

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

MOTOR VEHICLE CRIME PREVENTION AUTHORITY
SENATE BILL 224 ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Home2 Suites by Hilton Laredo Airport
7120 Robson Lane
Laredo, Texas 78041

via Microsoft Teams

9:00 a.m.
Thursday,
October 3, 2024

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Sharon Jones, Chair
Robert Carson
Laird Doran (absent)
F. Todd Foreman
Josh Martin
Ricardo Porras (absent)
Stewart Prentice
Jaime Rodriguez
Tchad Taormina
JR Willis

STAFF:

William Diggs, MVCPA Director
David Richards, MVCPA General Counsel

ON THE RECORD REPORTING
(512) 450-0342

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MS. JONES: My name is Sharon Jones, and I am
3 pleased to announce the fourth meeting of Senate Bill 224
4 Advisory Committee of the Board of the Motor Vehicle and
5 Crime Prevention Authority.

6 It is 9:01 a.m., and I am now calling the
7 advisory committee meeting for October 3, 2024, to order.

8 I want to note for the record that the public notice of
9 this meeting, containing all items on the agenda, was
10 filed with the Office of Secretary of State.

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

16 I want to welcome those who are with us for
17 today's advisory committee meeting. If you wish to
18 address the committee or speak on an agenda item during
19 today's meeting, please complete a speaker's sheet at the
20 registration table. Please identify the specific item you
21 are interested in commenting on, your name and address,
22 and whether you are representing anyone or representing
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 period of this meeting.

1 In accordance with the department's
2 administrative rule, comments to the advisory committee
3 will be limited to three minutes. To assist each speaker,
4 a staff member will keep time. When addressing the
5 advisory committee, please state your name and affiliation
6 for the record.

7 There are a few things that will assist in
8 making the meeting run smoother and assist the MVCPA in
9 securing an accurate record: please identify yourself
10 before speaking, speak clearly and slowly, do not speak
11 over others, and please ask the chair for permission to
12 speak and be sure to get recognized before speaking.

13 Before we begin today, I'd like to remind all
14 presenters and those in attendance of the rules of conduct
15 at our advisory committee meetings. The advisory
16 committee chair has the authority to supervise the conduct
17 of meetings. This includes the authority to determine
18 when a person is being disruptive of the meeting or is
19 otherwise violating the timing and presentation rules I
20 just discussed.

21 Members, I now move on to agenda item number 1
22 which is roll call and establishment of quorum. I will
23 now have a roll call with the advisory committee members.
24 Please respond verbally when I call your name to indicate
25 your presence.

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Member Carson?

MR. CARSON: Present.

MS. JONES: Member Doran?

(No response.)

MS. JONES: Member Foreman?

MR. FOREMAN: Present.

MS. JONES: Member Porras?

(No response.)

MS. JONES: Member Prentice?

MR. PRENTICE: Present.

MS. JONES: Member Rodriguez?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Present.

MS. JONES: Member Martin?

MR. MARTIN: Present.

MS. JONES: Member Taormina?

MR. TAORMINA: Present.

MS. JONES: Member Willis?

MR. WILLIS: Present.

MS. JONES: And let the record reflect that I,
Sharon Jones, am present too. We have a quorum.

We will now stand for the pledge of allegiance.

(The U.S. Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas
Pledge were recited.)

MS. JONES: Please be seated.

We now move on to agenda item number 2, which

1 are comments and announcements from our Senate Bill
2 Advisory chair and our MVCPA director.

3 Last meeting we were in San Marcos, and we had
4 two wonderful tours by two of our committee members. We
5 visited LKQ, which is Tchad Taormina's place and I refer
6 to that as anything auto parts. I don't care what it is,
7 a tire, a mirror from a 2022 Ford -- you better have that
8 because I just said it -- anything that you need, it's
9 there.

10 So great fantastic tour just to see -- we're
11 always talking about salvage and salvage vehicles, to
12 actually put it into perspective and to see what happens
13 when a vehicle is salvaged. So thank you for our tour
14 that was there.

15 And then we moved on to LKQ which is another
16 board member's -- PGM, which is one of our other board
17 member's establishment, JR Willis. And that place is
18 spectacular. It is clean, it has everything you ever
19 needed as far as catalytic converters, and just to see the
20 process and how it is so well-organized into different
21 parts.

22 And I commend you for that, because everyone
23 was commenting about how well-organized it was and they
24 felt that it was truly a testament to what you and to the
25 other board members, to Tchad and also to Stewart, what

1 you do for the profession. So we thank you all for your
2 gallant effort.

3 Also, in our last meeting we discussed the
4 upcoming conference for 2025 which will be in Fort Worth.

5 We have a hotel. Until we actually have our signed
6 contract with them, we won't announce it publicly.

7 But one of the discussions at our last meeting,
8 and even from our very first meeting, we discussed that
9 there was a disconnect between the industry and law
10 enforcement. I believe that these meetings has led us
11 closer to understanding each other's needs, what's needed,
12 why we can't do certain things on both sides.

13 So with that in mind, our next conference is
14 going to be a Monday through Friday and we're going to
15 have breakout sessions. There's some sessions that will
16 be for law enforcement and then there will be others that
17 are going to be for industry -- for everyone, those who
18 are non law enforcement, so auto parts, catalytic
19 converters, the people who do the work for you, those who
20 get inspected, our analysts, the administrative assistants
21 who take those calls and they're the ones that keep us
22 going and flowing.

23 So we're going to have that at our conference
24 every day so there is inclusion. And what I will ask from
25 you guys is we want you to present to us, as well.

1 We, myself and Director Luna from DMV, we spoke
2 at a conference we were invited to by Tchad Taormina. And
3 at that conference again it was brought to our attention,
4 there's a lot that as far as our industry providers that
5 they're not understanding our limitations. But also, we
6 heard the frustration.

7 So we invited them and I'm saying it here
8 publicly: we want to hear what you have to say. We have
9 our meetings here, our 224 meetings. We also have our
10 MVCPA Board meetings that we have those quarterly. So
11 we're asking for your input, your thoughts, your ideas.

12 Come to us, let us know what's needed, what's
13 working, what's not working, what is working -- I'm sure
14 something is working -- how can we do better, what you
15 need from us, and us vice versa, so that we can keep the
16 conversation going and get the true broad perspective and
17 message out for what we're doing.

18 So again, we're asking you guys to just present
19 to us. And then for the conference, if you have
20 suggestions for topics that you want us to hear from you,
21 let us know that and then give us that subject matter
22 expert who can present that to us at the conference. And
23 then vice versa, we will do the same for you. So please,
24 when we're offline, if you have any ideas, just let me
25 know.

1 This week we are hosted by the Laredo Police
2 Department, and they organized a tour for us with Border
3 Patrol yesterday. We had a great briefing and wonderful
4 tour of the border. So we appreciate Border Patrol for
5 taking the time off of inspecting and stopping and making
6 sure that we are safe coming in and out of the border, and
7 that the regulations that are set forth are being done, we
8 witnessed that. So we thank them for taking the time for
9 hosting us yesterday.

10 Afterwards, Laredo Police Department, they have
11 a wonderful pitmaster who is also a police officer who
12 works there, and that pitmaster delivered. I feel that if
13 he was in "BBQ Pitmasters" that he could beat some of
14 those top guys on there. His brisket was tremendous; I
15 think he could score top one, meaning number one. So
16 thank you for our tour yesterday.

17 The police chief, who is also our board member
18 who leads us, who does a great job of taking care of us as
19 our committee chair, our board chair, our MVCPA Board, he
20 had to do some police business but his intent is to at
21 some point get here to give us a briefing. And then also
22 there will be one of the state representatives from this
23 area who will address us as well, and we'll work them in
24 accordingly.

25 So, sir, that's the end of my report, and I

1 relinquish to you.

2 MR. DIGGS: Major Jones, thank you for all that
3 information. I echo everything you said.

4 I want to recap FY24 just real briefly. The
5 legislature told us to get the plan of operation in place.

6 We did that in January, and fast and furiously, the MVCPA
7 Board, Chief Rodriguez, Major Jones and other board
8 members supported us, the MVCPA staff did a phenomenal
9 job, and we issued out 33 grants for SB 224 in FY24,
10 totaling to law enforcement agencies throughout Texas,
11 from one end to the other, totaling approximately \$17
12 million.

13 Those funds are out there; they're working
14 today. Those funds were for equipment, technology,
15 personnel, operating expenses, and I think they're out
16 there making a difference today.

17 And moving forward into FY25, to date the MVCPA
18 Board approved on July 19, 22 additional law enforcement
19 grant applications for FY25, totaling approximately \$10
20 million. And we've also got a second round request out
21 there that's listed until November 12 to get additional
22 law enforcement agencies to come to the table and ask for
23 funding. I know MVCPA staff and others are working
24 feverishly around the state to get other law enforcement
25 agencies to come and ask for some of this funding.

1 Our partner agencies are doing a phenomenal job
2 as well. The MVCPA Board, back in January, also approved
3 our ability to fund our partner agencies, Texas DMV, Texas
4 DPS, and TDLR, up to \$5.75 million. Those funds are in
5 play and our partner agencies are also working closely
6 with MVCPA to get those efforts in place. And those
7 dollars also include dollars for personnel, equipment,
8 technology and operating expenses.

9 So with that, Major Jones, I'm going to turn it
10 back over to you, ma'am.

11 MS. JONES: Thank you.

12 We now move on to agenda item 3. Members, I
13 would now like to take several minutes and ask each of you
14 to introduce yourselves, to the other advisory committee
15 and those in attendance, as I call your name. I will ask
16 that each of you provide us with some background
17 information on your affiliation or interest in the
18 advisory committee.

19 Member Carson, as always, we start with you.

20 MR. CARSON: Good morning, ma'am.

21 MS. JONES: Good morning.

22 MR. CARSON: My name is Robert Carson. I'm a
23 sergeant with the Houston Police Department and I
24 supervise the metal theft unit. Currently I have six
25 officers that work under me, and I have two officers

1 devoted specifically to inspecting MREs, scrap yards.

2 At any given time in the city, there's anywhere
3 from 88 to 91 scrap yards in the City of Houston,
4 depending on where they are in their license renewal. So
5 we stay pretty active. We also investigate the thefts of
6 catalytic converters that end up in scrap yards. And a
7 lot of wire, any copper, any precious metal, we're
8 investigating.

9 This committee has been great, made a lot of
10 great contacts. I finally got to meet Mr. Willis from
11 PGM. Stewart was very generous.

12 And when this started, I took over kind of in
13 the middle of the catalytic converter theft when it was
14 really at its height, and I didn't know a lot about it.
15 And we were able to reach out to Stewart and he brought my
16 whole group, my leadership in and showed us step by step.

17 And you talked earlier about working with the industry.
18 That was one of our biggest partners at the time.

19 I know as a law enforcement group, we're not
20 very good at taking instruction from people outside the
21 police department. Sometimes we think we know a lot when,
22 in fact, we don't. So it's a new thing to partner, to be
23 able to pick up the phone and call the CEO of a company.

24 And then working with Todd Foreman with REMA,
25 formerly ISRI, we've really done a great job, I think, as

1 a whole, the police departments in Texas as a whole, and
2 they're recognizing there's a problem.

3 And you talk about having our conference in
4 Fort Worth next year. Fort Worth just started a metal
5 unit; they came to Houston and trained with us for four
6 days. Dallas is kicking in their metal unit again, so
7 they're revamping.

8 So this is getting a lot of attention, and the
9 funding that this group provides is unbelievable. It
10 helps us in so many ways. So we thank everybody for that.

11 Chief, we appreciate everything you've done for
12 us, we really do. And Mr. Diggs and Sharon, we appreciate
13 everything. So I'll conclude with that. Thank y'all.

14 MS. JONES: Member Carson, thank you for tying
15 it back together. You could have easily said here's my
16 name and here's my work, but thank you for showing the
17 connection. And yes, we are vulnerable law enforcement in
18 that aspect of others telling us what to do and how to do
19 it, but I will say having industry partners has been a
20 huge benefit to us as law enforcement. Because I always
21 say you don't know what you don't know, and we didn't know
22 a lot, so we appreciate the thoughts and the efforts to
23 help educate us.

24 Member Doran is not here. Member Foreman?

25 MR. FOREMAN: Hello. Todd Foreman. I am a

1 retired police chief from Virginia. I now work for REMA
2 which was formerly ISRI, the Institute of Scrap Recycling
3 Industries.

4 We are now re-branded as Recycled Materials
5 Association, and I work as their director of law
6 enforcement outreach. So I do exactly what Sergeant
7 Carson was talking about. I work between law enforcement
8 and members in the industry, trying to help build those
9 relationships so that we can work together to help stop
10 the thefts. Because our members don't want to buy stolen
11 materials, they want to help stop the theft and prevent
12 it.

13 We actually have tools that we provide to law
14 enforcement; scraptheftalert.com is one of the tools that
15 we provide to law enforcement to help prevent thefts and
16 help stop thefts or help catch thieves. In this tool we
17 actually added some information for analysts. We've got a
18 mapping system on there that will map nationwide thefts by
19 commodities, so we've just added that for our analysts.

20 So analysts or law enforcement can go on there
21 and look in there. You can pull up Texas during a certain
22 period of time and look at what's been entered into the
23 system. It's going to be entered by law enforcement or
24 analysts working in there, so I'm trying to get the use of
25 it happening more, but it will be a useful tool for

1 everyone to use. And it's already been useful, we've
2 recovered about \$3.5 million worth of property with it.

3 So I travel around and I work with law
4 enforcement, work with Sergeant Carson a lot, so we can
5 help stop the thefts.

6 MS. JONES: Thank you. Everywhere I go, your
7 name comes up, so that's a good sign for you, for what you
8 do.

9 Member Hitzman, I cannot go on without
10 mentioning Dana Hitzman. So Dana was our representative
11 from the Houston Police Department and she had to resign
12 her position because she is now the chief of the Federal
13 Reserve Bank in Houston, so we're very proud of her.

14 Also, we've had to speak before us basically --
15 when we were in Houston, this committee -- was Commander
16 Chief Seafous from the Houston Police Department. And
17 then at our conference he was our keynote for the
18 conference as well. Since then, Commander Seafous is now
19 the assistant chief of the Houston Police Department.

