

# Audit of Seattle Police Department Patrol Vehicle Procurement

**January 25, 2022**

**Melissa Alderson**

**David G. Jones, City Auditor**

*We acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Coast Salish People past and present. We honor the land itself and the Coast Salish and Duwamish Tribes with gratitude.*



**Seattle Office of City Auditor**

# Audit of Seattle Police Department Patrol Vehicle Procurement

## Report Highlights

### Background

In this audit, we reviewed the procurement of the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) primary patrol vehicle: the Ford Police Interceptor Utility (PIU). The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) manages SPD's fleet, including purchasing and maintenance. SPD leases the vehicles from FAS and pays monthly for all associated costs.

### What We Found

We found that SPD paid about \$86,836 for each 2020 model PIU, and about \$2.9 million on patrol fleet maintenance and repair work in 2020. SPD paid about \$48,354 to customize a 2020 PIU in the standard patrol build, which accounts for a little over half of the total purchase price. SPD had 272 PIUs in their fleet at the end of 2020. We found that supply chain issues in the auto industry are affecting patrol vehicle procurement. The 92 PIUs due for replacement in 2021 and 2022 have not been ordered because the City Budget Office (CBO) paused ordering new vehicles. Keeping older patrol vehicles in service past their retirement date could cause negative long-term financial and operational impacts to the City.

### Recommendations

We make three recommendations to address the issues with procuring patrol vehicles. We recommend that CBO allow FAS to adhere to their vehicle replacement schedule so that vehicles can be retired in a timely way. We also recommend FAS begin purchasing replacement vehicles one year in advance.

### Department Response

FAS concurred with the report's findings and recommendations (see Appendix B). SPD concurred with two of the recommendations but not with the third (see Appendix A). CBO provided context on the City's financial situation amid the COVID-19 pandemic (see Appendix A).



### WHY WE DID THIS AUDIT

This audit was conducted in response to Seattle City Councilmember Andrew J. Lewis' request for our office to review the procurement of SPD patrol vehicles. Specifically, we were asked to report on:

- Purchase and maintenance costs
- Upfitting selections and costs
- Fleet size and procurement challenges

### HOW WE DID THIS AUDIT

To accomplish the audit's objectives, we:

- Analyzed patrol fleet data from 2012-2020
- Interviewed SPD, FAS, and CBO staff
- Conducted a site visit and ride along
- Surveyed five local law enforcement agencies
- Researched relevant fleet management best practices

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## INTRODUCTION

### Audit Overview

Seattle City Councilmember Andrew J. Lewis requested that we examine the City of Seattle's (City) procurement of Seattle Police Department (SPD) patrol vehicles. Our objectives were to answer the following questions:

- Purchase and Maintenance Costs: What are the purchase and annual maintenance costs of SPD patrol vehicles? How do these costs compare to the patrol vehicles of other jurisdictions?
- Upfitting<sup>1</sup> Selections and Costs: What items does SPD add to patrol vehicles, what is their purpose, and what are the purchase and installation costs? How does this compare to what similar jurisdictions select and spend on upfitting?
- Fleet Size and Procurement Challenges: How has the size of the fleet changed over time, and how does the City determine the number of patrol cars to have? What challenges does the City face in acquiring and maintaining patrol vehicles, and what is being done to address these issues?

The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) concurred with the report's findings and recommendations (see Appendix B). SPD concurred with two of the recommendations but not with the third (see Appendix A). The City Budget Office (CBO) provided context on the City's financial situation amid the COVID-19 pandemic (see Appendix A). The audit team for this project included Melissa Alderson and Sean DeBlieck.

### Background

**The Seattle Police Department's primary patrol vehicle is the Ford Police Interceptor Utility (PIU).** The PIU is an SUV designed for law enforcement and is a best-selling patrol vehicle in the United States. SPD's previous patrol vehicle, the Ford Crown Victoria, was retired by the Ford Company in 2011. SPD selected the PIU in 2013 after reviewing and testing six vehicle options. In 2020, SPD began purchasing the PIU-hybrid model, as part of the City's Green Fleet Initiative. The Ford Company estimates the hybrid-PIU has annual fuel cost savings of \$3,500 to \$5,700 per vehicle.

