

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME PREVENTION AUTHORITY

GRANTS BUDGET and REPORTING (GBR)
COMMITTEE MEETING

Hilton Houston Post Oak
by The Galleria
2001 Post Oak Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77056

Via Microsoft Teams and in person

1:00 p.m.
Wednesday,
March 27, 2024

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Julio Gonzalez, Chair
Rebecca Cantu-Serrano
Sharon Jones

STAFF:

William Diggs, MVCPA Director
David Richards, General Counsel

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CLOSED SESSION	
3. The Committee may enter into closed session under one or more of the following provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Government Code Chapter 551: Section 551.071 Section 551.074 Section 551.076 Section 551.089	none
4. Action Items from Closed Session	--
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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. GONZALEZ: I'd like to call to order the
3 Grants, Budget and Reporting Committee of the Board of
4 Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority.

5 It is one o'clock, and I'm now calling the
6 committee meeting for March 27, 2024, to order. I want to
7 note for the record that the public notice of this
8 meeting, containing all items on the agenda, was filed
9 with the Office of the Secretary of State on March 18,
10 2024.

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 committee meeting. Welcome.

18 If you wish to address the committee or speak
19 on an agenda item during today's meeting, please complete
20 a speaker's sheet at the registration table. Please
21 identify the specific item you are interested in
22 commenting on, your name and address and whether you are
23 representing anyone or speaking for yourself. If your
24 comment does not pertain to a specific agenda item, we
25 will take your comment during the general public comment

1 portion of the meeting.

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

8 Individuals cannot accumulate time from other
9 speakers. Comments should be pertinent to the issues
10 stated on the comment sheet. When addressing the
11 committee, please state your name and affiliation for the
12 record.

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

20 I would like to thank our court reporter who is
21 transcribing this meeting.

22 Before we begin today, I would like to remind
23 all presenters and those in attendance of the rules of
24 conduct at our committee meetings. The committee chair
25 has authority to supervise the conduct of meetings. This

1 includes the authority to determine when a speaker is
2 being disruptive of the meeting or is otherwise violating
3 the timing and presentation rules I just discussed.

4 The posted agenda stated that a quorum of the
5 MVCPA Board may be present at this meeting. However,
6 Board members who are not members of the Grants, Budget
7 and Reporting Committee will not vote on any committee
8 agenda items today, nor will any Board action be taken.

9 I don't see any other members.

10 And now I'd like to have the roll call of the
11 committee members. Please respond verbally when I call
12 your name.

13 Member Jones, are you present?

14 MS. JONES: Present.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Cantu-Serrano?

16 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: Present.

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

19 The chair lays out agenda item 2, the pledges
20 of allegiance, U.S. and Texas. Please stand and honor our
21 country and state with the pledges of allegiance. I will
22 now lead us in the U.S. Pledge.

23 (The pledges of allegiance - U.S. and Texas
24 were recited.)

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Item 3, comments from the

1 Grants, Budget and Reporting Committee chairman.

2 I just want to say thank y'all to all the task
3 forces that came out. Really looking forward to hearing
4 the wonderful ideas that you guys have for how to address
5 catalytic converter theft and how to really push the state
6 forward with respect to addressing the catalytic converter
7 thefts. So thank y'all for putting these presentations
8 together.

9 I've gotten a bit of a sneak peek, certainly
10 excited for that, and we're excited to get this grant
11 going. It was quite a bit of work.

12 Thank you, Member Jones, for everything you did
13 on this. And I think this is the culmination of all of
14 that, so thank you for what you've done.

15 Members, do you have any comments that you'd
16 like to make?

17 (No response.)

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Director Diggs, do you have any
19 comments that you'd like to make?

20 MR. DIGGS: Mr. Chairman, William Diggs, MVCPA
21 director, for the record.

22 I want to echo everything you just said about
23 the task forces throughout Texas and their efforts. And
24 then also I'm looking forward to seeing the presentations
25 today and moving forward with getting some of the

1 catalytic converter money out there around the state where
2 it needs to be.

3 Also, I did want to introduce one of our new
4 MVCPA employees, if I may. Her name is Sterling Fielder.
5 She's one of our new grant auditors.

6 Sterling, can you stand up back there in the
7 back just real quick?

8 She comes to us from San Angelo, Texas, and
9 also a Texas State graduate. And she has over six years
10 of auditing experience.

11 So welcome again, Sterling, and we're glad
12 you're here today.

13 Thank you, sir.

14 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. We'll now take up
15 briefing and action items. The chair lays out agenda item
16 4, the MVCPA FY24 budget overview, and we will hear from
17 Director William Diggs.

18 MR. DIGGS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. William
19 Diggs, MVCPA director, for the record.

20 I did want to draw your attention to pages 3
21 and 6 of your committee books. It has information related
22 to our current budget and some expenditures as they stand
23 today at the end of February. At the end of February --
24 our Motor Vehicle Crime Prevention appropriations, our
25 main budget, it's on page 5. You will see that we

1 currently have an available budget of \$2,072,266, and that
2 is through the end of February.

3 And our catalytic appropriations on page 6, you
4 will see that we currently have \$24,601,076 still
5 remaining. We are monitoring those budgets closely. We
6 continue to monitor revenues and our expenditures. And as
7 of today, I feel like we are in good shape and we will
8 keep an eye closely on the revenues as they come in from
9 the Comptroller's Office from the insurance industry.

10 And that's all I have if you have any
11 questions, sir.

12 MR. GONZALEZ: I just want to commend you,
13 Director Diggs, for filling these vacant positions. It's
14 fantastic and you can see significant progress here, and
15 certainly glad to see that we're getting auditors onboard.

16 I think that's a great use of full-time equivalencies.
17 So thanks for your leadership on that.

18 MR. DIGGS: Yes, sir. Thank you.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, are there any questions
20 for Director Diggs?

21 (No response.)

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

24 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Then we will move on

1 to agenda item 5, the Grant Management Tracking System.
2 Members, Director Diggs will present on this agenda item.

3 MR. DIGGS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. William
4 Diggs, director at MVCPA, for the record.

5 On page 7 of your committee books you will find
6 a brief update as it relates to the Grant Management
7 Tracking System. I'm excited to let you know that we had
8 24 respondents to our request for information, and of
9 those, myself, staff, along with ITSD, our Information
10 Technology Division leadership, we are working through
11 those and we currently have scheduled four demos from four
12 different companies in the month of April.

13 Just as Chief Rodriguez requested back in
14 December here in Houston, we are actually going to be
15 engaging six of the task forces from throughout Texas, two
16 large, two medium, two small. Director Pence will be
17 working with the task force commanders and we're going to
18 bring them in on these demos and hear from them on some
19 things that they would like to see. Because we know that
20 our current system doesn't have all the bells and whistles
21 that we really need, you know, as technology has improved.

22 And we want to make it not just easier for us
23 but we want to make it easier for all of you to actually
24 make application, to submit your reports, and to submit
25 your requests for reimbursement. And so we're working to

1 that end.

2 The Information Technology Division at the DMV
3 has done a great job with this. We actually have a
4 project manager and we have a business analyst now
5 assigned. I'll be working with Glenna Bowman over here,
6 our director in FAO, so that we can ensure that the things
7 that we are doing are going to work easily for the
8 Comptroller and for the LBB as far as reporting goes. So
9 we're going to look for an overall package that's going to
10 take us over another ten years or so.

11 So more to come on that. I plan to give
12 another update in July on where we're at and how the demos
13 went, and also what the task forces actually thought about
14 the companies that we're looking at.

15 And that's all I have for today. Are there any
16 questions?

17 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions for
18 Director Diggs?

19 (No response.)

20 MR. GONZALEZ: Hearing none, are there any
21 public comments, Yessenia?

22 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

23 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. The chair lays out
24 agenda item 6, the proposed amendment to 43 TAC Chapter
25 57.36.

1 We will now hear from General Counsel David
2 Richards.

3 MR. RICHARDS: Good afternoon, everyone,
4 members, Mr. Chairman. David Richards, for the record.

5 The agenda item that I'm bringing forward today
6 is an amendment to 43 Section 57.36, Level of funding for
7 grant projects. As most of you know, this rule has been
8 in place as is for quite some time and it currently
9 provides that a grantee must contribute 20 percent toward
10 the total amount awarded to a grantee, hard and fast rule.

