that
13 gets hot on their table where there's a hot lead, I
14 understand that they're going to track that. But if
15 there's a hotspot situation in your jurisdiction, they're
16 right next door, do they go and help you? No?

17 That's not the way it's working this task
18 force? So it's really not a task force. I mean, be
19 honest.

20 MS. ZUNIGA: We haven't done that yet, I guess
21 you could say.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That's what we're trying to get
23 at. I think we believe that a task force should be
24 working together. I know the jurisdiction is there, it's
25 one town after another, but that's the whole mission of a

1 task force, to work together to combat auto crimes.

2 And if we're not doing that and we're just
3 taking care of our jurisdiction, and this is where it
4 creates an issue for me and for this Board where we're
5 funding four investigators and a sergeant for McAllen, yet
6 they have less auto theft than you do, how is it that we
7 are not a task force working those cases together? How
8 are we not communicating?

9 Because if it's affecting your area, it's
10 affecting their area. Whatever affects their area is
11 going to affect your area, because the suspects are going
12 to go across Pharr, Edinburg, Alamo, Weslaco. They're
13 going to go everywhere.

14 So if we're trying to create a task force and
15 funding a task force, it should work like a task force.
16 It shouldn't be like, oh, you take care of your own
17 business and we take care of our own. It shouldn't be
18 like that.

19 Because if it is, then we need to have a
20 conversation about it because, again, we're funding four
21 McAllen investigators and a sergeant versus the two in
22 Edinburg. Who has the bigger number of auto thefts?
23 Edinburg. Same thing with Brownsville, same thing with
24 Pharr.

25 So if you're not working as a task force there,

1 what's happening to Mission? Is anybody taking care of
2 Mission? Have we offered them our help? Because we're
3 there.

4 Hidalgo County SO, have they ever called us for
5 help? That's a conversation that needs to happen because
6 if we have other agencies here that are helping non-funded
7 agencies that have no task force and they're going out
8 there and they're going out of their way to help. I don't
9 understand how in that jurisdiction you guys that are all
10 funded are not helping each other, and that needs to be
11 corrected because it needs to work like that.

12 I understand the chiefs are going to decide
13 this is what we're going to do, but if we're MVCPA-funded
14 investigators or sergeants, I strongly believe we have a
15 say-so. They're fully funded FTEs and we have a say-so as
16 to how things should happen there, and we look at the
17 problem.

18 And that's why I keep on bringing back Odessa,
19 bringing Corpus -- because it's a problem. You see those
20 numbers going up and the statistics going up and it's
21 concerning to us as a Board saying, hey, what are we doing
22 to reduce the number of auto thefts here. Because we owe
23 this to the Governor's Office, we owe this to the state,
24 and we need to be very responsible about those hotspots.

25 So again, we need to have this conversation

1 about how we're going to handle the situation there with
2 the Brownsville task force because there needs to be more
3 communication. There needs to be more collaboration.
4 That's a big ticket in our strategic plan with our goals
5 that we need to have that collaboration. And if everybody
6 is doing their own thing, I can tell you it's not going to
7 work out.

8 So thank you for coming here and stating your
9 recoveries, your cases, your caseload, and for being
10 honest about what's going on in the Brownsville task
11 force. I appreciate it.

12 MS. ZUNIGA: Thank you.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Anybody else have any
14 questions? Julio, Sharon?

15 MS. JONES: No, sir.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: No.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Sgt. Roden, can you come back to
19 the floor, please?

20 Just so all the task forces can kind of
21 replicate what you've been able to do, can you talk about
22 your partnership with the insurance companies as it
23 relates to the bait cars that you've been able to secure?

24 MR. RODEN: Yes. Right now we just entered
25 into kind of a negotiation with NICB and State Farm and

1 they're in the process of donating two bait cars
2 specifically to be used in the City of Dallas. State Farm
3 had requested -- there was a few cities that they reached
4 out to NICB and stated that they wanted to put bait cars
5 around the area and Dallas was specifically one of them.
6 We're kind of in negotiations right now to be able to pick
7 out which bait cars work best for us, but we should be
8 able to secure them pretty soon.

9 MR. GONZALEZ: And that was just with State
10 Farm?

11 MR. RODEN: Right now this one is. We've had
12 donations from other insurance agents. They usually come
13 from NICB and we kind of negotiate with them through them.
14 They've always been the middle man for us but they're a
15 invaluable resource right now as we're working on it.

16 We also got into a contract with NICB to deploy
17 them. They'll put one covert track system in one, I have
18 a covert track system that's ready to be deployed in one,
19 so at that time we'll have two bait cars that have covert
20 track in them, in addition to the other three that we
21 basically handmade ourselves at the department.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: And did NICB pay for the covert
23 track system installation also?

24 MR. RODEN: The one I have, yes, and then the
25 additional one that they're trying to put with the donated

1 vehicle, they're purchasing that one too. The only thing
2 that I have to pay for is the installation.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. And speaking for me,
4 that's definitely something that if a task force needs
5 funds for the installation of bait car equipment, please
6 let us know whether we can try to do this on a Rapid
7 Response Strikeforce Grant or if we've got to bring it up
8 for the Board, but that's certainly an expenditure that I
9 would certainly be in favor for for everyone.

10 So what you're saying is that if a task force
11 wants to start some kind of partnership like you have with
12 State Farm, the best place to start is with NICB. Am I
13 right?

14 MR. RODEN: Oh, absolutely. I think I
15 mentioned earlier that I'd be more than happy to help
16 Dallas County kind of get into those partnerships and
17 share in those resources to be able to help with them.

18 And one thing I do want to mention about the
19 covert track system -- and probably everybody knows this;
20 if you don't, it's good intel -- they're extremely
21 backlogged. It took me a long time to kind of secure the
22 other one that I have right now. But if that's something
23 that that partnership needs to happen or something that
24 they're thinking about purchasing, they just need to keep
25 that in mind that they're backlogged and it's not an

1 overnight process.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: And then also the batteries
3 necessary for bait cars are a substantial cost, like a
4 couple thousand. Am I right?

5 MR. RODEN: What was it, \$4- to \$5,000 for
6 those batteries for the covert track system. And there
7 was one company that basically had those batteries. I
8 forgot where -- they're out around by Houston or something
9 like that.

10 MR. GONZALEZ: I did not know batteries get
11 that expensive but for bait cars they do. And I mean, it
12 makes sense, you've got to keep cameras on all the time.

13 Thank you, Sarge.

14 Any other questions from the Board?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

17 MR. SMITH: Member Smith, for the record. I
18 just want to chime in about the relationship with NICB.
19 And for the audience here, our task force commanders and
20 folks, there's an agreement process through NICB that
21 insulates carriers to a large degree during the use of
22 bait vehicle operations. And so there's some indemnity
23 language and so forth that happens through the transition
24 of passing that vehicle off to law enforcement.

25 So it's not necessarily really that NICB holds

1 the keys to the kingdom, it's just that there's some
2 cooperative agreements and things that are in place that
3 facilitate that and make that happen. So I just want to
4 make sure that everybody understands that who's not aware
5 of how that works.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Dean.

7 I've got some registration forms from the
8 commander from Burnet. Howard, you already spoke.
9 Correct? We're fine with this?

10 And then we've got Commander Hal Barrow, but
11 we're going to call up Galveston County.

12 MR. BARROW: Good morning. Lt. Hal Barrow,
13 Galveston County Auto Crimes Task Force.

14 Is this over the grant or the public speaking
15 deal?

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You've got five minutes.

17 MR. BARROW: Okay. Galveston County Auto
18 Crimes Task Force, we're multi-agency and we're requesting
19 to be a multi-county task force, to bring in Brazoria
20 County Sheriff's office. The theft rate in Brazoria
21 County is 485, Galveston County is 766. Burglary of motor
22 vehicles, we had 1,637 and 1,452 for Brazoria County.

23 For our stats year-to-date for FY23, we had 202
24 recoveries, 31 arrests from investigations, 475 68-A
25 inspections, recovered \$3,989,000 and that's at the end of

1 the third quarter for FY23.

2 We've been building on the LPR systems. We
3 have Vigilant, we have commercial data through Vigilant,
4 we have the Flock system. These are being bought through
5 the sheriff's office which we have access to all of it.
6 We have a marked unit with an LPR system for auto crimes,
7 which doing that we respond to all the LPR hits.

8 That kind of brings me to the vehicles. I
9 don't know if you want to get into that or not. We do
10 respond -- we follow departmental policy on using
11 emergency lights, pursuits.

12 When a marked unit gets there, the marked unit
13 takes over the pursuit, we parallel. I know that was a
14 policy issue that we were talking about.

15 We assist the tax office on frauds, we do
16 training, crime prevention. We have a bait vehicle
17 program, which -- Galveston Police Department, they had a
18 seized vehicle they gave us. We've rigged it out with the
19 covert system.

20 So we have six investigators and one analyst,
21 which our analyst works for us and throughout the state
22 and sometimes our country when people request an analyst.

23 She's a motor vehicle theft analyst, not a crime analyst.
24 There's a big difference between a motor vehicle theft
25 analyst and a crime analyst.

1 A motor vehicle theft analyst helps us identify
2 trailers, trucks, equipment and stuff like that, where a
3 criminal analyst tells you where hotspots are and stuff
4 like that. It's a different variant.

5 That's all my justification. Do you have any
6 questions?

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any questions for Galveston
8 County?

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

10 Hal, you briefly started to and then stopped,
11 but could you explain what the difference would be in a
12 leased vehicle versus a purchased vehicle for your agency?

13 MR. BARROW: What we do is purchase vehicles,
14 and I was kind of confused about all the conversations
15 everybody was given. When we go out we identify vehicles,
16 we have trucks that are rigged out with toolboxes. We
17 have total sets of tools in the vehicles, they're equipped
18 out with laptops, hopefully printers because when you go
19 out to a scene, you can't be running back and forth to the
20 office to get equipment or tools.

21 Sometimes you've got to take these cars apart
22 to identify them, you pull airbags, you pull fenders. All
23 these are confidential numbers, I don't want to get too
24 much in-depth on that. But you have to have this
25 equipment.

1 Another thing is we usually get dirty and
2 greasy. You get dirty and greasy in these cars, so if you
3 have rental cars and lease cars and you start getting them
4 all messed up real bad, that's going to be a problem.

5 On owned vehicles there's intrinsic value.
6 During these hard times for the last 12 years we've been
7 being cut. We've done everything we can from selling
8 vehicles, to working on comp time, to cutting positions to
9 fund people. We finally get to this point where there's
10 more money.

11 And I understand financially it's a big
12 headache for the Board to try to figure out how to
13 distribute these funds. I think that by leasing vehicles,
14 if you can buy them, like Stinehour said, at the sheriffs'
15 rate, that's very good. Renting these vehicles, you're
16 just spending that money, you don't have anything for it.

17
18 In other words, MVCPA don't have any intrinsic
19 value laying out there. You might have a million or two
20 million dollars for vehicles that you could sell off to
21 help keep people funded if you had to, where if you're
22 leasing it, you're just giving that money away. It's like
23 leasing a home or a house, you're just giving that money
24 away every month. That's my perspective on it.

25 As in lights and sirens and stuff like that,

1 we're out on the side of the road on call-outs. We're
2 available 24/7. For someone's life not to have lights on
3 a car for an officer's safety, it ain't worth it.

4 It's not worth not spending the money equipping
5 these cars correctly to get somebody run over. I've been
6 on the scene where people have been run over. One of our
7 majors got ran over. He survived, the girl was killed,
8 and it was by a drunk.

9 So I just don't think cutting equipment and
10 lights and stuff is the right thing to do. That's just my
11 opinion.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So I completely respect your
13 opinion, Commander. And I think that it's not about --
14 I'm not saying that this is about officer safety and I'm
15 not concerned with officer safety. That's something that
16 we preach very day to make sure that guys out there wear
17 their vests, guys out there have the proper equipment.

18 But for us within the MVCPA, I know everybody
19 has different scopes of work within their agency, but
20 we're funding for investigative purposes. That's my
21 response to that.

22 Yes, I do respect the officer safety part of
23 it. I'm all for officer safety, but at the same time, we
24 can outfit somebody with a bulletproof vest and give them
25 a car outfitted with lights and siren and everything, they

1 can be on the side of the road and if a drunk driver is
2 going to hit you, that drunk driver is going to hit you.
3 Could he have avoided it if there was lights and siren?
4 Maybe yes, maybe no.

5 But for what we're trying to fund today, my
6 idea of funding something is responsibly, and if for
7 whatever reason there needs to be an outfitted vehicle
8 within your agency, then I would push that responsibility
9 to the agency to help us meet in the middle. That's
10 pretty much my take on that, that it has to be a win-win
11 situation.

12 It cannot just be all tasked into the MVCPA
13 grant to do these things because then we're going to be
14 leaving out some of these other agencies to try and get
15 three or four agencies with their requests. And that's
16 where I'm at. We just want to be frugal with this. And
17 we know that everybody has their requests.

18 We told everybody put it in, and then we'll see
19 where we start tweaking from there. But at the end of the
20 day, I just want to make sure that everybody here
21 understands that I'm all for officer safety, but at the
22 end of the day, here we need to meet in the middle. If
23 your agency can support the outfit, I'm all for it.

24 If your agency can come in the middle and meet
25 in the middle with us, I'm all for it. But we cannot be

1 tasking the MVCPA and this Board to fund almost half a
2 million dollars in vehicles, because we don't have that
3 kind of money, not here. Because we're already in the red
4 if we start doing that.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Gonzalez, for the record.
6 How much in trucks are you requesting to
7 purchase?

8 MR. BARROW: We've requested three.

9 MR. GONZALEZ: And what's the total cost of
10 that?

11 MR. BARROW: I think it was \$160-.

12 MR. GONZALEZ: I think it's \$180-. And then so
13 on top of that, make ready for \$21,000. Is that correct?

14 MR. BARROW: Yeah, you're talking laptops,
15 computers, lights, the whole rig, tools.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: So a total of \$201,000 in trucks
17 for three trucks?

18 MR. BARROW: Yes, sir.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

20 MR. BARROW: And can I speak? If that's
21 something the Board wants to do is the agency start
22 providing the vehicles, that gives us something to go back
23 to our agencies and say, hey, they will pay the FTE but
24 they're not going to pay the vehicles. So we could go
25 back and say y'all are going to have to provide a vehicle

1 if you want this FTE. But over my years, I've been 20
2 years with the task force, that has never been conveyed.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I completely understand. I
4 think that this is the situation that we got into today
5 because of what was requested and the amount of funds that
6 we have.