20 I would like to say that our role, our MVCPA
21 role and our Senate Bill 224 role, played a part in both
22 of them getting promoted because both of them were
23 literally -- I'm taking that credit for all of us, I think
24 they got promoted because of us.

25 Congratulations to them both, especially

1 Commandeer Hitzman. We have not replaced her yet. I'm
2 hoping that our replacement that represents her for the
3 task force, I'm hoping that would be a good fit for that
4 person.

5 So I understand they haven't been named.
6 Correct?

7 MR. CARSON: Yes, ma'am. They haven't named a
8 commander for the auto theft division yet. Chief Diaz is
9 in the process of changing some of the leadership, filling
10 some of the open spots.

11 And I will say that Chief Seafous, who you
12 mentioned, has since been promoted to executive assistant
13 chief now. He's no longer assistant chief, he's executive
14 over investigative and special investigations command.

15 MS. JONES: Correct, yes, sir. Thank you for
16 that.

17 Member Prentice.

18 MR. PRENTICE: Good morning, everyone. My name
19 is Stewart Prentice. I'm a partner at Techemet, which is
20 one of the largest recyclers of catalytic converters, not
21 just in the U.S., but I would say worldwide.

22 We have benefitted quite well from this
23 committee because one of the problems that you have in an
24 obscure industry -- which catalytic converter recycling
25 is -- is trying to explain to people what it is exactly

1 you do. Most people think we are just the receiver of
2 stolen goods, and we battle that image every day. And if
3 you want to stop a conversation with somebody next to you
4 on an airplane, mention you recycle catalytic converters
5 and that will be a conversation killer right there.

6 (General laughter.)

7 MR. PRENTICE: But this committee for us has
8 been an eye-opener. All the people we've met from law
9 enforcement have been tremendously kind and generous to us
10 with their time, and the tours and talking all the
11 officers here have opened our eyes to exactly how
12 difficult it is to solve any problem, let alone just this
13 problem. When it comes to fighting crime, it's like, you
14 know, trying to grab a fistful of sand. The tighter you
15 squeeze, the less you have.

16 So you know, I would like to thank everybody
17 for allowing me the opportunity to sit on this board -- or
18 this committee, and I hope that any input that we've given
19 has been useful on the other side. I'd like to say our
20 door is always open for questions, and Techemet continues
21 to expand its operations. For the long term, it's our
22 opinion that catalytic converters will be around for at
23 least another 20 years. So I don't know if this committee
24 will be around in 20 years, but we're certainly hoping
25 converters will.

1 And I'd just like to reiterate our commitment
2 today to make sure that this industry's name can be held
3 up in a high standard or at least be part of the respected
4 communities which everybody at this table that is involved
5 in recycling wishes to achieve.

6 Thank you.

7 MS. JONES: Absolutely. Thank you.

8 As you can see, Member Steigelman is not here.
9 That was our Texas Department of Public Safety
10 representative. She has been permanently replaced by a
11 wonderful new member, Member Martin.

12 But we cannot proceed with Member Martin until
13 we actually recognize Sheri's role as an inspector, and I
14 literally watch how passionate she is regarding her job.
15 I learned a lot from her in the brief time that she's been
16 in our committee. We went to Techamet twice -- I went
17 twice.

18 The first time I went was Sheri, and we were on
19 a tour and I watched her, how she's interacting with the
20 employees and she's giving them like little tidbits, hey,
21 did you know that this is a way you can search, have you
22 tried this. And she's like instructing and given guidance
23 along the way. I saw her do it again a second time and
24 then I watched her as she went on other tours, like how
25 interested she is in what her job entails, and so we've

1 learned a lot from her and her experience.

2 And with that, I turn it over to Member Martin.

3 MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Major.

4 Just to piggyback on that, I'm a huge fan of
5 Sheri myself. I've learned a lot from her.

6 And that being said, those of you that don't
7 know, my name is Josh Martin. I'm a compliance and
8 enforcement specialist with the department. I am new to
9 this role and obviously new to this committee.

10 But I have been with the department for 15
11 years and so I'm very familiar with the programs that the
12 department regulates. And in my new role, I'm
13 specifically focused on the metal recycling entities. I
14 work closely with the program investigators in the field
15 that are designated to inspect those facilities. And our
16 continued goal is just to ensure that they're in
17 compliance with the rules and laws surrounding catalytic
18 converters, as well as many other things.

19 But thank you for having me today, and I enjoy
20 the conversation.

21 MS. JONES: Absolutely. Thank you.

22 Member Taormina.

23 MR. TAORMINA: Good morning, Major.

24 My name is Tchad Taormina. I represent the
25 Texas Automotive Recyclers Association. I also work for

1 LKQ Auto Parts. We dismantle end-of-life vehicles.

2 I'm glad a lot of you were able to see my
3 facility, the end-of-life procedures, especially with
4 catalytic converters, our storage as well as our security.

5 Like Major said, we invited Sharon and Roland
6 to our conference recently. And I also agree, I think
7 it's very important for our industries to join together.
8 We're challenged with the same kind of fights.

9 But being together with law enforcement and DMV
10 is important for us. There's all kinds of steps in our
11 process from obtaining salvage vehicles as well as
12 titling, and then again, with end-of-life vehicles.

13 So I appreciate this committee as well as what
14 we're doing and where we're headed.

15 MS. JONES: Member Rodriguez, I did not forget
16 you. I switched it a little bit. You're going to go
17 right after JR, and then when you go, your chief will come
18 up, and then after that, I'll introduce our new board
19 member.

20 I felt those darts. I did not forget you, I
21 have a plan here.

22 (General laughter.)

23 MS. JONES: All righty. So Member Willis.

24 MR. WILLIS: My name is JR Willis. I am the
25 chief operating officer at PGM of Texas. We are in the

1 industry. What we specialize in is recycling catalytic
2 converters.

3 We have several locations across Texas and
4 others across the U.S. And what we've really strived to
5 do with the relationship in this committee and in Texas is
6 to bring our company and our industry together with law
7 enforcement. And like I said, we have several locations
8 around Texas and we always thought that we did a pretty
9 good job working with the local law enforcement.

10 But when the theft increases and reaches its
11 peak, you realize there's way more law enforcement and
12 agencies and different organizations out there than just
13 your local guys that you're used to dealing with. And one
14 of the biggest things that we realized quickly is that a
15 lot of these agencies are not on the same page. They're
16 not at the same level of understanding of the business.

17 And so our goal is to really try to educate as
18 many as agencies and as many departments as we can, and
19 build those relationships in the areas that we work to
20 where we're not viewed as part of the problem, but we
21 really want to be part of the solution. I think we've
22 done a pretty good job, especially in the areas where we
23 have locations. Like Sergeant Carson had mentioned in
24 Houston, Houston is a big city, big population, a big
25 problem with theft, and there was a time where it seemed

1 like we were viewed as the problem, and so we've come a
2 long way with that and I think we're viewed now as an
3 asset and part of the solution, which is great.

4 You know, it really is about learning what the
5 department needs, and just as Stewart had said, realizing
6 that there's so many struggles for all the different law
7 enforcement agencies out there to be successful at their
8 job and accomplish the task at hand. And while we look at
9 it and think, you know, just go do your job, catch the bad
10 guys, it's not that easy and we realize it now. And so I
11 hope that law enforcement agencies are learning just as
12 much from us as we're learning from them. And we want to
13 continue with that growth over the years.

14 MS. JONES: Absolutely. Mr. Carson spoke for
15 all of us, law enforcement. Definitely, you guys have
16 been a tremendous asset to us and I would ask if there are
17 any upcoming plans legislative-wise to just let us know,
18 ask us questions, let us help you, no surprises.

19 I always go back to when we had our meeting and
20 we had a keynote speaker in Houston and Senator Alvarado
21 said that she didn't know about the challenges of
22 prosecuting. And by no means is law enforcement blaming
23 our judicial system. I give examples of there's certain
24 counties that any crime, doesn't matter what the crime is,
25 before you can take the person in into custody, you have

1 to get permission from the DA's office in all crimes.

2 And then there's times when there are plea
3 deals, and if the person has like five felonies and one
4 misdemeanor, the misdemeanor might be thrown out or it
5 pleas down. And I always jokingly say if you have a Class
6 C it's a plea, the only plea down from a Class C is off.
7 Like literally that's it, they're going to get off.

8 So if you have anything upcoming, just let us
9 know. We're not here to hinder, we want to help you just
10 whatever that is. If it's something for DMV, Texas DPS,
11 MVCPA, we want to literally partner with you to get all of
12 us to where we need to be.

13 MR. WILLIS: Major, if you don't mind.

14 MS. JONES: Absolutely.

15 MR. WILLIS: JR Willis, PGM of Texas.

16 On that comment, PGM of Texas kind of took a
17 leadership role in the industry, if you will, getting
18 involved in legislation last year. And it wasn't
19 necessarily -- it was because we wanted to protect the
20 industry. We didn't really know what else to do.

21 But when you see laws and regulations being
22 made across the country that don't make sense for our
23 industry, the way it was presented to us was, you know, if
24 you don't have a seat at the table, then you're going to
25 be the lunch. And we didn't want to see our industry get

1 hurt any more than the increased theft had already done,
2 you know.

3 That being said, we don't have any specific
4 plans on our end, but I do think those are topics to talk
5 about. And especially now that we have other folks in the
6 industry involved, because as we realize that maybe for
7 our industry everything in Senate Bill 224 isn't exactly
8 perfect the way we would want it, but we're trying to make
9 something work for law enforcement and for the industry.
10 And while we do feel that Senate Bill 224 is a huge
11 success over what some of the original plans may have
12 been, I think it can always be better. And the more that
13 we learn from each other and the more that we continue to
14 work together, then the more that we can hopefully refine
15 that.

16 So we want to stay in the fight and we want to
17 help with that in any way we can. But the conversation
18 has come up about the next legislative session, we don't
19 have anything at the moment but we're open to suggestions
20 and talking it through.

21 MS. JONES: Perfect. Thank you for that. And
22 also, please understand that if it were not for PGM and
23 others and those who supported Senate Bill 224, our task
24 force commanders would not have the necessary tools to
25 continue to fight.

1 And something in law enforcement we always say
2 is whatever we acquire today, by the time we have acquired
3 that -- because government, it's going to take forever --
4 by the time we go through procurement and we get the
5 equipment that we needed, the crooks, they're already like
6 two or three steps ahead of us. So we're always catching
7 up, but we do believe that with the funding that we
8 received from Senate Bill 224, I truly believe, and a lot
9 of us do, that we are literally right there in step.

10 And you will see and hear from our task force
11 commanders today. They have excellent presentations, and
12 they will be a testament to Senate Bill 224 for today.

13 Member Rodriguez.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Jaime Rodriguez, sergeant with
15 the Laredo Police Department Auto Theft Task Force.

16 For the record, I didn't think you skipped me,
17 there's always a plan.

18 (General laughter.)

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: The beauty about going last is
20 that everything that I was going to say was already said.

21 So I'll take this time to thank this committee
22 for allowing us to host this meeting right now. We're
23 glad to have y'all and we're glad to still have y'all
24 right now. So if y'all need anything, y'all are not only
25 friends, y'all are family while y'all are here. Contact

1 us if y'all need and we're here for y'all, and I
2 appreciate y'all very much.

3 MS. JONES: Thank you, cousin.

4 Chief Rodriguez, if you would at the corner,
5 sir.

6 CHIEF RODRIGUEZ: Good morning.

7 MS. JONES: Good morning.

8 CHIEF RODRIGUEZ: I'm used to sitting over
9 there, Sharon.

10 MS. JONES: Sir, I apologize.

11 (General laughter.)

12 CHIEF RODRIGUEZ: I'm way over here.

13 Good morning, everyone. Miguel Rodriguez, for
14 the record. I'm chairman for the Motor Vehicle Crime
15 Prevention Authority, chief of police for the City of
16 Laredo.

17 I first want to thank everybody that's here
18 today. I know that it takes a toll going from city to
19 city and having this strategic planning committee, but I
20 do want to thank each and every one of you for what you've
21 done. I know that at the beginning we were in uncharted
22 territory, we didn't know how to go about any of this.

23 So we've come a long way. We've already
24 distributed millions of dollars to make sure that we
25 prevent the theft of catalytic converters, first and

1 foremost.

2 I want to go back a little bit as to how and
3 when we started this and the conversations that we had
4 before we started this. And one of the things that we
5 initially talked about was the objective. The objective
6 was public safety. Right?

7 The objective is to stop the thefts of
8 catalytic converters. But with that, we also talked about
9 let's not hinder operations for our recycling community.
10 Right? And it was very important in that conversation
11 that we brought in everybody from the private sector that
12 had an interest in what we were doing. And that, we
13 believed it was very important because for the Motor
14 Vehicle Crime Prevention Authority and Texas DMV is not to
15 hinder any operations from our private partners. Right?

16 And we call you partners because that's what we
17 are today. And once we started moving forward into these
18 committees, the one thing that I truly, truly believe in
19 and why I'm always very proud of being a police officer is
20 that Houston PD, Dallas PD, Laredo PD, every PD in our
21 state was already moving ahead and already putting plans
22 of operation to counter the increase in catalytic
23 converters. They weren't waiting for a plan; they were
24 already trying to make sure that we stop the thefts of
25 catalytic converters.

1 So I do want to thank personally Houston PD now
2 that I'm here, and I know that, Sarge, you're here. But
3 Houston PD was the one that initially took the lead on
4 trying to make sure that we started preventing the theft
5 of catalytic converters. And we sat together with Donna,
6 I remember that day, and we said, Hey, let's put a task
7 force together in Houston. And you all did it, and you
8 immediately saw the impact of that task force when they
9 started decreasing the numbers of catalytic converters.

10 But more than anything, we need to continue our
11 plan. And we needed a good plan and this committee put
12 out a very good plan that was implemented throughout the
13 State of Texas. But at the same time, our job is not
14 finished. Right? We need to continue addressing the
15 problem because, remember, suspects do change their
16 direction, they change their tactics, and we need to make
17 sure that we pivot and also change our tactics.

