



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

AUGUST 1, 2023

First Follow-Up on 2022 Traffic Enforcement Audit

The King County Sheriff's Office (Sheriff's Office) has not yet developed objectives for its traffic enforcement activities. Without objectives and strategies to meet these objectives, the Sheriff's Office is limited in its assessment of the effectiveness of King County's enforcement strategies. The lack of centrally monitored objectives creates a risk that the strategies in place across the County do not contribute to overarching safety goals and may not be in alignment with broader county goals.

The Sheriff's Office recently hired key staff that will play an important role in determining policies for the collection and analysis of data that would help measure progress toward traffic enforcement objectives. Among the staff hired in May and June of 2023, are a chief of staff and a chief for the Patrol Operations Division, which oversees patrol functions across the County. The Sheriff's Office said that it is still in the process of recruiting a new equity and social justice manager. Each of these staff will play key roles in developing traffic enforcement strategies and the related policies guiding the collection of demographic data. Together, these efforts will help the Sheriff's Office better understand the impacts of its enforcement activities across King County. Full implementation of these efforts also relies on an upgrade to the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system to allow it to collect information needed to measure progress toward objectives. Additional information on the CAD system and the collection of perceived race data can be found in the [Calls for Service](#) follow-up report, published August 2023.

These challenges are another example of the systemic risk issues identified across 11 audits over the past decade. As reported in our [Sheriff's Office Systemic Issues](#) audit, inefficient processes and limited data within the Sheriff's Office hamper decision-making and oversight, and the ability of the Sheriff's Office to identify and mitigate operational risks. Additionally, the contract partner entity–Sheriff's Office relationship also creates policy complexities. Policy interests of a contract city—traffic enforcement, for example—can be quite different from other partners and the County as a whole. By implementing the recommendations below, the Sheriff's Office and the County Executive can improve data accuracy, procedural clarity, and transparency in policy-setting and direction, which are all central to managing this complex topic.

Of the three audit recommendations:

 0 DONE	 0 PROGRESS	 3 OPEN
FULLY IMPLEMENTED Auditor will no longer monitor.	PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED Auditor will continue to monitor.	REMAIN UNRESOLVED Auditor will continue to monitor.

Please see details below for implementation status of each recommendation.

Recommendation 1

OPEN



The King County Sheriff's Office should identify traffic enforcement objectives and develop and implement strategies for meeting those objectives, using data to track progress toward its overarching safety goal.

STATUS UPDATE: The Sheriff's Office has not yet begun developing objectives for traffic enforcement. The Sheriff's Office stated that its efforts thus far have been focused on filling key vacancies, including, in June 2023, filling the role chief of the Patrol Operations Division, which manages the patrol functions across the County. The Sheriff's Office indicates that efforts to identify objectives—and the traffic enforcement strategies to meet those objectives—will occur in the future.

WHAT REMAINS: The Sheriff's Office should identify traffic enforcement objectives and develop and implement strategies for meeting those objectives, using data to track progress toward its overarching safety goal. In creating these objectives, the Sheriff's Office should ensure it has to the ability to gather and analyze information needed to track progress toward the objectives and its overarching safety goal.

Recommendation 2

OPEN



The King County Sheriff's Office should coordinate with unincorporated area commanders, contract partners, and the King County Department of Local Services to ensure that traffic safety objectives and strategies are in alignment with county goals.

STATUS UPDATE: Related to Recommendation 1, above, the Sheriff's Office has not yet begun developing objectives for traffic enforcement and, therefore, has not begun its efforts to coordinate with area commanders, contract partners, and the Department of Local Services about the objectives. Now that the vacancy for chief of the Patrol Operations Division has been filled, the Sheriff's Office indicates that efforts to coordinate with county partners to identify objectives and traffic enforcement strategies will occur in the future.

WHAT REMAINS: The Sheriff's Office should begin efforts to coordinate with unincorporated area commanders, contract partners, and the King County Department of Local Services to develop traffic enforcement objectives. The Sheriff's Office should ensure that the traffic safety objectives and strategies developed contribute to overarching safety objectives and are in alignment with county goals.

Recommendation 3

OPEN



The King County Sheriff's Office should collect perceived demographic data for each traffic stop regardless of the purpose of the stop or its outcome. This recommendation is made in alignment with Recommendation 3 from our report "Sheriff's Office Data Show Racial Disparities, Potential for Alternative Policing," which addresses analysis of this data.

STATUS UPDATE: The Sheriff's Office explored options to collect demographic information using its current CAD system but found that the system could not be expanded to collect race information. The Sheriff's Office has posted for a project manager position that would work to acquire a CAD system that allows for the collection of perceived demographic information. However, the Sheriff's Office has stated that it will likely be at least another year before a funding request for a responsive CAD system would be made. The County Council may take further action to support collection of demographic information. Additional information on the collection of perceived race data and the CAD system can be found in the [Calls for Service](#) follow-up report, published August 2023.

WHAT REMAINS: To complete this recommendation, the Sheriff's Office should continue its work to ensure that its CAD system can collect demographic data. As part of this process, the Sheriff's Office should ensure that the data collected is in a format that can be readily analyzed in response to Recommendation 3 of the audit report, "[Sheriff's Office Data Shows Racial Disparities, Potential to Expand Alternative Policing](#)," dated June 14, 2022.

Grant Dailey conducted this review. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at KCAO@kingcounty.gov or 206-477-1033.