7 MR. BARROW: Yes, sir.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And I know that if you go back
9 to your agency and you tell your chief or your sheriff,
10 and say, hey, you're going to have to fund a vehicle, he's
11 probably going to tell you go find another vehicle with
12 250,000 miles and you're going to use that one, just
13 because of budgetary purposes. But I can tell you this,
14 that from here till the next year that we grant awards,
15 things can change.

16 MR. BARROW: Absolutely.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Things can change and we're
18 going to have to adjust again. So for today for this
19 grant year award, this is what we have right now as a task
20 as a Board that we're going to have to make sure that
21 we're going to have to reduce somewhere. And we looked at
22 vehicles first because that was the easy way to look at
23 this.

24 And by all means, we're not going to cut any
25 personnel. We're in the red and we haven't even discussed

1 the whole educational part, preventive part, the
2 promotional item part. We don't have any money, we give
3 all this money and we're in the red.

4 We don't have any more money, and we haven't
5 even discussed anything that has to do with doing the
6 prevention part within the community, those social media
7 platforms that we always talk about that we need to get
8 out there to make sure that they lock their cars. We
9 haven't even spoke about that.

10 So again, this is the situation this year. I
11 know we're in a much better situation this year than last
12 year, but I can tell you that we're going to try to work
13 things out. We're not saying completely, okay, this is
14 it, you're not getting anything as far as vehicles. We're
15 not saying that, but we have to make sure that they get
16 creative.

17 That's what I want to say. We're going to get
18 creative with the vehicles and see where we can just meet
19 in the middle and that way your agencies will support you
20 on that decision.

21 MR. BARROW: Yes, sir. My biggest concern is
22 that we have vehicles, we can make it work. If we add a
23 task force, we need one more vehicle. But they need to
24 have the tools to do their job.

25 We've got two ports. I mean, you go to

1 Freeport, there's a port we're having to deal with. We go
2 to Galveston, there's a port we're having to deal with.

3 It just makes it a lot more complex if you've
4 got a Toyota. Yeah, you can get there, but where's all
5 the tools and stuff you're going to have to have. I'm
6 trying to let y'all know what we're looking at from our
7 side is that you have to go down the beach, needing a
8 four-wheel drive to get on the beach. If not, you're
9 buried up -- salt water comes in, you just lost that
10 vehicle.

11 So there's a lot more dynamics and every
12 jurisdiction is different in the state. The State of
13 Texas is huge and it's got everything you can think of in
14 it. So that is my point.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And this is why I will say we
16 get creative. And this is the situation also with Laredo
17 when you have to go down to the river banks -- we have
18 Camrys, that's why I keep on saying Camrys -- we have
19 Camrys, but then we do have an F-250 that's a 2011 that's
20 a diesel and a 2500 Chevy that's a 2013, I want to say,
21 that's a diesel. And we put all our tools in there, and
22 those guys, whenever they need them, they task somebody,
23 hey, go get the truck, we're going to have to go through
24 here.

25 And they pick up the trucks and they go and

1 they do what they need to do. Especially if it's out by
2 the river banks where we know we need those 4X4 vehicles,
3 those half ton vehicles, we call them up. But we get
4 creative in that sense because we feel and know that the
5 money can be put somewhere else for now.

6 Now I'm not saying I'm not for funding 4X4s and
7 things like that. I'm not saying that. But if next year
8 we have the funding to say, hey, you know what, Hal, we're
9 going to give you three 4X4s now because we have money
10 that we can spare and that's within the budget.

11 So that's where I'm at. But right now we are
12 having a situation with this because we are in the red if
13 we fund all the vehicles that were requested.

14 MR. BARROW: Yes, sir.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: But we'll figure it out.

16 Any other questions?

17 (No response.)

18 MR. BARROW: Thank you.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Houston PD.

20 MR. HARDING: Good morning.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good morning.

22 MR. HARDING: I'm Tolan Harding. I'm a
23 lieutenant with the Houston Police Department. I'm
24 currently the task force commander for the Houston Auto
25 Crimes Task Force.

1 On behalf of Chief Fenner, Mayor Sylvester
2 Turner, and the Houston City Council, the Houston Police
3 Department submitted a grant application requesting
4 approximately \$1.5 million for the Houston Auto Crimes
5 Task Force.

6 Of those funds, approximately \$1 million are
7 personnel and fringe costs, and that covers one
8 lieutenant, three sergeants, and five officers. The
9 department's in-kind match is approximately \$1.7 million
10 from personnel which includes one administrative aide, one
11 lieutenant, three and a half full-time equivalent
12 sergeants, and five and a half full-time equivalent
13 officers. The department's cash match is approximately
14 \$390,000 and equates to 25 percent.

15 The Houston Auto Crimes Task Force is to
16 address approximately 17,000 auto thefts and approximately
17 37,000 burglaries of motor vehicles in the Greater Houston
18 area. The City of Houston covers 665 square miles, is
19 located in three different counties, and our city
20 population is approximately 2.28 million people, with an
21 additional 4 million citizens in the unincorporated county
22 areas.

23 One of the specific things I requested in the
24 grant was leased vehicles. For the Houston Auto Crimes
25 Task Force, we've discovered leased vehicles are more

1 appropriate than purchasing vehicles. It's a lower
2 upfront cost, but they also have the benefit of most of
3 the maintenance is included.

4 When a vehicle does go down for maintenance,
5 the lease company provides us with another vehicle
6 immediately, so we're never without a vehicle. They
7 provide us with a great variety of vehicles, not just
8 pickup trucks, but we have pickup trucks, SUVs, sedans and
9 vans for whatever we need.

10 If a vehicle needs emergency lights, we use
11 small dash lights. But we don't do enforcement with our
12 leased vehicles, we call in a marked patrol vehicle with a
13 marked officer to do that. The officers can use mobile
14 computers in their cars. We provide them with laptops
15 which function in there without having to have a permanent
16 mount.

17 The leased vehicles work better for our primary
18 job which is covert and proactive investigations. They
19 don't look like police cars, they look like every other
20 vehicle on the street. If our crooks tend to notice one
21 of our vehicles, we can go back to the lease company and
22 ask for another one.

23 We don't have mileage limits on our cars. We
24 negotiated that, and typically anywhere between 30- and
25 60,000 miles before the vehicle becomes a maintenance

1 burden, we trade it out. So from my brief math, I
2 discovered if you keep a purchased vehicle for about three
3 years, then it's about a break-even, but then after that,
4 you now have a three-year-old vehicle which is
5 accumulating mileage, versus on the lease side, I've
6 swapped that car out and now I've got another one with low
7 mileage and it's ready to go.

8 One of the other items I asked for in the
9 funding was additional overtime. I did ask for
10 approximately four times as much as I received last year.

11 I've asked for \$136,000 in overtime funds. This equates
12 to about 100 hours per officer per year, or two hours per
13 week.

14 The department has restrictions and limited use
15 of flex time and compensatory time, so sometimes paid
16 overtime is more appropriate. Officers -- typically on a
17 workday you only have eight hours to work but crime
18 happens in the other 16 hours as well, so we'll be using
19 some of that overtime for that.

20 One of my new thoughts on if I was given this
21 additional overtime, it would allow us to revisit some of
22 our old cases. Typically, once we've arrested and charged
23 a suspect, with our caseload we have to move on to the
24 next tip, the next theft, or the next investigation, but
25 our old crook is still there. He's bonded out of jail and

1 he knows it's going to take probably two years for his
2 case to be adjudicated in Harris County. If we have the
3 additional overtime, we'd be able to go back and revisit
4 him because we know he's gone back to work, and we'll file
5 another charge on him and another charge and another
6 charge.

7 I did ask, again, for professional and contract
8 services which would include one officer from the
9 Metropolitan Police Department, Officer Zamino [phonetic].

10 He's been with the Houston Auto Crimes Task Force for
11 approximately 12 years and has a huge amount of technical
12 and historical knowledge. There's also funds in there
13 that would continue our relationship with the Harris
14 County District Attorney's Office for the dedicated DA
15 that we work with.

16 I did ask for \$38,000 in travel budget; it's an
17 increase from last year. It would allow me to send more
18 officers to the TAVTI convention.

19 MR. PENCE: Time.

20 MR. HARDING: I could continue.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So we got to the good stuff
22 already.

23 MR. HARDING: Okay.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Just real quick, on the outfit
25 for the computer, you said that they don't mount them in

1 their vehicles?

2 MR. HARDING: Typically, no, sir. On Ford
3 pickups, a lot of them you have the large center console
4 and you can just mount it there. We don't want officers
5 driving and trying to operate a computer at the same time.

6 So if you're sitting in your car, you're going
7 to have to put your laptop up on your lap while you're
8 parked. We don't want a permanent mount in there because
9 it makes it look like a police car and it's detrimental to
10 our undercover proactive type operations and
11 investigations.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Very good.

13 MR. GONZALEZ: Lieutenant, I just wanted to say
14 I think you had an excellent presentation. When you're
15 talking about your overtime and you're saying, look, this
16 equates to two hours of overtime per person, that's
17 exactly what I want to hear. So in my opinion, the six
18 figures for overtime is completely justified. I can break
19 it down by investigator.

20 So kudos to you on your breakdown on you budget
21 and on your presentation. You have my full support.

22 If I could, you mentioned how many offenses are
23 there in Houston, sir?

24 MR. HARDING: Approximately 17,000 auto thefts.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: And so your task force is

1 responsible for investigating 17,000 auto thefts.

2 MR. HARDING: Yes, sir.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: And I would imagine that you all
4 file hundreds, if not thousands of cases of motor vehicle
5 theft each year. Am I correct?

6 MR. HARDING: I don't know the exact figures,
7 but we file as many as we can, yes, sir. With 19 officers
8 I can't investigate all 17,000, but the ones with leads
9 that are workable, we try.

10 We also try and focus on the long-term
11 investigations where we're going after the criminals that
12 have the most economic impact, that are committing these
13 crimes daily, are stealing the newer high-end vehicles,
14 and that this is their job. Because we know if we can get
15 them, that has the greatest impact versus just one UUMV
16 charge on a low level player who's been paid 50 bucks to
17 move a stolen truck from one apartment complex to another
18 holding spot.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: And then just going back to the
20 leased vehicles, it sounded, if anything, that your
21 officer safety is enhanced by the policies and procedures
22 that you're following. Would you agree?

23 MR. HARDING: I would believe so, yes, sir.
24 They don't appear to be police vehicles. If we need
25 emergency equipment, we call in marked patrol cars with

1 uniformed officers in it. We do have available the dash
2 lights if the officer needs them, but we're not going to
3 conduct pursuits in unmarked leased vehicles.

4 MR. GONZALEZ: And then the last thing that I
5 have is I want thank your agency for the work that you
6 have done with respect to the fraud-related training.
7 That is a statutory requirement for us. We are mandated
8 to have that as a priority.

9 And so I just want to thank your agency for the
10 training program with respect to fraud-related motor
11 vehicle crime. I know that you guys have gone around to
12 various other task forces and tried to replicate this
13 program that is preventing millions of dollars worth of
14 theft.

15 Thank you, LT.

16 MR. HARDING: Thank you. Sgt. Schlosser is
17 doing an excellent job, much easier to prevent than it is
18 to solve. I spent five years working fraud cases and
19 totally understand.

20 MR. SMITH: Dean Smith, for the record, Mr.
21 Chairman.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Go ahead.

23 MR. SMITH: Lieutenant, you've got leased
24 vehicles listed and I understand your arguments. What are
25 the lease fees per vehicle?

1 MR. HARDING: It would be 19 vehicles, \$750 per
2 month is what I requested from the MVCPA for 12 months,
3 approximately \$171,000 on an annual cost. That provides
4 me with 19 vehicles.

5 MR. SMITH: About \$750 per vehicle?

6 MR. HARDING: Yes, sir. That was what I asked
7 for from MVCPA, and then the department has on top of that
8 the 20 percent match.

9 MR. SMITH: Okay. The crime prevention
10 outreach trailer, \$20,000 for that. Is that just for the
11 trailer or what does that include?

12 MR. HARDING: That's for rehabbing an existing
13 trailer that the MVCPA -- or actually the ABTPA from back
14 in the day purchased. It's got a vinyl wrap and logos on
15 it that are ABTPA and H.E.A.T., Help End Auto Theft. So
16 it would be new graphics, new electronics, television
17 screens, game consoles, a generator, rehabbing the air
18 conditioning and the interior, adding some exterior
19 lights, including police light bars to attract attention.

20 We'd be using a racing game on one of the game
21 consoles called "Need for Speed: Most Wanted" where one
22 player plays as a police officer driving a police super
23 car. We'd use that to attract people's attention, get
24 them to interact with us. And then at that point we'd
25 share with them various crime prevention strategies.

1 We plan to have anti-theft devices mounted
2 inside the trailer that we can show them, the wheel locks,
3 OBD-2 locks, catalytic converter covers, trailer, tire and
4 hitch type locks. We could also talk to the people
5 outside saying: What's your vehicle. Okay, well, that's
6 one of the ones that's most stolen, so here's our tips for
7 how to not get your vehicle stolen.

8 MR. SMITH: And my last question -- thank you
9 for that response -- the last question, \$15,000 for a
10 four-post lift with 15,000-pound capacity.

11 MR. HARDING: Yes, sir.

12 MR. SMITH: Is that a specific lift in mind or
13 is that just a guess?

14 MR. HARDING: There was a specific lift in
15 mind, yes, sir. It's a drive-on four-post lift with a
16 15,000-pound capacity to aid us on our weekly 68-A
17 inspections.

18 The current lift we have is a two-post lift
19 with a limited capacity. Some of the larger trucks, it's
20 not safe to put it on there. The drive-on lift is much
21 easier to use, you drive straight on it.

22 MR. SMITH: I understand.

23 MR. HARDING: Raise the vehicle up.

24 MR. SMITH: Would there be interest in, and it
25 might help you out on your end-game, shopping around a

1 little bit for that lift? It seems a little excessive.
2 I'm familiar with lift costs and the benefits, so 15 grand
3 sounds a little high for a four-post, but just bringing
4 that up.

5 MR. HARDING: That included some other
6 equipment that was going to be used for the 68-A and
7 secondary VIN inspections, some cooling fans, and I think
8 about \$3,000 for the wheel attachments for our forklift.

9 MR. SMITH: Right, those are secondary expenses
10 to that.

11 MR. HARDING: Yes.

12 MR. SMITH: But those are included in separate
13 line items. Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Commander.

15 MR. HARDING: Thank you.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Harris County.

17 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Mr. Chairman, Director,
18 Board members, good afternoon.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: John, good morning.

20 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: For the record, John
21 Gonzalez. I'm a lieutenant with the Harris County
22 Sheriff's Office Auto Theft Task Force. I recently
23 assumed the position of task force commander back in mid
24 April, so I've got a little over two months.