18 So this is why I had talked to you, Sharon,
19 about continuing this committee and making sure that --
20 maybe we don't need as much as we're doing now, but maybe
21 every quarter we come back and meet and see where we're at
22 and statistics-wise and making sure that we bring you some
23 data to give you some visibility as to where we're at with
24 thefts of catalytic converters.

25 One of the things that we also are seeing right

1 now, and it doesn't connect too much to catalytic
2 converters but is motor vehicle theft. We're having a big
3 problem with Sierras, GMC Sierras, Silverados, any GM
4 product is being stolen all across our state. We see an
5 increase in San Antonio, we see an increase in Laredo, we
6 see an increase in Corpus, even in the Valley, and we have
7 several investigations going on.

8 And I'm so happy to see Sergio, because Sergio
9 started out as a sergeant, back here. Where are you now,
10 Sergio?

11 MR. PEREZ: (Speaking from audience.)
12 Lieutenant.

13 CHIEF RODRIGUEZ: Now a lieutenant with
14 Brownsville PD. And we talk about what can we do to
15 prevent these thefts. And there's been a lot of work that
16 we've done to make sure that we prevent these thefts.

17 But again, cartels, bad elements, they pivot.
18 They change their tactics, and we need to change too. And
19 this is the reason why I think we are looking into -- and
20 talked about this with Sharon and William where we're
21 looking into start putting heat maps across the state,
22 start putting some data so everybody can see not only the
23 law enforcement community but the community itself.
24 Right?

25 What is it that's happening with the motor

1 vehicle world. Right? And if it's GMC Sierras they are
2 stealing and we need to get very loud about that, making
3 sure that we maybe start giving out more clubs to prevent
4 that from happening while GM fixes the issue. But I'll
5 tell you what, less than one minute to steal a GMC Sierra,
6 that's very concerning, very concerning.

7 So we need to keep on pushing the note on the
8 auto theft part of MVCPA, but we will also continue
9 pushing the note and making sure that we continue moving
10 forward with what we're doing here. The job is not done,
11 but I do want to thank everybody for being part of this
12 committee, taking time to be part of this committee.

13 And I want to personally also thank Sharon,
14 because Sharon, you know, she said it right away, I want
15 to be chairman. I said, You are going to be chairman,
16 this is your committee. Right? So I thank you for that,
17 Sharon, because your leadership in everything that you do
18 for MVCPA is just outstanding.

19 You're one of those that, you know, you go 100
20 miles an hour and it's hard to catch up to you. But I do
21 want to thank you for that because your leadership with
22 MVCPA is just phenomenal, and thank you for that. You're
23 an amazing, amazing cop, and more than anything, a leader,
24 so thank you for that.

25 And I do want to acknowledge Tom, our new board

1 member back there. It's a new team. I know that we had
2 Julio as part of the board member team and now that we
3 have Tom, he's a Round Rock PD commander -- right,
4 commander, Tom?

5 So we welcome you. I know Sharon is going to
6 do the intro but I do want to welcome you. We have a lot
7 of work to do.

8 More than anything, DMV, thank you for being
9 here. Roland, big supporters of everything that we do.
10 David, thank you for being here today, and our staff. We
11 couldn't do it without you.

12 So again, you're still in Laredo, it's a great
13 city. If you feel like you need to go see an historic
14 part that you Googled or anything like that, please tell
15 our guys. They'll be more than welcome to take you.
16 There's several parts of the city that you might want to
17 go see just to go see.

18 And again, anything that you need while you're
19 here, we're at your service. And again, thank you for
20 being here today.

21 MS. JONES: Thank you, sir.

22 Next we're going to have an introduction by Tom
23 Sloan. I'm excited to see how he will progress and he's
24 already fitting into his role with us and the team and the
25 task forces. I watch everything.

1 A lot of times I just sit back and I observe,
2 and I watched him yesterday. He didn't need hand-holding,
3 he was all over the place, so I love him already.

4 MR. SLOAN: Thank you, Major Jones. I feel
5 like a big boy, I appreciate that.

6 As Major Jones introduced me, my name is Tom
7 Sloan. I'm a commander with the City of Round Rock Police
8 Department, which is a captain rank. And it's readily
9 apparent to me that the City of Laredo Police Department
10 has a membership with Toastmasters because you're a great
11 speaker, and then I've got to follow the chief. You heard
12 some great speakers, now you're going to hear from me.

13 (General laughter.)

14 MR. SLOAN: I'm very excited, and to say that
15 I'm honored and humbled to be a member of the MVCPA would
16 be a drastic understatement. I hope to advance the
17 program because the welcoming that I have received from
18 everybody is remarkable. And I think that I merely can
19 stand in the shadows as you are so excited and have such
20 zest to advance the program.

21 And those are big shoes to fill, I understand
22 that. I hope to bring the same enthusiasm and
23 encouragement that you all share; I'm looking forward to
24 the next three years. Thank you.

25 A little back story and history with me. I've

1 been in public service with combined Marine Corps and the
2 City of Round Rock Police Department for 21 years now. I
3 was a journalist in the Marines and was deployed in
4 support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and that is where I
5 really found my excitement for service. And I traded one
6 uniform for the other.

7 I'm over the criminal investigations division
8 in the City of Round Rock. And we share the same
9 struggles and complications that many cities and agencies
10 across the State of Texas share, and that's with motor
11 vehicle theft, burglaries and fraud, you know, the big
12 three that the MVCPA tries to advance and thwart with our
13 stakeholder leveraging partnerships.

14 Any city with 35 running through it, as Laredo
15 does and many others -- we're a part of the big triangle
16 with San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. It's a very fertile
17 hunting ground for crooks that come up and look to
18 burglarize vehicles and steal them. So we have really a
19 lot of challenges that we share with everybody else.

20 For us it's the Hyundais. It's the Hyundai
21 challenge, it's been gun juggling and then taking those
22 guns and building glock switches on 3D printers and then
23 selling them on the black market that then perpetuates
24 more violence within our city.

25 And so I'm looking forward to learning from

1 everybody and doing what I can to help advance the
2 program.

3 Thank you, Major Jones.

4 MS. JONES: Thank you, and welcome aboard.

5 We'll now move on to agenda item number 4,
6 which is the recap of our San Marcos meeting. I've
7 basically done that already just in talking. We're not
8 going to regurgitate that.

9 Mr. Diggs, did you have anything to add in that
10 aspect?

11 MR. DIGGS: Major Jones, I think you covered
12 it.

13 MS. JONES: And from our board members, are
14 there any questions, anything we need to discuss on, I'm
15 going to say, general order number 4 -- that's DPS talk --
16 on item number 4?

17 (No response.)

18 MS. JONES: At this moment it is 9:50, we will
19 take a break until 10:00 a.m.

20 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

21 MS. JONES: We'll now start back at 10:06, six
22 minutes after 10:00.

23 We are on agenda item number 5, Senate Bill 224
24 plan of operation and discussion.

25 Members, we will now take up this agenda,

1 agenda number 5.A. Partner agency coordination, and 5.B.
2 Partner agency meeting frequency, and that will be led by
3 MVCPA Director William Diggs.

4 MR. DIGGS: William Diggs, MVCPA director, for
5 the record.

6 I did want to just briefly update everyone on
7 what we're doing now. We've switched our meeting
8 frequency to once a month with our partner agencies, with
9 Texas DPS, TDLR, and then also Texas DMV. Chief Rodriguez
10 mentioned this earlier, you know, one of our primary
11 things that we do whenever we're meeting and we have our
12 discussions, we don't want regulatory processes to impede
13 with the legitimate stream of commerce.

14 You heard JR Willis speak while ago about
15 making sure that they had a seat at the table or they'd
16 get their lunch ate. Right? Well, we're partners with
17 you and we have those conversations. We're talking about
18 best practices when it comes to the regulatory processes
19 and those regulatory investigators with the agencies, with
20 all three of the agencies; we're talking about trends, you
21 know, looking at trend analysis; and we're also doing some
22 case sharing during these meetings.

23 These meetings are held virtually. They
24 usually last about an hour, sometimes a little longer than
25 an hour. We've built some really good relationships. We

1 know who the players are now at the agencies, know who to
2 call, so those work out real nice.

3 And you know, for the main thing that I like to
4 do monthly when we're meeting, I like to ask the agencies
5 if they have any unmet needs. Because we do have funding
6 that remains available that if Texas DPS, if it be the
7 regulatory services division or the CID division, if they
8 have unmet needs, we have the ability to help fund some of
9 those unmet needs, just as TDLR and also as it relates to
10 Texas DMV.

11 I can tell you that we have interagency
12 contracts in place with Texas DPS and TDLR that go through
13 the end of FY25, so we're in great shape there. And I
14 feel like that we are doing everything that we can do
15 monthly to make sure that the agencies are fully funded
16 for their efforts. And these contracts include, again,
17 personnel, they include technology, they include equipment
18 and then also operating expenses.

19 And so with that, Major Jones, that's going to
20 conclude my update on 5.A and B.

21 MS. JONES: Mr. Diggs, Texas DPS does have a
22 plan need/ask that will benefit the industry statewide,
23 law enforcement statewide. We're tying a bow around it
24 but we're working on it.

25 MR. DIGGS: That sounds good, and we look

1 forward to seeing that request.

2 MS. JONES: Are there any questions on agenda
3 item 5.A, 5.B, discussion, thoughts, comments?

4 (No response.)

5 MS. JONES: We will now move on to agenda 6,
6 which is Senate Bill 224 partner agency updates which will
7 be presented by MVCPA Director William Diggs.

8 MR. DIGGS: Thank you, Major Jones. William
9 Diggs, MVCPA director, for the record.

10 I did want to go ahead, and our partner
11 agencies are here today to give us a brief update of their
12 efforts and what they're doing in support of SB 224. So
13 I'd like for Captain John Hallett to come up first from
14 the Texas DPS, CID captain.

15 MR. HALLETT: Good morning. Shawn Hallett,
16 Texas DPS CID special investigations captain at
17 headquarters.

18 Just a few things to report. As y'all know,
19 Senate Bill 224 gave 16 FTEs, full-time employees, to DPS;
20 14 of those were program investigator spots and two of
21 them were case specialist positions. As of September 1,
22 10 of the 14 program investigator slots and one of the
23 case support specialist spots were filled.

24 During the month of September, boards were held
25 to fill the additional four program investigators and the

1 additional case support specialist spot. I've not gotten
2 an update on whether those -- I know the boards have been
3 completed; I don't know the result of those boards at this
4 time.

5 I also know that, as Major Jones, I think, was
6 alluding to, there have been some funds to purchase
7 equipment that are being requested by MVCPA. And I think
8 all of that is kind of in the budgetary process, trying to
9 get budget numbers and speed charts and all that good
10 stuff. So I don't know too much about all of that, but I
11 know that's in the process.

12 Just kind of one case to note. We did have one
13 entity report on another entity that they were doing some
14 things illegally and it was revolving around some
15 catalytic converters, and CID assisted the regulatory
16 service with an undercover operation. We sent an
17 undercover in and tried to sell the catalytic converters
18 and they were turned away without hesitation.

19 I think the important thing to note about that
20 is, as y'all know, as police officers, we're outnumbered.

21 Right? So the goal of what we do in most things is
22 voluntary compliance. And I think that turning us away
23 very quickly is a good sign of voluntary compliance in
24 terms of the catalytic converter theft. We didn't present
25 any paperwork with the converters and we were not

1 entertained as far as making the purchase of them.

2 So our regulatory folks waited a while and went
3 in and did a spot inspection on the business and
4 everything was in order, all the paperwork was good and
5 everything was good. So we think that's a step in the
6 right direction as far as voluntary compliance and not
7 just buying the converters.

8 So that's all I have unless you have any
9 questions for me.

10 MS. JONES: Sir, do you know the work location
11 of the 14? Will they be at headquarters or are they
12 throughout the field? Does Member Martin need to help you
13 with that question?

14 MR. HALLETT: Yeah. I don't know the answer to
15 that.

16 MR. MARTIN: I can speak on the current
17 employees. We have five in the north region, North Texas
18 region, and then the additional ones that we're looking to
19 hire are going to be in the Houston area. In addition to
20 that, I believe we have one in South Texas and a couple in
21 West Texas, so they are spread statewide.

22 MS. JONES: The last part was you said South
23 Texas and --

24 MR. MARTIN: Yeah, don't get me lying. I just
25 know that they're spread in all the regions and the newest

1 ones will be in Region 2 in the Southeast Texas region.

2 MS. JONES: Perfect. Thank you.

3 Captain Hallett, you mentioned basically
4 voluntary compliance. Last month when I spoke at the
5 Texas Automotive Recyclers Association, there was an
6 attendee who basically stated that he's complaining about
7 another entity, I guess a competitor. And that was one of
8 the things that I specifically said, if you know it, just
9 tell us, self-policing. Let us determine that.

10 It doesn't matter what the end results are, we
11 just want it to be a matter of self-reporting, self-
12 policing. If you know that someone is not doing what
13 they're supposed to be doing or they're not following the
14 rules, regulations, if that is your perception, the
15 message was do not sit idly by and be frustrated for years
16 and years and years while something may or may not be
17 going on. Just let law enforcement know and we'll take it
18 from there.

19 So excellent job on CID's part to conduct the
20 undercover operation and even better job to realize that
21 we were turned away, that's a great thing. Perfect, sir.

22 Thank you.

23 Any questions for Captain Hallett?

24 (No response.)

25 MR. HALLETT: Thank you.

1 MR. DIGGS: So, Major Jones, next I would like
2 to call up our consumer protection manager for the Texas
3 Department of Licensing and Regulation, Michael Strawn.

4 Michael goes by Ford, so, Ford, you have the
5 floor, sir.

6 MR. STRAWN: Good morning, members. My name is
7 Michael Strawn, or Ford Strawn, as Director Diggs
8 introduced me. I'm the consumer protection manager for
9 Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.

10 Before I get into my updates today, I did want
11 to take a moment to recognize the Border Patrol agents
12 that graciously invited us this weekend. That was
13 phenomenal, got to learn a lot.

14 And I can't extend a thank you enough to the
15 Laredo PD and the fine women and men that showed us the
16 hospitality here. It was above and beyond, truly. Very
17 appreciative of the time taking us around, showing us your
18 city, and the different needs and problems and successes
19 that y'all have had. It was very eye-opening.

