



AGENDA REPORT

Police Department

DATE:	December 19, 2023
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Bisa French, Chief of Police
Subject:	Richmond Police Department Assigned Vehicle Program (AVP)
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	The proposed \$141,790 annual expenditure will require a budget adjustment to the Police Department's vehicle cost pool allocation for Fiscal Year 2023-2024; future years will be budgeted for appropriately – account string 01191021-400571.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	November 7, 2023-The PD's "18-Month Plan to Eliminate Mandatory Overtime within the Richmond Police Department" presentation was approved on the consent calendar.
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	Richmond Police Officers have been subject to multiple years of mandatory overtime to fill minimum staffing levels and sustain essential public safety services. To mitigate this issue, the Police Department proposes implementing an assigned take-home vehicle program to reduce overtime costs by increasing recruitment efforts and retaining current staff while positively impacting department morale.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	APPROVE the immediate implementation of the Richmond Police Department's Assigned Vehicle Program for an amount of \$141,790 annually – Police Department (Chief Bisa French 510-621-1802).

DISCUSSION:

For several years, the Richmond Police Department has endured critically low staffing levels, resulting in officers being subjected to mandatory overtime to maintain crucial public safety services and minimum staffing levels. As a result of this issue, the Police Department Administration has successfully worked with the Human Resources Department to procure recruitment resources as part of a comprehensive strategy to increase interest in police officer jobs. However, despite our best efforts and the progress that we have made, the City of Richmond continues to fall behind in the area of recruitment of new police officers and the retention of existing staff. This unending cycle of hiring new officers while losing existing staff ultimately results in continued mandatory overtime, poor employee morale, and negatively impacts public safety services to the community.

It is widely known that police departments nationwide struggle to recruit, hire, and retain quality personnel. The Richmond Police Department is no different. To address this issue, the Richmond Police Department proposes implementing an "Assigned Vehicle Program" (AVP) to increase our ability to market Richmond Police Department jobs and simultaneously retain the highly trained officers currently working for the City of Richmond.

Recruitment and Retention

The implementation of an Assigned Vehicle Program would set us apart from other agencies that are now offering incentives such as \$75,000 hiring bonuses, \$5,000 referral bonuses, down payments for home purchases, lifetime medical benefits after 15 years of service, retirement eligibility at age 50, free uniforms and dry cleaning, tuition reimbursement, and more robust specialty assignments and promotional opportunities, all benefits and recruitment/retention tools that RPD cannot currently compete with.

The AVP initiative addresses the critical need for a dedicated fleet of vehicles exclusively assigned to individual sworn personnel and extends beyond personnel already authorized to take a vehicle home to accommodate on-call work status. Currently, Richmond Police Officers rely on a shared pool of vehicles, leading to logistical challenges and increased wear and tear on the vehicles, as each patrol car operates on a 24-hour-per-day basis and is utilized continuously from one shift to the next. The AVP seeks to mitigate these issues by providing officers with their assigned take-home vehicle, which will only be operational to and from work and for the duration of the officer's shift, therefore utilizing the vehicle in a manner consistent with manufacturing intent. In addition to prolonging each vehicle's lifespan, the AVP will foster a sense of ownership and ensure each car is adequately equipped, properly serviced, and always prepared for swift and responsive community policing.

The AVP is designed to improve the mobility, response time, and overall effectiveness of our Police Department by eliminating the need for officers to prepare a vehicle for service at the onset of each shift and allowing them to provide service to the community more efficiently. By allocating specific vehicles to individual officers, we aim to

streamline daily operations and reduce downtime associated with pool vehicle deployments. The AVP includes a comprehensive maintenance plan serviced by City of Richmond maintenance staff to extend the lifespan of vehicles and minimize long-term vehicle costs.

In addition to the long-term cost savings, implementing an AVP is a powerful tool in the City's efforts to recruit and retain top-tier police officers. The prospect of having a dedicated take-home vehicle for patrol officers provides a tangible and attractive benefit for potential recruits and existing sworn personnel. This program not only addresses the practical needs of officers but also symbolizes a commitment to their well-being and professional satisfaction. A sense of individual ownership over assigned vehicles fosters a stronger connection between officers and their role in safeguarding the community. This, in turn, contributes to a positive organizational culture and improved morale, which is vital for attracting new talent to the Richmond Police Department. To emphasize the impact of an AVP, the Richmond Police Department has lost numerous tenured officers to cities that currently offer an AVP; most recently, this past month, the Richmond Police Department lost three sworn officers to such organizations.

Geographic Case Studies:

Fairfield PD, Vacaville PD, and Kensington PD offer an AVP to their sworn officers. Dixon PD and Benicia PD currently have "pilot" programs. Within these agencies, AVPs are commonly cited as a significant factor in an employee's decision to stay and an applicant's decision to apply.