25 I was just going to go over a little bit of

1 geographic demographics of Harris County. As we know,
2 Harris County is the third largest county in the nation
3 and we have approximately 4.8 million residents. We're
4 1,777 square miles. There are more than 2 million people
5 living in the unincorporated areas of Harris County for
6 which the sheriff's office is the primary law enforcement
7 agency, along with eight other constable precinct
8 agencies.

9 Within Harris County and some of the
10 unincorporated parts of Harris County, we do have the Port
11 of Houston, which obviously continues to expand its
12 facilities, some being a few hours sailing time from the
13 Gulf of Mexico. The port also consists of a petrochemical
14 complex that is one of the largest in the world. And just
15 FYI, the majority of the Volkswagen vehicles sold in the
16 U.S. come through the Port of Houston. Within Harris
17 County there are 25 school districts and several colleges
18 and universities, such as University of Houston, TSU and
19 Rice.

20 Houston is the hub. We do have a HIDTA group
21 within our city and within our department. It is a hub of
22 commerce and culture, also provides an equal if not better
23 opportunity for organized criminal activity, which also
24 poses numerous threats to the community. This includes
25 but not limited to human trafficking and smuggling,

1 narcotics, forced prostitution, and robbery; all, we can
2 safety say, have a direct link with auto theft.

3 My task force falls underneath the Criminal
4 Investigations Bureau under the Special Investigations
5 Division. Under that division is auto theft, narcotics,
6 human trafficking, vice, and I'm not sure if I said it
7 already, narcotics. My task force consists of 17
8 investigators, three sergeants, one lieutenant -- being
9 myself -- and we have four undercover investigators that
10 act in a covert or proactive approach, and they have one
11 sergeant so that's included in that total number.

12 As previously mentioned, our unit of 17
13 investigators serves a jurisdiction of just over 2 million
14 residents and we are spread very thin already. These
15 investigators not only investigate auto theft, BMV and
16 motor vehicle fraud cases, but they also perform 68-A
17 inspections once a week for the citizens of Harris County.

18 As of this year we've already conducted 1,196 68-A
19 inspections.

20 Touching base, we also lease our vehicles. And
21 to piggyback on what City of Houston said, we've had
22 instances, especially with the wide spread of community
23 activists and social media, where several of our
24 undercover officers have had their vehicles identified by
25 criminals as being law enforcement, so it has been a

1 benefit for us rapidly exchange a vehicle and get another
2 one. Our undercover investigators also do assist vice,
3 narcotics in their operations, as they assist us with
4 ours.

5 So again, not to beat a dead horse, but it is
6 an officer safety issue. We do have them also with dash
7 lights. We don't permanently affix any kind of emergency
8 equipment.

9 We also have strict policies. Unfortunately,
10 the City of Houston and Harris County, we do have a lot of
11 officers that tend to crash vehicles, so the vehicle
12 shortage hurts us a lot more. We have strict policies
13 that they are not allowed to operate MDTs or pursue
14 vehicles in unmarked vehicles. I don't want to be funny,
15 but it's like they crash them faster than they can build
16 them or buy them.

17 What I plan to do -- so we have a lot of
18 transition with our department. We've just recently had a
19 new bureau commander take over, as well as a division
20 commander, and myself as the task force commander. I'm
21 bringing in a new sergeant with a lot of auto theft and
22 undercover experience. Our current proactive sergeant was
23 very good at going and getting the stats, but I'd like to
24 increase quality over quantity when it comes to cases to
25 disrupt and dismantle these criminal organizations, bank

1 juggers, et cetera.

2 One thing I also intend to do is -- prior to my
3 assignment I was over the LESO Program to obtain excess
4 military vehicles and equipment from the Department of
5 Defense. I built our high water rescue unit after Harvey
6 with utilization of 2.5 and 5 ton military trucks for high
7 water rescue.

8 MR. PENCE: That's time.

9 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Sorry. Five minutes goes
10 fast.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You said you have seven
12 investigators?

13 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Seventeen.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Seventeen.

15 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Yes, sir.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do you cover Deer Park, the
17 Deer Park area?

18 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: So Deer Park has a local
19 police force, Deer Park PD. We have had some cases and
20 we've collaborated with them before. But there are parts
21 of Deer Park that carry a Deer Park address, specifically
22 along Highway 225 which is where all the petrochemical
23 plants are at, and sometimes, depending on where the call
24 comes through, we end up taking the case.

25 We send an investigator out there. Even though

1 it's within the city, we don't refuse calls. We go out
2 there and take care of that.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And the reason I'm asking
4 because usually the PONY World Series, the zone tournament
5 always is at Deer Park. And this year the email that I
6 received was that they're moving it from Deer Park because
7 there was a major problem with auto burglaries and vehicle
8 thefts, and I was kind of, well, what's going on there.
9 So I'm trying to figure out, and I was just talking to
10 Member Serrano that these are the situations that we don't
11 know. It's just the public that gets sent that message
12 and it's really bad for the city to get that from an
13 organization that is actually worldwide and saying, hey,
14 we're going to move it from there because of that.

15 And we're the ones taking care of that, and to
16 me, it doesn't sit well. So it moved to La Porte --
17 didn't move from the Houston area, but it did move from
18 Deer Park because of that.

19 So this is where I think we need to just get
20 better at providing those statistics. And so one of the
21 things that I would like to propose and recommend to the
22 Board is start getting an interactive map where police
23 agencies -- kind of like the OD map that's now being
24 pushed -- an interactive map as to where the auto thefts
25 are happening, the hotspots. Get agencies to put their

1 statistics in there so that we can have this ability as to
2 in our area -- especially Harris County which is a huge
3 county -- what cities are being hit.

4 Same thing with the Valley, you know, you get
5 agencies putting in there and now you know that in Mission
6 there's a hotspot there. And we can respond to that and
7 we can have better visibility as to what's going on within
8 our area.

9 So that's going to be one of my recommendations
10 to the Board to start getting that digital platform for
11 agencies to start putting those statistics in there and
12 not just fall back into the NICB hotspot report, which is
13 every year, and we're just counting on that to kind of
14 have that visibility.

15 I know that DPS sends out that monthly report,
16 but I can tell you [inaudible] doesn't read it. And if we
17 get that interactive map and we start seeing it. And then
18 we also offer it to the public where if I'm going to
19 Houston and I'm going to go to a Hilton Inn or a La Quinta
20 and I can check there, hey, this is a hotspot for motor
21 vehicle theft, make sure I lock my car, or I go to another
22 place and then stay there.

23 So this is what I'm thinking of thinking
24 outside the box, guys. And I think that this is something
25 that would be good also for us as the task forces to make

1 sure that if we have every jurisdiction pushing those
2 numbers in there, that you can have that visibility.

3 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: I totally agree.

4 A few years back we got a new computer dispatch
5 system and there are several other smaller -- La Porte is
6 one of them. I believe the City of Pasadena utilizes it.

7 And there is an option for information sharing and also
8 where we can see calls for service from a patrol
9 perspective.

10 The decision to share information is made
11 several ranks above me, but I do agree it would be
12 beneficial. We also do have crime analysts and they
13 provide us with heat maps and stuff like that. And that
14 can be something that they may already have the ability to
15 do. It's just familiarizing myself with that.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Anybody else have any
17 questions?

18 (No response.)

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

20 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Thank you.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We're going to break for lunch.

22 It is 12:34; be back at 1:30.

23 (Whereupon, the meeting was recessed, to
24 reconvene this same day, Thursday, June 15, 2023,
25 following the lunch recess.)

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's 1:42 and we're back in
2 session.

3 City of Laredo.

4 MR. CANTU: Good afternoon, Chair, Board of
5 Directors. My name is Investigator Greg Cantu with Laredo
6 PD Auto Theft Unit. I'm representing the Auto Theft Unit
7 there at PD.

8 So I'm going to start off with a little bit
9 about Laredo before I start going into numbers. We're the
10 eighth largest police department in Texas. We are located
11 in the Rio Grande and are known as the number one inland
12 port in the nation. In 2021 over \$250 billion in trade
13 was conducted through our ports of entry. Historically in
14 2009 we were known as the car theft capital of the nation;
15 in 2020 we became the least likely city in Texas to get a
16 vehicle stolen.

17 So our task force is comprised of one
18 lieutenant, one sergeant -- our lieutenant is our
19 commander -- ten investigators, two of our TCOLE certified
20 instructors, one public relation investigator, one
21 analyst, and one ATF administrative assistant. The
22 investigations that we conduct in Laredo are, of course,
23 vehicle thefts, burglary of vehicles, fraudulent reports,
24 cargo thefts, catalytic converters, and we also do 68-As.

25 So in the burglaries, from 2021 we were at 875

1 burglaries of vehicles. It went down in 2022 to 688. And
2 on thefts of motor vehicles in 2021 we were at 214. In
3 fiscal 2022 we went up to 446.

4 Year-to-date this year there's a 12 percent
5 reduction in auto thefts; we brought it back down. In
6 burglaries of vehicles, we also brought it down 25 percent
7 for this year. So I don't have the numbers for 2023 yet
8 on the vehicles recovered, but in 2022 we recovered 164
9 vehicles with a total amount of \$3.4 million.

10 Every time we have an incident or we have a
11 burglary or we have a theft, we try to utilize our
12 real-time center to put out lookouts on vehicle suspects
13 as soon as possible for the officers and for the other
14 agencies. We work closely with border patrol. They call
15 us out if they have something suspicious or they can't
16 identify a vehicle or a tractor or a trailer and we get
17 called out to the ports of entry too. So they have our
18 numbers, direct numbers, and usually they call us direct
19 and we go ahead and respond to the ports.

20 Right now my commander created two proactive
21 investigators. Myself and another investigator are doing
22 proactive investigations. We've been doing it for a
23 couple of months already. So we do not run on assigned,
24 per se, cases but we try to start up cases.

25 And the cases that we're working on right now

1 are a little bit sensitive, but right now we're working on
2 a VIN swap out of Chicago, so I'm working right now with
3 DEA. They're bringing down those vehicles to Laredo and
4 they're doing the VIN swaps, so we're working on that.

5 We've helped Zapata County with a couple of
6 stolen vehicles also and they were VIN swaps. And we also
7 helped out Cameron County with a suspect that they're
8 trying to ID that we arrested and he's using false names,
9 and we also recovered one of their vehicles in Laredo. So
10 that's the proactive approach that we're taking in Laredo.

11 Anything that comes up, if patrol arrests a
12 burglary of a vehicle suspect or a suspect that has been
13 arrested for auto theft that they arrested, we try and
14 interview that individual either to turn into a source to
15 try to get as much information of what's going on. And
16 that's myself and the other detective. The other
17 detectives, they take all those cases -- they take the
18 burglaries of vehicles, auto thefts, anything to do with
19 auto theft.

20 This year there's been 121 arrests.
21 Eighty-eight have been for burglary of vehicles, and for
22 auto theft 22. Eleven have been miscellaneous and those
23 miscellaneous might be credit card abuse. They go ahead
24 and take a purse, they start using that credit card. So
25 we might not be able to prove the burglary but we go ahead

1 and arrest them for credit card abuse because they're
2 using them in stores and there's accounts out there.

3 MR. PENCE: Time. Sorry.

4 (General laughter.)

5 MR. CANTU: Real quick on the 68-A inspections,
6 in 2022 we did 1,317 motor vehicles and 903 tractors. So
7 that was last year. It was a 50 percent uptick between
8 2021 and 2022. I believe I have the numbers -- they sent
9 the numbers earlier, and I think we're up to 1,300 this
10 year on the 68-A inspections.

11 Real quick on our commander, we do a lot of
12 public events also, public service. We talk to the kids,
13 we do education with the kids. Myself and the other
14 investigator, we go to one of the driving schools and we
15 try to catch them young when they're about to get their
16 driver's license and we talk to them about the safety of
17 their vehicles, locking them up.

18 Our commander, our supervisors, what they want
19 for the funding is one more sergeant, two investigators,
20 one uniformed officer. We're working on LPRs, so we do
21 not have LPRs. We usually work with other agencies.

22 Myself and the other investigators, we have a
23 task force officer that is assigned to Laredo PD. He's
24 border patrol, and usually we go with him. So we're
25 working on that.

1 The Flock System, we also are working on the
2 Flock System. We have two towers right now, but they're
3 out of commission because the generators are not working.

4 So we're trying to get two new generators.

5 And the reason behind a second sergeant is we
6 want to cut the group in half, have one in the afternoon
7 and one in the morning. The two investigators are to
8 replace the proactive investigators.

9 So that's my presentation.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You went over five more
11 minutes.

12 MR. CANTU: Sorry.

13 MR. PENCE: You're at seven minutes now.

14 (General laughter.)

15 MR. SMITH: Board Member Smith, for the record.
16 So you'll be setting this up kind of shift
17 work.

18 MR. CANTU: Yes.

19 MR. SMITH: That's awesome.

20 MR. CANTU: Thank you.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Greg.

22 Lubbock.

23 MR. GENTRY: For the record, my name is Andy
24 Gentry and I am the chief investigator for the South
25 Plains Auto Theft Force.

1 I know the Board members already know how the
2 task force is set up, but for the members that don't know,
3 they say our task force is a stand-alone task force,
4 meaning we're commissioned through the district attorney's
5 office in Lubbock. We're not attached to a sheriff's
6 office or a PD.

7 We do have an agreement with the sheriff's
8 office that they send us all their auto theft cases and
9 auto theft related cases, and we work closely with the
10 police department. And long story short, the crime
11 prevention unit at the police department is an active unit
12 that goes out, and we have two officers that are embedded
13 with those guys because they're out and about. They're in
14 the neighborhoods, they are familiar with the criminals in
15 that neighborhood. So by placing two officers in with
16 that unit there has greatly increased our arrests and
17 penetration just by doing that.

18 Just a little bit more about our task force.
19 Including Lubbock County, we're 26 counties. The total
20 mileage coverage is 24,500 square miles of coverage area,
21 and we do that with seven personnel right now.

22 We do it with our commander -- which, by the
23 way, I apologize, he wanted to be here but he had a death
24 in the family so he had to leave, so you guys are blessed
25 with me. So we have our commander, myself, and more

1 investigators and one civilian that she wears multiple
2 hats, crime analyst, crime prevention and the
3 administrative assistant.

4 One of the things that we're asking for is
5 salary increases to bring us more competitive with some of
6 the other agencies that are in our area, because, quite
7 honestly, we're at the tipping point to where if we aren't
8 able to supplement some of our salaries, then we're going
9 to start losing some of our personnel to the sheriff's
10 office or the police department or some of the other
11 outlying police departments that are competitive with
12 their salaries.