11 Recently, I guess after the first of the year,
12 we realized, particularly with the advent of the Senate
13 Bill 224 funding, and the fact that grantees were in the
14 middle of their funding cycle of FY24, that a 20 percent
15 match would be or might be -- and some of you have told us
16 this -- problematic for your jurisdictions to produce. So
17 the amendment essentially is in response to what you, the
18 grantees, have told the MVCPA, that we don't have money
19 growing on trees and that there are budget shortfalls on
20 many occasions.

21 So what this rule will do is allow for the
22 Board to decide for each funding year what that cash match
23 shall be. It's going to have a maxed out amount of 20
24 percent but they're going to have to look at each funding
25 year and your budgets and what you have and what you're

1 able to do. We want you to have the funding and that's
2 one of the purposes behind this rule amendment is to allow
3 for you to get funding but not go belly-up, so it's to
4 your advantage. We want to work with y'all as we go
5 forward.

6 We've got two grants right now, as you know,
7 our main grant and the 244 grant. So this will create a
8 more flexible way of dealing with each funding cycle so
9 that you can get the funding and not be disqualified for
10 not being able to put up a hard and fast 20 percent cash
11 match.

12 What I'm asking for is a recommendation, a vote
13 from this committee -- we'll take it up tomorrow in the
14 Board as well -- to recommend to the Board tomorrow that
15 we amend 57.36 to include the amended language going
16 forward, and we're asking for it to be published in the
17 *Texas Register* for a 30-day comment period.

18 That concludes my remarks.

19 One other thing I did want to say is that, like
20 most things that we do with MVCPA and DMV, this had to go
21 by the Office of the Governor and the Governor's Office
22 has approved it for publication.

23 So with that, are there any questions, members,
24 that you might have of this?

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Mr. Richards, and just to

1 clarify, so this cash match change would be for SB 224
2 money or for, as well, the main grant?

3 MR. RICHARDS: For both.

4 MR. GONZALEZ: For both.

5 MR. RICHARDS: For both going forward, right.

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, are there any questions
7 for Mr. Richards?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. GONZALEZ: I will now call for the motion.

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

11 I move to amend 57.36 to include amended
12 language and approval to publish it in the *Texas Register*
13 for public comment.

14 MR. GONZALEZ: There is a motion. Do I hear a
15 second?

16 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: I, Cantu-Serrano, second.

17 MR. GONZALEZ: Hearing a second, I will now
18 call for the vote.

19 Member Cantu-Serrano?

20 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: Aye.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Jones?

22 MS. JONES: Aye.

23 MR. GONZALEZ: And let the record reflect that
24 I, Julio Gonzalez, vote aye. Motion passes.

25 Yessenia, are there any public comments for

1 this agenda item?

2 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Members, we will now
4 move on to agenda item 7. Agenda item 7, Senate Bill 224
5 catalytic converter applicant presentations.

6 We will now take up agenda item 7. We will
7 receive presentations from applicant representatives who
8 will explain their requests for SB 244 FY24 grant funding.

9 MR. DIGGS: Mr. Chairman, committee members,
10 William Diggs, MVCPA director, for the record.

11 And so now we would go ahead and call up in
12 order the agenda item. The City of Brownsville, if we can
13 go ahead and have the City of Brownsville come up.

14 (No response.)

15 MR. DIGGS: We will move on to Chambers County.

16 (No response.)

17 MR. DIGGS: The City of Dallas, I know you are
18 here.

19 And, Zach, if you'll go ahead and pull up the
20 City of Dallas. Thank you, sir.

21 MR. RODEN: (Mic not on when he started
22 speaking.) In 2022 our stats for auto theft numbers were
23 over 16,000; in '23 auto theft rose to over 18,000 in the
24 City of Dallas. Our MVCPA grant, we have nine detectives
25 and two police officers dedicated to auto theft offenses

1 under our original MVCPA grant. Those numbers of offenses
2 have stretched our task force, making it difficult to
3 properly target catalytic converters.

4 SB 224 is critical to expanding our task for us
5 to appropriately handle the catalytic converter problem.
6 The current MVCPA grant permits us to investigate
7 catalytic converters but SB 224 empowers us to prioritize
8 the matter as our state legislature did. Depending on
9 financing, we intend to expand our task force team to
10 include three more funded uniformed police officers to
11 investigate street-level catalytic converter issues. They
12 will conduct traffic stops, arrest offenders, file and
13 supplement reports, identify suspects and participate in
14 direct proactive enforcement against our targeted
15 suspects.

16 We require resources to act on suspects and
17 locations identified by our detectives regarding catalytic
18 converters. The expansion of the officers gives us
19 freedom to coordinate operations more frequently, pulling
20 less resources from patrol stations, including marked
21 police vehicles that we also requested in our application.

22 To execute complex operations, we constantly ask and pool
23 resources from our patrol stations.

24 Needless to say, it's difficult to schedule and
25 coordinate this help. With proper funding from SB 224, we

1 will finally became a self-sustained task force.

2 With any extension comes the need for equipment
3 and resources. We are also requesting equipment and
4 overtime for more field work. Our overtime request is
5 calculated for operations and activities solely for
6 catalytic converter investigations. A personnel of 15
7 officers to conduct investigations, one office assistant
8 that will maintain the distinction of the two grants on
9 activity reporting and time records.

10 Total personnel is 16 with an average overtime
11 rate of \$60 an hour. A team of 16 people committing 12
12 hours of overtime per week on catalytic converter
13 operations and activities equals 192 hours of overtime
14 weekly; 192 hours at \$60 equals \$11,520 per week and
15 \$46,080 a month. We'll be ready to begin implementing
16 this award in April and conclude on September 31,
17 calculating five months, utilizing \$230,400 for overtime
18 costs for the remainder of this fiscal year.

19 This additional grant by the MVCPA is
20 additional work for our finance officer as well, but will
21 oversee both MVCPA grants. To ensure proper execution on
22 all sides, we'll be requesting overtime for our finance
23 officer as well. This is cheaper than hiring an
24 additional grant compliance officer.

25 She'll maintain compliance with the financial

1 records, complete the necessary audits as required on
2 state and local levels. Her overtime rate is \$45 an hour.
3 Additional ten hours a week due to the added work equals
4 \$450 a week, \$1,800 a month, for an additional five months
5 is approximately \$9,000. Our total overtime expenses
6 we're requesting is \$239,400.

7 Since the ransomware attack -- I think it was
8 last June, July or April -- we've been using refurbished
9 desktops, used and refurbished desktops. So we're
10 requesting ten new desktop bundles for the detectives and
11 police officers, as well as four laptop bundles that can
12 be used in the field, totaling \$51,612. Our IT department
13 sets these prices, all of which have updated security
14 features required by our department since the ransomware.

15 As previously mentioned, we're requesting two
16 marked responder F-150 trucks. These are on the ground
17 ready, they just need to be outfitted. They are fully
18 marked with lights, sirens, decals, LPR readers, mobile
19 computers, and all the Dallas Police Department standard
20 operating procedures you could ever want.

21 These marked units will allow us to be ready to
22 take proactive action at any given moment, not having to
23 wait to acquire one from a patrol station. We currently
24 utilize one 2014 squad car that's constantly down for
25 repairs. The cost of these two trucks is \$157,265.

1 We're also requesting one MarkTech 30i handheld
2 laser engraver, \$6,995. This will allow us to engrave VIN
3 numbers on catalytic converters safely and also tailgates,
4 truck beds, and pretty much anything that our imagination
5 lets us.

6 With the additional personnel, we want to rent
7 two more trucks, allow personnel to travel when it's not
8 advantageous to drive the marked trucks. Examples are
9 covert operations, meetings in other cities, collect
10 evidence, responding after hours, access tough terrain,
11 investigating chop shops illegally acquiring catalytic
12 converters.

13 The reported numbers from '22 and '23 reflect
14 the actual offense numbers reported to NIBRS. Those are
15 the numbers in our grant application. Our investigations
16 revealed that there's a common type of theft that involves
17 vehicles being stolen by tow trucks, their parts being cut
18 off and vehicles being stripped of their catalytic
19 converters, while the rest of the vehicle is salvaged,
20 then crushed. They report the vehicle as stolen but do
21 not include the illegal acquisition of the catalytic
22 converter.