Some facts to consider about the listed agencies that currently deploy an AVP: Fairfield PD is one of the few fully-staffed police departments in the region. Fairfield PD now has 124 of 126 sworn vacancies filled. They do not have mandatory overtime signups and rarely force patrol officers to work past their assigned shifts. Fairfield PD has attracted new hires and seasoned lateral officers, including two from our agency. These officers cited Fairfield PD's Assigned Vehicle Program as one of the main reasons they chose the agency.

Vacaville PD is currently operating with 119 of 126 sworn vacancies filled. The coordinator of their Assigned Vehicle Program cites it as their best recruiting and retention tool. He stated that they do not have officer retention problems. Vacaville PD does have mandatory overtime signups but reports that the assigned vehicle program mitigates a significant amount of officer frustration and fatigue.

Kensington PD has 8 of 9 sworn positions filled, with multiple candidates currently in the background for the position. They have no mandatory overtime and rarely need to force a patrol officer to work past their assigned shift.

Dixon PD has 26 of 29 sworn positions filled. They have no mandatory overtime and rarely need to force a patrol officer to work past their assigned shift.

Benicia PD has 29 of 33 sworn positions filled.

(note: there are many more cities in California and throughout the United States that have implemented AVPs)

Feedback from officers at the Richmond Police Department has shown that an AVP would help tremendously with officer retention. From 2019 – 2023, 33 officers have resigned from Richmond PD and left for other agencies. These resignations have led to a staffing crisis necessitating the elimination of an entire patrol team, and our Traffic, Narcotics, Parole, Gang, Bravo, and Regulatory Units. The remaining investigative units have also endured staffing cuts.

Vehicle Longevity

In addition to the hiring and retention benefits, AVPs have a significant impact on the longevity of a police vehicle. The evidence overwhelmingly indicates that an Assigned Vehicle Program is more cost-effective than a Pool Car system. Research shows that total engine hours can accurately tell vehicle longevity and repair needs more than mileage. Pool cars operate up to 24 hours a day. Having a vehicle assigned to an individual officer dramatically reduces the engine hours on the car. Research shows that one hour of engine idle equals 30 to 60 miles of driving. Pool cars are typically passed off between officers at the beginning and end of their shifts. When a vehicle constantly runs, it cannot cool off, leading to expensive maintenance, longevity, and warranty issues.

Nation Wide Case Studies:

Numerous studies conducted on Assigned Vehicle Programs throughout the country show that vehicle longevity is significantly improved. This is due to assigned vehicles running approximately one-half to one-third less than a pool car and individual driver accountability.

Pima County Sheriffs, Arizona

Pool Car:	1.7 years
Assigned Vehicle:	7 years

Hampton PD, Virginia

Pool Car:	3 years
Assigned Vehicle:	8 years

Arlington PD, Texas

Pool Car:	3 years
Assigned Vehicle:	6 years

Manatee County Sheriff's Department, Florida

Pool Car:	1.8 years
Assigned Vehicle:	5 years

St. Petersburg PD, Florida

Pool Car: 1.8 years
Assigned Vehicle: 5 years

Tacoma PD, Washington

Pool Car: 2 years
Assigned Vehicle: 7 years

The Montgomery County Study

Pool Car: 2-3 years
Assigned Vehicle: 5-7 years

The average patrol vehicle costs \$70,000. A pool car at Richmond PD would be replaced on average three times for every one time a car in the Assigned Vehicle Program would need to be replaced. This would be a tremendous cost savings (not adjusted for inflation) for just one vehicle in an Assigned Vehicle Program.

Operating Costs

A study with the Tacoma, WA, Police Department showed that operating costs per mile were 30 percent lower for assigned vehicles versus pool cars. Officers take more ownership of their assigned vehicles. They are more likely to report minor mechanical issues, avoid costly repairs, and comply with scheduled maintenance. Officers drive their assigned vehicles less aggressively, saving on wear and tear and fuel costs.

The State of Massachusetts Study showed that agencies with an Assigned Vehicle Program revealed that officers take better care of assigned vehicles. Minor issues go unreported when officers utilize pool cars, fresh damage can be overlooked, and vehicles often get dirty. A Pima County Sheriff's Study showed that assigned vehicles had decreased maintenance costs due to increased driver accountability:

City of St. Petersburg, Florida

Pool Car: 0.49 cent/mile
Assigned Vehicle: 0.40 cent/mile
Total savings: \$7,650 per vehicle over life expectancy or eight percent cost reduction.

Galloway Township Police Department, New Jersey

The Fleet manager projected operating costs to nearly double from \$130,000 to \$228,000 if forced to transition from the Assigned Vehicle Program to the Pool Car Program.

Daytona Beach Police Department, Florida

They reported 40 percent reduced maintenance costs with the Assigned Vehicle Program.

Tacoma Police Department, Washington

Operating costs were reduced by 33.86 percent by utilizing an Assigned Vehicle Program.

Visalia Police Department, California

The personalized patrol vehicle program has saved 31 percent in operating costs compared to traditional patrol vehicle programs.