13 Along with that, we'd like to add one more
14 investigator to go with the proactive unit. We also have
15 a TAG unit, a Texas Anti-Gang task force, that's managed
16 by the sheriff's office in Lubbock. So we'd like to get
17 them embedded with the street crimes units and the TAG
18 officers, because, obviously, a lot of the juggling and so
19 forth is committed by these hybrid gangs. The thought
20 process is if we can get them embedded with those people,
21 then it would not only help with identification, arrests
22 and clearance rates, and hopefully lower our crime stats
23 at the same time.

24 Currently our crime analyst -- we're having the
25 same problem everybody else is with 68-A inspections.

1 Right now currently in Lubbock we've done 1,171
2 inspections. We're catching all of the traffic from the
3 Midland-Odessa area.

4 We're having people come up to our area from
5 three or four hours away. And when we're not able to take
6 care of them, then they go another two hours to Potter
7 County. And so there's a huge gap. So we're estimating
8 that we're going to have to do in the area of between
9 1,600 and 1,700 68-A inspections this year alone.

10 Along with that, our crime analyst, she's still
11 on for every one of those calls. We don't have a large
12 enough area to have a first-come, first-served. We have
13 an area set up that we have to take appointments for, so
14 they show up by appointment.

15 She sets these appointments up, and quite
16 honestly -- and I'm sure everybody else that does by
17 appointment -- there is a 20- to 25-percent no-show rate.

18 So we'll call back, reschedule, another 20 percent no-
19 show rate. So by the time it's said and done, those 1,700
20 inspections has translated into 2,000, 2,100 phone calls,
21 thus keeping our crime prevention coordinator from going
22 out and spreading the word and educating the public as far
23 as keep your keys, don't leave them in the car,
24 possessions that you're proud of that you don't want
25 taken, take those out of the car, and so forth, to just

1 spread the message.

2 MR. PENCE: Time.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You can go ahead and finish.

4 MR. GENTRY: I'm good.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any questions for Lubbock?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 MR. GENTRY: Thank you.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Mansfield PD.

10 MR. HARRELL: Good afternoon. Lt. Jim Harrell.

11 I'm with the Mansfield Police Department, but I am over
12 the Tri-County Auto Theft.

13 I'd like to tell you a little bit about our
14 unit. We began in 2011 and we're currently working with
15 the same staffing, which is myself and five investigators.

16 I am a working boss, which means I carry a caseload.

17 And my caseload right now is about 30 cases.
18 And for managing the task force and all the investigators
19 and the grant and everything else, that's a little bit
20 steep. So we have requested another position in our grant
21 request to help take some of that caseload, so I can do a
22 little more as far as directing the task force, where we
23 need to be and how we need to do things.

24 We cover three counties. Most of it is in
25 Johnson and Ellis, and between those two, that's about

1 1,600 square miles, 30 cities. Most of these cities have
2 one officer or a chief and an officer or a sheriff's
3 department.

4 In Ellis County, roughly they've got one
5 officer for 100 square miles -- Johnson County, about the
6 same thing. So when we're out there working, for us to
7 get other officers to where we're at, it don't happen very
8 often. There are six of us. We work together; we're out
9 there working. If we do need backup, well, it's a little
10 bit away.

11 So I'm going to try to take this time to go
12 towards y'all's conversation on purchase of vehicles
13 versus leasing vehicles. I think you could go both ways,
14 and I say that to say for Houston it works because they're
15 in the city. We're not in the city, we work in counties.

16 And when we start getting to salvage yards,
17 junk yards and places like that, leased vehicles probably
18 wouldn't work as well for us. We also recover a lot of
19 RVs, big trailers. We can't get wreckers into where they
20 are because they're down in the sticks, so we end up
21 having to pull them out with our trucks.

22 We save the citizens a lot of tow fees just by
23 pulling those out, getting them back to the citizens. We
24 save the task force fees from having wreckers coming out
25 there, bringing heavy duty wreckers out there to be able

1 to pull these things out. With the vehicles we have,
2 we're able to get to them.

3 Also, working in the counties we do a lot of
4 interdiction, which is a lot of stolen farm equipment, a
5 lot of stolen skid steers. They're running up and down
6 the back roads. With lights and sirens we're able to stop
7 these cars, recover equipment that has been stolen, and
8 they carry them on the back roads to keep from getting
9 caught in the city with them.

10 So for us, it's kind of imperative to have
11 vehicles that we can alter a little bit, put lights into
12 them, also LoJack Systems where we can track LoJacks. And
13 leased vehicles, that would be a lot of work moving it
14 from one section to the other.

15 I do understand the cost, and for us it's okay,
16 we'll offset what we can. Whatever you provide to us
17 through program income for the department, we'll make it
18 work for us.

19 To date we've had -- and this is just this
20 year -- we've had 236 recoveries for a little over right
21 around \$7 million, \$500,000 in equipment, filed 71 cases,
22 30 arrests, completed 1,500 68-As.

23 While I was here today I got a call from my
24 guys. They recovered another three stolen vehicles in 68-
25 As today. Not surprising, we got one from Houston with a

1 fake title.

2 We've completed MVT bait deployments, 60 BMV
3 bait deployments, and 60 shop/salvage yard inspections.
4 And that's a lot of what we do is hit the salvage yards
5 out in the counties because that's where they're taking
6 these vehicles to be smashed.

7 We have completed four education classes. Our
8 task force, along with Tarrant Regional, do an
9 interdiction/apprehension eight-hour class for officers,
10 so we've completed four of those. We'd like to continue
11 our proactive approach in our program area to also include
12 more citizen education and officer education.

13 And that's about what I have.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

15 Any questions?

16 (No response.)

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: In your application you put
18 \$21,000 for RMS. Is that a records management system?

19 MR. HARRELL: Yes, it is.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Your agency doesn't have an RMS
21 system?

22 MR. HARRELL: They do, but they're having to
23 upgrade the system. And since the system is being
24 upgraded, the licenses -- since they provide 90 percent of
25 everything, that we pay for our license for MDT for the

1 member agencies.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So how much is each license?
3 How many licenses are we getting?

4 MR. HARRELL: I know that the fees that they
5 told us -- they provided us the fees. They said it's
6 \$21,000 to cover what it costs to run our MDTs for the
7 task force.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: The City of Mansfield is
9 charging this?

10 MR. HARRELL: Mansfield is the host city. So
11 we have Mansfield, Burleson, Kennedale, Midlothian and the
12 Tarrant County Constable's Office, but they all work off
13 of Mansfield's system. So each one of our task force
14 investigators is housed out of Mansfield. They work out
15 of our office with the equipment provided by Mansfield and
16 it's all run through their system.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do you know what the system is
18 called?

19 MR. HARRELL: It's the OSSI version. And the
20 one that we work under now is sunseting. They're not
21 going to provide any updates on it anymore, so we're
22 having to go to a new system which will provide more
23 benefits for the officers, because it's also going to be
24 global-based where they could run pretty much everything
25 off of their phones if they happen to be somewhere they

1 need to. But that's an upgrade -- they're upgrading the
2 system.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So where is this at,
4 CentralSquare?

5 MR. HARRELL: Yes.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So you're staying with
7 CentralSquare but an updated system?

8 MR. HARRELL: Yes. It's a hybrid system,
9 because what we have now has been there almost as long as
10 I have and I've been there 25 years. So they're not going
11 to support it anymore, so they're having to upgrade.

12 I think they said 95 percent of the cost is
13 being taken by the city. They're just asking that we pay
14 for those licensing fees for the air time for those six
15 MDTs that we use.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So just to be clear,
17 CentralSquare -- I'm familiar with CentralSquare. They
18 provide licenses based on your agency, so unless you host
19 it, it would be per user -- a subscription service, as
20 they call it.

21 At \$21,000, I would like to see how is it that
22 we're breaking that down per officer, because that \$21,000
23 for six officers on RMS software per year seems like a
24 lot. And the agency itself should be able to provide that
25 to you because that's a records management system for the

1 agency. I just don't want to get into a situation where
2 we're supplanting here.

3 MR. HARRELL: I totally understand.

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So I just want to make sure we
5 know exactly what we're paying for.

6 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, Joe Canady, for the
7 record. If I may?

8 If we consider allowing the cost for the sub-
9 grantees that are not part of the City of Mansfield,
10 having the City of Mansfield cover the portion for their
11 personnel, that would be better to have the external
12 agencies that are in addition to what the City of
13 Mansfield has.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: But I still want to see the
15 breakdown per officer, per investigator. Because if we're
16 also including the air card for the MDT and the wireless
17 bill to be able to access your NCIT TTIC, then we need to
18 break that down to make sure that we have that, not just
19 put it as part of this. Because that's allowable, we'll
20 be able to pay for that.

21 But I want is the City of Mansfield is charging
22 the license to MVCPA and if the Mansfield PD, the
23 Mansfield officers are utilizing that RMS system that
24 [inaudible] agency would have, we don't want to get into
25 that. We're okay for the other officers that under the

1 command of the task force.

2 I think for the license, \$21,000 is a lot of
3 money. So I just want to make sure that we break it down
4 as to, okay, per officer this is how much the license is
5 costing.

6 How many officers does Mansfield have?

7 MR. HARRELL: How many officers does Mansfield
8 have? They're at 102.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So if you divide \$21,000 by
10 six, imagine how much it would cost the city to run an RMS
11 software system. That's a lot of money. There's no way
12 that they pay for that.

13 MR. HARRELL: I don't know exactly the
14 breakdown, but I do know that it covers the portions where
15 they have to have NCIT, they have to have the aircards,
16 like you said. I did not get that breakdown and I
17 apologize for that.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And I understand. I just want
19 to make sure that what we're funding is correct.

20 MR. HARRELL: Understood.

21 MR. CANADY: And Lt. Harrell -- Joe Canady, for
22 the record -- does this include for Burleson PD, and
23 Kennedale and Midlothian, do they also utilize reports in
24 their system or use the Mansfield system exclusively for
25 their reporting?

1 MR. HARRELL: Everything runs through our
2 system, everything.

3 MR. CANADY: And what about the ones that are
4 more in-kind, such as the Tarrant County Constables and
5 Alvarado PD?

6 MR. HARRELL: If they're working with us, the
7 day that they're there, they utilize our system.
8 Basically everything that's put into our cars -- when we
9 go out in the field, we're two men per car. So if a
10 constable is with one of us, he's using our computer
11 system, he's writing a report. Same thing, it all goes
12 through our system. Everything they generate comes
13 through the task force system.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any other questions?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you very much.

17 Montgomery County.

18 MR. SANCHEZ: Good afternoon. My name is John
19 Sanchez. I'm a lieutenant with the Montgomery County
20 Sheriff's Office, and I am the commander of the Montgomery
21 County Auto Theft Task Force.

22 First, I'd like to start by just saying thank
23 you for this conference. It's been a lot of fun and it's
24 been very educational, and y'all set the tone by having us
25 network and meet people and we have done that and made new

1 friends along the way. Thank you very much for putting
2 this together.

3 We are a task force, we're 30 years old. We
4 have six investigators, we cover nine counties. We're
5 multi-agency: I have one from Walker County, one from
6 Grimes County, and the rest are in-house from Montgomery
7 County.

8 We do a little bit of everything: stolen
9 vehicles, burglaries of motor vehicles, bait operations,
10 license plates, paper tag operations -- we've done several
11 of those undercover. Unfortunately, I'm the only Spanish-
12 speaker in my group, so I get to do most of the undercover
13 on those and get to see it firsthand and see how it goes.

14 For fiscal year '22 we made 561 recoveries with
15 80 arrests. For fiscal year '23 through February 28 we
16 have 282 recoveries and 37 arrests.

17 I'm fortunate to have Sgt. Kelley Smith as my
18 auto theft sergeant. Kelley is well known throughout all
19 the task forces and probably across the country for his
20 expertise, and that brings us a lot of contacts across the
21 state and also across the nation. It also causes people
22 to reach out to us through Kelley.

23 We get a lot of information. We do a lot of
24 networking in that manner, and we get a lot of clues that
25 come back to our county and we conduct investigations from

1 there. It also gives us the ability to reach out to other
2 task forces; they know Kelley and have that personal
3 relationship with him and get things done through other
4 task forces.

5 I'm not going to beat up on HPD and Harris
6 County but we do a lot of work with them because since we
7 border Harris County, their crooks come up to us. We have
8 a very good working relationship with them which we're
9 very grateful for.

10 As far as this grant application, what I'm
11 looking forward to is we've asked for more personnel which
12 is really our greatest need. We have tremendous caseload
13 right now, and unfortunately, we can't go as deep into our
14 investigations as I would like my detectives to go.
15 Because of that, because we have so many cases, I'm hoping
16 that the added personnel will relieve the caseload and
17 allow them to get more in-depth into their investigations,
18 allowing us to recover more vehicles, hopefully take out
19 some more organizations and a greater entirety of the
20 organization and put more people in jail.

21 And it will also give us the ability to conduct
22 more proactive activities than we do now. We partner with
23 patrol a lot of times, and like I said, we do our paper
24 plate initiatives.

25 Sometimes we get patrol out and we'll just

1 smother 45 and stop everything that's got a paper plate.
2 We've been very successful at that, everything from
3 recovering stolen vehicles to bad paper tags, to people
4 with warrants, guns, dope, everything.

5 My agency, particularly, we have a lot of
6 different divisions, our gang unit, our narcotics unit.
7 All of those units reach out to us, even our homicide
8 units.

9 They came to us, said we're looking for a
10 suspect vehicle. We were able to help them recover that
11 suspect vehicle, identify that suspect and put that person
12 in jail. So we cut across the spectrum.

13 What's been said here this week that auto theft
14 is really kind of part of every crime that's committed out
15 there, we have that opportunity in Montgomery County to
16 touch just about everything that's out there. And because
17 of our expertise and because of the hard work that my
18 people do, these groups are not reluctant at all to reach
19 out to us and come to us for assistance. And they know we
20 will be there and we'll be able to help them.

21 I've asked for overtime. Again, when I made
22 the presentation in April, I explained that because of the
23 work that we do, the callouts and everything else that we
24 do, there are times where at the end of the pay period I
25 don't have anybody in the office late on a Thursday or

1 maybe entirely on a Friday because we just don't have the
2 overtime money. I've asked for the overtime money so that
3 I can cover that. That puts them back in the office, that
4 helps us continue our investigative processes, and
5 hopefully that will help us reach our goals that I've set
6 for my team for the future.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Very good.

8 Any questions from the Board?

9 MS. JONES: The radar speed trailer for 15K.

10 MR. SANCHEZ: Yes, ma'am. So they're really
11 LPR trailers and they're disguised as speed trailers. We
12 have some in the agency right now that we can try to
13 reserve and see if we need them, but I feel that putting
14 those out gives us a better opportunity for people not to
15 make them as LPR trailers. But that's really what they
16 are, they're LPR trailers disguised as speed trailers.