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<sup>1</sup> Upfitting refers to the process of installing features on a vehicle to meet operational needs.

### Exhibit 1: Seattle Police Department Police Interceptor Utility Patrol Vehicle



Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor.

**The Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) manages SPD's fleet.** FAS owns and maintains the PIU's in SPD's patrol fleet, and bills SPD monthly for the vehicle lease, maintenance, and fuel. FAS determines how much to bill SPD using assumptions on replacement timing and costs. SPD must pay separately for damage that FAS determines was caused by the driver. At the time of our audit, FAS's PIU replacement schedule was five years for gasoline models, and seven years for hybrid models.

**FAS contracts with two vendors to purchase and upfit the PIU.** In 2018, FAS selected [Bill Pierre Ford](#) in Seattle to provide the base PIU vehicle and some SPD selected customization options. Before 2018, FAS purchased patrol vehicles under Washington State's contract with a Ford dealer, which is a bundled contract that Washington State manages and allows other jurisdictions to purchase under. FAS has since determined that it was less costly to manage their own contract. FAS told us that their current contract has also resulted in higher quality service to the City. FAS also has a contract with [Systems for Public Safety](#) in Lakewood, WA to install additional equipment to further customize the PIU to meet SPD's operational needs.

**We surveyed local law enforcement departments to compare their patrol vehicle choices to SPD's.** In consultation with FAS and SPD, we selected 11 law enforcement departments to include in our survey. We asked these departments questions about their patrol vehicle costs and upfitting selections. We received responses from five departments: King County, WA; Spokane, WA; Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; and San Jose, CA. We summarize their answers at the end of each report section.

# PURCHASE AND MAINTENANCE COSTS

## Section Summary

In this section, we provide the purchase and maintenance costs for SPD's patrol vehicles. SPD paid about \$86,836 for each 2020 model PIU. About 44 percent of this cost is for the base vehicle, and 56 percent is for further customization (i.e., upfitting). PIU purchase costs have increased gradually since 2016, most notably with the 2020 model when SPD began purchasing hybrids. In 2020 SPD paid about \$2.9 million on PIU vehicle maintenance and repair.

## Purchase Costs

**SPD paid about \$86,836 for each 2020 model PIU.** About 44 percent of this cost was for the base vehicle (\$38,482) and 56 percent was for the upfitting and additional manufacture options (\$48,354). See Exhibit 2. The base vehicle is not equipped with the features necessary to conduct certain police activities, such as lights and radios. We discuss upfitting further in the next section of this report, Upfitting Selections and Costs.

### Exhibit 2: Average PIU vehicle costs, 2020

**SPD paid about \$86,836 for each 2020 model PIU**

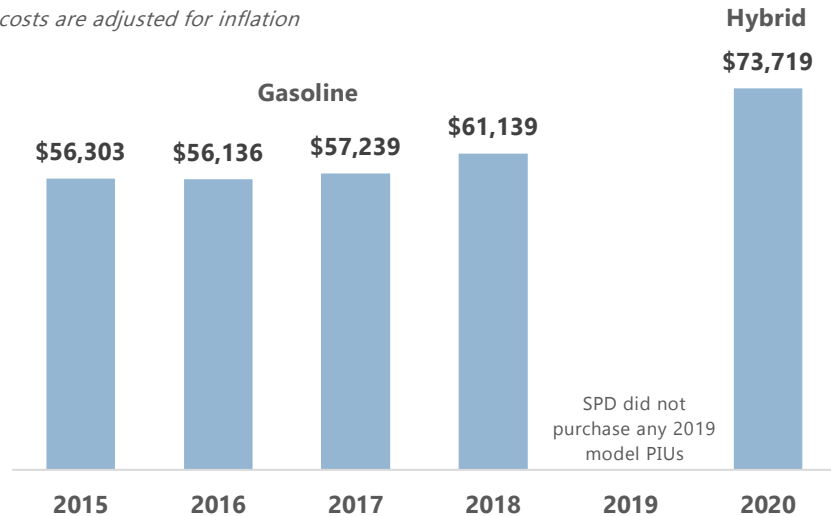


Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of data from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology, and vendor invoices.