20 Getting into my updates, you know, just for a
21 little bit of background, TDLR, we've come into this
22 interagency agreement under SB 224. Our primary function
23 within it is the licensing and regulation of used auto
24 parts recyclers, so catalytic converters, different parts
25 that they have across the state. As Director Diggs

1 mentioned, we have entered into that interagency contract,
2 and TDLR is already performing duties under that contract
3 at this point in time.

4 We've been out there. We've increased our
5 positions by four FTE equivalencies, and that is across
6 the state, to your question, you know, where are we
7 looking at strategically. It's a large state, four
8 employees is not necessarily a lot to cover all of that.
9 But we have a very talented field inspections division
10 that's out there, their director, everything else, putting
11 a risk-based analysis on what we're looking for, looking
12 at complaints that we receive, any notifications, any
13 prior issues that we have with these auto parts recyclers
14 so that we're using our resources intelligently and
15 effectively.

16 One of the things that we are looking to do
17 within this contract is taking in lessons learned as we
18 increase our inspections across the state to look at do we
19 need additional technologies? Do we need to look at our
20 methodologies for how we're inspecting people and when
21 we're inspecting people or other efforts?

22 Additionally, aside from increasing by four
23 inspectors, we're looking to hire a liaison for this
24 program. That liaison position is to be posted hopefully
25 by the end of this month. And one of the things that we

1 really want them to do is increase our collaboration with
2 our law enforcement partners, with our auto parts
3 recyclers, with any individual that has a stake in this
4 program, in this function.

5 That is going to help us be more successful
6 moving forward. It's going to collaborate and coordinate
7 with not only our internal resources but our stakeholders
8 that are out there as we continue to develop this program
9 further and further.

10 Just as a quick kind of recap for the increased
11 inspections we've had, we had over 260 additional
12 personnel hours spent on APR inspections, auto parts
13 recycler inspections, for the month of August alone. Our
14 staff traveled over 5,000 miles across the state to
15 conduct those inspections. So a lot of work being done.

16 We are looking at kind of the data we look
17 forward to presenting to you all in the future, to the
18 chief's comments earlier. One thing that we're also
19 looking at is software at TDLR that is going to be
20 integrated into our inspection process, route
21 optimization. You know, we want to save as much money as
22 we can while we're out here doing it, be efficient,
23 building our risk-base to any case analysis, things like
24 that that we have into that risk-based software to help us
25 with our inspections across the state.

1 And on the back-end internally, we're also
2 working on our strategic planning process for our rules
3 and implementation of Senate Bill 224. October 1,
4 recently while we were here, there was a work group
5 meeting that was conducted with industry stakeholders,
6 subject matter experts across the board, where they were
7 focusing on our rule updates that we're looking to
8 implement. We had put out some rules originally, there
9 was some further clarification needs that were discussed,
10 so we met with the industry again, anything from
11 clarification on removal of registration stickers,
12 clarifying if catalytic converters are a component part,
13 statutory references for off-highway vehicles, and any
14 other substantive changes that needed to occur.

15 Unfortunately, I missed part of that meeting
16 traveling down here, so I don't know the outcomes of all
17 those. But I know the intention is that we have those
18 rules out to the *Texas Register* hopefully by the end of
19 this month, which would put us in line for those rules
20 being adopted before the end of the year. We always
21 advise everybody to please go to our website, sign up for
22 any updates, because when we do have the rule package out
23 for public comments, we will post it there. So anybody
24 can make their comments, whether it be law enforcement,
25 citizens of the State of Texas, or any other agency or

1 representative here.

2 So we hope to put together a good rule package
3 that's effective, helps our licensees that are out there,
4 our auto parts recyclers, be able to meet those needs
5 efficiently without creating them undue burden, but also
6 giving us the tools that we need within our agency, within
7 law enforcement to be effective at tracking down these bad
8 players within the industry and the criminals that are out
9 there causing harm to our citizens across the state.

10 That concludes my updates for today and I'm
11 open to any questions that the board has.

12 MS. JONES: Members, are there any questions?

13 (No response.)

14 MS. JONES: Perfect. Thank you.

15 MR. DIGGS: Thank you, Ford.

16 So next I would like to call up Texas
17 Department of Motor Vehicles Enforcement director, Corrie
18 Thompson.

19 MS. THOMPSON: Good morning, everyone. Corrie
20 Thompson, director of the Enforcement Division for the
21 Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

22 And when I last spoke to this group, I
23 mentioned that Enforcement had a number of different items
24 in the works regarding implementation of SB 224. We
25 talked about rule development, our rules being open for

1 public comment. We do anticipate that our rules will be
2 adopted prior to the end of the year.

3 We were also working on doing some system
4 updates that would allow us to gather additional
5 information for SB 224 needs. So I have motor vehicle
6 investigators that currently go out to our licensed
7 entities and conduct inspections, but we've historically
8 regulated sales and distribution in the motor vehicle
9 industry, and so this puts us into a different sphere,
10 looking at repairs that might be done by our licensees.
11 And so we have completed our system updates.

12 We now have questions included on our
13 inspection reports that investigators ask when they go out
14 into the field to determine whether or not people are
15 conducting sales and transfers of catalytic converters.
16 We had our regular motor vehicle investigator training
17 mid-September, and so all of the investigators were made
18 aware of the new requirement, the new ask to go out and
19 gather this information so that we can get compliance with
20 the new requirements. And to date, we've conducted 91
21 inspections, and of those, we have ten dealers who
22 indicated that they are engaged in catalytic converter
23 work.

24 So the scope of the coverage for our licensees
25 is franchised dealers and independent dealers who are

1 engaged in this work, and so we will know that there are
2 going to be a number of our independent dealers that
3 simply don't touch catalytic converters. And so through
4 this process we hope to gather that information so that in
5 the future we can focus our reviews on those entities that
6 are conducting that work.

7 And also, in the future it will not just be my
8 motor vehicle investigative staff -- which I have 37 to
9 38 -- that are able to go out and conduct these
10 inspections, but I'm also going to be utilizing some new
11 staff within the Enforcement Division. We are developing
12 a dealer compliance section that are going to assist us
13 with implementation of another bill, House Bill 718, the
14 metal plate bill. And that staff also will be regularly
15 out at the dealer locations, and so we will also utilize
16 that staff to perform these reviews of catalytic converter
17 work that's being done. So I'll have approximately 60
18 individual employees that will be able to gather
19 information and conduct this work.

20 We are also gathering information on our
21 licensing side. We've got new application questions that
22 will be in process, asking dealers when they apply for
23 licensure whether or not they touch catalytic converters
24 in this capacity, and if so, where those repairs and sales
25 and transfers are conducted.

1 So I hope to come back to this committee at a
2 future date, let you know that we've done more
3 inspections, that we've identified more entities that are
4 engaged in this work, share that information with the
5 other partner agencies, and then also identify if we've
6 found any issues.

7 MS. JONES: Ma'am, 718 is the metal bill. Can
8 you tell us once that bill -- well, metal plates come into
9 effect, I understand July 1 of next year. How that will
10 aid in assisting with combating the converter thefts?

11 MS. THOMPSON: So if you're referring back to
12 what I mentioned with regard to the additional staff that
13 would be able to do this work, so we have 22 additional
14 FTEs that will be traveling out to dealer locations in
15 order to conduct metal plate inventories. So we have over
16 20,000 dealers licensed by Texas Department of Motor
17 Vehicles across the state, and so as TDLR mentioned, in
18 order to make the most efficient use of our time and our
19 resources, we will be also utilizing that staff when they
20 are out on site to ask those catalytic converter questions
21 and conduct those reviews as well.

22 MS. JONES: Okay. Also, with the paper tags, I
23 know there's going to be a transitional -- I'm assuming
24 there's a transitional period. July 1 is metal, is there
25 a transitional period? And I'm asking this because when

1 we got our briefing yesterday at the border, it was clear
2 that those paper plates are definitely an issue.

3 So my question is at what point will -- is
4 there a point where we'll be able to say, you know what,
5 you see a paper plate, like we're done, like that's it.

6 MS. THOMPSON: Yes. And to eliminate confusion
7 on that too, so paper plates and temporary permits will be
8 eliminated for the most part. With respect to our motor
9 vehicle dealers, they will be eliminated in their
10 entirety. With regard to motor carriers, however, they
11 will still be able to obtain 72- and 144-hour permits for
12 transport of those large motor carrier vehicles. But our
13 dealers will no longer have access to those paper
14 temporary tags, and the same with our tax assessor-
15 collectors.

16 There will be a point when those tags will
17 expire. So when we go live with metal plate issuance July
18 1, 2025, if a dealer had sold a vehicle prior to that date
19 and had issued a paper tag, that paper tag is going to
20 expire within 60 days. And so, yes, there will come a
21 time that if you see a paper tag on a vehicle, it will no
22 longer be valid.

23 And that could be for a purely innocent reason.
24 It could be because the dealer has failed to transfer the
25 consumer's title and they don't yet have their metal

1 plate, or it could be for a nefarious purpose that could
2 be investigated by law enforcement.

3 MS. JONES: Perfect.

4 Any questions, points for discussion?

5 (No response.)

6 MS. JONES: Thank you.

7 MR. DIGGS: Thanks, Corrie.

8 So I'd now like call up the VTR director,
9 Annette Quintero.

10 MS. QUINTERO: Good morning. Annette Quintero,
11 Vehicle Titles and Registration director at Texas
12 Department of Motor Vehicles. Thank you for having me.

13 Thank you, City of Laredo, for your
14 hospitality. I really enjoyed our visit here, our border
15 tour yesterday. I only hope that we will be equally great
16 hosts when it is our turn, but you have definitely raised
17 the bar.

18 When I was here previously in front of this
19 board, I explained about our future plans to upgrade our
20 webSALVAGE application to expand our electronic titling
21 functionality to metal recyclers and used auto parts
22 recyclers. This would allow our entities, as well as
23 salvage dealers, to electronically surrender ownership
24 evidence and report a vehicle to the department that was
25 obtained for purposes of dismantling, scrapping and

1 destroying.

2 I think a lot of our conversations that we had
3 yesterday on the border related to salvage vehicles. That
4 might help identify those vehicles and give us some
5 indication as to whether they should be transported across
6 the border or not, and that's our goal.

7 SB 224 allowed us to hire two full-time
8 employees. One began work on October 1 and the second
9 will start on October 15. The goal right out of the gate
10 for those folks is ensuring a deep understanding and high-
11 level problem-solving ability is built on that team. We
12 want to make sure that those folks are absolutely
13 proficient in their regulation and statutes that regulate
14 SB 224 so that they are good partners and are moving the
15 needle and driving innovation in this space.

16 One other thing that we have also begun is the
17 tri-agency meetings with the Texas Department of Motor
18 Vehicles, DPS and TDLR. Our first meeting began in
19 August, and from what I understand today, they are
20 planning on building the cadence for what those future
21 meetings look like.

22 In the first meeting, they were able to
23 identify what roles would be, identify dependencies and
24 discuss the technology applications used to support 224.
25 In addition to that, they were able to identify future

1 action items and next steps so that we could continue to
2 move this work forward collaboratively with other
3 agencies.

4 That's my update. If you have any questions,
5 I'm here to answer those.

6 MS. JONES: Any questions, members?

7 (No response.)

8 MS. JONES: Perfect. Thank you, ma'am.

9 MS. QUINTERO: Thank you.

10 MR. DIGGS: Thanks, Annette.

11 Hearing no questions, we will now move on to
12 agenda item number 7 which is a presentation from the
13 Laredo Police Department Task Force, Lieutenant Jeannette
14 Tobar.

15 MS. TOBAR: Good morning. My name is
16 Lieutenant Jeannette Tobar. I am the Auto Theft Task
17 Force commander for the Laredo Police Department.

18 So today we will be speaking on Senate Bill
19 224. I'm going to give you a little bit of information
20 about us, and our department and our city, the dire need
21 for an ADA, technology, personnel and equipment, and
22 community outreach.

23 So today we are all meeting regarding Senate
24 Bill 224, which is also known as the Deputy Darren
25 Almendarez Act, which highlights new criminal offenses for

1 catalytic converter theft, which is also detailed in Texas
2 Penal Code 31.21 which makes it a felony third for any
3 unauthorized possession of catalytic converters.

4 So a little bit about us. The Laredo Police
5 Department is comprised of just over 500 sworn officers.
6 We are located on the riverbanks of the Rio Grande, and as
7 of 2023, we are known as the number one inland port in the
8 nation. Also in 2023, Laredo's trade increased by 7.1
9 percent, surpassing \$300 billion for the first time ever,
10 as trade continues to increase throughout our ports of
11 entry.

12 Historically, in 2009, we were also known as
13 the car theft capital in the nation, however, our chief of
14 police, Miguel Rodriguez, swiftly turned that around for
15 us. And now, per the NICB 2022 hot spots MSA ranking, for
16 the past several years, Laredo, Texas, has now become the
17 least likely city in the nation to get your vehicle
18 stolen. In 2022, our Laredo Auto Theft Task Force was
19 awarded with the MVCPA Task Force of the Year, and in 2023
20 our Laredo ATTF was awarded with the MVCPA Chairman's
21 Award.

22 So as you can see on the map, Laredo is a
23 border town. Our city has a population of just over
24 256,000 people. That's not including all the visitors and
25 shoppers that traverse our city every day.

1 And so we are a border town, we're on the
2 border with Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas in Mexico. And
3 because we are a border town, we do see an influx of
4 crime. We have many criminal organizations working in our
5 city and upwards north into other cities and even far down
6 into the Rio Grande Valley area.

7 And so we see anything from human smuggling to
8 theft of motor vehicles, drugs, weapons, weapons go back
9 down into Mexico, along with a lot of stolen vehicles that
10 we've seen as of late. And so predominantly we're seeing
11 a lot of GMC Sierras and Chevrolet Silverados that are
12 funneling back down to us, along with weapons. And
13 they're ultimately crossed into Mexico into the hands of
14 the criminal organizations. And so we do believe it is
15 very important for us to continue collaborating with other
16 law enforcement agencies.

17 One such collaboration was on a catalytic
18 converter theft case. So in this particular case, it was
19 in FY 2022. There was a collaboration between DPS
20 troopers and our auto theft division, which resulted in
21 the recovery of several catalytic converters that were
22 ultimately matched back to four of our active cases.