23 In just one recent investigation, we discovered
24 over 30 occurrences of thefts in which automobiles were
25 taken by wreckers illegally, destroyed and their catalytic

1 converters removed. None of these occurrences were
2 classed as a catalytic converter with NIBRS; they're all
3 recorded as UUV violations.

4 Despite decreased raw numbers, catalytic
5 converter theft remains an issue. Since 2022, Dallas has
6 reported more than 3,361 catalytic converter offenses.
7 One catalytic converter, at an average cost of \$2,000 to
8 replace, equals a loss of about \$6.7 million in the City
9 of Dallas. That's not including twin exhaust systems or
10 multiple converters taken in a single criminal incident
11 than just one catalytic converter at a replacement cost of
12 \$2,000.

13 Our grant proposal is \$872,650, just a fraction
14 of the \$6.7 million in catalytic converter theft loss.

15 Any questions?

16 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions of the
17 Dallas Police Department?

18 MS. JONES: Member Jones. I like your ask.

19 MR. RODEN: What was that?

20 MS. JONES: Your ask. I like those. It's very
21 good.

22 MR. RODEN: I thought you said something else.

23 MS. JONES: I know you did. I hear little
24 chuckles over here.

25 (General laughter.)

1 MR. RODEN: Remember the two that didn't show
2 up.

3 MS. JONES: Yes, we will; trust me, we will.

4 The laser engraver, is it a particular kind?
5 Did you mention a name?

6 MR. RODEN: Yes. That was the MarkTech 30.
7 And actually, in the application I sent a video, so I
8 don't know if the link went through on the application
9 when submitted. But it's a pretty neat device where you
10 plug a number into the computer part of it and it engraves
11 it on multiple surfaces.

12 The video I sent for the application shows a
13 guy engraving it on a catalytic converter, but you could
14 easily put it inside of a truck bed, inside of a tailgate,
15 and there's really a lot of different places that you
16 could mark. Actually, we picked the cheapest one; there
17 are some that go \$20- to \$30,000.

18 MS. JONES: Okay. That's all I have.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any other questions of
20 Dallas Police Department?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Sgt. Roden.

23 We will now move on to the City of Eagle Pass.

24 MR. DURAN: Good afternoon, everyone. Sgt.
25 Jose Duran with the Eagle Pass Police Department Auto

1 Theft Division.

2 I took over the Auto Theft Task Force in August
3 of 2023. So I had to crunch up some numbers for the
4 previous years, numbers that I wasn't aware of; I was in a
5 different division. And so here we are today with this.

6 I'm going to introduce my guys. We have four
7 investigators with the Eagle Pass Police Department:
8 myself, Sgt. Jose Duran, Detective Jose Huerta, Detective
9 Edgar Flores, and Detective Juan Balderas. That is a
10 photo we took during the stock show rodeo time, and it was
11 the first time that our guys in our department were ever
12 allowed to wear a cowboy hat for operations. So they
13 started calling us the Black Hatters, and that's something
14 that we're going to carry on for a while.

15 Our real responsibility consists of five
16 counties: Maverick County, of course, with Eagle Pass PD,
17 Maverick County Sheriff's Office and the Kickapoo Tribal
18 Police; Dimmitt County is with Dimmitt County SO; then we
19 have Zavala County which is Zavala County SO and Crystal
20 City PD; Uvalde County consists of Uvalde County SO,
21 Uvalde PD and Sabinal PD; Kinney County is one department,
22 Kinney County Sheriff's Office; Val Verde County is Del
23 Rio PD and Val Verde County SO. That is our area of
24 responsibility, and we are the only ones that are part of
25 this task force. We reach out and help them with whatever

1 we can whenever they reach out for help, with 68-As or
2 some investigations.

3 Our international bridge system -- and I'm
4 bringing this up because we've identified the current
5 trend with catalytic converter thefts and we know that the
6 catalytic converters are being smuggled into Mexico, and
7 that is our current trend right now. In 2022, I wasn't
8 able to get my hands on it, but in 2022, Mexico actually
9 seized a vehicle with false compartment and it was filled
10 with catalytic converters. That was early 2022.

11 And it caught our attention back then -- well,
12 their attention back then, I still wasn't part of the task
13 force. But we don't have any information on that seizure.

14 All we received was a photograph of the truck and the
15 false compartment and it was loaded with catalytic
16 converters. So we know that these catalytic converters
17 are going south into Mexico through the South Texas
18 border.

19 The count for our bridge system was 3,417,346
20 in 2022; in 2023 3,643,659. And that is commercial and
21 non-commercial vehicles that cross through our bridge
22 system -- we have two bridges in Eagle Pass. In Del Rio,
23 they only have one international bridge, their non-
24 commercial for '22 was 1,543,222, with 73,781 commercial
25 vehicles crossing; in '23 they had 1,687,542 non-

1 commercial, 72,954 commercial vehicles.

2 I'm bringing these numbers up because
3 considering how small our department is, those are big
4 numbers and we know that we're missing a lot. As a matter
5 of fact, today we're expecting what we call paisano
6 traffic: everyone from the interior of the U.S. that is
7 from Mexico, everybody is going back to Mexico and they
8 have chosen Eagle Pass. That shuts us down. That shuts
9 the whole city down due to traffic and officers will be
10 directing traffic for 8, 10, 12 hours.

11 North and south, it's hard to come across
12 because of the paisano traffic. So in the mix of all that
13 traffic we get all these criminal organizations that are
14 taking advantage of these situations.

15 In '22 there was only ten reported thefts of
16 catalytic converters in our area of responsibility, and
17 also ten in 2023. 2021 we saw more numbers but in 2022 we
18 had two of our prolific offenders that we had identified
19 in Eagle Pass. And I was part of that investigation in
20 another division, we were able to put these guys away.

21 One of them is doing 12 years, sentenced to 12
22 years, and the other one was sentenced to eight years.
23 And we noticed that a lot of the burglaries and vehicle
24 thefts slowed down after those arrests.

25 What we're asking for is a task force

1 specialist, and that person is going to be in charge of
2 keeping up with our social media, along with intelligence
3 sharing and gathering, keeping in touch with other task
4 forces to share all this intelligence. We need 15 multi-
5 sensor cameras for our bridges to be able to maintain
6 constant surveillance on our bridges. We're asking for 44
7 license plate readers, and I want to deploy those not only
8 in Eagle Pass but outside in our area, Highway 90, Uvalde
9 County, so that we get a bigger chance of catching the
10 offenders.

11 We need to replace two unmarked vehicles. The
12 vehicle that I drove here today is a 2013 Ford F-150 and
13 we've invested so much money in mechanical repairs on that
14 truck. I kind of feel sad letting it go because I'm
15 attached to it, but those are vehicles that we need to
16 replace.

17 And we're asking for an overtime budget. On
18 the overtime budget I also want to share that budget with
19 Del Rio PD and Val Verde County Sheriff's Office so that
20 they can do outbound operations and do proactive
21 operations as well, targeting catalytic converter thefts.

22 And I basically covered what I wrote in these
23 other narratives so that's pretty much it for me. Any
24 questions?

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions?

1 (No response.)

2 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Eagle Pass.

3 So I want to be respectful of everyone's time
4 here, so with respect to these presentations, three to
5 five minutes, let's just talk about how much money you
6 want or how much you're asking for and what you're going
7 to do with the funds. That way we can get to everyone and
8 we can get out of there in a reasonable amount of time.
9 So I would respectfully ask if we can stick to those two
10 items, or as Major Jones says, the point.

11 Chair calls up Galveston County.

12 MR. BARROW: Lt. Hal Barrow, Galveston County
13 Auto Crimes Task Force. And what we're looking at, what I
14 understood, it changed from Gulf Coast Auto Crimes Task
15 Force, because we're covering Brazoria County with a full-
16 time agent now, to Gulf Coast Environmental Crimes Task
17 Force, kind of have a different approach on it.

18 This is our staff that we came up with. NICB
19 showed for Texas 8,027. I don't think that's correct
20 because that's insurance claims.