**PIU purchase costs have increased gradually since 2016, most notably with the 2020 model.** SPD attributes these recent cost increases to a higher purchase cost for the hybrid models, which cost about \$11,000 more per base vehicle than the gasoline model. See Exhibit 3.

### Exhibit 3: Average PIU purchase costs by vehicle model year

*costs are adjusted for inflation*



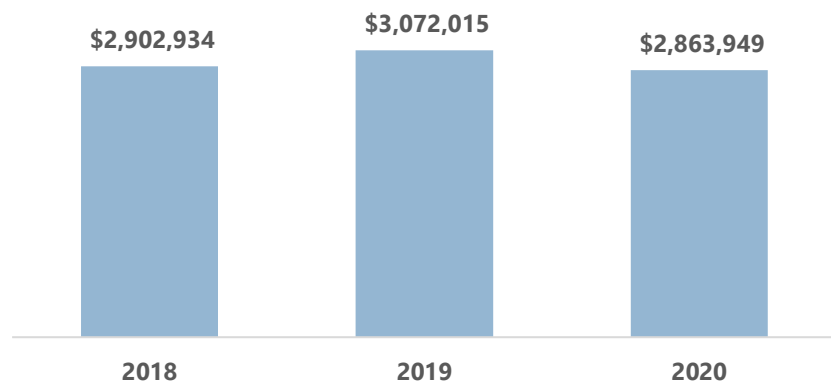
Note: this chart does not include upfitting work completed by Seattle Information Technology, which includes the radio, in-car video, laptop and mount, router and modem, printer, and keyboard; thus, these costs are understated. In 2020, this upfitting work cost about \$12,114.

Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of Department of Finance and Administrative Services data.

## Maintenance Costs

**SPD paid about \$2.9 million annually on PIU vehicle maintenance and repair work in 2020.** Maintenance costs include preventative maintenance and repair work performed by FAS staff and external vendors. In 2020, the average maintenance cost across the entire PIU fleet was about \$11,000 per vehicle.

### Exhibit 4: Annual PIU maintenance and repair costs



Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of Department of Finance and Administrative Services data.

## Survey Results – what did other law enforcement agencies spend?

**Survey respondents spent varying amounts on their vehicle purchase and maintenance costs.** We surveyed local law enforcement agencies to compare their patrol vehicle choices to SPD's. All five of the survey respondents use the PIU as their primary patrol vehicle (either gasoline or hybrid model). We summarize their

2020 purchase, upfitting, and routine maintenance costs in Exhibit 5. SPD's base vehicle cost was lower than what any of the five jurisdictions we surveyed paid for their base vehicles; however, SPD's upfitting cost was higher than the upfitting costs of any of the five jurisdictions we surveyed. More follow up would be needed to determine why these cost differences exist.

**Exhibit 5: Survey results – 2020 PIU purchase and preventative maintenance costs**

	<b>City of Seattle</b>	<b>Survey Responses</b>
<b>Base Vehicle Cost</b>	\$38,482	Median: \$47,600 Range: \$41,200 – 50,186
<b>Upfitting Cost</b>	\$48,354	Median: \$17,620 Range: \$8,528 – 34,543
<b>Total Vehicle Cost</b>	\$86,836	Median: \$65,262 Range: \$55,449 – 84,729
<b>Preventative Maintenance per Vehicle</b>	\$1,391	Median: \$1,999 Range: \$826 – 4,114

Note: Preventative maintenance includes routine maintenance work; it does not include repair work caused by accidents or vehicle issues.

Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of survey of local law enforcement agencies (King County, WA; Spokane, WA; Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; and San Jose, CA).