23 So in this particular case, the suspects were
24 arrested. They were all found to be residents out of
25 Houston, Texas. So only one of these suspects ended up

1 appearing for his court cases.

2 He ended up pleading guilty, and there was
3 finally a resolution on this case in April of this year.
4 So again, this dates back to 2022. So it took two years
5 to have a final resolution on this particular case.

6 These are the three suspects that are still
7 wanted. They absconded and we have not been able to
8 arrest them yet.

9 Continue with catalytic converter thefts -- so
10 back from 2020 to 2022, our LPD recorded a total of 38
11 catalytic converter thefts. In 2023, an additional seven
12 were reported. In May of this year, our Auto Theft Task
13 Force arrested a couple, it was a male and a female, they
14 were charged with stealing eight catalytic converters, and
15 in a separate case, two additional male adults were
16 arrested for stealing catalytic converters.

17 So Laredo is no stranger to having repeat
18 offenders. And so we've had a male suspect that has been
19 arrested on 22 separate counts of burglary of motor
20 vehicle, we have another one that has been arrested on
21 seven separate counts of burglary of motor vehicle, and
22 another suspect on ten separate counts of theft, state
23 jail felony, while another also on six counts of theft,
24 state jail felony.

25 We continue with repeat offenders -- so this is

1 particularly a case regarding motor vehicle theft. This
2 is a fairly recent case and we still have an ongoing
3 investigation. So back in the latter part of August, we
4 had an uptick of stolen motor vehicles.

5 As Chief mentioned, these people are stealing
6 motor vehicles within a minute; within a minute they're
7 turning it on and they're taking off. And so our auto
8 theft division was working very hard and we were able to
9 identify and arrest several male adults, along with
10 several juvenile offenders -- we're talking about kids 15
11 years old, 16 years old committing these crimes. And so
12 like I said, it is an ongoing case and we still have
13 several more that have been identified. We are pending
14 several more that are wanted.

15 So which brings me to my next point on
16 propositioning to obtain our designated ADA. So currently
17 as it stands, we do not have an ADA assigned to our auto
18 theft division. We are working on that. So our current
19 cases are distributed amongst all ADAs. Our current auto
20 theft cases are not prioritized, and we do have repeat
21 offenders that are not indicted, and there is a lack of
22 timely communication between our auto theft detectives and
23 our ADA.

24 However, once we obtain our designated ADA, 100
25 percent of their time is going to be dedicated to all

1 theft of catalytic converters, to motor vehicle and
2 burglary of motor vehicle cases. And they will be having
3 an understanding and specialize in the field of motor
4 vehicle crimes and they will have knowledge of repeat
5 offenders, which will help us present cases to the grand
6 jury in a timely manner for that swift indictment and
7 prosecution.

8 So for personnel and equipment, we are asking
9 for two investigative support specialists. These
10 investigative support specialists will be assisting our
11 ADA by gathering all pertinent documentation for the case
12 files, again for that swift prosecution. We are also
13 asking for nine Axon interview rooms, a surveillance van,
14 a bait vehicle, a digital forensic lab, and three unmarked
15 units, along with unmarked vehicle lock boxes.

16 For technology, we are in the process of
17 obtaining the Flock OS system. I'll speak a little bit
18 more on the Flock on the next slide. We are also asking
19 for Brinc drone first responders, and with that, we are
20 going to obtain four responder drones, four responder
21 stations, an Ecoshield radar, hardware, software, and we
22 are also obtaining the Magnet Graykey which allows us to
23 obtain those same day extractions from lost IOS devices,
24 along with androids. It will ensure compliance with
25 search warrant specification and time restraints, and we

1 will be allowed to perform those extractions in-house so
2 we can maintain that chain of custody.

3 So regarding the Flock deployment plan and
4 equipment, we are in the process of obtaining a 113 Condor
5 PTZ cameras which are the point, tilt and zoom, 79 Falcon
6 automated license plate readers. I'm sorry I didn't
7 include it, but we also obtaining 40 crime prevention kits
8 for our local hot spots with convenience stores, along
9 with seven Ravens which are gunshot detection devices and
10 these are predominantly for our high schools and the area
11 schools, and six solar video trailers. Again, all of this
12 equipment is going to be distributed citywide and
13 strategically placed in all of our hotspot areas and other
14 trouble areas. And of course, it will greatly assist our
15 detectives with any active cases and will also assist us
16 with proactive policing.

17 So with the Brinc drone first responders, we
18 are also asking for two RTCCC drone remote pilots. Again,
19 as I mentioned, the drones are specifically for first
20 responders. They are built for public safety as a 9-1-1
21 response drone.

22 They can arrive within 70 seconds and they
23 deploy out of their station which protects and recharges
24 the actual drone. They have the capability for red and
25 blue light activation or they can remain in stealth mode

1 activation. They also have the capability for two-way
2 cell phone communication.

3 And this will be extremely helpful, for
4 example, when we have a hostage situation. We can go
5 ahead and deploy that drone and deliver that cell phone to
6 the suspect and we could eliminate having our personnel be
7 in harm's way. And these also have a 40-minute flight
8 time.

9 So we all believe that communication is key, so
10 with our real-time crime center, this allows for our auto
11 theft to distribute our BOLOs immediately. The center has
12 access to multiple cameras in different areas of the city,
13 and of course, they will have access to all of our Flock
14 cameras as well. It is equipped to provide instant
15 intelligence information to officers, which includes other
16 law enforcement agencies and public safety partners. Of
17 course, it is manned and monitored 24 hours a day, seven
18 days a week, year-round.

19 So regarding community awareness, we are also
20 asking for four solar traffic message boards. These
21 boards are easily secured and programmable with our
22 message. It allows our ATTF to have complete control of
23 that message and it will be utilized for public awareness
24 and crime deterrence, and they are portable and easily
25 deployable.

1 Sorry about that, I missed that right there.

2 (General laughter.)

3 MS. TOBAR: So multiple boards will cover
4 larger geographical areas, and of course, these can last
5 up to 25 years. Sorry for that wording up there.

6 Which brings me to our next slide which is
7 public presentations. So our Auto Theft Task Force is
8 very active in our city when it comes to city festivities,
9 public events, career days and other partnerships. And so
10 we are also asking for a Genoptic Smart Display, which
11 that's shown in the lower corner. So this Genoptic Smart
12 Display will also help us continue pushing out that
13 education, awareness and message throughout our community,
14 at our schools, and it's a great tool to, again, help us
15 assist us in the community.

16 And so this pretty much concludes my
17 presentation, and I just want to mention that these funds
18 are greatly needed. We need to continue receiving these
19 funds to, again, help us just bring down the crime
20 element. We have a lot of criminal organizations
21 operating, again, within our city, up in Texas, and so
22 again, it's just going to help us achieving that goal to
23 disrupt the criminal organizations.

24 Our information is on this next slide. If
25 anybody needs our assistance at any point in time, you can

1 always reach us at these numbers.

2 Thank you. I don't know if anybody has any
3 questions.

4 MS. JONES: Any questions for Lieutenant?

5 MR. DIGGS: I just have one.

6 So, Lieutenant Tobar, I know you provided a lot
7 of information. Thank you for all the detail. Laredo PD
8 always does a great job.

9 And just to echo, all of this is in support of
10 catalytic converter theft, reduction and apprehensions,
11 and so again, phenomenal report. Thank you so much.

12 MS. TOBAR: Thank you so much, I appreciate it.

13 MS. JONES: Any other questions?

14 (No response.)

15 MS. JONES: I will point out that having the
16 real-time crime center is definitely a plus for the city.

17 You have a lot of auto theft and there's a lot of stolen
18 parts that are getting across. So when that's placed in
19 motion, it's important to be able to expeditiously as
20 possible get there as soon as possible, and the only way
21 you know that is with real-time real intel. So great job
22 on whoever's idea it was to have that in place, excellent
23 job.

24 MS. TOBAR: Thank you so much, we appreciate
25 it. We appreciate everybody that came into our city and

1 are visiting our city. I apologize for this hot weather.

2 I know we're in fall, doesn't seem like it, but that's
3 Laredo for you.

4 But again, we'd like to thank you and we are so
5 honored and humbled for your assistance.

6 MS. JONES: Perfect. Thank you.

7 No further questions, we will move on to agenda
8 item number 8, Eagle Pass Police Department, Sergeant
9 Duran.

10 MR. DURAN: Good morning, everyone. Sergeant
11 Jose Duran, for the record, Eagle Pass PD Auto Theft. I'm
12 the task force commander there.

13 So just sort of a brief history, our task force
14 was established in 1992. We are a small department.
15 Right now we are 39 uniformed officers strong with 16
16 vacancies.

17 DPS and Border Patrol are kicking our butts
18 recruiting our guys. So we hire two, five leave. We hire
19 five, six leave. So it's a never-ending game with us.

20 The good thing is that we lost five guys to DPS
21 and they're going to graduate soon and all five guys were
22 assigned to Eagle Pass. So now we're going to have black-
23 and-whites arriving to family violence calls with us,
24 that's pretty awesome.

25 (General laughter.)

1 MR. DURAN: So I have three detectives under
2 the task force. These guys, I always brag about my team.
3 I have the greatest team in the greatest department in
4 the greatest state. Right? These guys have been doing
5 investigations for a while.

6 Detective Huerth, who is the guy right next to
7 me, he's been in auto theft for a very long time. I did
8 auto theft back in 2017 to 2020, when I promoted to
9 corporal, then went to organized crime, came back to auto
10 theft as a sergeant.

11 Our area consists of five counties and that's
12 our area of responsibility, which is Maverick, Dimmit,
13 Zavala, Uvalde County, Kinney County, and Val Verde. And
14 of course, in the counties there's two to three other
15 agencies. I've been trying my best to keep tabs with all
16 the agencies in our area of responsibility.

17 I took over auto theft in August of 2023, and
18 initially when I came onboard, I met with Chief Rodriguez,
19 I met with Sarge, and I said, You know what, I'm going to
20 talk to everybody and we're going to get this going. And
21 there's not enough time in a week or in a month.

22 But I'm happy to tell you right now that Dimmit
23 County is onboard and they will be applying for the SB
24 224. Val Verde County looks promising, and Zavala County
25 is also very excited to be applying for the SB 224 grant.

1 And I'm going to be working on Uvalde and Kinney
2 counties. Those are smaller counties.

3 Kinney County is a smaller county, but we do
4 see a lot of vehicle thefts coming down or stolen vehicles
5 coming down headed towards the border. And that's what
6 we're going to be targeting, along with the catalytic
7 converter thefts.

8 Just to give you an idea of our traffic in
9 Eagle Pass, from September 1, 2023, to August 31 we had
10 18,153,176 crossings. This is Eagle Pass alone, two
11 bridges in Eagle Pass. When I verified and re-verified
12 and re-verified the numbers, I talked to the bridge
13 director, I talked to the city manager, I said, Are these
14 numbers accurate? And they verified, said, Yeah, those
15 numbers -- we're pulling them out of the system.

16 18,153,176, that's 11 million non-commercial
17 vehicles, over 5 million commercial vehicles, 148,000
18 buses, 15,000-plus motorcycles, and 622,000 pedestrians.
19 And this is in a 12-month span for Eagle Pass, two bridges
20 alone. Del Rio has one bridge; I didn't get the numbers
21 for Del Rio crossings in time.

22 We have zero catalytic converter theft reported
23 for this period, and I want to keep it at that. I want to
24 keep it at zero. Our approach is very different in Eagle
25 Pass and our area on the border, for that matter.

1 There have been in the past organizations that
2 like to steal catalytic converters. Fortunately, a lot of
3 those actors have been incarcerated, are still in jail.
4 We were able to identify another group, it was a group of
5 three men that were going to start, but as fate had it,
6 they went and murdered someone and now they fled into
7 Mexico. So I think that's going to put a damper on their
8 operation; we won't be seeing that, hopefully.

9 We want to stay preventive, and I think SB
10 224 -- or I know SB 224 has been paramount for that.
11 We've done operations -- and I'll show you a slide here in
12 a little bit -- that we wouldn't have been able to do
13 otherwise without the funding that SB 224 has provided.
14 We're able to target catalytic converter, motor vehicle
15 crime, those types of crimes directly without having to
16 veer off anywhere else.

17 As you guys know, or may not know, Eagle Pass
18 has been in the news for the past year, maybe two, and we
19 are known nationwide for the border crisis, for the
20 illegal crossings. Our River Vega looks like a warzone,
21 talking barbed wire, sea containers. It's completely
22 different of what it used to be a couple of years ago.

23 So having funding to focus on these types of
24 crimes that have occurred in the past and that will
25 eventually come back, it's crucial for our department.

1 And we take a lot of pride in being able to be proactive
2 and preventive and hopefully keep it at zero. I love that
3 number zero, and I hope that if we ever meet again, I can
4 tell you we still have zero.

5 Some of the items that we requested is a task
6 force specialist, to begin. The specialist is going to be
7 more of an intel analyst, multi-use type of civilian, and
8 that person is going to be gathering intelligence for
9 motor vehicle crimes. And we're also going to be
10 utilizing that person for crime prevention awareness and
11 presentations and all that, fully dedicated 100 percent to
12 those types of operations.

13 Fifty multi-sensor cameras. One of our
14 bridges, the camera systems were outdated, so we're
15 utilizing that to update the camera system. That is
16 something that we use almost daily.

17 We get phone calls from Houston, from anywhere:
18 Hey, can you check on this crossing for me? We've been
19 able to identify murder suspects that have killed people
20 in the interior of Texas, and some other state, as a
21 matter of fact. On one occasion we were able to provide an
22 excellent picture which led to facial recognition. And
23 we've assisted other agencies multiple times with our
24 camera system, so that's very important to us to have a
25 good camera system at our bridges.

1 Forty-four license plate readers and that's
2 going to be our Flock system. That recently got approved
3 by city council and we're now in the process of getting
4 that also deployed within our city, which will also help
5 us link with Laredo, Houston, Dallas, and keep constant
6 communication through that means, which has been proven to
7 be very effective as well.

8 Two unmarked vehicles. Our units were old,
9 they were outdated, it costs more to keep those units
10 running so we asked for two new units which those are
11 already in service.