21 Galveston County coverage area in calendar year
22 '22 we had 226. We went through the offense reports and
23 that is actual catalytic converters, each one that was
24 stolen; '23 it was 186 so it went down. Brazoria County
25 coverage area it was 124 during '22 and '23 was 45. Also,

1 y'all remember Pearland was where the big case came out of
2 with all the catalytic converters that were cut and they
3 were buying them and selling them off, and that's in our
4 coverage area.

5 What we request in the '24 request on the 224:
6 a Galveston County investigator; a Brazoria County
7 investigator; an admin assistant to work out of the office
8 because there's a lot of paperwork to go with all this;
9 two vehicles equipped for the agents; computers, office
10 supplies, training and travel.

11 And we're going to train them in environmental
12 laws with the 224 because when you go do these
13 inspections, like mechanic shops, salvage yards, metal
14 recyclers, licensed and unlicensed -- we have several of
15 them in our county, Brazoria County they have a lot too --
16 they're buying these catalytic converters black market and
17 stuff. That's kind of our approach, we want to hit the
18 place where it's kind of like dope, you take away the
19 people buying it, you're going to stop the problem. And
20 you take away the people that are stealing them, you
21 approach it that way.

22 The theft cases assigned throughout the cities
23 and the counties, public education, going to civic groups,
24 organizations, general public, Facebook, Instagram, and
25 approach it that way as a separate task force from auto

1 crimes.

2 That's it, and I think I did that in two
3 minutes.

4 MS. JONES: So, sir.

5 MR. BARROW: Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. JONES: Two investigators, one admin, two
7 vehicles, training and travel.

8 MR. BARROW: Yes.

9 MR. GONZALEZ: Tight budget.

10 MR. BARROW: And a clerk.

11 MS. JONES: Clerk.

12 MR. BARROW: Or admin assistant. Excuse me.

13 MS. JONES: Do you have social media person?

14 MR. BARROW: We have people that do --

15 MS. JONES: Oh, you have people.

16 MR. BARROW: We have investigators on the auto
17 theft side that do it, but we don't have anybody specific
18 that is trained in media, no.

19 MS. JONES: Okay. LPRs?

20 MR. BARROW: We do have LPRs on the auto theft
21 side. I didn't ask for any on the environmental side
22 because from what I understood, these are supposed to be
23 separate. So I did a separate for environmental crimes
24 and kept auto theft totally separate, even though it would
25 be under my supervision. They're two separate groups that

1 will be working.

2 MS. JONES: All right. Thank you.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any other questions?

4 (No response.)

5 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Galveston.

6 Chair calls up Harris County.

7 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Good afternoon, Mr.

8 Chairman, director and Board members. Lt. John Gonzalez
9 with the Harris County Sheriff's Office, for the record.

10 It was kind of hard to compress this into two
11 slides but, you know, I didn't want to go overboard so two
12 slides is what you get.

13 A little about us. Harris County Sheriff's
14 Office, founded in 1837, is the largest sheriff's office
15 in Texas and third largest in the nation. The HCSO has
16 nearly 5,100 employees and 200 volunteer reservists
17 dedicated to ensuring the safety of more than 4.8 million
18 residents who call Harris County home. Harris County
19 encompasses 1,788 square miles and includes 41
20 incorporated municipalities.

21 Just for reference, that picture up there are
22 22 other states in the U.S. that have a population of less
23 than our county. And our county is right there in the
24 orange. As you can see, it's very compressed.

25 Why our agency requests access to Senate Bill

1 224 funds. As mentioned before, our agency serves a
2 county with a population of 4.8 million residents; 2
3 million of those residents live in the unincorporated
4 areas. We are the primary law enforcement agency
5 responsible for all unincorporated areas of Harris County.

6 We are also home to over 2,800 automobile
7 dealers, which includes 395 franchised dealers. Though
8 our numbers did decrease from 2022 to 2023, this does not
9 mean the trend of catalytic converter theft will not make
10 a comeback.

11 Those of y'all that know me know I'm a movie
12 buff and I enjoy movies. And sometimes you get some
13 pretty good quotes from those. And one of those that
14 actually stuck with me in this time actually comes from
15 the 2012 film of *Dark Knight Rises* where the antagonist is
16 actually battling with the protagonist in the movie and he
17 actually mentions, "Peace has cost you your strength,
18 victory has defeated you."

19 Meaning that in times of peace, if you're not
20 training, you're not preparing, it can make you weak. You
21 get complacent. I feel that's what's going on with
22 catalytic converter theft now.

23 Even though the numbers are down, our approach
24 is going to be to continue to spread awareness and
25 prevention. We wish to increase auto theft catalytic

1 converter awareness by hosting more VIN etching events.
2 We wish to increase the number of salvage yard and
3 mechanic shop inspections, alongside our nuisance
4 abatement unit.

5 And last but not least, Senate Bill 224, aka
6 the Darren Almendarez Act, is named after our fallen
7 brother who was tragically killed while interrupting the
8 theft of his own catalytic converters while off duty on
9 March 31, 2022.

10 Very quickly, our numbers were 3,026 incidents
11 in 2022 -- that's incidents, that's not converters,
12 multiple ones being taken. That number dropped to 740 in
13 2023.

14 So what we are asking for is \$6,300 for
15 equipment. Like Dallas PD, we're asking for a laser
16 etching device, and like theirs, it was the MarkTech 30.
17 That was one of the least expensive ones.

18 We hosted a VIN etching event last week. We
19 did 36 vehicles. Fatigue sets in, those catalytic
20 converters are red hot, plus the guys get little metal
21 shavings in their eyes despite wearing safety glasses, so
22 we figure that would be a benefit for us.

23 \$57,000 in overtime costs. That would consist
24 of hosting etching events, seven hours, roughly, one for
25 preparation, one for cleanup, and about five for the

1 operation. That can vary.

2 Also, callout, we do not currently receive
3 overtime. They get compensatory time. We've taken our
4 leave because of staffing issues, so paid overtime is
5 always a morale booster.

6 And also, for additional business and salvage
7 inspections, four hours, we hope to increase those. Out
8 in east Harris County, the Aldine and Channelview areas,
9 there's a lot of businesses out there that run under the
10 radar just because of the lack of manpower out there.

11 So that means a grand total of our request is
12 \$63,300.

13 That's all I have. Any questions?

14 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions of Harris
15 County?

16 MS. JONES: Both you and Dallas mentioned you
17 asked for the cheapest, and cheaper doesn't always mean
18 better. So what's the difference between the cheapest one
19 that you asked for and other options?

20 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: So when I called the
21 number -- I'm assuming the same video that Dallas PD saw
22 is the same one I saw on YouTube. I want to say it was a
23 local vendor, and when I say local, in Texas, they're out
24 of Beaumont.

25 My first question was these catalytic

1 converters are red hot. When we host these etching
2 events, we don't have time to have vehicles wait in the
3 cooldown period. So will it mess up the instrument or the
4 device?

5 He mentioned there are more expensive models
6 that can do QR Codes. They can do designs, pretty much
7 like a computer, like a 3-D printer. This basic one, from
8 my understanding, it can do a form of a QR Code but mostly
9 just numbers in different fonts, your basic stuff. We
10 don't need to put designs.

11 MS. JONES: No tattoos.

12 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: No tattoos, nothing like
13 that.

14 MR. GONZALEZ: I think it would have been kind
15 of cool to have the MVCPA's logo on catalytic converters.

16 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Well, if you want to give
17 me another \$20,000.

18 No, but that's what I gathered from it. And
19 it's just like Dallas PD described it. It's literally a
20 small box computer with a hose and it looks like a price
21 gun and you enter whatever you want.

22 Currently what we do is we do the last eight of
23 the VIN. With something like that, that requires less
24 fatigue and it's quicker. We can do the whole VIN number
25 and it's just a lot cleaner look.

1 MS. JONES: Thank you.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any other questions for
3 Harris County?

4 (No response.)

5 MR. JOHN GONZALEZ: Thank you.

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

7 Chair calls Hidalgo County.

8 MR. LEAL: Good afternoon. My name is Norbert
9 Leal. I'm a captain representing Hidalgo County Sheriff's
10 Office.

11 Brought my partner here. This is our first
12 time applying for the grant, so we're trying to figure out
13 the rules and whatnot. So this is Sgt. Lucio Torres.