## UPFITTING SELECTIONS AND COSTS

### Section Summary

In this section, we describe the PIU upfitting (i.e., customization) process and how much it costs. SPD varies their upfitting selections based on the purpose of the vehicle. SPD paid about \$48,354 to upfit a 2020 PIU in the standard patrol build. Most of these parts cost less than \$300 each in purchase price. We share more detailed information about the most expensive items costing over \$1,000 each.

### Upfitting Items

**SPD customizes their patrol vehicles to meet operational needs through a process called upfitting.** Upfitting is necessary to customize the base vehicle with SPD's desired equipment and specifications to make it ready for use as a patrol vehicle. Many items and features commonly found in patrol vehicles are part of the upfitting process and require an additional purchase and installation cost above the base vehicle. This includes parts like the red/white/blue lightbar on the top of the vehicle, and the hard-plastic rear seats for transporting people in custody.

**Upfitting selections on SPD's PIUs vary.** SPD uses upfitting to create different builds of PIUs for different purposes. Most PIUs (83 percent) are given a standard patrol build. Other PIU builds are for canine units, special operations, investigations, and for sergeants and watch commanders. These vehicle builds have differences in things like the lighting packages, the backseat configuration, and the SPD decal on the vehicle body. In this audit, we focus on the standard patrol build and the upfitting items involved.

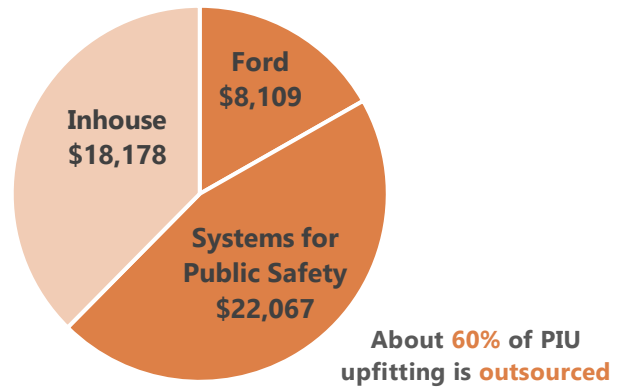
**Vendors provide most of the upfitting parts and labor.** FAS contracts with Bill Pierre Ford and Systems for Public Safety to purchase and install most of the options that SPD has selected for their patrol vehicles. City employees perform some upfitting as well, including installing the SPD radio, in-car video system, and router.

### Upfitting Costs

**It cost about \$48,354 to upfit a 2020 PIU in the standard patrol build.** About 60 percent of upfitting costs were paid to vendors; about 40 percent were paid to internal City departments. See Exhibit 6. The cost of upfitting per vehicle varied depending on which vehicle build was selected.