17 One of our districts has some in the orange
18 barrels that you see at construction sites, and I know the
19 minute we put one out, some drunk is going to hit it and
20 there goes the whole LPR system down. So I'd rather go
21 with the speed trailers if possible.

22 MS. JONES: Okay.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

24 MR. SANCHEZ: Thank you.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: City of Paris.

1 MR. LOGSDEN: Good afternoon. Det. Cody
2 Logsdan with the Paris Police Department, the commander
3 for the Northeast Texas Auto Theft Task Force.

4 Our task force is just a two-man task force.
5 We cover nine counties across northeast Texas, five of
6 which border Oklahoma. We cover 7,400 square miles
7 between our coverage areas; with just two of us, quite a
8 bit of area to cover.

9 We're requesting funding for two additional
10 investigators to help cover that. With that, we're
11 requesting funding for three vehicles, one to replace a
12 vehicle currently on loan to my partner who is with the
13 Lamar County Sheriff's Office on loan through the City of
14 Paris, and two for each additional investigator if they
15 are funded.

16 For us, because we cover such a large area,
17 it's mostly rural; we need trucks. Just like another
18 person said, we don't have backup readily available most
19 of the time. If we're within the City of Paris or one of
20 the big cities, it's there, but a lot of our
21 investigations take us out where backup could be 30 miles
22 away, 100 miles away.

23 So we have our vehicles fully equipped, lights,
24 sirens. We have to make traffic stops, we recover stolen
25 vehicles. Our policy, we can pursue in an unmarked until

1 we get a marked unit.

2 We ran into the problem where we'll be off duty
3 in our personal vehicle and locate a stolen vehicle
4 because of an LPR hit and we'll have to follow it 10, 15,
5 20 miles before we can get an agency to come in and find
6 it, help us get it stopped. So that's the reasoning we
7 would prefer to purchase vehicles so we can have them
8 fully outfitted. With that, we have the MDTs stationary
9 in the units for our 68-A inspections and for all of our
10 investigations.

11 The City of Paris, we currently have 21 Flock
12 cameras. The task force requested \$5,000 to fund two of
13 those. Those have been instrumental in recovering stolen
14 vehicles, auto theft investigations. My partner was able
15 to identify a homicide suspect for the Lamar County
16 Sheriff's Office, thanks to those.

17 Like I said, we only have two detectives. I'm
18 new, I've only been in auto theft three months. I am the
19 commander.

20 My partner only has eight months experience,
21 but we've hit the ground running. We're trying to be
22 extremely proactive. We're wanting to get out and get
23 into those chop shops out in the rural areas. We just
24 discovered one with the assistance of another agency and
25 we were able to recover six stolen vehicles, \$400,000

1 worth of property that belonged to a U.S. attorney, so
2 that's made some contacts for us.

3 Just in the three quarters that I've been
4 here -- well, I've only been here for the last quarter --
5 just some quick numbers. We increased our recovered
6 stolen from 11 and 14 in quarter one and quarter two to
7 just 31 in quarter there alone, increased our values from
8 \$174,000 and \$222,000 to just under \$1.1 million last
9 quarter.

10 Prior to this our stats are going to be really
11 skewed because our commander was out with surgeries, we
12 had changes. So we're just trying to come in, pick up
13 what we can and be as proactive as we can, catch as much
14 as we can.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you. Appreciate your
16 time.

17 Pasadena.

18 MR. BUTLER: Good afternoon. Sgt. Doug Butler
19 with the Pasadena PD Auto Crimes Task Force. I'll try to
20 be quick here.

21 Our unit consists of five investigators and one
22 sergeant. MVCPA funds one of our investigator positions,
23 with the other five positions being listed as in-kind. We
24 handle all the auto crime investigations for Pasadena.

25 We have about 60 auto thefts a month, about 65

1 BMVs and another 15 thefts of motor vehicle parts. Along
2 with criminal investigations, we do our 68-A inspections.

3 We also provide community outreach through our Citizens
4 Police Academy and other outreach programs through the PD.

5 Our unit has had quite the turnover recently.
6 Of our six positions, four of us are new to the task
7 force, so with that come the challenges of training new
8 personnel, creating new contacts with our surrounding
9 agencies. Despite those challenges, recently we put
10 together several significant investigations identifying
11 organized groups responsible for high-end vehicle thefts.

12 With MVCPA's continued support, I believe we
13 will have a positive impact on crimes in our area.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Questions from the Board?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We're good. You didn't even
17 use five minutes.

18 Potter County.

19 MR. McBROOM: Good afternoon.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon.

21 MR. McBROOM: Patrick McBroom, Potter County
22 Sheriff's Office. I'm the commander of the Panhandle Auto
23 Burglary and Theft Unit.

24 Lots of big changes coming for us. In
25 February, the Amarillo Police Department will no longer be

1 a part of the unit, so that's three of their investigators
2 are pulling out, as well as over half of our cash match is
3 going as well. So in this application -- which was almost
4 not, really had to work through some numbers to make this
5 happen -- in this application, 93 percent of that is for
6 personnel salaries for the upcoming year, and the other
7 seven percent will be for DOE, so we're not asking for any
8 vehicles or any equipment.

9 So we cover the top 16 counties of the Texas
10 Panhandle which is 16,000 square miles -- that's a bunch.

11 We have a population of 370,000 people. We have two
12 participating agencies, which is Randall County and Potter
13 County Sheriff's Offices. We also have a half-time DPS
14 special agent that works with us.

15 We work all auto theft cases and all auto
16 burglaries from the counties, and currently we work all
17 auto theft for APD. So once the new cycle begins, we
18 won't work the APD cases anymore, so that will be 1,400
19 cases less than what we worked, so we'll actually be
20 working less than 200 assigned cases.

21 We'll go from a reactive unit, which we are
22 now, to very much a proactive unit. We'll go from 260 per
23 investigator a year to less than 25 cases per
24 investigator. We'd like to change our crime prevention
25 coordinator to an investigator spot, so once we lose the

1 three guys, we'll gain one investigator.

2 We've been using program income to buy new
3 equipment. We bought two new LPRs this year, as well as a
4 bait car. NICB has also assisted us with getting bait
5 cars and we're in the process of getting them out in the
6 bait car system as we speak.

7 Number-wise, in 2022 we recovered \$3.2 million
8 in vehicles. There was 1,151 stolen in '22, that was a 6
9 percent increase from the previous year. Auto burglaries
10 are down 10 percent. Fraud cases are up 84 percent, and I
11 think the reason we see that increase is to us paying more
12 attention to fraud cases so we can track those numbers a
13 little better than we have in the past.

14 Of course we have New Mexico, Oklahoma -- we
15 assist agencies from Oklahoma, we assist agencies in New
16 Mexico and Colorado on cases. We've done over 600 68-As
17 in the last year and that money has been used to purchase
18 equipment. And we're in the process of buying two new
19 trackers now, as well as another LPR, and that way I'll
20 equip all our vehicles with LPRs.

21 Public awareness contacts, we've had almost 370
22 contacts which is our population over the course of the
23 year and programs for prevention.

24 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, if I may comment
25 just really quickly.

1 We met with Potter County a couple of months
2 ago. Amarillo PD was looking at pulling out. Amarillo is
3 reorganizing and will handle things on their own within
4 their agency; it's not part of the task force.

5 At the time the sheriffs and district attorneys
6 that were assigned to their board of governors were
7 contemplating totally pulling out from the task force. We
8 communicated with them in a meeting in Amarillo the value
9 of the program to their agency. They understand that it
10 was a valuable program to be participating in.

11 MR. McBROOM: And I'd like to thank Joe for his
12 assistance. He's been a big help.

13 MR. CANADY: Thank you.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for staying.

15 Do we have anybody from River Oaks?

16 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, if I may? There's
17 two in here from River Oaks and from San Augustine. They
18 are equipment only grants asking for LPRs -- equipment
19 only, no personnel to operate as a task force.

20 But now we can go to San Antonio.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: These are new applicants.

22 MR. CANADY: New applicants, yes, sir.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. San Antonio.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Good afternoon. I'm Lt. Nick
25 Johnson, San Antonio Police Department, and I'm the task

1 force commander for San Antonio ReACT.

2 I'm fairly new in the position, taking over in
3 January, but I'm very proud of what my task force has been
4 able to do. So I'd like to begin by recapping some of the
5 recent operations we've been conducting.

6 In January we wrapped up the Holiday Auto Theft
7 and Burglary of Motor Vehicle Task Force. This was an
8 interagency operation that consisted of our property
9 crimes unit, members of ReACT, our covert, fusion and our
10 street crimes unit. It was 45 days over the holiday
11 season and it targeted prolific offenders as well as area
12 hotspots in auto theft and burglary of motor vehicles.
13 This resulted in 58 arrests, 39 recovered stolen vehicles
14 valued at approximately \$800,000, 18 firearms recovered
15 and recovered stolen property valued at \$53,000.

16 More recently in May we concluded the operation
17 with the FBI in Laredo, Operation Black Echo that was
18 briefed by the FBI. Members of ReACT, as well as our SAPD
19 SWAT, assisted in locating and executing arrest warrants
20 at various targets within San Antonio. This was a
21 culmination of work that's been ongoing since 2022.

22 Our bait program -- we had a lot of technical
23 difficulties, I know, before I took over regarding the
24 bait program. We were able to overcome those and now we
25 have two vehicles that are operational and currently being

1 deployed.

2 Current trends -- like many other the task
3 forces in the state, we've seen dramatic increases in our
4 auto thefts. In San Antonio we're reporting over 7,000
5 auto thefts just through May. So we're averaging about
6 1,400 a month right now, comparing this to 2020 when we
7 had around 6,900 for the entire year. So this kind of
8 leads me to the current issues and stuff we're facing
9 right now.

10 One of our biggest problems we're facing is
11 staffing. Our manpower has not increased since 2020, so
12 we're still operating off the same manpower and we have
13 over double the cases. This made it difficult to
14 implement prolonged proactive strategies.

15 Our current task force is staffed with one
16 lieutenant, two sergeants, 18 detectives and three
17 administrative personnel. The grant currently funds seven
18 detectives and two administrative personnel. We also have
19 attached an NICB agent, a DPS investigator, and we have
20 one participating agency.

21 We had Bexar County attached with us, they
22 pulled out in early 2022. We've reached out to Guadalupe
23 County Sheriff's Office and we have an interlocal that's
24 going to be pending approval by our city council and the
25 county side.

1 Some of the struggles we're facing as a task
2 force is we're pretty light with experience. We've had
3 tremendous turnover within that unit, strictly from
4 retirements and promotions. So I will only have three
5 investigators with over five years of auto theft
6 experience and one third of my unit will have under six
7 months of auto theft experience.

8 Our followup responsibilities within SAPD auto
9 theft are strictly the auto theft aspect and unauthorized
10 use of motor vehicles. Our forgery unit will deal with
11 the fraud-related motor vehicle thefts, and our property
12 crimes unit is currently tasked with our burglary of motor
13 vehicles and our theft of motor vehicles parts and
14 accessories.

15 Where this comes into play, our property crimes
16 unit is currently decentralized. So they have six
17 different substations and they have six unit directors
18 that report to them. So in July they're going to be
19 centralized and they're going to come underneath the
20 special investigations section so they'll report to the
21 same captain that we're reporting to.

22 So what this is going to do is that we have the
23 same captain that everybody is going to be reporting for
24 the forgery, our property crimes and our auto theft. And
25 we're going to be in the same building as the property

1 crimes unit, so this is going to make coordinating things
2 much easier and make our department much more efficient in
3 addressing all vehicle crimes within San Antonio.

4 And the goal that I'm seeing is trying to go
5 more towards that burglary of motor vehicle and auto theft
6 task force that we ran over the holidays as it was
7 extremely effective and we weren't duplicating work. So
8 that's what we're going for.

9 The grant application, like I mentioned, the
10 main issue here is our manpower, so we're asking for
11 funding for three additional positions, one sergeant and
12 two detectives. I've also asked for additional positions
13 within my department and that process is currently
14 ongoing. My intent is to make the task force able to
15 implement more long-term proactive strategies in
16 addressing vehicles crimes in our area. And I know with
17 the additional positions, it will help our task force
18 reach that goal.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for that
20 presentation.

21 How do you think those three additional FTEs
22 are going to make a dent in those 1,700 getting there?

23 MR. JOHNSON: We requested six additional
24 positions from within the department. The ultimate goal
25 is to have two teams with two sergeants working reactive

1 and then one team strictly proactive, placing them on a
2 flex schedule from 12:00 to 10:00 and with the expectation
3 and ability to flex to address the areas of hotspots that
4 we're seeing in the city.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Questions?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Smith County.

10 MR. RICHBOURG: Good evening -- it's still
11 afternoon. Kenneth Richbourg with the Smith County East
12 Texas Auto Theft Task Force.

13 We are one of the original task forces, again,
14 in 1993. And just for purposes, the funding back then is
15 pretty much on par for what it is right now 30 years down
16 the line, so that says something.

17 We're comprised of four full-time investigators
18 and those are four participating agencies. Two of the
19 investigators have over 22 years experience combined,
20 another has more than eight years, and our newest one has
21 three years of service, so we've got pretty much a good
22 crew. I, of course, work from DPS and I'm provided to the
23 task force at no cost to them.

24 We have a district attorney that provides money
25 for our part-time administrative assistant. It's been a

1 priority for participating agencies to fully staff the
2 auto theft task force, even though some of these agencies
3 are experiencing shortages of manpower in other areas.

4 We serve 14 counties in the East Texas Council
5 of Governments area, many of these are on a weekly basis.

6 It's law enforcement, fire marshal offices, state and
7 federal agencies. We attend intel meetings with other
8 agencies and we share intel with all these agencies and
9 industry.

10 We are housed with the Smith County tax office
11 and tax assessor so that makes it handy for when we have
12 cases come in there; we can just hop downstairs and handle
13 it. We're the only specialized trained experts in the
14 area. We do law enforcement, prevention, reduction of
15 theft of parts, and we do education programs, TCOLE and
16 DCOLE training.

17 Our ask for this new grant, it's not a whole
18 lot. The first time that we've ever asked for overtime is
19 included in this grant. We're asking for additional money
20 for training for investigators, travel and training.

21 We are asking for a vehicle this time to
22 replace a 2012 vehicle, and we do prefer to have a
23 purchased vehicle for the purposes of mounting a toolbox
24 in the back, computer inside, lights, that sort of thing.
25 Also some additional money for fuel.

1 We plan to expand in the future. This time was
2 not the right time. We'd like to add one or two
3 investigators as we go forward. The main agency that has
4 the highest theft rate in our area was not able to do it
5 at this time and we'd rather wait and get them on rather
6 than somebody else.