12 And this is what I was telling you about about
13 the funding, the overtime budget and proactive preventive
14 operations. This is what I was telling you that with the
15 funding of SB 224 we've done operations that we couldn't
16 have afforded. To be honest with you, our municipality
17 couldn't afford to -- have afforded to have these types of
18 operations because of the funding.

19 We are getting an LED billboard, and that goes
20 into the prevention and community awareness. That's going
21 to be stationed outside our department. It's right
22 outside one of the corridors to Mexico, so we always have
23 a lot of traffic there, and that's where we're going to be
24 promoting and bringing awareness to the crime prevention
25 to say that.

1 Magnet Forensics data extraction tool -- that
2 is a tool that during a conversation with Sarge, I learned
3 about that tool, and that's something that's very
4 important. Once we make arrests and we respond to the
5 bridges a lot, we'll be able to extract this information
6 and make links into other crimes that are occurring within
7 the interior of the state.

8 And these operations that I'm talking about,
9 we're doing highway interdiction, we're patrolling,
10 targeting hotels, parking lots, churches, just mainly
11 enhancing our patrol, both marked and unmarked. You'll be
12 surprised what you see when you're in an unmarked vehicle.

13 So we get a lot of our detectives that participate and
14 they're driving unmarked vehicles and they get to see a
15 lot of this stuff and we'll get the marked vehicles out
16 there too to do the traffic stops or make the arrests.

17 As far as the catalytic converters, we've
18 conducted several interviews. We're trying to identify if
19 it's stopping in Eagle Pass. I was a NARC -- before I
20 came to auto theft in 2017, I was a narcotics officer for
21 DEA for eleven years.

22 So I'm familiar with weapons and money going
23 into Mexico and what's coming in from Mexico. And I'm
24 familiar with you want to identify people, you want to
25 talk to organizations and find out what a method is of

1 transport. We know that it's illegal to possess a
2 catalytic converter here in the State of Texas and we've
3 learned that a lot of these catalytic converters are being
4 smuggled into Mexico.

5 Now, we found out through interviews that there
6 is a metal recycling center in Monterrey, Mexico, and
7 we've learned that making traffic stops, working
8 operations, we've seen 18-wheelers loaded with metals.
9 And until we opened our eyes into SB 224 and whatnot, is
10 when it caught our attention, said, hey, man, we're seeing
11 these trailers that are driving right past us. We need to
12 stop them and we need to start looking into what they
13 have.

14 Of course, it's not every person in uniform is
15 going to want to climb up an 18-wheeler with oil metals,
16 so we'll get U.S. Customs to help us out, lift us in a
17 forklift on top of a pallet and we'll go record what's
18 inside the trailers. And we haven't seen any catalytic
19 converters, we haven't been able to.

20 We've had conversations with customs agents and
21 they have seen it in the past year but they haven't seen
22 anything lately. I want to say towards the end of 2023,
23 they haven't seen anything. But for a while they told me
24 that they would see pickup trucks loaded with catalytic
25 converters and they didn't know, they weren't educated,

1 they weren't made aware of what was going on.

2 So they would borderline praise the guy and
3 say, hey, look, he's hustling, he wants to make that buck,
4 good luck, go to Mexico and recycle this. Right? Not
5 knowing that they were committing a crime.

6 (General laughter.)

7 MR. DURAN: So when we started engaging in
8 these conversations they were like, oh, my God, man, we
9 should have known, we should have been doing something
10 about this. So now CBP is aware of this and we have great
11 communication.

12 My next goal for next month, I need to meet
13 with the Mexican Customs. And I want to present this to
14 them so now Mexican Customs is aware and they'll turn
15 these vehicles around; if they catch something, they'll
16 let us know. I'm hoping the next slide will give you an
17 idea of what relationship we have with both the American
18 Customs and the Mexican Customs. I was looking through
19 this and that slide isn't there, I'm hoping I didn't send
20 the wrong one.

21 Well, I'll tell you about this. In this year,
22 Eagle Pass hosted the 2024 Babe Ruth World Series, and we
23 had teams from Australia -- I really like those guys from
24 Australia, took a picture with them -- and we had teams
25 from all over the world, to be honest with you, from all

1 over the state. So when we found out, and this had been
2 planned for months and I spoke to my upper chain and said,
3 Hey, I want to do an operation during the time that
4 they're here. And I think that so far is the highlight of
5 what SB 224 has done for us.

6 This tournament lasted ten days, and like I
7 said, we had people from all over the country and abroad.

8 They were all staying in Eagle Pass in different hotels.
9 So I got my guys and I said, okay, we're going to activate
10 Operation Full Count -- because it's a baseball term,
11 right? -- and I said we're going to bring uniformed guys
12 and we're going to bring detectives, plain clothes guys,
13 and we're all going to be out there and we're going to go
14 to every game and we're going to talk to every team, to
15 every coach, and we're going to be patrolling the hotels,
16 we're going to be patrolling the restaurants, both
17 unmarked and marked. I want them to see the police
18 presence.

19 So we did, and for ten days we had zero
20 burglaries, criminal mischief, thefts. We had one guy
21 from -- I can't remember the country, but it's vacation
22 country that they came from, and that was the only
23 incident. He was drunk. The game hadn't even started, he
24 was drunk, and we had to approach him, and I said, Hey,
25 you can't be here.

1 He said, Well, what do you do when you come to
2 my country? Well, in all fairness, you're right, I'll
3 give you that, but sorry, we can't, you know, there's kids
4 so we can't do it. Well, this isn't fair.

5 And from Jamaica, some place close to
6 Jamaica -- Aruba -- I'm sorry -- he was from Aruba. He
7 said, Well, you guys come to my country and you vacation
8 and you guys get drunk. Yes, we do, but sorry. He was a
9 great guy. We ended up taking pictures with him at the
10 end.

11 (General laughter.)

12 MR. DURAN: So during our conversations, I
13 tasked my guys and I tasked everybody that signed up to
14 work that detail, that operation. I said, I want you to
15 talk about prevention, preventing the motor vehicle
16 crimes. I want you to bring awareness into catalytic
17 converter thefts and what's going on, what we're seeing.
18 So we did.

19 We shared not only with the people in our area
20 and our community, but I had a long conversation with
21 Australia. That young lady there in the middle, she was
22 one of the coaches. Her dad is a retired police officer
23 in Australia, so we had a good conversation. And she was
24 like, wow, I can't believe that you guys are doing this.

25 Our city manager, our mayor have received

1 numerous letters praising the city and the police
2 department because we were tasked and we told them you
3 will engage, you don't have a choice. You see someone
4 that isn't from Eagle Pass, you're going to take five
5 minutes of your time and you're going to talk to them and
6 talk about crime prevention. You're going to talk about
7 motor vehicle thefts and remind them, hey, did you lock
8 your car, it takes a couple of seconds. So we did and
9 that worked out fine.

10 Again, I go back to that number zero. When I
11 hear zero and we're talking about crime, I love that
12 number, so I think up to now that will be the highlight
13 for my task force.

14 And let's see, there we go, this is what I was
15 telling you about, our networking that we do with Mexican
16 Customs. We've participated in twelve four-day binational
17 operations with CBP. With the binational operations we
18 have both American Customs, law enforcement agencies, and
19 the Mexican Customs.

20 We work together simultaneously for four days
21 straight, three different shifts; we have twelve of those
22 throughout the year. Two national targeting center
23 operations, those operations are sent from Washington to
24 CBP. Randomly you're going to have this operation, and
25 they call us in and we'll go and we'll participate.

1 And then there's Operation Full Force. That's
2 a week long. That's the longest week ever because our
3 guys -- like I said, I have a three-man team and to spread
4 those guys to work for seven days at a bridge, when you're
5 a cop, you don't really want to work at a bridge unless
6 you're CBP. So it's real difficult, but those guys are
7 champs and they pull through.

8 Thirty-one vehicles were recovered and this is
9 vehicles going into Mexico -- I'm not talking about our
10 traffic stops or anything like that, this is CBP -- 31
11 total vehicles recovered, 17 during outbound operations,
12 17 vehicles were recovered during outbound operations,
13 nine returned from Mexican Customs. There's been a
14 stigma, for that matter, of hey, once a vehicle crosses,
15 it's gone. Well, that proves otherwise.

16 That proves that we have a great working
17 relationship with Mexico, and when those guys catch it,
18 they're going to send it back. And sometimes these
19 drivers are upset: Well, I was already there, why are
20 they sending me back? Well, because they don't want you
21 in their country either.

22 We did a little bit of educating with the
23 Mexican Customs as far as the 30-day permits, the temp
24 tags, the buyer tags, dealer tags. And sometimes we're
25 like, oh, my God, I can't believe we taught these guys

1 that, because they're returning everything. They're
2 returning an average of 18 vehicles a day because they
3 show up and they don't have the correct documents, they
4 can't verify their tags, so, no, we don't want you here,
5 and they'll send them back.

6 And that goes back to educating, networking,
7 explaining this is what we're doing and this is why. Now
8 they know. And I think that once we have that
9 conversation with the catalytic converters, it's going to
10 bring more results.

11 So that's what I have. In closing, I just want
12 to reiterate that the funding that we received has been
13 paramount to our agency. And like I said, we've done
14 things that we couldn't have been able to do without the
15 funding of SB 224, and we look forward to more years of SB
16 224 funding for our city.

17 And we want to continue working with other
18 agencies. Laredo has been magnificent with us, Houston,
19 San Antonio. I think I annoy these guys because I call
20 them all the time with questions or leads, sometimes I'll
21 give leads. So I'm looking forward to continue working
22 together with everyone here.

23 MS. JONES: Sergeant Duran, you mentioned the
24 funding that we have which is current. How important is
25 the funding for the future technology? Even for

1 Lieutenant Tobar and her team, the technology is only as
2 current as today. So how important is funding and the
3 need for the funding two, three, four years from now?

4 MR. DURAN: It has to continue, especially with
5 technology, it's constantly changing. Eventually, and
6 soon we're going to have to upgrade with whatever systems
7 we obtain now today. We're going to have to upgrade just
8 to keep up, just to keep up. I don't think that we'll
9 necessarily have a step ahead but just to keep up, and we
10 need the funding and it's got to continue.

11 MS. JONES: You mentioned Val Verde and they
12 look promising. Is there anything I can do to help you
13 win them over? Do we need to come out, have a meeting?

14 MR. DURAN: I will definitely let you know. I
15 have to go sit with the lieutenant and the sheriff. She
16 was going to pitch it up to the sheriff. It is election
17 year so the sheriff is busy.

18 The lieutenant that I spoke to is going to
19 bring it up, and she told me, I need you to come sit with
20 us so you can talk about SB 224. But I say it looks
21 promising because they want it. They want the funding,
22 they need the funding. And basically, my job is going to
23 be just to help them understand the logistics of it, how
24 to go about it, but they do need the funding.

25 Kinney County needs the funding, Uvalde County

1 could sure use the funding. These are main corridors to
2 Mexico on both ends of our area of responsibility, Eagle
3 Pass and Del Rio, so they absolutely without a doubt need
4 that funding.

Dimmit County 5 I was just text messaging -- I apologize for that -- but I
6 was getting a text message from Dimmit County asking me
7 questions about deadlines and whatnot for SB 224. So I
8 think that we're looking good and I'm going to send you a
9 text and an email, Ms. Jones, so that you can come and see
10 it.

11 MS. JONES: Absolutely. I'll bring backup as
12 well.

13 MR. DURAN: There you go.

14 MS. JONES: Any other questions?

15 MR. DIGGS: Major Jones, I just had a comment,
16 if I may?

17 MS. JONES: Yes, sir.

18 MR. DIGGS: So, Sergeant Duran, I also echo
19 what you said about the zero. Right? You've done a
20 phenomenal job and the leadership there in Eagle Pass,
21 with your team, also looking at the technology, the things
22 that you need, whether it be camera systems or LPRs, and
23 the connection and the collaboration all over Texas. And
24 you're right, Eagle Pass has been in the news a lot.
25 You've done a fantastic job.

1 You know, you're more the frontlines of defense
2 for the State of Texas and the citizens that live here and
3 the safety, and also for our nation. So thank you for
4 everything that you're doing right here on the border,
5 just down the road in Eagle Pass.

6 MR. DURAN: Appreciate that.

7 MS. JONES: We will now hear from Brownsville
8 Police Department Task Force, Lieutenant Sergio Perez.

9 MR. PEREZ: Good morning. Lieutenant Sergio
10 Perez, Brownsville Police Department, also commander for
11 the STATE Task Force, South Texas Auto Theft Enforcement
12 Task Force. I recently promoted about a month ago to the
13 rank of lieutenant, oversee the special investigations
14 unit there with Brownsville, and part of that is the STATE
15 Task Force.

16 There's a lot of up-to-speed that I have to do
17 with all the responsibilities that I currently have, but I
18 wanted to take this opportunity to present myself here
19 with the committee and reintroduce myself to some. As
20 Chief Mike Rodriguez said earlier, as a sergeant I was
21 within the Auto Theft Task Force from 2013 to 2017.
22 That's where we met, so we do have some stories to tell,
23 me and the chief, so we do go way back. My recent
24 appointment was to major crimes which, you know,
25 aggravated robbery, you name it, we did all the major

1 crimes.

2 Sergeant Humberto Delgado, Major Jones, if it's
3 no issue, will assist me with the presentation for our
4 task force. I just thought that it was important for him
5 to know that I am here to support him. He's got an
6 excellent grasp on the program, on Senate Bill 224.

7 This was not around back in 2017 when I left
8 the task force. I wanted to, of course, let everybody
9 here know who I am. Contact information will be provided
10 for everybody.

11 Back then our relationship with the task force,
12 our collaborations, me and Mike -- Chief Rodriguez, I will
13 say -- with Laredo, City of Laredo, we used to have
14 constant communication. I hope that is still the case,
15 not just with Laredo but with the other task forces,
16 because I do believe that it is very important for us to
17 continue combating auto theft and combating the catalytic
18 converter thefts.

19 So with that, Major Jones, if it's okay,
20 Sergeant Delgado will present our update.

21 MS. JONES: Excellent baton pass, excellent.

22 MR. DELGADO: Good morning. Sergeant Humberto
23 Delgado, Brownsville PD, also program manager for the
24 STATE Task Force.