14 MR. TORRES: Hello.

15 MR. LEAL: Like I said, this is the first time
16 we're applying for this grant. Hidalgo County is a border
17 county; we have 20 cities within our county. As you can
18 see our numbers, we included in our presentation some of
19 the stats involving auto theft, 60-A inspections that we
20 conduct, also some of the unauthorized use and catalytic
21 converter thefts.

22 Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office itself, we only
23 have two auto theft investigators that work on auto
24 thefts. So one of the things that we've tried to do in
25 the past, Sgt. Torres is our director of our TTIC center,

1 our Texas Transnational Intelligence Center. One of the
2 things that we do there is we have the TAG, the Texas
3 Anti-Gang, which comprised of multiple agencies.

4 One of the things that we do is we network with
5 other agencies, state, local and federal, to combat gangs
6 and narcotics and whatnot. So that's one of the things
7 that we want to do with the auto thefts and the catalytic
8 converter thefts is be able to network with other agencies
9 as well, since we don't participate in a task force
10 currently.

11 We are asking for funding for one criminal
12 analyst at the TTIC. We have several analysts from
13 different agencies, including state and federal, so we
14 would like to add one strictly for our auto thefts,
15 catalytic converter thefts. And we also would like to ask
16 for one full-time employee to strictly work catalytic
17 converter thefts within our county, as well as with the
18 local agencies.

19 We had 34 and 37 last year just in our county.

20 I didn't bring the numbers for the cities, but just in
21 Hidalgo County in 2022 we had 34 and 2023 we had 37. We
22 want to use the same methods that we use with the TAG and
23 the TTIC, like I said, with the analyst and the one full-
24 time employee.

25 We also want to ask for overtime in the amount

1 of \$122,951. The way we're going to utilize this money is
2 we have specialized units that work burglaries, robberies
3 and whatnot. So on their days off they would come in, put
4 in some overtime, provide support for our auto theft
5 investigators to conduct business inspections at the
6 salvage yards and whatnot.

7 That's one thing that we're lacking right now.
8 Because of the time constraints, with two investigators
9 it's very difficult to conduct that. So our goal is to do
10 that with the overtime, have them come in on days off and
11 go hit these salvage yards, which some of them are
12 registered, some are not registered.

13 Also, LPRs, we do have currently numerous LPRs
14 distributed throughout the county using the Vigilant
15 system. We would ask for two more which will be
16 additional and they would be strictly for locations and
17 preferably they would be trailers. They wouldn't be fixed
18 locations; they can be mobile which we can send out to
19 locations of interest, salvage yards and whatnot that we
20 suspect of being involved in the purchase of catalytic
21 converters.

22 We also are asking for equipment as far as a
23 leased vehicle, and the total would be \$402,473.

24 One of the things that we do also, as well, we
25 indicate in there is the VERUS system that we have at our

1 county jail. I do have two gang intelligence detention
2 officers that are assigned specifically to gangs, but we
3 do monitor the inmates' phone calls. A lot of times they
4 do discuss -- currently we have cases where they're
5 discussing auto thefts, how to steal cars, where to go
6 target certain locations and whatnot.

7 That information gets forwarded to our auto
8 theft investigators and that's been a very useful tool as
9 well. So we're getting intel from all over in reference
10 to auto thefts, but I feel that funding what we're asking
11 for will help us be even more productive and address some
12 of the issues that are falling through the cracks with
13 just two investigators.

14 And that's pretty much all we have for now,
15 unless you want to add something else. We've got a
16 minute.

17 MR. TORRES: I just want to add that our
18 intelligence center, we've been paramount with linking all
19 our agencies. We have 20 agencies within our county, five
20 total ports of entry into Mexico. So trying to catch them
21 with our proximity to the border, being the final
22 frontier, these vehicles, you know, we have just a few
23 hours after they're stolen and trying to catch them or
24 apprehend them, and our LPR system has proved vital.

25 I think more LPRs especially will help us

1 combat this issue that not only us, I know everybody here
2 is facing.

3 MR. LEAL: And currently, one of the things
4 that we have discovered as well is we have seen a spike in
5 auto thefts, but not necessarily within our region but
6 also coming out of towns, especially like Houston, Harris
7 County and whatnot, and we've located them down there.
8 And it's not a local problem for us; it's a statewide
9 problem. And I think we can network with other agencies
10 statewide.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions?

12 (No response.)

13 MR. GONZALEZ: So this \$400,000, this would
14 stay just with the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office?

15 MR. LEAL: That's correct, sir.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: No partner agencies?

17 MR. LEAL: No.

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. That's all I have. Thank
19 you.

20 MR. LEAL: Thank you.

21 MR. DIGGS: Mr. Chairman?

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Yes.

23 MR. DIGGS: William Diggs, director, MVCPA, for
24 the record.

25 I would like to just elaborate a little bit on

1 the conversations with Hidalgo County over the last few
2 weeks, if I may, sir.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: Sure.

4 MR. DIGGS: So a few weeks ago, myself, a
5 number of DMV staff members, MVCPA staff, Deputy Executive
6 Director Roland Luna, we went to the Valley, had some
7 conversations with law enforcement throughout the area,
8 all the way from Laredo down to Brownsville, with some of
9 the dealership community and tax assessor-collector
10 community. And we took the opportunity to actually have a
11 conversation with Hidalgo County. You know, they're right
12 there in McAllen. McAllen PD was at the meeting.

13 But the next day we went over and had a
14 conversation with Hidalgo County. And a former colleague
15 of mine is the chief deputy there in Hidalgo County and we
16 were able to visit with them, talk about some
17 opportunities for SB 224. They do have some other
18 thoughts about applying for a main task force grant and
19 bringing other agencies in from the surrounding areas and
20 applying for an FY25 grant.

21 I think they're going to be a good partner in
22 the future and I look forward to working with them.

23 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions of
24 Director Diggs?

25 (No response.)

1 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

2 We will now move on to the City of Houston.

3 MR. HARDING: Good afternoon. Lt. Tolan Harding
4 with the Houston Police Department Auto Theft Division.

5 The Houston Police Department comes before you
6 to ask for grant funding to form the Houston Catalytic
7 Converter Crimes Task Force. The additional grant funds
8 that we're asking for would allow us to focus on catalytic
9 converter crimes in Houston. This budget year we're
10 asking for overtime funds to cover personnel costs,
11 equipment, technology, travel and training and vehicles.

12 Why are we asking for grant funds? To quote a
13 movie quote like Lt. Gonzalez, "Houston, we have a
14 problem." 2021, 2022 and 2023 Houston Police Department
15 recorded 19,626 catalytic converter theft incidents.

16 The Houston Police Department covers Harris
17 County, Fort Bend County and Montgomery County. As you
18 can see from the slide, those counties cover 3,740 square
19 miles, have 6.2 million residents, and in excess of 4.8
20 million cars. We are a target-rich environment; we're
21 also the largest city in the State of Texas.

22 What is our solution to this problem? The
23 formation of the Houston Catalytic Converter Crimes Task
24 Force. It's a multi-unit collaborative task force that
25 includes the Auto Theft Division, the Precious Metals

1 Theft Unit of the Property and Financial Crimes Division,
2 and also uniformed patrol resources.

3 We're going to address this problem in two
4 ways: one, the physical theft of the catalytic
5 converters, and two, the introduction of the catalytic
6 converters into the recycling stream. We're going to use
7 reactive investigations, proactive investigations,
8 undercover covert operations, and regulatory enforcement,
9 in addition to community outreach and crime prevention to
10 address this issue.

11 We're going to ask for \$964,000. Of that,
12 \$550,000 of it is for technology which is license plate
13 reading equipment. We're asking for \$186,000 in overtime,
14 split between the Auto Theft Division and the Precious
15 Metals Theft Unit.

16 Broken down, that would allow a .75 full-time
17 equivalent for the Auto Theft Division, or approximately
18 1,500 hours of overtime. It would allow a half full-time
19 equivalent for the Precious Metals Theft Unit, or 1,000
20 hours of overtime.

21 We would also ask for eight additional leased
22 vehicles to conduct the covert and undercover operations.
23 I already mentioned the \$550,000 in technology for license
24 plate readers, as well as other supplies and direct
25 operating costs.

1 That sums up our application.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: So no full-time equivalencies,
3 no personnel comp?