7 LPRs, we're evaluating those. Some of our
8 counties has them, some of the other counties that are
9 participating have them. We're trying to weigh what's
10 best: mobile for the vehicles or stationary. So we kind
11 of want to see how those pan out before we decide to ask
12 MVCPA for funding for those in the future.

13 I'd be happy to answer any questions if you
14 have any.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

16 Any questions?

17 (No response.)

18 MR. RICHBOURG: Thank you.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

20 Tarrant County. Good afternoon.

21 MR. PEDERSEN: Good afternoon. For the record,
22 Matt Pedersen, commander of the auto theft task force in
23 Tarrant County for the Tarrant Regional Auto Crimes Unit.

24 MS. PENA: Ann Pena, Auto Crimes Tarrant County
25 administrative assistant, prevention coordinator. I serve

1 as the grant manager.

2 MR. PEDERSEN: Good afternoon. We appreciate
3 the opportunity to come and talk a little bit about our
4 program. In FY 2024 will be our 31st year of successful
5 grant-funded operations with the Motor Vehicle Crime
6 Prevention Authority.

7 Our task force consists of ten different
8 agencies. We have seven investigators, two professional
9 staff, a commander, a dedicated criminal prosecutor. We
10 also are assigned a special agent and an investigative
11 specialist with NICB, and we have an MOU currently with
12 Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, so under the same roof
13 we have a chief investigator, as well as three DMV
14 investigators.

15 Our task force currently serves as the primary
16 source of auto crime expertise for the agencies that fall
17 within our unit's program area, as well as collaborative
18 partner regional crime efforts with Dallas PD, North Texas
19 and Tri-County. Serving as a force multiplier for
20 agencies within the coverage area and beyond, team members
21 participate in field operations, criminal investigations,
22 law enforcement training, intelligence sharing, prevention
23 programs, and citizen education efforts.

24 Operations concentrate on large dollar losses,
25 multi-jurisdictional investigations, and organized

1 criminal rings. Investigators specialize in vehicle
2 identification, assisting investigations involving complex
3 criminal schemes, as well as conducting the state-mandated
4 inspections for Texas consumers for title purposes.

5 The tax force routinely inspects businesses
6 such as repair shops, dealerships and salvage yards, as
7 well as recycling entities to identify and investigate
8 illicit activities. Prevention education efforts include
9 VIN etching, citizen presentations, participation in
10 community events, and coordinating and dissemination of
11 public information through both traditional and social
12 media outlets.

13 The task force's FY24 grant application is
14 requesting additional four investigators, as well as the
15 equipment necessary to keep them functional, to help
16 supplement the current team staffing levels of the
17 operational blueprint I just outlined. Several
18 jurisdictions were solicited for possible participation
19 but did not currently possess the staffing capability to
20 oblige. The sheriff and chiefs of Wise County,
21 Weatherford, Grapevine and White Settlement, however,
22 demonstrated not only their ability through staffing to
23 assign an investigator but a strong desire to participate
24 is outlined in their letters of support that were attached
25 to our application.

1 The program collectively experienced a small
2 decrease in auto thefts between 2021 and 2022. When
3 compared separately for the seven counties that we cover
4 to the west experienced increases in auto thefts, vehicle
5 burglaries and the part theft rates. The increase in
6 these current auto theft trends appear to mirror the
7 population growth being experienced by these counties.
8 Parker County, for example, is one of the three fastest
9 growing counties in North Texas, according to the most
10 current U.S. Census Bureau figures.

11 The addition of the Weatherford Police
12 Department, as well as the Wise County Sheriff's Office,
13 will assist in creating a team of investigators who can
14 bring experience and expertise and resources to these
15 growing communities. The addition of the Grapevine Police
16 Department will provide a needed presence in the northeast
17 corner of Tarrant County, including the DFW Airport, where
18 theft and burglary rates have experienced significant
19 increases. The White Settlement Police Department, who
20 has already proven an active and willing participant in
21 collaborative efforts, will also provide additional
22 investigators to supplement the current team of
23 investigators who are serving 32 various municipalities in
24 Tarrant County alone.

25 An original goal for the grant application was

1 to attempt to secure a full-time fraud investigator. We
2 weren't able to do that, but we do know that the addition
3 of four investigators will help us to share the workload
4 that we've experienced with our fraud investigations,
5 which by far is what's taking up the majority of our
6 resources at this time.

7 Additional funding will assist the task force
8 in building upon prior successes highlighted --

9 MR. PENCE: One minute.

10 MR. PEDERSEN: Okay. I don't hear you.

11 (General laughter.)

12 MR. PEDERSEN: Additional funding will assist
13 the task force with building upon these prior successes
14 which we've reported in our quarterly and annual reports,
15 as well as previous committee presentations. With these
16 funds, the task force will continue to address auto theft,
17 burglary and fraud concerns by adopting cases with
18 multiple suspects, vehicles and jurisdictions. We'll
19 continue to identify and target prolific offenders, to
20 educate citizens, provide more presentations and attend
21 community events.

22 With the funding we'll be able to continue to
23 serve as an organizing force to gather and disseminate
24 intelligence with our regional partners, building the
25 strength of our investigator network while connecting

1 offenses, identifying suspects, and learning trends.
2 We'll continue to provide basic and advanced education to
3 officers, both in the academy and on the street. Finally,
4 we will strive to continue to be good stewards of the
5 citizens' money, working in full support of the MVCPA
6 vision to empower local law enforcement agencies and
7 communities to combat and prevent auto crimes.

8 MR. PENCE: Time.

9 MR. PEDERSEN: Right on time.

10 MS. BROTHERTON: Member Brotherton. I am from
11 Tarrant County so I do look at y'all closely, but as we've
12 looked through everything today, y'all are the only one --
13 correct me if I'm wrong, but it looks like y'all have
14 asked for a district attorney.

15 MR. PEDERSEN: We already have a dedicated
16 prosecutor.

17 MS. BROTHERTON: You have one, so this is not a
18 new one.

19 MR. PEDERSEN: That is correct.

20 MS. BROTHERTON: So can you tell me what you
21 see in improvement by having that so that we know how that
22 would affect the other agencies who are applying as well?

23 MR. PEDERSEN: Certainly. Obviously the
24 success rate or the efficiency with which we move our
25 cases through the DA's office is a lot easier and a lot

1 better when you have somebody that's a direct connect.
2 One of the big advantages with a dedicated prosecutor is
3 they get educated on all the technical aspects of auto
4 theft, it's not just breaking a steering column and
5 stealing a car. They understand what VIN switches are,
6 they understand what organized criminal activity is.

7 But the big thing with our dedicated prosecutor
8 too is because it's the only one in North Texas, and far
9 as I'm aware, full-time in the state. We make him
10 available also to all of our coverage agencies, but
11 specifically those who participate in our North Texas Auto
12 Crime Intel Network. And he becomes a resource and a
13 phone call for all of them, not just our participating
14 agencies.

15 Does that answer your question?

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any questions?

17 (No response.)

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Tarrant.

19 Let's take a five-minute break. It's 2:44, be
20 back at 2:50, make it six minutes.

21 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: 2:53 and we're back in session.
23 Travis County.

24 MR. TARRANT: Hello, Board members. Neil
25 Tarrant, Travis County Sheriff's Office sergeant and task

1 force commander, program manager Sheriff's Combined Auto
2 Theft Task Force.

3 MR. MEYER: Lt. Chris Meyer, Travis County
4 Sheriff's Office. I currently don't have anything to do
5 with the task force, but I'm going to be introduced into
6 the task force, so that's why I'm here.

7 Just to tell you a little bit about our task
8 force, we've been a recipient for almost 30 years from the
9 grant. We have six participating counties, eight coverage
10 counties, and our task force covers approximately 12,000
11 square miles and that's spread over 14 Central Texas
12 counties. So we have the barbecue belt from Plano down to
13 Caldwell County and Lockhart.

14 Our population is approximately 2.6 million
15 people, and that's not counting the population for our
16 high conversion rate, and we have approximately 2.2
17 million registered motor vehicles within our task force
18 coverage area. We currently have one full-time sergeant,
19 six full-time agents, two part-time agents, and one
20 community liaison that's over our 12,000 square miles.

21 Just like everybody else, we have multi-faceted
22 issues, anywhere from heavy equipment all the way to high-
23 end vehicles and the trailers that get stolen. Uniquely
24 in Central Texas are main corridors: I-35, the toll road,
25 71 East-West. Wherever you want to go, if you want to go

1 to Houston, San Antonio and Dallas and all the way down to
2 the border, you can get there very easily through the maze
3 of roadways we have, and that's not counting the smaller
4 county roadways that we handle.

5 The rural area of our coverage area makes it
6 difficult to find vehicles and items stolen because they
7 stash them off of county roads, a long way from eyeshot
8 from the roadways. So it's usually tips that we get that
9 we recover those. We have a large homeless population and
10 so we end up finding RVs and trailers that are stolen in
11 encampments, along with heavy equipment, F-250s, and
12 everything along that end. Our estimated loss in 2022 for
13 the whole entire task force was \$12 million, in auto parts
14 \$3.5 million.

15 The fraud relateds have gone up with the
16 altered VINs. I would like to say, though, that in the
17 first half of fiscal year '23 the agents were able to
18 recover 16 vehicles, some of those coming from 68-A
19 inspections.

20 Our strategies for this is to reinvent how we
21 look at this as a task force. For the record, nothing
22 against our current task force commander and program
23 manager, but he's retiring in November so we're having to
24 replace him. We've already picked and identified someone
25 that has task force operations in the Austin and in the

1 Houston area.

2 They've been working together to cross-train
3 and learn as much as they can, so in November our task
4 force commander can hit the ground running. I am going to
5 take the program management administration role in hopes
6 of taking the work off of our sergeant.

7 Other things that we've been able to do
8 internally just within the sheriff's office is we've been
9 able to rearrange some county assets to cover no-lead
10 cases and the recovery cases. We've also been able to
11 pick up the bill for the cell phones and the air cards for
12 the MDTs. And we also supply their own vehicles, the
13 county does. What that has led to is cost savings to the
14 task force and pushed funds to our smaller agencies that
15 may not have as much as we do in Travis County.

16 Our approach to this is going to be a multi-
17 disciplined approach going forward, which is education,
18 training and community involvement. We are requesting
19 funding for three more full-time field agents: one for
20 Travis County, one for Hays County, and then to pay for
21 the one in Bell County which Bell County currently covers.

22 We're also asking for one law enforcement specialist for
23 the task force to serve as admin/intel/analyst.

24 MR. PENCE: One minute.

25 MR. MEYER: Is that time, is that what you

1 said?

2 MR. PENCE: One minute.

3 MR. MEYER: Oh, one minute. Oh my goodness.

4 So where we want to go with this is, one, to
5 educate our public. We can't do anything without our
6 public's help, and we want to educate our troops, and our
7 troops is a force multiplier times however many in our
8 task force.

9 The other things we want to do going forward
10 with our program income is outfit a bait vehicle or two
11 and update the one currently. 3G is out so we've got to
12 update some antiquated technology.

13 We're also going to run LPR operations on our
14 main arteries. I've instructed Sgt. Tarrant that where we
15 come from our command is that we don't expect large scale
16 operations, we expect small scale operations involving our
17 troops along with the task force troops. That way it
18 doesn't take away from everybody's assets, it distributes
19 the assets evenly.

20 MR. PENCE: Time.

21 MR. MEYER: One other thing we have to do is
22 open up a dialogue with our district attorney -- I'm going
23 to take lead from the other guy.

24 (General laughter.)

25 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, we've lost signal on

1 the streaming, if we can pause briefly to get it hardwired
2 and we'll get it right back up.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We'll take a five-minute break.

4 It is 3:01, be back at 3:06.

5 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It is 3:07 p.m. and we're back
7 in session.

8 Just for the record, the live streaming is
9 down. They are working on it, but we need to continue so
10 we're going to continue.

11 You were on the attorney.

12 MR. MEYER: We have to open up a dialogue with
13 our district attorney's office. That's one thing that our
14 criminal investigations division commanders are trying to
15 do, and I believe it's something we've got to do in the
16 auto theft task force.

17 I would like to say that at the SCATTF we don't
18 take vehicle crimes as property crimes, everything is
19 attached to a person. If you take a single vehicle from a
20 family that only has one vehicle, they're done. Most of
21 our areas don't have bus service so there's no way to get
22 to the grocery store, there's no way to get the kids to
23 school, or anything like that.

24 If you steal a family's RV, that family is not
25 going on vacation. If you take a trailer full of

1 equipment that that person was just trying to make a
2 living, that person is stuck. We focus mainly on the
3 person as a victim and look toward to serving the victims
4 that we can to hopefully give them some sort of closure.

5 Thank you for your time.

6 MR. TARRANT: Thank you.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

8 Victoria.

9 MR. ROGERS: I'm Sgt. Rogers with the Victoria
10 Police Department, the task force commander.

11 We currently have two task force officers and
12 one detective in the unit. I'm fairly new, about eight
13 months ago in transferred from property; before I had
14 property and auto theft and for the last eight months I've
15 been just auto theft due to the increase in crime.

16 We've had a 22 percent increase in the motor
17 vehicle crimes. We've recovered approximately \$800,000 in
18 vehicles and about \$10,000 in property. And we service
19 Victoria and the seven surrounding cities doing 68-A
20 inspections.

21 We've been doing intensive investigations and
22 recovery of motor vehicles. We have a large number of
23 officers in the department and we're trying to educate
24 them on stolen vehicles and motor vehicle crimes. We're
25 on call 24/7 to them if they need to call us. We've been

1 doing the salvage and repair shop issues, being very
2 proactive with our bait operations, property bait, not the
3 vehicle bait.

4 We've had a lot of theft out on 59, trailer
5 thefts, we've had truck tractor thefts. We don't have any
6 LPRs in our personal vehicles.

7 MR. KELLY: Mark Kelly, Victoria PD, for the
8 record.

9 Our patrol has a total of 18 cameras mounted on
10 units. We also have four total on our auto theft, two
11 that are ordered and on the way, two that are waiting to
12 be installed, so that makes a total of 22.

13 We also had a speed trailer with three cameras.

14 It was destroyed in an accident but that's being replaced
15 where they're going to give us the partially restored
16 trailer which the camera still works and we're going to
17 have two speed trailers with a total of another six
18 cameras for our deployment.

19 MR. ROGERS: We've been doing several community
20 events trying to educate the public about lock it and take
21 their possessions. We've done VIN etching events, a lot
22 of social media. We're working on a door hangar to hang
23 on the doors of neighborhoods to try to educate them. We
24 have a lot of firearms stolen, and not totally
25 unbelievable but sometimes we get it back to them and it

1 gets stolen again.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: What is your request for this
3 year for Victoria? Are you increasing your FTEs, or what
4 is your request?

