

Seattle Municipal Court

The Honorable Anita Crawford-Willis, Presiding Judge

(206) 684-5600

<http://www.seattle.gov/courts/>

Department Overview

As the judicial branch of Seattle City government, the Seattle Municipal Court (SMC or court) provides a forum to resolve alleged violations of the law in a respectful, independent, and impartial manner. SMC adjudicates misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, infractions (e.g., traffic/parking, traffic camera tickets, and other violations), and certain civil violations related to building and zoning offenses. The court has seven elected judges and five appointed magistrates. There are more cases processed here than in any other municipal court in the State of Washington.

This is a transformational time at SMC with several initiatives underway that will advance SMC as the people's court, providing fair, equitable and innovative delivery of justice. Each change initiative aligns with the court's values of service, fairness, equity and inclusion, innovation, excellence, integrity and our strategic priorities:

- system stabilization and optimize efficiencies
- employee well-being, engagement and growth
- organizational resilience with planning and practice
- operational excellence, accountability and innovation
- integrity through equitable leadership
- judicial independence
- fairness with proactive compliance

SMC is organized into four service areas: Operations, Administrative Services, Court Technology, and Strategy. This structure supports realizing SMC's strategic priorities by making the best use of court resources, eliminating siloed operations and functions, and ensuring court services are easy to navigate. Leveraging a sustainable governance structure with operating agreements, established process by which these agreements may be changed, and documented decision-making authority, the court continues to improve transparency and ensuring effective communication throughout the court

Ensuring access to justice for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind (D/HH/DV) individuals remains a priority for the court. SMC has provided Interpreter Services in 149 languages since 2005, including American Sign Language. The court provides free interpreter services for criminal and civil matters, including court hearings, trials, attorney-client interviews, probation appointments, prosecution witnesses, mental health evaluations, customer service, and translation of court forms and letters.

In August 2025, the court began receiving referrals from the Seattle City Attorney's Office to the newly developed Seattle Drug Prosecution Alternative. This collaborative approach allows prosecutors to offer individuals charged with drug possession or another charge related to substance abuse the opportunity to have their case dismissed by completing service connections through the court's Community Resource Center, participating in a substance use disorder assessment, and accepting a Stay Out of Drug Area (SODA) order, if applicable. This approach provides faster case resolution (within 60 days), supportive pathways to engage in treatment and other support services, and transparency in case outcomes.

SMC recognizes undoing institutional racism and ensuring a culture of equity and inclusion requires engagement with community and staff to identify meaningful solutions. In 2025, SMC continued to engage community through its judicial officers, as well as through Community Resource events. These events bring court services and resources to Seattle neighborhoods and are an opportunity for community members to receive assistance with resolving SMC warrants, learn about options for addressing tickets, help with reinstating their driver's license, and access supportive services through the Community Resource Center. SMC hosted its second Law Day event, welcoming high

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school students from Chief Sealth, Nathan Hale and Rainier Beach high schools to learn about City government, court careers, and participate in mock trials.

Budget Snapshot

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	47,083,912	45,891,310	48,085,609	48,350,472
Other Funding - Operating	-	335,602	396,602	393,738
Total Operations	47,083,912	46,226,911	48,482,211	48,744,210
Total Appropriations	47,083,912	46,226,911	48,482,211	48,744,210
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	201.85	200.85	200.85	199.85

** FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here*

Budget Overview

The City's 2026 Proposed Budget maintains core services for the Seattle Municipal Court. The department will continue to invest in programs to adjudicate misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, infractions (e.g., traffic and parking tickets, traffic camera violations, and other violations), and civil violations related to building and zoning offenses.

The budget is also adjusted for minor Citywide and departmental technical changes. Included is a legislated change in 2025 establishing the Drug Prosecution Alternative in coordination with the City Attorney's Office. This ongoing program is an alternative for individuals charged with a drug crime or where an incident indicates a connection to substance abuse.

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	2026 Budget	FTE
Total 2026 Endorsed Budget	48,482,211	200.85
Baseline		
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(94,015)	-
Position Transfers Within the Court	-	-
Net-Zero Technical Adjustment	-	-
Eliminate Sunset Positions	-	(5.00)
Proposed Technical		
Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation	720,750	4.00
Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget	(340,969)	-
SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction	(23,766)	-
Total Incremental Changes	\$262,000	(1.00)
Total 2026 Proposed Budget	\$48,744,210	199.85

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(94,015)

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

Position Transfers Within the Court

Expenditures -

Position Allocation -

This item is a technical change to move 2.0 FTE from Court Operations to Court Administration to align with the reorganization of 2025. The 2.0 FTE and associated budget are transferred, resulting in a net-zero change.

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Net-Zero Technical Adjustment

Expenditures -

This item is a net-zero technical adjustment to reflect the accounts utilized after the larger reorganization in 2025. This will move Court software budget to the correct account and consolidate the Mental Health Court General Fund budget into the same budget summary level, where spending will occur.

Eliminate Sunset Positions

Position Allocation (5.00)

This item is a technical change to remove five sunseting positions. These sunseting positions were added to the Court for the Municipal Court Information System (MCIS) replacement project and are currently vacant. There is no budget for the positions as they were funded through the MCIS 2.0 bond project. The MCIS project successfully launched in March of 2024.

Proposed Technical

Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation

Expenditures \$720,750

Position Allocation 4.00

This change includes ongoing budget and position changes resulting from current year legislation in 2025. The Drug Prosecution Alternative was established in 2025 in coordination with the Law Department and added in the Mid-Year Supplemental Budget Ordinance. This ongoing program is an alternative for individuals charged with Possession, Use of Controlled Substances, Stay Out of Drug Area (SODA) violations, and incidents where the facts of the case indicate a direct connection/nexus to substance abuse. There are 4.0 FTE to support this program including a Community Resource Coordinator, Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Assessor, and two Court Marshals.

Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget

Expenditures \$(340,969)

This centrally administered change adjusts base budget appropriations to reflect the proper Annual Wage Increase (AWI) increment for 2026, as outlined in the agreements between the City and the Coalition of City Unions for personnel costs. AWI increments are determined based on the average change in the local Consumer Price Index (CPI). This change represents a true-up between the forecasted CPI assumption included in the Endorsed Budget and the actual CPI data.

SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate Reduction

Expenditures \$(23,766)

The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2025, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.17% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 15.06%.

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Expenditure Overview

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Appropriations				
SMC - BO-MC-2000 - Court Operations				
00100 - General Fund	18,078,504	23,326,785	24,552,105	23,970,394
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	-	280,602	366,602	363,738
Total for BSL: BO-MC-2000	18,078,504	23,607,387	24,918,707	24,334,131
SMC - BO-MC-3000 - Administration				
00100 - General Fund	23,915,557	22,564,525	23,533,505	24,380,078
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	-	55,000	30,000	30,000
Total for BSL: BO-MC-3000	23,915,557	22,619,525	23,563,505	24,410,078
SMC - BO-MC-4000 - Court Compliance				
00100 - General Fund	5,089,851	(1)	(1)	1
Total for BSL: BO-MC-4000	5,089,851	(1)	(1)	1
Department Total	47,083,912	46,226,911	48,482,211	48,744,210
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	201.85	200.85	200.85	199.85

* FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here

Budget Summary by Fund Seattle Municipal Court

	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	47,083,912	45,891,310	48,085,609	48,350,472
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	-	335,602	396,602	393,738
Budget Totals for SMC	47,083,912	46,226,911	48,482,211	48,744,210

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Revenue Overview

2026 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
334010	State Grants	377,911	165,000	330,000	330,000
335060	Judicial Salary Contrib-State	149,440	150,000	150,000	150,000
341300	Administrative Fees & Charges	41	-	-	-
341900	General Government-Other Rev	515,715	-	-	-
342040	Detention/Correction Fees	385	-	-	-
342050	Adult Probation & Parole Svcs	970	-	-	-
350010	Traffic Infractn Penal, Non-Pa	289,398	330,000	330,000	330,000
350020	Fines/Forfeits-Non-Pkg Infract	94,870	60,000	60,000	60,000
350030	Parking Infraction Penalties	16,873,641	24,122,713	22,954,402	21,257,134
350040	Driving While Intoxicated Pena	16,919	20,000	20,000	20,000
350050	Other Criminal Traffic Penalti	23,454	30,000	30,000	30,000
350060	Time Payments	12,024	20,000	20,000	20,000
350070	Other Non-Traffic Misdemeanor	(5,546)	20,000	20,000	20,000
350090	City Litigation Recoveries	27,617	35,000	35,000	35,000
350170	Penalties On Deliquent Recs	(395,040)	-	-	-
350180	Misc Fines & Penalties	3,530	5,000	5,000	5,000
350190	Nsf Check Fees	911	1,000	1,000	-
360220	Interest Earned On Deliquent A	138,194	-	-	-
360540	Cashiers Overages & Shortages	275,798	1,050	1,050	-
360900	Miscellaneous Revs-Other Rev	706	-	-	-
Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund		18,400,938	24,959,763	23,956,452	22,257,134
Total SMC Resources		18,400,938	24,959,763	23,956,452	22,257,134

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Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

SMC - BO-MC-2000 - Court Operations

The purpose of the Court Operations Budget Summary Level is to hold hearings and address legal requirements for defendants and others, help defendants understand the Court's expectations, and assist them in successfully complying with court orders. Some proceedings are held in formal courtrooms and others in magistrate offices, with the goal of providing timely resolution of alleged violations of City ordinances and misdemeanor crimes committed within the Seattle city limits.

Program Expenditures	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Court Operations	18,078,504	23,607,387	24,918,707	24,334,131
Total	18,078,504	23,607,387	24,918,707	24,334,131
Full-time Equivalents Total*	131.75	146.35	146.35	146.35

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SMC - BO-MC-3000 - Administration

The purpose of the Administration Budget Summary Level is to provide administrative controls, develop and provide strategic direction, and provide policy and program development.

Program Expenditures	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	13,434,483	10,634,114	11,129,520	11,312,401
Departmental Indirect Costs	10,481,075	11,985,411	12,433,984	13,097,677
Total	23,915,557	22,619,525	23,563,505	24,410,078
Full-time Equivalents Total*	39.00	54.50	54.50	53.50

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The following information summarizes the programs in Administration Budget Summary Level:

Citywide Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	13,434,483	10,634,114	11,129,520	11,312,401
Full Time Equivalents Total	34.00	34.00	34.00	29.00

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Departmental Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Departmental Indirect Costs	10,481,075	11,985,411	12,433,984	13,097,677
Full Time Equivalents Total	5.00	20.50	20.50	24.50

SMC - BO-MC-4000 - Court Compliance

The purpose of the Court Compliance Budget Summary Level is to help defendants understand the Court's expectations and to assist them in successfully complying with court orders.

Program Expenditures	2024 Actuals	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	2026 Proposed
Court Compliance	5,089,851	(1)	(1)	1
Total	5,089,851	(1)	(1)	1
Full-time Equivalents Total*	31.10	-	-	-

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