25 First of all, I do want to start, I know it has

1 been repeated over and over, but it is something that does
2 need to continue to be touched on. Thank you, everybody
3 that is here, the committee. I know you all have put in
4 effortless hours trying to get us to where we are right
5 now with the funding, and as previous task forces have
6 shown, it is working.

7 So we do appreciate that and we hope that this
8 funding does continue through many years. That is the
9 hope for this program.

10 This is just the first slide.

11 MS. JONES: Great job so far.

12 (General discussion and laughter.)

13 MR. DELGADO: So like I said, South Texas Auto
14 Theft Enforcement Task Force, this is just an overview and
15 reference to what has been happening with the funds just
16 up to now.

17 There are partnerships that have already been
18 developed through the auto theft task force grant, so we
19 do have surrounding agencies. We do try to communicate
20 constantly. We all know that everybody does have their
21 time constraints, but nevertheless, the communication is
22 there, whether it be in person, through text messages,
23 through calls. The willingness to help is there, which we
24 do hope that continues as well throughout our partner
25 agencies.

1 We have Customs, DPS, we have Cameron County
2 District Attorney's Office, as well as Hidalgo, since we
3 do operate in Cameron County as well as Hidalgo County.
4 The Texas DMV, I know every now and then we do reach out
5 and I don't know if the persons on the other side are like
6 give us a break, but you know, we're trying to do our best
7 so that we can do the best. We also have support from the
8 Mexican authorities that Sergeant Duran had mentioned.

9 Recently, with the whole ordeal of the auto
10 theft, it's just on the rise everywhere. But it has also
11 helped us consolidate that partnership with our Mexican
12 counterparts where our task force now, we do have direct
13 communications with them where if they stop a vehicle,
14 they will reach us directly. They will share the
15 information that they get on their side, and we start our
16 operation on our side, whether it be flagging them at the
17 bridge, starting on getting warrants, us actually
18 contacting the victims before they even know that their
19 vehicle had been stolen. So we have been able to recover
20 quite a few vehicles that way.

21 In reference to the catalytic converter theft,
22 it has decreased, as other task forces have shown. It has
23 decreased from 2023 up to now. For our task force here,
24 Cameron and Hidalgo, for 2023 we did have 65 cases, 2024,
25 from January up to date, I'm happy to say that it has

1 decreased up to eight overall. So for both counties
2 eight, I'll take that. I know that the theft is there,
3 but nevertheless, it does not compare to the number that
4 it used to be last year.

5 I do think it has to do with the legislative
6 change in reference to the penalty. You know, that
7 changed to the degree it helped a lot. It does deter
8 those criminals.

9 Yeah, some of them might think, you know what,
10 I'll just do so much, and now the change into a felony, I
11 believe it does have them thinking a little bit more so
12 that they can -- you know, I'll rethink this and maybe I
13 won't steal that catalytic converter.

14 But nevertheless, the efforts are continuing on
15 our part to try to make contact with the citizens, you
16 know, let them know what it is that they can do to avoid
17 being a victim and find ways to protect themselves,
18 whether it be to be more alert whenever they go to parking
19 lots, to businesses, or even at their homes. Technology
20 is very big, but it's still sometimes unbelievable where
21 residents still don't have camera systems. Nowadays that
22 is a big help. I would say everybody would agree that
23 surveillance footage this time of day is what we need in
24 order to further our investigations.

25 So we do focus on community awareness. We do

1 have two agents that they came onboard in reference to
2 this, that this is their main focus. They came onboard,
3 one in July, mid July, the second one about mid August,
4 since they had to go through the vetting process through
5 the department, but that is what I have been focusing on.
6 Our business inspections, they have gone up more since now
7 they're focusing on junkyards, mechanic shops. We're
8 looking into mechanic shops, also use the dealerships,
9 which I'll touch on on the next slides.

10 We're working on flyers. I know they might be
11 old school but it still works. Some people still like the
12 visual sense of having something in their hand that they
13 can see, that they can read, or maybe down the road they
14 can relate back, oh, you know what, I remember reading
15 this on this flyer and go back to it. And it's something
16 that can also be shared with others, you know, just take a
17 look at this, it's ways that you can help protect
18 yourself.

19 Public service announcements -- one of our
20 agents is actually pretty good on social media, so we are
21 planning on getting our Facebook site a little more active
22 and putting more announcements there. You know, reaching
23 out to the public and hopefully have the public reaching
24 out to us so that they can start asking what can I do, any
25 type of event we can participate, or what else we can try

1 on our end as well.

2 We do reach out to the media. Obviously right
3 now with the theft of vehicles, they have helped out. So
4 I know that they are also open to helping us out should we
5 need to put something in reference to the catalytic
6 converters, which eventually we will.

7 And the community events, it goes without
8 saying we do take the opportunity of, once again, you
9 know, one-on-one will always have a bigger effect on a
10 person because it shows that you are dedicating your time
11 just to that person whenever you are talking to them
12 one-on-one.

13 As I had mentioned, these two are agents.
14 Although fairly new, one of them has already, you know,
15 this is your task, surprise inside view, and sure enough,
16 she went out there. She started reaching out to DMV to
17 see what the rules, the laws that they need to follow, the
18 junkyards, the businesses in reference to permits, what it
19 is that the process entails in reference to selling a
20 catalytic converter, buying it, you know, what goes behind
21 it. So she's still doing her research into that so that
22 we can better the system on our part as well.

23 As I mentioned, our business inspections, we
24 have done them at the used auto lots because we know that
25 sometimes they're not holding to the business of selling

1 vehicles but they also do their repairs on the side. So
2 we know that there's going to be parts laying around. And
3 whenever we do those business inspections, it allows us to
4 view the property as well, and it may lead us to other
5 offenses there that are being committed.

6 So currently, the funds have been extremely
7 helpful, as I said. We do have those two agents that are
8 full-time in reference to the catalytic converters, but we
9 also have the equipment, and this is a surveillance tower.

10 These will be placed strategically, hot spots, once
11 again, business parking lots, stores or any request made
12 by a certain business because they're having either some
13 sort of rash in crime or that we know -- we start tracking
14 that in this place, this store, there's an increase either
15 burglary of vehicles, motor vehicle theft or catalytic
16 converter theft, or even the criminal mischief.

17 So whenever we're notified of such change,
18 we're able to change our operations and be able to help
19 and assist those businesses so they can feel safer in
20 reference to conducting their business.

21 In reference to the equipment, as we continue
22 the Skywatch, it is something that is looked forward to so
23 that we can deploy it in major events. You know, we have
24 the National Night Out, or like in our case in Cameron,
25 every now and then towards the end of the year we do have

1 a marathon that is hosted by the City of Brownsville. So
2 that's another opportunity that we get so that we are able
3 to use this equipment that is funded by this grant so that
4 we can provide that public safety for the citizens.

5 In conclusion, the funds, this catalytic
6 converter grant, it should continue. It does help law
7 enforcement in general because it does provide the means
8 of being able to do more, where without it, we would not
9 have that opportunity to be able to outreach a bit more,
10 to be more available for the public to be able to help
11 out, which in the end, it's every task force's goal. We
12 want to protect the citizens. We want to make them feel
13 safe, and we want for them to be able to go out and be
14 calm and be able to go back home, and you know, I had a
15 good day.

16 And overall, that would be the conclusion of
17 our presentation.

18 MS. JONES: Sir, I want to commend you for
19 knowing your citizens and realizing that social media does
20 work but there's some that actually want the flyer, need
21 the flyer. So whatever works for your city, please
22 continue to do so.

23 And what are the chances of getting a DA
24 onboard with you?

25 MR. DELGADO: I know there have been talks in

1 reference to a DA. Fortunately, up to now, we do have a
2 good communication with them. So we are able to reach out
3 to a DA, which most of the time it's always the same one.

4 So they already know our trends, they know our
5 habitual offenders, so they're able to provide that
6 feedback whenever we reach out to them. And they are
7 readily available. Just like everybody else, they might be
8 at trial, but nevertheless, they do take the time to, hey,
9 you know what, I'm busy right now but I'll get back to
10 you.

11 MS. JONES: So basically they're already
12 onboard, just not permanent.

13 MR. DELGADO: Correct.

14 MS. JONES: Okay. Great to hear.

15 Any questions?

16 (No response.)

17 MS. JONES: Perfect. Thank you.

18 MR. DELGADO: Thank you.

19 MS. JONES: Do we need to take a quick five-
20 minute technical break? Yes, we do. It's 11:30, let's
21 take about five minutes.

22 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

23 MS. JONES: We're reconvening at 11:37 with
24 Hidalgo Sheriff's Department, Captain Norberto Leal.

25 MR. LEAL: Good morning. My name is Norbert

1 Leal, Norberto Leal, and I'm a captain with Hidalgo County
2 Sheriff's Office. I'm currently in charge of the special
3 operations division; I've been in charge of special
4 operations for the past eight-nine years.

5 A couple of years ago, I had the auto theft
6 unit, which is comprised of two investigators reassigned
7 to my division. Most of my units are proactive units.
8 Auto theft was an eye-opener for me, pretty much they were
9 reactionary. Obviously they get reports every day of
10 stolen vehicles and whatnot, so they're doing follow-ups
11 and so forth.

12 So last year they sent me to a meeting. I was
13 fortunate enough to meet Mr. Diggs at the location at the
14 meeting and he introduced me to all the grants that are
15 out there, and I want to thank you for that. We discussed
16 the SB 224 and the catalytic converter problem and the
17 funding that was out there. So I met with my boss and we
18 decided to apply for the grant, and I want to say it was a
19 blessing for our department, as well as my division.

20 So having the special operations division, just
21 an example of how many units we run. I've got 20
22 narcotics and gang units investigators, I have ten
23 burglary/apprehension team members, I have eight tactical
24 patrol deputies, I've got a 30-member SWAT team, and six
25 task force officers that are assigned to federal agencies.

1 So I get two auto theft investigators. I'm
2 trying to make them proactive; they complain that they
3 can't, they're following up on reports. So when we
4 applied for this grant, we asked for an additional
5 investigator and one analyst, so I'm here to report on
6 what we've done so far with the funding that was awarded.

7 It got awarded and approved in April, with the actual
8 funding became active in June.

9 So as you can see here, this is just showing a
10 graph of different types of crimes since 2021 in Hidalgo
11 County. Year-to-date fiscal year '24, that's as of
12 September 30, so our auto theft, the ones in black, are a
13 bit down which is good news. Catalytic converters, the
14 yellow one, we do have three as of September but in
15 October -- let me back up a little bit. In the last week
16 of September we covered six in two separate operations,
17 and I'll discuss it later in the other slides.

18 For the SB 224, this is the investigator that
19 is being paid by the grant. So June, July and August,
20 those three months, we were able to identify nine
21 offenders that are dealing with catalytic converter
22 thefts, and also with groups, and we've been able to
23 inspect four businesses. Obviously, I've had to pull from
24 my other units to assist that investigator with some
25 support, and that's why it's key to have additional

1 funding for this because it really does help.

2 LPR reader alerts, we've had 20, ten in August.

3 This particular read, I believe we recovered two stolen
4 vehicles at the port of entry. We do have the overtime
5 that was allowed for this grant, so I'm having people go
6 out on their days off, they were able to recover the
7 vehicle. We interviewed the suspect that was driving the
8 vehicle, developed intel, and kind of productive on that.

9 The analyst has attended intelligence meetings.

10 When I say intelligence meetings, he's assigned to our
11 intel center in McAllen with the rest of our analysts, and
12 we have a total of eight analysts assigned to the intel
13 center, and he deals strictly with auto theft and SB 224
14 catalytic converters. So he does meet with them, shares
15 information, they submit emails, they do an intel blast to
16 agencies on suspects, information that needs to be put
17 out, MOs and whatnot. And collaborating with other
18 agencies in the coverage areas, we do have the
19 investigator and the analyst reaching out to the other
20 agencies within intel, also receiving intel, and working
21 from there.

22 As you know, when you work with a department
23 and around this time of year, everybody fights for the
24 budget. Being Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, the
25 majority of our money goes to the jail, so the rest gets

1 divvied up between patrol and civil warrants and whatnot.

2 Special operations gets very little money, obviously the
3 majority of it goes to the SWAT.

4 So having the auto theft investigators there, I
5 ask them -- I said, We've got to be more proactive. What
6 do you need?

7 Well, we need tools. What kind of tools? So
8 we did purchase some tools with some of the money that you
9 awarded for the grant for equipment.

10 These are just some of the stats of the overall
11 investigators that we do have, the auto theft
12 investigators. June, July and August and September, 30
13 total stolen vehicles recovered, valued at \$492,000. We
14 cleared 42 cases, arrested 15 people, and we've been able
15 to do 68A inspections, 61 total for the four months. So
16 hopefully we can do more in the future.

17 This is some of the expenditures on the
18 equipment. We've only spent \$18,592. We are pending a
19 drone, we did submit the drone policy to MVCPA. Personnel
20 is just that investigator and that analyst, total salaries
21 so far, I think it's bang for the buck for the total that
22 we recovered in stolen vehicles.

23 Supplies \$10,800, the next slide will indicate
24 what we purchased, OBD readers and some scopes and stuff.

25 The \$208,000 for Flock cameras, LPRs, right now is going

1 through the legal process with our county, but we are
2 doing a mapping of high crime areas and strategic areas,
3 so we're going to place those cameras there.

4 Other equipment, like I said, the OBD readers,
5 we spent \$2,583. We assisted in identifying registered
6 owners, we did recover five stolen vehicles utilizing that
7 piece of equipment, and some of those vehicles were
8 stripped at chop shops. Some of them were stolen, burned,
9 but we were able to use that piece of equipment on that.
10 The Borescope cameras, same thing, total value, I think
11 it's \$108,000 that we recovered.

12 Laptops that are assigned to the investigator
13 and the analyst, obviously the analyst has got all the
14 software that the TTAC analysts have. And he utilizes
15 that to relay information back and forth, intel, do
16 charts, and all that kind of stuff.

17 Pending, we did order a DJI Matrice 30T. It's
18 got a flare on it and stuff, so that will be utilized for
19 large operations and whatnot.