5 MR. ROGERS: The request we put in for is for a
6 sergeant position to be exclusively over auto theft.
7 Right now temporarily my division and property are being
8 covered and we're hoping to get a position for a sergeant

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is that sergeant just going to
10 provide supervision or is he also going to be active in
11 investigation?

12 MR. ROGERS: Active.

13 MR. GONZALEZ: Mr. Chairman, I should point out
14 that that was the recommendation from me that they put in
15 there a sergeant because their entire task force has been
16 replaced. Am I correct?

17 MR. KELLY: Correct. I'm the longest tenured
18 and I've been there a year.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: And so there was no continuity
20 during the changeover from task forces, and so I felt it
21 was important that at least they have a supervisor that
22 may provide some more continuity, in the event they have
23 more personnel changes at the detective level.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

25 MR. ROGERS: And the only additional we asked

1 for, we asked for \$25,000 for a bait vehicle, and the way
2 we came up with that, we looked at getting an old Charger
3 or Challenger. I expect that would be the best vehicle we
4 could use for a bait vehicle, and we just looked it up and
5 said we could get one for about \$20,000 and it would take
6 about \$5,000 to outfit it.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And again, we highly recommend
8 that you go through the NICB route or State Farm route,
9 insurance route to try to obtain vehicles as bait
10 vehicles.

11 On the amount that you would want funded to
12 outfit the vehicle as a bait vehicle --

13 MR. KELLY: We have the covert track kit for
14 it. Our current bait vehicle is a 2007 Ford F-150 which,
15 as you can imagine, is not very enticing. So that's why
16 we're trying to get a vehicle so we can replace that and
17 there's not a waste of vehicle equipment to have it in a
18 2007 Ford.

19 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, Joe Canady, for the
20 record.

21 If I may recommend that on the purchase of a
22 bait vehicle if you could identify a vehicle that you
23 currently have in the task force with high mileage and
24 possibly use that one as a bait vehicle.

25 MR. KELLY: That's the one we're using right,

1 the 2007 F-150.

2 MR. CANADY: So you're not looking to purchase
3 a new bait vehicle?

4 MR. ROGERS: We were asking for funds to obtain
5 like a used Charger or Challenger, something that would be
6 more enticing.

7 MR. CANADY: Is there a possibility of another
8 vehicle that a task force investigator is utilizing that
9 you could turn into a bait vehicle?

10 MR. ROGERS: Not at the moment, sir.

11 MR. KELLY: We have three vehicles and the
12 fourth being our bait vehicle, and as of right now, all
13 the vehicles are in use for ourselves.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I know it's a trick question,
15 but do you guys have a Dodge or a Challenger?

16 MR. KELLY: We do have a Dodge but it's one we
17 use.

18 (General laughter.)

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any other questions?

20 (No response.)

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

22 Item 6 for discussion.

23 MR. GONZALEZ: Mr. Chairman, today we've heard
24 quite a bit of testimony regarding the use of funds for
25 purchases versus lease.

1 One option that we have to consider is that a
2 \$45,000 cap on MVCPA towards the purchase of a new vehicle
3 would yield us a savings of \$301,667. Now, this would put
4 the amount of money requested by the task forces at
5 \$22,819,307. We have allocated \$22,879,922 in funds for
6 the task forces, and this \$45,000 cap would put us \$60,000
7 under budget.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: \$45,000 cap, you said?

9 MR. GONZALEZ: Yes, Mr. Chairman. It would be
10 my recommendation that we adopt the \$45,000 cap on
11 purchases of new vehicles, and the task forces would be
12 free to include any remainder from their cash match or
13 in-kind. I know various task forces have a significant
14 amount of money in their program income and they could
15 also access that.

16 But again, that puts us under budget and I
17 don't think anyone could argue that \$45,000 on a new truck
18 isn't reasonable. And in addition, you'd still be free to
19 lease.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So we're talking about a
21 \$45,000 cap for purchase or \$1,500 per month for leases.
22 So you're going to have to go back to your financial
23 people and ask them what's the best route to take for each
24 particular agency, pretty much.

25 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, if I may? Most of

1 them will have some money that they can move around from
2 the cash match for those vehicles and should be able to
3 make it work, or utilize a different portion for match.
4 And it still gives them the option to purchase or lease a
5 vehicle that benefits their program.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do we have any discussion with
7 that?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. GONZALEZ: Mr. Chairman, I move that the
10 Board adopt a cap of \$45,000 of MVCPA funds per vehicle on
11 the purchase of a new vehicle for the FY24 budget year,
12 and allow task forces to utilize cash match or in-kind for
13 any amount over \$45,000 towards the purchase of a new
14 vehicle.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I have a motion from Member
16 Gonzalez. Do I have a second?

17 MS. JONES: Sharon Jones, for the record. I
18 second.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, is there any further
20 discussion?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hearing none, I will now call
23 for the vote. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

24 (A chorus of ayes.)

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All those opposed say nay.

1 (No response.)

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Let the record reflect that I,
3 Mike Rodriguez, vote aye. The motion passes.

4 Thank you, members. We will now move to the
5 next agenda item.

6 Agenda item 7, I will turn the discussion over
7 to Director Joe Canady. Before I do that, there is a card
8 for public comment.

9 Agenda item 7, Unallowable grant expenditure.
10 This is an action item. I'll turn the discussion over to
11 Director Joe Canady.

12 MR. CANADY: Joe Canady, for the record.

13 Mr. Chairman, members, a previous review of
14 Tarrant County's expenditure report discovered a line item
15 cost for rent that was less than an arm's length
16 transaction and determined to be an unallowable
17 expenditure. The MVCPA first identified the potentially
18 unallowable expenditure contained in the FY23 application
19 for Tarrant County. Discussions between Tarrant County
20 grant officials resulted in a determination made to allow
21 the rent item to be included in the FY23 grant
22 application.

23 During the close of FY22, the Texas Department
24 of Motor Vehicles was notified of an audit from the State
25 Auditor's Office to determine that the MVCPA had processes

1 in place to ensure that it awarded, administered and
2 monitored grants in accordance with applicable
3 requirements and ensure that grantees use funds properly
4 and that reimbursements are supported, reasonable and
5 allowable for fiscal years FY21 and FY22.

6 The final audit report from SAI identified that
7 the Authority did not identify that rent expenses that one
8 grantee reported were related to a less than arm's length
9 transaction. As a result, the Authority may have
10 reimbursed the grantee in excess of allowable rent
11 expenses. Auditors were not able to determine the amount
12 that was incorrectly reimbursed to the grantee due to a
13 lack of supporting documentation.

14 This is an action item and it is the MVCPA's
15 recommendation to determine the period of fiscal years to
16 require that reimbursement for rent expenses be returned
17 to the MVCPA.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: The chair recognizes Matt
19 Pedersen. Please state your name and provide your
20 comments.

21 MR. PEDERSEN: Good afternoon. For the record,
22 Matt Pedersen, commander, Tarrant Regional Auto Crimes
23 Task Force. I'll be making comments on behalf of Tarrant
24 County, specifically Tarrant County Auditor's Office.

25 Permission to speak to the Board?

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Go ahead.

2 MR. PEDERSEN: In early August 2022, Tarrant
3 County was informed of an unallowable rent expense and was
4 requested to make adjustments to the grant application
5 prior to the approval of the FY23 continuation grant.
6 Tarrant County and MVCPA agreed on a resolution to use
7 program income as a cash match to cover rent and the FY23
8 grant award statement was issued and accepted on August
9 30, 2022.

10 In January '23, Tarrant County received a
11 second notification from the MVCPA that after consultation
12 with general counsel and the MVCPA Board, further review
13 of the rent expense was conducted and determined
14 unallowable and recommended additional grant adjustments,
15 including removal of the rent expense altogether. Tarrant
16 County complied by completely removing the rent expense
17 from the grant and paying with county funds.

18 In March, Tarrant County received an email from
19 MVCPA requesting that we agree in writing to return grant
20 funds paid to us, should the Board vote that funds paid in
21 prior years for rent be returned. Tarrant County inquired
22 about the vote referenced in the email and learned that
23 the Board would be considering this matter in an action
24 item during today's meeting.

25 In researching the matter, Tarrant County

1 determined that the recent MVCPA audit conducted by the
2 State it was noted that the MVCPA did not ensure that
3 Tarrant County provided sufficient documentation regarding
4 the rent transaction and that the amount incorrect
5 reimbursed could not be determined due to lack of
6 supporting documentation. As a result, Tarrant County
7 auditors requested to meet with the MVCPA to share
8 supporting documents showing actual costs and cost
9 allocated to the office space utilized by Auto Theft.

10 The MVCPA requested to receive the
11 documentation in writing for review before the meeting.
12 This information was provided via email on May 24 to
13 ensure that the MVCPA, including the Board, had the
14 adequate support documentation prior to the Board meeting
15 for consideration.

16 Tarrant County's goal is to provide financial
17 transparency to assist the Board in making an informed
18 decision and to help mitigate the amount of potential
19 recoupment based on actual data. Last Thursday, Tarrant
20 County auditors were notified that anything that Tarrant
21 County would like to provide would have to be done today
22 in public comments.

23 Tarrant County's external auditors selected the
24 Auto Task Force as a major program for additional review.

25 The auditors reviewed the documentation prepared by the

1 auditors' office and were satisfied that Tarrant County
2 complied with state grant requirements.

3 It is Tarrant County's belief that the
4 information shared with the MVCPA on the 24th and a
5 briefing by a member of Tarrant County Auditor's Office
6 would resolve this issue. We, therefore, respectfully
7 request that this will be postponed until Tarrant County
8 auditors have an opportunity to meet with the MVCPA Board
9 and/or present supporting documentation to you in a future
10 meeting.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yessenia, are there any other
13 requests to comment?

14 MS. BENAVIDES: Not for this item.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We will go into closed session
16 pursuant to Government Code Section 551.071. I expect
17 that we will be in closed session for approximately 30
18 minutes.

19 We will now go into closed session. The time
20 is 3:25 p.m.

21 (Whereupon, at 3:25 p.m., the meeting was
22 recessed, to reconvene this same day, Thursday, June 15,
23 2023, following conclusion of the closed session.)

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We are back in open session.
25 It is now 4:17 p.m.

1 Members, are there any motions on agenda item
2 number 7?

3 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Gonzalez, for the record.

4 I move that the Board request Tarrant County
5 return rent expenses identified as unallowable for the
6 period of FY21 and FY22, for an amount to be determined by
7 the director after consulting with grant and Texas DMV
8 auditors and a review of Tarrant County documentation.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is there a second?

10 MR. SMITH: Member Smith. I second.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, is there any further
12 discussion?

13 (No response.)

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hearing none, I will now call
15 for the vote. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

16 (A chorus of ayes.)

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All opposed say nay.

18 (No response.)

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Let the record reflect that I,
20 Mike Rodriguez, vote aye. The motion passes. Thank you,
21 members.

22 We will now move on to the next agenda item.
23 Agenda item 8, Senate Bill 224. There's a briefing and
24 also an action item.

25 I will now turn this agenda item over to

1 Director Joe Canady.

2 MR. CANADY: Mr. Chairman, members, Joe Canady,
3 MVCPA.

4 MVCPA is funded for a portion of the \$4 fee on
5 the motor vehicle insurance policies collected. With
6 passage of Senate Bill 224 in the 88th Legislative
7 Session, the fee is proposed to increase to \$5, with the
8 entire additional dollar rolling through MVCPA to local
9 law enforcement. As discussed earlier by Keith Yawn and
10 the Texas DMV Finance Division, this will be a determined
11 amount as indicated by the Texas Legislature in the coming
12 days.

13 The Texas Comptroller will update forms to
14 reflect the increased fee, as well as the TDI, Texas
15 Department of Insurance, will send out a notice or
16 bulletin to inform insurers of the new \$5 fee, the
17 effective date requiring their compliance and the
18 requirement that insurers notify their policyholders of
19 the new fee. The new \$5 fee will apply to policies
20 delivered, issued for delivery, or renewed on or after May
21 29, 2023.

22 Do you have any questions?

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any
24 questions, comments on agenda item 8.A?

25 (No response.)

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We do have a registration form
2 request to speak on this agenda item, Steve Bresnen.

3 MR. BRESNEN: (Speaking from audience.) Just
4 for your information, all these items in 8 I'd like to be
5 able to comment on at your convenience.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, this is a briefing
7 item only so let's move on to the next agenda item.

8 Agenda item 8.B. Develop and implement a
9 plan -- there is an action item. Members, we will now
10 take up agenda item 8.B., Develop and implement a plan to
11 coordinate efforts with the Texas Department of Public
12 Safety, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation,
13 and the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to review
14 records of persons regulated by each agency involving the
15 purchase, acquisition, sale or transfer of catalytic
16 converters removed from motor vehicles and respond to
17 suspicious activities that may be detected through the
18 analysis of records.

19 Mr. Canady will present this item.

20 MR. CANADY: Joe Canady, MVCPA.

21 Mr. Chairman, members, Senate Bill 224 requires
22 no later than January 1 of 2024 the Authority shall
23 develop and implement a plan to coordinate with other
24 state agencies to review catalytic converter records of
25 persons regulated by agencies and respond to suspicious

1 activities that may be directed in the review of the
2 records.

3 The bill directed the MVCPA to coordinate
4 efforts with the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas
5 Department of Licensing and Regulation, and the Texas
6 Department of Motor Vehicles to review the records of
7 persons regulated by each agency involving the purchase,
8 acquisition, sales or transfer of catalytic converters
9 removed from motor vehicles, respond to suspicious
10 activities that may be detected through the analysis of
11 records described above.

12 The plan shall focus on protecting each step in
13 the legitimate stream of commerce that begins with the
14 removal of a catalytic converter from a motor vehicle and
15 includes recycling of those catalytic converters to ensure
16 that persons regulated are not the means for inserting
17 stolen catalytic converters into the stream of commerce,
18 in addition, providing risk-based targeting and random
19 auditing of the records of the persons regulated.

20 This is an action item. The recommendation is
21 to allow the MVCPA directors and stakeholders sufficient
22 time to develop and implement a plan to coordinate efforts
23 with the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas
24 Department of Licensing and Regulation, and the Texas
25 Department of Motor Vehicles to comply with Section 501 of

1 Senate Bill 224 and report back to the Board with a
2 recommendation in an August Board meeting.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any
4 questions for Mr. Canady?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Mr. Bresnen.

7 MR. BRESNEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 I'm Steve Bresnen. I'm here representing PGM
9 of Texas, North America's largest recyclers of catalytic
10 converters, headquartered in San Marcos, Texas, and
11 operating in 24 states.

12 As a lobbyist, it's not uncommon to take credit
13 for things that you didn't have anything to do with, but
14 in this particular instance, I'm going to take credit for
15 PGM for what they absolutely had to do with.