4 MR. HARDING: Not this fiscal year. Due to the
5 quick turnaround, the 30-day turnaround on the request for
6 applications, I didn't believe our agency would be able to
7 come up with additional personnel and avoid the
8 supplanting rule of being able to backfill those
9 positions. So this fiscal year, at least, we're asking
10 for overtime funds to cover personnel costs.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions.

12 MR. DIGGS: Mr. Chairman?

13 MR. GONZALEZ: Yes.

14 MR. DIGGS: William Diggs, MVCPA director, for
15 the record.

16 You know, when I looked at the Houston PD
17 grant, well written, and it doesn't take a whole lot to do
18 the math on this. You know, roughly 20 percent of the
19 registered vehicles in the State of Texas are in their
20 area. And I also want to commend them for looking at the
21 supplanting rule and staying ahead of that, and so thank
22 you for that effort as well.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

25 MR. HARDING: Thank you, sir.

1 MR. GONZALEZ: City of Laredo.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for having us here.
3 Sgt. Jaime Rodriguez, Laredo Police Department Auto Theft
4 Task Force. In light of the chair's request, my
5 PowerPoint is going to change a little bit.

6 So what we're asking for is just straight up,
7 we're asking for an assistant district attorney to be
8 attached with us full-time. We're asking for overtime
9 funds for our operations. We're asking for travel and
10 training.

11 We are asking for a lot of technology. Within
12 that technology is a Flock system which y'all are familiar
13 with. Fusus, the OS System, it's a real-time crime center
14 where that could be integrated with the Flock, but we
15 could talk more about that later on if I have time.

16 LiveView Technology, D-3 security system
17 towers, we're asking for four of those so we can move them
18 around mobile. Two-way communication -- they have sirens.

19 It's a lot of good technology there.

20 And lastly with technology would be Magnet
21 Graykey mobile forensics device with AXIOM. That one is
22 to dump the phones, to get intel information on the
23 phones.

24 Additionally, for public awareness, what we
25 want is traffic message boards. Right now we get those

1 message boards from our city and we have to cut a lot of
2 red tape. It takes a month or two sometimes to even get
3 use of those to make the public aware of what's going on
4 around them.

5 With these, we'll be able to use them when we
6 want to. We'll set them up, we'll put the message that we
7 want, we can put them anywhere we want. We don't need to
8 go through the red tape.

9 Also, we're asking for some advertising,
10 billboard advertising. Now, in the City of Laredo, we're
11 pretty tight knit. They allow us to do it for free. But
12 money talks, so when they're not available, we cannot use
13 them so we might as well get funds to pay for those.

14 So pretty much that's what we're asking for.
15 Now let me go a little bit into Laredo. So we pride
16 ourselves on shared intelligence, 100 percent shared
17 intelligence. We bring it, we give it, they get it, we
18 get it, so it's good interdiction.

19 Obviously, we're at the border so we do
20 interdiction and recovery. That's one of our main things
21 that we end up doing. That comes from all over the state.

22 So to emphasize that technology that we need,
23 we have four ports of entry there and one rail bridge port
24 of entry there. And just recently, we got a presidential
25 permit for a fifth bridge. And I also found out that

1 we're no longer the number one inland port in the nation,
2 we are the number inland port in the world, so just to
3 kind of stress that.

4 As far as that in the past, like Eagle Pass,
5 Sgt. Duran stated, we would get catalytic converters
6 coming through, going and coming in, and we really
7 couldn't do anything about it because there's no laws on
8 the books of them having them. But now the laws are
9 there, so now with those laws, I mean, we find it hard to
10 kind of -- we don't have ADA, that's strictly to our motor
11 vehicle traffic crimes. So now having the ADA, we'll be
12 able to enforce these. They'll indict them, they're going
13 to be 100 percent on these types of cases.

14 If you have any other questions as far as the
15 technology, I could have gone on forever, but I know y'all
16 have time and other people want to present too.

17 MR. GONZALEZ: I got one.

18 MS. JONES: Go ahead.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: You talked about you want the
20 Flock system. Can you talk about placement? And I'm
21 specifically interested in hearing -- you mentioned there
22 were four ports of entry?

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Four ports of entry, with a new
24 one coming, with the rail port of entry too.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: So would you be able to talk

1 about your plans?

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: In the big PowerPoint that we
3 had made, I actually had three maps, a map of where we're
4 at --

5 MR. GONZALEZ: Do you want to get that?

6 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's not in there because we
7 were only allowed -- if y'all don't mind, I can get it
8 real quick.

9 MR. GONZALEZ: That's okay.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So there's three different maps
11 that we had. We had a heat map and then we also had a map
12 of strategically placed Flock systems within our city.
13 However, meeting with the Flock people, they also have
14 different strategies of doing that, so we would actually
15 talk to them.

16 They're the experts. They're the ones that
17 have done it all over the state, to actually implement
18 some. But our wish list of having it there, I believe
19 it's 60 cameras at 30 locations. And right now where we
20 want them is in our hotspots of where we're getting hit
21 with any type of motor vehicle crimes, auto parts.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: I would just say that if you
23 have 60 -- I mean, border security is incredibly important
24 for the governor and is a legislative priority. And so
25 being able to secure those ports of entry and the roads

1 and ingress and egress going in and out of those ports of
2 entry, I would strongly recommend that, especially if you
3 had 60 cameras going up and we're talking about four ports
4 of entry.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And we're stressing those in
6 the downtown area near the bridges. Those are really our
7 hotspots. Because they park vehicles, they park anything
8 that they're going to smuggle in there.

9 They wait for us to leave on the bridge
10 operations -- that's why we asked for the overtime -- and
11 then when we're not there or CBP is not there, they just
12 go in.

13 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Jones, did you have a
14 question? I'm sorry.

15 MS. JONES: I'm trying to picture 60 cameras in
16 four locations.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Sixty cameras in 30 locations.

18 So we're not just emphasizing just the bridges, we're
19 doing it all over the city.

20 MS. JONES: Okay.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And we also have a bridge way
22 on the other side of town in the Mines Road area. And our
23 bridges aren't like close to each other and even further
24 down off that Mines Road area, so it's separated.

25 MS. JONES: Real-time real crime?

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Real-time crime center.

2 MS. JONES: What is that?

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's an OS system that you can
4 integrate -- I had it on there -- so picture a computer
5 screen with a map, and in that map you can zoom into that
6 map when any type of call comes up, a motor vehicle crime
7 related, any type of crime that you could go into. So you
8 go into that crime, you can see all the cameras around the
9 area that are available, including Flock system.

10 So with Fusus there comes a core system. We
11 offer it to the people of the city, so it's going to come
12 with some core boxes that we're going to offer to the
13 city. And they can plug them in and then they can give us
14 access to their cameras in and around motels, especially
15 where we get hit -- motels, hotels, parking lots, any type
16 of those areas.

17 And they don't have to give us all their
18 cameras inside because you know that's kind of a thin line
19 with some corporations, but they can give us the outside
20 ones. So now with that system, you zoom in, there's a
21 call, you go in there, and it shows you all the cameras
22 that are around the area. You type in there and it will
23 show you the real-time.

24 You can even rewind a little bit to find out
25 what's going on, who did it, give a description of people.

1 Because as we know in law enforcement that when we do the
2 call, by the time we get there or by the time we actually
3 get the call to our mobile units, they've already left.
4 So we could rewind, we could find out who they were, and
5 then we could put a BOLO out on them right away, and then
6 we could just follow their tracks. We can even zone in
7 and see what type of route they ended up going or probably
8 ended up going, and then visit those cameras along the way
9 too.

10 So we need buy-in from the city, which I think
11 we will get, as far as the residents of the city. And I'm
12 sure they're going to do it in their convenience stores
13 and all that other good stuff too. It's going to benefit
14 them.

15 MS. JONES: So it's technology, not a center?
16 Because when I'm hearing center, I'm thinking location
17 staffing with people crime center.

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So we already have a real-time
19 crime center and all this is going to do is be added to
20 that real-time crime center. We already have people
21 there.

22 MS. JONES: So it's technology.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's basically technology.

24 MS. JONES: Okay, understood.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And with that being said, we're

1 going to a surveillance tactical unit, our department in
2 the future, so now I can have my guys working on different
3 things while that surveillance tactical team is working on
4 this. And that way we can be in two places at one time,
5 and they don't have to be onsite, they can be monitoring
6 the cameras.