United States Department of Justice Study

Operating costs for a large city department with an Assigned Vehicle Program would drop 30 percent over a Pool Car Program.

RICHMOND POLICE DEPARTMENT FLEET

We will have ample vehicles to support an Assigned Vehicle Program. The first year of an Assigned Vehicle Program is typically the most expensive due to departments needing to stockpile enough vehicles. Fortunately, and unfortunately, due to our limited staff, we currently have sufficient vehicles to launch a sustainable Assigned Vehicle Program at this time.

Current Maintenance Costs:

This includes oil changes, tires, and preventative maintenance. Oil changes are performed every 3,000 miles, and patrol vehicle tires are replaced every six to eight months.

Maintenance Cost:

The current expense of maintaining the Richmond Police Department pool of vehicles is \$2,078 per vehicle annually. This cost is based on an average vehicle driven approximately 11,387 miles annually.

The proposed expense to maintain the Richmond Police Department AVP is \$3,457 per vehicle annually. This cost is based on an average vehicle driven approximately 18,944 miles annually.

The AVP accounts for a cost difference of \$75,845 per year.

Fuel Cost:

The current fuel expense for the Richmond Police Department's pool of vehicles is approximately \$1,807 per vehicle annually. This cost is predicted based on an average vehicle driven approximately 11,387 miles annually with a fuel efficiency rate of 23 miles per gallon.

The fuel expense for the proposed AVP is approximately \$3,006 per vehicle annually. This cost is predicted based on an average vehicle driven approximately 18,944 miles annually with a fuel efficiency rate of 23 miles per gallon.

The AVP accounts for a cost difference of \$65,945 per year.

The annual added expense to operate the AVP (fuel/maintenance) is \$141,790.

Policy and Oversight

The Police Department Administration recognizes potential risks associated with implementing an AVP; therefore, strict policy development and enforcement are crucial to the program's success. RPD policy dictates that City-owned vehicles are only used for work-related purposes, not personal errands, or transportation. Assigned vehicles may be used for travel related to a work assignment as follows:

- Sworn employees living within 60 miles of Richmond city limits can take an assigned vehicle home.
- Exceptions to the 60-mile rule may be made with the approval of the Chief of Police under specific circumstances.
- Probationary employees are not eligible to participate in the Assigned Vehicle Program.
- Those employees eligible to take their cars home based on the above criteria shall provide off-street parking for the police vehicle. The address where the vehicle will be parked when not used shall be current on the Assigned Vehicle Agreement form.
- Employees who live more than 60 miles away may park it in the secured lot of a local police or fire department within the 60-mile radius. The address must be provided and current on the Assigned Vehicle Agreement form. Written proof of permission from that agency may be required.
- All rules of the road shall be obeyed unless exigent circumstances warrant an emergency response. The current RPD Policy shall be adhered to in these circumstances. When driving an assigned vehicle to and from work outside of the jurisdiction of the Richmond Police Department or while off-duty, an officer shall not initiate enforcement actions except in those circumstances where a potential threat to life or severe property damage exists. Officers may render public assistance when prudent (e.g., to a stranded motorist).

FISCAL IMPACT

Evidence from existing Assigned Vehicle Programs throughout California and the United States overwhelmingly indicates that they are more cost-effective than a Pool Car system. The majority of the expenses of an Assigned Vehicle Program are upfront. **The benefit for Richmond PD is that we currently have sufficient vehicles to implement the costliest part of the program.** The cost of the Assigned Vehicle Program is significantly reduced every year as the vehicle cost is amortized.

The annual estimated fuel and maintenance increase for vehicles under the Assigned Vehicle Program is \$141,790. This cost does not consider the expected increase in

vehicle longevity, decreases in serious collisions, and recruiting and retention benefits, as seen by other agencies with Assigned Vehicle Programs.

RECOMMENDATION

Richmond Police Department Administration recommends implementing an Assigned Vehicle Program at the Richmond Police Department.

Evidence from established Assigned Vehicle Programs around the country overwhelmingly shows the financial benefit that the program brings to their local organizations. The quantifiable advantages include a dramatic increase in vehicle longevity, reduced operating costs, and increased work efficiency. The less measurable benefits are perhaps even more significant.

Departments with Assigned Vehicle Programs report increased officer morale and job satisfaction. Their Assigned Vehicle Programs have been vital in recruiting and retaining personnel.

The Richmond Police Department is slowly recovering from one of our most critical staffing shortages. Implementing a well-managed Assigned Vehicle Program will aid our efforts to improve the working conditions for our officers. With our current staffing shortages and resulting lack of specialty assignments and promotional opportunities, we are no longer one of the most competitive agencies to work for. An Assigned Vehicle Program will boost our standing among other local agencies in our recruiting effort and placing us in the top tier of desired Bay Area agencies for which to work.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – RPD Assigned Vehicle Program Policy

Attachment 2 – RPD Assigned Vehicle Program Employee Agreement

Attachment 3 – RPD City Vehicle Use Policy