20 Supplies, the LPRs I already indicated on the
21 Flock. Promo items, we do have items that we're going to
22 utilize during events. We do have our National Night Out
23 coming up in the future, we've attended several other
24 ones.

25 We do have an event that we're planning. We

1 did get awarded 250 steering wheel locks from Hyundai; we
2 reached out to them and they donated 250 of those locks to
3 us. We're trying to organize that event and I'll let you
4 know in case y'all want to attend there.

5 So we do have Adobe software. We did order an
6 etching machine, an etcher, so we're planning at least
7 three events in the next twelve months. That one is
8 currently pending approval through the budget process.

9 Leased vehicles for the investigator and the
10 analyst, we're waiting for quotes on that. And the cell
11 phones, they've already been assigned to them.

12 Like I said, we do have the steering wheel lock
13 giveaway that we're pending in the future, hopefully in
14 the next couple of months. Probably first choice will be
15 a Hyundai dealership, but we'll see on that. And the
16 National Night Out events.

17 So this is just an example of some of the
18 catalytic converters that we recovered. On this
19 particular one, it was at a chop shop. We arrested three
20 individuals, there were some stolen vehicles there and
21 narcotics, a couple of weapons. Catalytic converter found
22 in a kitchen cabinet, one suspect arrested, I believe that
23 was a narcotics operation that we did, and he had some
24 other car parts at the location.

25 Stolen vehicle, this is at another chop shop.

1 The first one that I indicated on the previous slide, this
2 is the back part, they have a storage shed. They had a
3 bunch of dashboards on there, they had rims, all sorts of
4 stolen parts in there, carburetors and whatnot.

5 This one, another location, stolen bed. We did
6 recover the rest of the vehicle at a different location
7 about a week ago, and all this happened August and
8 September.

9 On this one, this particular one, we had an
10 individual put on there that they had a ruse to open a
11 mechanic shop. They reached out to the individual, said
12 we're opening a mechanic shop, is it okay. So they
13 started taking vehicles there that were stolen and started
14 stripping them, and so we made three arrests on that
15 particular case.

16 This one with the LPR alerts, we dispatched
17 personnel. I believe this one was caught going out and
18 this one was caught in Mexico and then brought back --
19 well, we caught it but it was brought back from Mexico,
20 and then we did arrest a couple of people on that.

21 This one, we used the equipment. This one was
22 a homicide that major crimes was investigating. They had
23 located the vehicle, suspect vehicle -- believed the
24 suspect vehicle, so the investigator utilized some of the
25 equipment to locate the VIN number and the registered

1 owner on that, and the investigation continues.

2 This other one was a stolen vehicle. They
3 called us, we were able to identify the owner, and so he
4 was notified. It had already been paid off by the
5 insurance.

6 This is another chop shop. On this particular
7 one, we had information that they had stolen 18-wheelers
8 at that location. We utilized the drone, we did see some
9 trailers in the back, but it was outside the property line
10 so we didn't execute a search warrant here.

11 This red maroon-ish Camaro, it turns out the
12 engine and transmission were from a stolen vehicle that
13 had been reported to us the previous couple of months
14 back. We did arrest one person, we identified three
15 witnesses to that location. One of the witnesses told us
16 that the primary Camaro that was stolen where the parts
17 came from was at a different location. As a matter of
18 fact, last week we executed a search warrant there,
19 recovered several more vehicles, including the shell of
20 that Camaro where those parts went to, same vehicle.

21 And that's all I have. So the only ask that I
22 have is that you continue funding for these task forces.
23 And the catalytic converter, our efforts, they're not
24 going unnoticed. Thank you.

25 MS. JONES: Captain Leal, you're one of the

1 newest members of the MVCPA task force, and it is evident
2 from the funding that you received from 224 that you're
3 actually using the funds to what they're being used for,
4 and we're seeing that from the ground up. All task forces
5 are using the funds for what they're used for, what's the
6 intended usage.

7 But just especially for our non law enforcement
8 to actually see, okay, you guys just started from ground
9 zero with nothing and be able to say, okay, we're
10 purchasing this, this is our plans for the future, and
11 then to continue that effort. So I'm excited to see how
12 you progress and how you grow into like full-fledged
13 deployment. And yes, it's very important that the funding
14 is continued.

15 Mr. Diggs.

16 MR. DIGGS: Major Jones, I just wanted to echo
17 the same. Captain Leal, thank you for being here today,
18 thank you for the presentation. Just walking through some
19 of the good solid police work that you guys are doing
20 there in Hidalgo County, the collaboration with other
21 agencies in the areas, I suspect local, state and federal
22 agencies that you're working with to bring vehicles back
23 from Mexico, so thank you for that.

24 Thank you for submitting your drone policy.
25 That was an ask that Chief Rodriguez tasked me with back

1 in July to make sure that all of our task forces are
2 providing their drone policies because we are heavily
3 engaged in that and assisting our task forces throughout
4 Texas with drones, which obviously are invaluable to be
5 able to get to areas quickly and also safely for our law
6 enforcement officers throughout Texas.

7 So anyway, thank you for being here, and thank
8 you again for the update.

9 MS. JONES: Any questions for Captain?

10 (No response.)

11 MS. JONES: Thank you, sir.

12 MR. LEAL: Thank you.

13 MS. JONES: We now move on to agenda item
14 number 11, which pertains to future advisory committee
15 dates and locations. So two things, our chairman for the
16 board, he asked us to continue having the meetings into
17 2025.

18 I'm going to pose a question to the committee
19 for input. Initial thoughts are perhaps just two
20 meetings, because we've been meeting greatly as a group,
21 or should we continue having the four meetings. I'm
22 looking for input here.

23 I will tell you the first meeting will probably
24 be in Fort Worth in January. That's the tentative plan,
25 but also, January in Fort Worth comes with weather. We'll

1 work around that. We'll see.

2 But any input as far as should we have two
3 meetings? Should we continue with the four?

4 Sergeant Rodriguez?

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do we have any other locations?

6 Jaime Rodriguez, for the record. Any other locations
7 where we can have them, volunteers?

8 MS. JONES: Oh, yeah, that's not a problem.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How many do we have?

10 MS. JONES: How many do you want? You tell us
11 two, three or four, we can make that happen. If we decide
12 on the location and we are strategic with locations to
13 make sure that we get -- especially for non law
14 enforcement, for you to get the true picture of what is
15 occurring across Texas as far as the catalytic converter
16 theft and crime, not just in your area, not just in San
17 Marcos, not just in the Houston area. So we're strategic
18 of where we have these meetings.

19 So just like here we're at a hotel, there are
20 other task forces, other places that we will be able to
21 have meetings. So that's not an issue.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And the reason I ask is that
23 maybe if they have some type of tour that they can give
24 that not all of us know about. Right? Like the border
25 here, not a lot of y'all had seen that.

1 MS. JONES: Like Techamet and PGM.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So if those other four places,
3 three places, two places, whatever it may be, if they can
4 offer that, something that we haven't seen before, and if
5 there's four that we can learn from, then that would be
6 great to have four. If it was three or two, that would be
7 great too.

8 MS. JONES: Thank you.

9 Member Carson?

10 MR. CARSON: Yes, ma'am. Robert Carson. I
11 like the idea of four. And as we're going to different
12 areas throughout the state, Mr. Diggs talked about
13 reaching out to other departments who may not be aware of
14 this, and this gives us the opportunity to reach other
15 departments and educate them and perhaps give them the
16 funding to assist us in what we're all trying to achieve
17 here.

18 MS. JONES: Great idea. I'm glad you brought
19 that up. I'm glad you thought of that, because I
20 anticipate that we will receive the funding in the future,
21 but with that funding comes the responsibility of the
22 MVCPA Board to go out, spread the message and recruit
23 other agencies, so absolutely love that idea. Thank you
24 for bringing that up.

25 We'll keep that in our forethought. And to be

1 blunt, it doesn't make sense to keep preaching to the
2 choir, so absolutely love it, great idea.

3 Member Willis?

4 MR. WILLIS: JR Willis, PGM of Texas, for the
5 record.

6 I think I'm good with either number. Like you
7 said, as long as we're not preaching to the choir and get
8 some new people involved. One of the notes I made on my
9 sheet was some of the law enforcement agencies that we do
10 encounter, they may not be aware of the grant money
11 available and while we're out there trying to educate
12 about Senate Bill 224, we don't typically talk about the
13 funding available to the agencies. So sometimes our
14 conversations are short, sometimes they're well received.

15

16 I think on some of those short conversations
17 maybe leading with the available funding that could be
18 available to their agencies may prolong that conversation,
19 and maybe inviting them to some of these meetings will be
20 beneficial. So I like the idea.

21 MS. JONES: Great idea. We will ask for our
22 industry partners, when you're having these discussions
23 with those law enforcement agencies, don't be shy about
24 inviting them and offering and discussing the funding
25 that's available, because there are a lot of agencies who

1 are not aware of this funding. One of our MVCPA members,
2 Yessenia Benavides, literally went to the police
3 department in her area and they had no clue. And when she
4 walked out of that PD, they were a task force member and
5 they've received benefits from Senate Bill 224.

6 So yes, spread the message, be our billboard,
7 our social media board, like whatever you can do to help
8 us attract others, it's very important. The whole goal is
9 for this to be a statewide effort.

10 MR. WILLIS: Right.

11 MS. JONES: Perfect. Thank you.

12 MR. WILLIS: Thank you.

13 MS. JONES: Member Foreman?

14 MR. FOREMAN: Todd Foreman, for the record.

15 I'm good with whatever number that is chosen,
16 I'll make it to all of them. So I'm good with that. I
17 like the idea, and I will start, as I do some educational
18 stuff, I'll make sure I'm mentioning the Senate Bill 224.

19 MS. JONES: Absolutely. Thank you.

20 If we mention it, people will come and the
21 funding will continue, so we don't want it to be an issue,
22 and I don't anticipate it, at least from what I'm sensing
23 and being told that in the future two years from now is it
24 going to say, okay, that's it. So that's not what I'm
25 anticipating.

1 And then also, if we can show that this is what
2 we're doing, we're recruiting Refugio, we are recruiting
3 small agencies that had no idea that we existed. So I
4 think that goes along with the support to those who
5 lobbied for this is to show that we're doing what you
6 asked us to do and we're going above and beyond. So
7 absolutely, please. Thank you.

8 Member Taormina?

9 MR. TAORMINA: Tchad Taormina, for the record.

10 I'm good with four, I like the idea. I'm kind
11 of on the same page with him. I don't know if there's any
12 way -- I'm big on these conferences, you had mentioned the
13 conference next year, if there's any way to tie in that
14 week or near that week to where we're all gathering.

15 I don't know if that's a possibility but we
16 have our annual conference in July-August. So again, I'd
17 like to center around those particular time frames, if
18 that's possible. I don't know if that's an option, but
19 just throwing it out there.

20 MS. JONES: Mr. Diggs, can we make that
21 possible?

22 MR. DIGGS: William Diggs.

23 So we're looking at some different alternatives
24 when it comes to our MVCPA conference where we've had
25 business meetings tied to that or our GBR meeting and our

1 Board meeting. We've made some decisions to move away
2 from that. I refer to these meetings as somewhat brief,
3 although y'all have all been sitting here since nine
4 o'clock. Right? But they are three hours.

5 I think it would probably be something that we
6 could fit in during that week to allow all of you to be
7 able to kind of get more bang for your buck. Right? You
8 come to the conference and we'll also be able to hold one
9 of the advisory committee meetings during that time frame.
10 So I think we can look at it.

11 MS. JONES: I can assure you we can make it
12 happen, it will happen. Just some logistics, but we will
13 make it happen. It's not a problem.

14 Member Prentice?

15 MR. PRENTICE: Stewart Prentice, for the
16 record.

17 I defer to the law enforcement agencies'
18 willingness to meet. For us, our goal here is to
19 communicate with them what it is they're trying to enforce
20 and who it affects, so we're happy to attend as invited.

21 MS. JONES: I thought you were going to say
22 before just Sharon Jones.

23 (General laughter.)

24 MS. JONES: Member Martin?

25 MR. MARTIN: I concur with everybody here, I'm

1 good with either number. The more it can be here, the
2 better, so I appreciate it.

3 MS. JONES: Perfect. We'll make it work and we
4 will definitely have a meeting during our conference week,
5 which is actually great because all the task force
6 commanders will be there. So we can have it to where a
7 task force where we will not necessarily be in that area
8 for a meeting based on logistics and the meeting space,
9 those could be the ones that can present that would not
10 normally have the opportunity to present. Perfect.

11 Going on my memory, I think we are now on
12 agenda item number 12, public comment. Do we have any
13 public comment?

14 MS. FLINT: Cassandra Flint, MVCPA, for the
15 record.

16 Chairman Jones, there is no comments at this
17 time. Thank you.

18 MS. JONES: Okay. Thank you.

19 We now move on to agenda item number 13, which
20 is adjournment.

21 Yes, sir, absolutely.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Jaime Rodriguez, for the
23 record.

24 For those of you that attended the tour
25 yesterday, the 18 of you, we have something for y'all so

1 before y'all leave, at the front desk if y'all could meet
2 with us, please. Thank you.

3 MS. JONES: And you should have given our
4 number count for our meeting afterwards, our lunch, our
5 business lunch afterwards. Do we have a number count?
6 Thank you, Lieutenant.

7 Any other comments before we move on, before we
8 adjourn?

9 (No response.)

10 MS. JONES: I would like to entertain a motion
11 for adjournment.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Jaime Rodriguez, motion to
13 adjourn the meeting.

14 MS. JONES: Motion by Member Rodriguez. Do I
15 have a second?

16 MR. PRENTICE: You have a second.

17 MS. JONES: Thank you, Member Prentice.

18 We have a motion and a second. Meeting
19 adjourned at 12:06.

20 Thank you, everyone.

21 (Whereupon, at 12:06 p.m., the meeting was
22 adjourned.)

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MEETING OF: TxDMV MVCPA SB 224 Advisory Committee
LOCATION: Laredo, Texas (via Teams)
DATE: October 3, 2024

I do hereby certify that the foregoing pages,
numbers 1 through 106, inclusive, are the true, accurate,
and complete transcript prepared from the verbal recording
made by electronic recording by Nancy King before the
Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

DATE: October 16, 2024

/s/ Nancy H. King
(Transcriber)

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