7 We can set up those towers, also, that can be
8 integrated into the system and we can monitor that at the
9 same time without compromising the individual or the work
10 that the individual could put out.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: You mentioned some digital
12 forensics with Graykey. What other infrastructure does
13 Laredo have in place right now for that? Like do y'all
14 have like the digital forensics work stations and Faraday
15 boxes?

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So right now we actually have
17 two of the Graykeys but they're not for us. We have it at
18 the tac center and then another is for the main PD. And
19 we kind of have to go through loopholes and sometimes they
20 don't work, sometimes we've got to call them in and stuff
21 like that.

22 So that's why we're asking for our own. We'll
23 get our own guys certified, and then we can do it whenever
24 we need to come in. And that's what the overtime is for
25 too.

1 MR. GONZALEZ: That's what I'm saying is just
2 the Graykey itself, right, it comes with additional things
3 that you need to have.

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So the AXIOM is to read it, to
5 be able to convert it and read it and translate it to us.

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Yeah, and the computers that are
7 necessary to be able to break into these terabyte phones
8 are significant.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: The Magnet Graykey, I think in
10 itself it could break into them. That's the beauty about
11 this actual equipment, so it can break into them and it's
12 then translated by AXIOM. And we get training from the
13 company to be able to do that, and our guys will be able
14 to do that.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: I know the training is not cheap
16 either.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So we put in for training too.

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any other questions?

19 (No response.)

20 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you, Laredo.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you very much.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Chair calls the City of New
23 Braunfels.

24 MS. GATES: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm
25 Jennifer Gates. I am the grants coordinator for the City

1 of New Braunfels, so I think I'm the oddball in the room.

2 And we also have -- you can go ahead.

3 MR. CHRISTOPHERSON: Lt. Christopherson with
4 Criminal Investigations Division with New Braunfels PD.
5 Craig Christopherson, for the record.

6 MS. GATES: And we just want to thank you for
7 the opportunity. We are first-time applicants also and we
8 very much appreciate the opportunity to be able to submit
9 an application for our needs.

10 So our application, we tried to keep it very
11 straightforward with this being our first time
12 opportunity. And so we are requesting a total of \$686,748
13 for equipment and personnel costs. The bulk of that cost
14 is actually within our personnel, so this will support the
15 law enforcement detection and apprehension category.

16 We will be the participating agency, the New
17 Braunfels Police Department will be the participating
18 agency. Our coverage agency will be the Comal County
19 Sheriff's Office. They are currently part of a task force
20 with Travis County in Austin.

21 And so what's important about that is based on
22 our geographic location, we are almost centrally located
23 on IH-35 between Austin and San Antonio. And so the task
24 force for Travis County, often their coverage stops at
25 about San Marcos which is north of our city limits, of

1 course. And so there is this little pocket where there's
2 no coverage.

3 And for our reported cases in 2022, just in
4 that year alone we had 259 thefts and there were 130 in
5 '23, last year. So this is important because our city has
6 just exploded in population, so we are over 100,000 now.
7 In our 2010 census, I think we were approximately 57,000.

8
9 Not only do we have our residents that have
10 just expanded greatly, but we also have over 3 million
11 visitors every year which creates the opportunity for
12 thefts. And so with that in mind, what we have already
13 put in place is we had previously purchased, using seizure
14 funds, three pole-mounted LPRs, license plate readers,
15 that we have sites located on I-35 that they will be
16 installed, but unfortunately, that project had to come to
17 a halt.

18 We already had the memorandum of understanding
19 with TxDOT and also with HITA, and so those are existing.

20 We are ready to hit the ground as soon as we have the
21 funding to complete the installation, so there are three
22 spots that have been identified on 35.

23 And then with the grant funds, additionally
24 what we would like to do is to purchase -- our application
25 said four, but I apologize, it is six. So it's however

1 many cameras that funding will provide, but that will be
2 six cameras that will be placed along 46 which connects
3 directly with IH-10, and as others have mentioned, Houston
4 which is a direct line for us.

5 And so even though relatively our numbers may
6 be small, we don't have a lot of coverage in our area and
7 we consider ourselves to be a central hub where we could
8 be able to partner with other agencies in both the
9 prevention and recovery. And then additionally, we are
10 also requesting funding for ten pole-mounted LPRs but they
11 would be able to be moved at different locations within
12 the city based on criminal activity. So we call them
13 mobile and that's only because they would be moved around
14 the city, but they would be pole-mounted.

15 And then additionally, we have requested
16 funding for two street crime unit officers because they
17 would be the officers that would be investigating the
18 crimes of the catalytic converter theft. And so this
19 would be for their salaries, their fringe, their two
20 vehicles, so a vehicle for each of them, and their issued
21 equipment, including uniforms.

22 We did not include overtime costs in this
23 because with this being new for us, we want to make sure
24 that we can be mindful partners in the funding. And so if
25 there were overtime costs, we as the city would absorb

1 that.

2 And so that is the financial overview of our
3 application, and we're happy to answer any questions. Lt.
4 Christopherson will have the details on those.

5 MR. CHRISTOPHERSON: If I could kind of
6 elaborate on our street crimes unit, we started that in
7 about 2022. We have six people in it already with one
8 supervisor, they're three plain clothes, three uniformed
9 officers, and they work great because it doesn't take away
10 from patrol. So on issues like tracking down anybody
11 stealing anything, catalytic converters, cars, it works
12 great.

13 We have also, sort of all of our cell phone
14 technology, we have Graykey, Cellebrite, Track, and we've
15 had great responses with those.

16 Just as a comparison, we have about 140,000
17 vehicles driving up and down 35 every day; that's
18 4,200,000 a month. We're sandwiched in between two hubs
19 and we're really needing the assistance with the cameras
20 to help out with that.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: I just want to say I love your
22 slide presentation. That's fantastic format. Ask
23 Director Diggs to save that one for the next time.

24 MS. GATES: I'm happy to share the template
25 with you.

1 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions?

2 (No response.)

3 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Thank you.

4 MS. GATES: Thank you very much.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: Chair calls City of Pasadena.

6 MR. BUCKERT: Douglas Buckert, sergeant with
7 Pasadena Police Department. Public speaking, even in a
8 small setting, is not my thing, so don't worry about that
9 timer, I will not use all of it. You definitely don't
10 want that.

11 Pasadena Auto Theft Task Force, we are a task
12 force grantee as well. We are comprised of six
13 investigators and myself, we investigate all auto-related
14 crimes. You're talking about heat maps, there you go.

15 We're in southeast Harris County, about 152,000
16 population. In 2022 we had 376 thefts. And I took over
17 the unit in '23, we only had 88, so I take credit for
18 that.

19 Our grant application is primarily focused on
20 equipment and LPR cameras that we hope to deploy in those
21 hotspot locations. We find most of our catalytic
22 converter thefts occur in our retail centers and hotel
23 areas. Where those hotspots are, those are our retail
24 centers down in the southeast portion of the city and some
25 of the other ones are, you know, apartment complexes --

1 which everybody can tell you that's where the majority of
2 their catalytic converter thefts occur. So we're hoping
3 to utilize equipment and the LPR cameras to be deployed in
4 those locations to help us with our investigations.

5 Having been an investigator for a few years,
6 LPR cameras have changed the game a bit for us. The
7 number of leads we've gotten since our department has
8 deployed Flock cameras is outrageous. I could have six
9 more investigators and not get it all done.

10 But our grant, we're asking for \$103,000. \$60-
11 of that is for LPR cameras. Another \$14,000 is for
12 LiveView PTZ cameras that our department has recently
13 developed a real-time crime center that they've been
14 utilizing these cameras to be deployed in hotspots for not
15 just auto crimes but throughout the city, but those
16 cameras would be able to be viewed by my personnel in our
17 auto theft office and deployed at those hotspot locations.

18 As well, we're asking for a surveillance drone,
19 which is new to me. But since our department began using
20 drones they've shown to be very useful, especially in
21 open-air public places where a majority of these catalytic
22 converter thefts are occurring.

23 Also, we're requesting funding for some covert
24 cameras where we can deploy those. They differ from the
25 LiveView because they're discreetly placed and can be

1 obviously used in covert operations.