16 In September of last year after about nine
17 months worth of study, I delivered, along with my law
18 partner, Amy Bresnen -- who is back over here -- to the
19 Senate Criminal Justice Committee and the Senate Committee
20 on Natural Resources and Economic Development what became
21 Senate Bill 224. It is essentially and almost totally
22 precisely what we delivered. To their great credit,
23 Senator Alvarado and Chairman Leach allowed PGM to work
24 with the private sector and law enforcement to propose
25 solutions to the epidemic of catalytic converter theft,

1 and by God, we got a bill that's as stout as horseradish.

2 I'm going to put on the table here, for anybody
3 who wants one later, a one-page summary of the bill. I'm
4 also going to put my business card and J.R. Willis's, the
5 chief operations officer of PGM of Texas on here, and I'll
6 tell you why about that in just a minute.

7 I want to make several comments. I know it's
8 been a long day, I feel like we've been in a foxhole
9 together between the heat, the air conditioner going out,
10 the streaming going out, and the tequila that was forced
11 on me last night in the bar.

12 (General laughter.)

13 MR. BRESNEN: If I might, could I ask one of
14 the staff to come and pass this out to the Board members
15 while they're there, if that's okay? I'm not trying to
16 own the place. Thank you.

17 This bill is effective now. There's only two
18 little pieces that don't really come into play for us and
19 those become effective on July 1, but otherwise, the bill
20 is effective now.

21 For everybody sitting behind me in the room, I
22 want to be really clear about one thing: House Bill 4110
23 that was passed in the prior session is still effective
24 and applies to sales by individuals of catalytic
25 converters that if they show up at a PGM, at an MRE, they

1 have to show that they have the documentation for that
2 vehicle. That has not changed.

3 What has changed is business-to-business sales.

4 The bill defines those businesses that are considered to
5 be in the legitimate ordinary course of business when
6 they're making these sales.

7 The bill establishes some uniform standards.
8 Each of those businesses has to maintain records that are
9 carefully defined in the bill and we defined them in the
10 bill so it wouldn't require additional rulemaking by the
11 regulatory agencies. We put in the dollar fee for the
12 get-go back in September and I was astounded that it was
13 never questioned and I was astounded that it will produce
14 over \$54 million for the coming biennium.

15 Now, I want to state what my position is about
16 something that I've known was going to come up, and that
17 is the use of the money from that fee. It clearly is
18 intended for that revenue to flow through to local law
19 enforcement agencies, and the broad language in the bill
20 makes that clear in Section 1006.153(e) of the
21 Transportation Code. But it's also intended that the
22 additional cost of coordination between your agency, TDLR,
23 DMV and DPS, that those funds can also flow through for
24 those purposes. If staff or anybody who does the check
25 writing and approving expenses has any question about

1 that, I'd appreciate them reaching out to me and we'll
2 work with legislative offices and make sure that that is
3 clear.

4 Because you might be asking yourselves why does
5 a regulated entity want to invite further regulation and
6 fund that to the extent of tens of millions of dollars.
7 Because if we don't get the bad actors out of the process,
8 then illicit catalytic converters will have a method for
9 being marketed.

10 Right now they're primarily being marketed
11 through organized crime aggregated and carried out of the
12 state. There were two very large busts in the Harris
13 County that make that absolutely clear. We don't want
14 folks to turn it in now and be able to use a legitimate
15 stream of commerce to be able to launder those items.

16 I'm here to make two offers today. One is I
17 think it's fair to say that there's only one or two people
18 who know as much about this legislation as Amy and I do,
19 and we want to offer our full support to your agency and
20 the regulatory agencies to be able to provide technical
21 assistance at any time. We are fully committed to this,
22 and as I said last night, with Deputy Armendariz's widow
23 present, this got personal with us and so we're fully
24 committed at a personal level to provide that technical
25 assistance and PGM will too.

1 And the reason I've got Mr. Willis's cards up
2 here, we would invite anybody in this room and anybody who
3 was here earlier to contact PGM, contact Amy or me, and we
4 will host you at a tour through the plant in San Marcos.
5 In addition to being very interesting, it will show you
6 the level of security that should be demonstrated by
7 legitimate responsible actors in this environment.

8 The other assistance that I want to offer is to
9 help organize private sector actors to be involved with
10 the task force that's your next item. We individually,
11 Amy and I, went and solicited the car dealers, the used
12 auto parts recyclers, the NFIB, all of the people in that
13 list. There wasn't a single entity that opposed the
14 passage of this 31-page bill that got seriously into their
15 business.

16 Those folks need to be involved, though. We
17 made them a promise. We drafted this bill in a way to
18 protect their industry, not to burden it and not to have
19 state government go crazy about it.

20 And so we would respectfully request that you
21 accept our offer to help identify the people within those
22 industries who can come to you and provide the kind of
23 assistance that's going to be needed to get this
24 coordinated regulatory enforcement piece done. And that
25 is our request.

1 As the task forces are formed, we would like to
2 be involved. As you decide the process by which you want
3 to go forward to develop this plan, we would like to be
4 involved. We invented this structure, we talked to the
5 legislature about it, we worked so close with Jason Hester
6 at the DPS and with Jessica Anderson at HPD and various
7 law enforcement too numerous to mention, and all these
8 private sector actors. We beg you to get us involved
9 early so we can make this work.

10 After 40-some-odd years, I know a little bit
11 about how state government can and should work, and if
12 you'll involve us with it, we'll make you a success. I'd
13 appreciate that.

14 That said, I want to point out two things that
15 should be part of your plan, and that is the legislation
16 directs you, quite intentionally, for the plan to be
17 focused on risk-based approaches and random record
18 selection and review. That's so we don't go overboard and
19 hamstring the regulated industry when it's come forward
20 and put itself out there to solve this problem. And so
21 having worked for Bob Bullock at the Comptroller's Office
22 and in the Lieutenant Governor's Office, I know a little
23 bit about how you can do risk-based selection and random
24 auditing in order to make this work out.

25 I so much appreciate our time with you last

1 night. PGM was proud to host the event. The chicken
2 cordon bleu was more than I expected to get in Kerrville,
3 Texas, to be honest about it, last night, so I really
4 appreciate it.

5 I'm happy to answer any questions. I think
6 I've hit my whole cheat sheet here, and I would invite
7 people to come up and ask questions, get my card, email
8 me.

9 Mr. Canady, I appreciated your accepting our
10 outreach to you, and we look forward to working with you.

11 We didn't stay all day to make frivolous
12 remarks, so take me at our word, we'll be your partners if
13 you'll grasp our hand.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Mr. Bresnen, for
15 your support. Thank you for being with us yesterday and
16 last night. And again, we are at the beginning stages of
17 this and we're going to take everything you said into
18 consideration.

19 I know Director Canady has your information and
20 contact information, and of course, we're open for
21 suggestions. And like I've said it before, we're going to
22 think outside the box to tackle this problem and making
23 sure that we have a strategic plan in place so that
24 everybody is on the same page as to how we're going to go
25 about tackling the catalytic converter issue.

1 MR. BRESNEN: Thank you for your hospitality,
2 and I appreciate it.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yessenia, are there any other
4 public comments on this item?

5 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any motions
7 on agenda item 8.B?

8 MS. BROTHERTON: Member Brotherton. I move to
9 allow the MVCPA to develop and implement a plan to
10 coordinate efforts with the Texas Department of Public
11 Safety, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation,
12 and the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles to comply with
13 Section 5.01 of Senate Bill 224 and report back to the
14 Board with its recommendation in our August 2023 Board
15 meeting.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is there a second?

17 MS. WHITEHILL: Member Whitehill seconds.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is there any further
19 discussion?

20 (No response.)

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hearing none, I will now call
22 for the vote. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

23 (A chorus of ayes.)

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All those opposed say nay.

25 (No response.)

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Let the record reflect that I,
2 Mike Rodriguez, vote aye. The motion passes.

3 Agenda item number 8.C., Establish a task force
4 composed of persons regulated by the agencies involving
5 the purchase, acquisition, sale, or transfer of catalytic
6 converters removed from motor vehicles. This is an action
7 item.

8 We'll now move on to this agenda item.
9 Director Canady.

10 MR. CANADY: Joe Canady, MVCPA.

11 Mr. Chairman, members, Senate Bill 244 provides
12 that the Authority may establish a task force composed of
13 persons and who have substantial business experience in
14 catalytic converters and other members, as the Authority
15 determines as appropriate. The Authority may establish
16 this task force composed of persons regulated by the
17 Department of Public Safety, Texas Department of Licensing
18 and Regulation, and the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles
19 who have substantial business experience and transactions
20 involving catalytic converters and members the Authority
21 determines as appropriate.

22 I will say the phrase "task force" is not what
23 we look at as a traditional task force. This is going to
24 be more of an advisory committee, but it's labeled as a
25 task force.

1 This is an action item. The recommendation is
2 to allow the director and stakeholders sufficient time to
3 research the establishment of a task force composed of the
4 persons regulated by agencies who have a substantial
5 experience in transactions involving catalytic converters
6 and report back to the Board with a recommendation in an
7 August Board meeting.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any
9 questions or comments for Mr. Canady?

10 (No response.)

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yessenia, are there any public
12 comments on this item?

13 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any motions
15 on agenda item 8.C?

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

17 I move to allow the MVCPA director sufficient
18 time to research the establishment of a task force
19 composed of persons regulated by the agencies and who have
20 substantial business experience in transactions involving
21 catalytic converters and report back to the Board with a
22 recommendation in an August 2023 Board meeting.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is there a second?

24 MS. JONES: Sharon Jones, for the record. I
25 second.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is there any further
2 discussion?

3 (No response.)

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hearing none, I will now call
5 for the vote. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

6 (A chorus of ayes.)

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All those opposed say nay.

8 (No response.)

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Let the record reflect that I,
10 Mike Rodriguez, vote aye. The motion passes.

11 Moving on to agenda item 9, FY 2024 task force
12 grant award and allocations.

13 Members, we will now take up agenda item 9,
14 Task force grant award and allocations. Director Canady
15 will present this item.

16 MR. CANADY: Joe Canady, MVCPA.

17 Mr. Chairman, members, this is a continuation
18 actually from agenda item 6, the review and recommendation
19 from the GBR Committee on fiscal year 2024 task force
20 grant applications and recommendations.

21 Can we get the information displayed on the
22 screen, please?

23 The review and analysis of fiscal year 2024
24 task force grant applications were reviewed for
25 reasonableness, allowable expenditures and proposed budget

1 amounts. And the need each jurisdiction has determined
2 the application amount for fiscal year 2024 task force
3 grant awards as recommended and approved by the Board from
4 the committee.

5 There are two tables displayed on the screen.
6 Table 1 includes the City of Austin, City of Beaumont,
7 City of Brownsville, Burnet County, City of Corpus
8 Christi, Dallas County, City of Dallas, Eagle Pass, El
9 Paso, Galveston County, Harris County, and the City of
10 Houston, and a second table for the City of Laredo,
11 Lubbock County, City of Mansfield, Montgomery County, City
12 of Paris, City of Pasadena, Potter County, City of River
13 Oaks, City of San Antonio, San Augustine County, Smith
14 County, Tarrant County, Travis County, and City of
15 Victoria, with proposed amounts for each one.

16 This is an action item to determine the amounts
17 for fiscal year FY 2024 task force grant awards from the
18 Board.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, are there any
20 questions for Director Canady?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, we're going to divide
23 the task forces for voting purposes since Member Gonzalez
24 and I will need to recuse ourselves when a particular task
25 force is included in the vote. Table 2 includes Laredo

1 and Table 1 includes Dallas.

2 I will now recuse myself and turn the meeting
3 over to the vice chairman, Member Whitehill.

4 MS. WHITEHILL: Members, Chairman Rodriguez
5 recuses himself from this vote on Table 2.

6 Is there a motion on voting Table 2 which
7 includes Laredo?

8 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Gonzalez, for the record.

9 I move that the Board adopt the proposed grant
10 awards for fiscal year 2024 for the following cities and
11 counties as indicated in Table 2.

12 MS. JONES: Sharon Jones. I second.

13 MS. WHITEHILL: Thank you.

14 Member Gonzalez motioned to approve amounts for
15 voting group 2, and Member Jones seconded the motion. Is
16 there any further discussion?

17 (No response.)

18 MS. WHITEHILL: Hearing none, I now call for
19 the vote. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

20 (A chorus of ayes.)

21 MS. WHITEHILL: All those opposed say nay.

22 (No response.)

23 MS. WHITEHILL: Let the record reflect that I,
24 Kit Whitehill, also vote aye. The motion passes.

25 The Board chair will now resume as chair of the

1 meeting.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Members, we will now take up
3 voting on Table 1 which includes Dallas. Member Gonzalez
4 recuses himself from this vote.

5 Members, are there any motions?

6 MS. BROTHERTON: Member Brotherton. I move the
7 Board adopt the proposed grant awards for fiscal year 2024
8 for the following cities and counties as indicated in
9 Table 1.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do I have a second?

11 MS. CANTU SERRANO: I second. Cantu Serrano.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Second from Member Cantu
13 Serrano. Is there any further discussion?

14 (No response.)

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hearing none, I will now call
16 for the vote. All those in favor of the motion say aye.

17 (A chorus of ayes.)

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: All those opposed say nay.

19 (No response.)

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Let the record reflect that I,
21 Mike Rodriguez, vote aye. The motion passes.

22 Just for the record, I'm going to be calling
23 out the cities that were included in Tables 1 and 2.

24 So Table 1 includes the City of Austin, City of
25 Beaumont, City of Brownsville, Burnet County, Corpus

1 Christi, Dallas County, City of Dallas, City of Eagle
2 Pass, City of El Paso, Galveston County, Harris County,
3 and City of Houston.

4 Table 2 includes City of Laredo, Lubbock
5 County, City of Mansfield, Montgomery County, City of
6 Paris, City of Pasadena, Potter County, River Oaks, City
7 of San Antonio, San Augustine County, Smith County,
8 Tarrant County, Travis County, and City of Victoria.

9 Yessenia, is there any public comment?

10 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You guys ready? Members,
12 unless there's any further business, I will entertain a
13 motion to adjourn the meeting.

14 MS. WHITEHILL: Member Whitehill. I move the
15 meeting be adjourned.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Member Whitehill makes a motion
17 to adjourn. Do I have a second?

18 MS. JONES: Second. Member Jones, for the
19 record.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Member Jones seconds.

21 The meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 (Whereupon, at 4:45 p.m., the meeting was
24 adjourned.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MEETING OF: MVCPA board

LOCATION: Austin, Texas

DATE: June 15, 2023

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages, numbers 1 through 224, 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: June 29, 2023

/s/ Nancy H. King
(Transcriber)

On the Record Reporting
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