2 Additionally, I'm asking for equipment for my
3 investigators just in inspecting vehicles, equipment bags
4 to inspect vehicles that have been affected by catalytic
5 converter thefts.

6 And I think that covers it for the most part.

7 Any questions?

8 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, any questions?

9 MR. BUCKERT: Twenty LPR and five of the
10 LiveView, one drone, and then another, I believe it was
11 four covert cameras.

12 MR. GONZALEZ: Any other questions?

13 (No response.)

14 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

15 Chair calls Potter County.

16 MR. McBROOM: Good afternoon. Patrick McBroom.

17 I'm commander of the Panhandle Auto Burglary and Theft
18 Unit out of Potter County.

19 Just a little bit about ourselves. We have
20 four investigators, three out of Potter County Sheriff's
21 Office and then one out of the Randall County Sheriff's
22 Office. We're housed in Amarillo, kind of the center of
23 Panhandle. We cover the top 22 counties, 16,000 square
24 miles, population about 400,000 people.

25 Today we're asking in the grant for 66 LPR

1 cameras and an update to our etch-a-sketch Insta Etch
2 system for marking catalytic converters, a total of
3 \$237,000.

4 In 2022 there was 212 catalytic converters
5 reported stolen and in '23 there were 54 in that coverage
6 area. Those numbers are probably lower than what was
7 actually stolen, just from people not reporting them, and
8 then the ability to look up actually catalytic converter
9 thefts in the RMS systems throughout those agencies. In
10 2022 that was a total loss of \$614,000 just in catalytic
11 converter thefts, and in '23 so far \$156,000 loss.

12 So when we started looking at this grant, we
13 talked to all of our coverage agencies. And to my
14 surprise, we had 13 agencies that wanted to participate
15 funding-wise to give us some funds, so that was awesome,
16 was not expecting that. I see that continue to grow as we
17 progress through the years on this.

18 Some of the solutions that we came up with, I
19 think the biggest thing is our relationship with TDLR and
20 DPS regulatory. If we can build good working
21 relationships with them, I think that would help immensely
22 where we are with dealing with scrap yards.

23 One of the big things we have there is we're
24 looking at within a two-hour drive we have four different
25 states that have less strict laws on buying and selling

1 catalytic converters than what we have in Texas. So the
2 thefts usually generally will leave the state and are
3 stolen in those other four states.

4 So the LPRs that we're looking at, the Flock
5 LPR cameras, they'll be scattered throughout the Texas
6 Panhandle. And I've talked to those jurisdictions that
7 have asked for cameras and have their input on where they
8 should be put as far as corridors that are more likely to
9 be used by the bad guys. They'll have a big hand in where
10 those cameras go because they know their jurisdiction more
11 than I do, for sure. We'll also lean on them as far as
12 helping us combat this as well with those participating
13 counties.

14 So I know the numbers aren't big but one of the
15 things that we did do, probably last year or the year
16 before, is we assisted Homeland Security on a guy that we
17 had actually filed 300 cases on that we were waiting to
18 see if they were accepted. So in the meantime, this guy
19 was buying catalytic converters from all over the United
20 States. Tulsa Homeland Security Office started
21 investigating and put a wiretap on him and we assisted
22 with a search warrant with them and DPS. Recovered two
23 semi loads of catalytic converters and \$1.2 million in
24 cash.

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Nice.

1 MR. McBROOM: Those numbers don't reflect on
2 any kind of paper other than voice of mouth, so we're
3 pretty proud of that too.

4 Any questions?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Thank you, Potter
7 County.

8 Chair calls Smith County.

9 MR. RICHBOURG: Kenneth Richbourg with DPS.
10 I'm representing Smith County and the task force there.

11 So the multi-jurisdictional task force, we put
12 in for the grant and this is primarily an equipment and
13 training grant that Smith County and participating
14 agencies are taking care of. We are unable to ask for
15 personnel at this time or to include those on the grant.
16 We did ask our agencies and they just don't have anybody
17 to commit to the program at this time.

18 The equipment is going to be used to perform
19 our normal activities and some new activities that
20 actually target salvage yards, metal recyclers and to do
21 the catalytic converter theft program. We'll be assisting
22 our 14-county council of governments, agencies that we
23 cover by helping them inspect their salvage yards and
24 their metal recyclers in the inspections.

25 We will do etching events but we did not ask

1 for one in this grant. But if you see fit, we'll take the
2 best one that they asked for if you want to add that on
3 there.

4 Our stats, they're not accurate as best we can
5 tell. The City of Tyler is the only one that codes for
6 catalytic converters, so theirs are fairly accurate. But
7 the other counties, we just had to go through reports to
8 get that.

9 So we're asking for money for training, we're
10 asking for a new vehicle, we're asking for an LPR, and new
11 laptop computers for our existing task force
12 investigators.

13 With that, I'll take your questions if you have
14 any.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. Members, any
16 questions?

17 (No response.)

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

19 Yessenia, is there any public comment for this
20 agenda item?

21 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Does anyone else wish to speak
23 on this item?

24 (No response.)

25 MR. GONZALEZ: The chair hears none.

1 We will now move on to agenda item 8, Catalytic
2 Converter Grant application review and recommendations.

3 MS. JONES: Mr. Chair, before we move on, I
4 would like to suggest to the task forces, if you heard
5 something today that you did not ask for and it popped in
6 your head that you need it, I would suggest that you ask
7 for it. If you need it, ask for it.

8 MR. GONZALEZ: Chair calls Galveston.

9 (No audible response.)

10 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, is there any other
11 discussion on SB 224 funding? I will now entertain any
12 discussion, motions or recommendations for SB 224 FY24
13 grant funding.

14 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: I, Board member Cantu-
15 Serrano, move that the GBR Committee recommend to the full
16 Board the list of SB 224 funding requests as stated on
17 page 16 of the Board book, except for Dallas.

18 MR. GONZALEZ: Members, there's a motion on the
19 floor. Is there a second?

20 MS. JONES: Member Jones. I second.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: And let the record reflect that
22 I, Julio Gonzalez, recuse myself from this vote. I will
23 call the vote now.

24 Member Cantu-Serrano?

25 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: Aye.

1 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Jones?

2 MS. JONES: Aye.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: The motion passes.

4 Are there any other motions or discussion?

5 MR. RICHARDS: Mr. Chairman, David Richards,
6 for the record.

7 You can vote on that particular motion, so let
8 the record reflect your vote.

9 MR. GONZALEZ: I'd like to change my vote to
10 aye.

11 MR. RICHARDS: Thank you.

12 Members, for this vote you're voting only on
13 Dallas, and the chairman will recuse himself on this vote.
14 Thank you.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: I am recused.

16 Are there any motions?

17 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: I move the funding for
18 Dallas to be approved on page 16 of the Board books.

19 MS. JONES: Members, there's a motion on the
20 floor. Is there a second?

21 MS. JONES: Second.

22 MR. GONZALEZ: Hearing a second, I will now
23 call for the vote.

24 Member Cantu-Serrano?

25 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: Aye.

1 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Jones?

2 MS. JONES: Aye.

3 MR. GONZALEZ: And let the record reflect that
4 I, Julio Gonzalez, recused myself.

5 MS. JONES: Look at Dallas PD, he's all mad and
6 red back there, he's about to come up. Here we go again,
7 grant 2023 conference.

8 (General laughter.)

9 MR. GONZALEZ: Motion passes.

10 Members, there will not be a closed session for
11 today's meeting.

12 Moving on to agenda item 11, Yessenia, are
13 there any public comments?

14 MS. BENAVIDES: No, sir.

15 MR. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

16 We will now take up the next agenda item,
17 agenda item 12. Members, unless there's further business,
18 I will entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

19 MS. JONES: Member Jones. I move we adjourn.

20 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Jones makes a motion to
21 adjourn. Do I have a second?

22 MS. CANTU-SERRANO: Cantu-Serrano seconds.

23 MR. GONZALEZ: Member Cantu-Serrano seconds the
24 motion. The meeting is adjourned.

25 Thank you.

1 (Whereupon, at 2:29 p.m., the meeting was
2 adjourned.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MEETING OF: MVCPA Grants Budget & Reporting Committee
LOCATION: Via Microsoft Teams
DATE: March 27, 2024

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages, numbers 1 through 66, 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: April 8, 2024

/s/ Nancy H. King
(Transcriber)

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