**Exhibit 6: Average PIU upfitting costs, 2020**

**SPD paid about \$48,354 to upfit a 2020 model PIU**

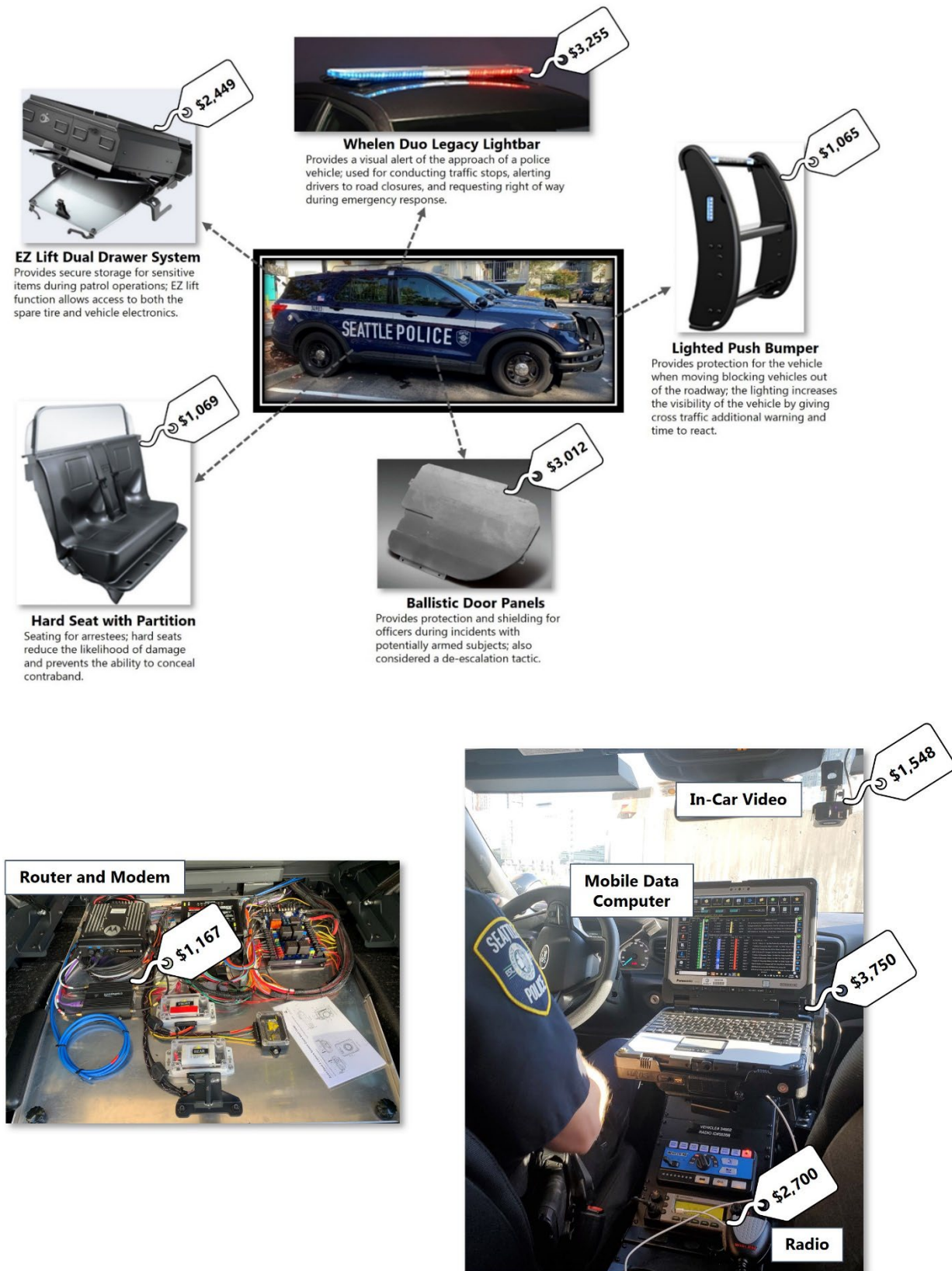


Note: The In-house upfitting costs included about \$12,114 for parts and labor provided by the Seattle Department of Information Technology, and about \$6,064 for parts and labor provided by the Department of Finance and Administrative Services.

Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of data from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology, and vendor invoices.

We found that most of the upfitting parts on SPD's standard patrol vehicle cost less than \$300 each in purchase price. There were nine items that cost over \$1,000. See Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7: PIU upfitting items over \$1,000



Source: Invoice data from [Systems for Public Safety](#) and [The Ford Motor Company](#), and information provided by Seattle Information Technology. Parts descriptions were provided by the Seattle Police Department.

## Survey Results – what upfitting selections did other jurisdictions make?

**Survey respondents vary in their upfitting selections.** We surveyed local law enforcement agencies to compare their patrol vehicle choices to SPD's. We selected five of the upfitting items that SPD put in their standard patrol vehicles, and asked survey participants if their vehicles also include these items. We asked them about items that SPD uses that are relatively higher in cost and which may or may not be necessary for police operations. Survey participants varied in their upfitting selections. All jurisdictions install a locking gun mount/rack and push bumper; most install ballistic door panels and spot lamps. Half of the jurisdictions install the dual drawer system and half do not. See Exhibit 8.

**Exhibit 8: Survey results – 2020 PIU upfitting selections**

	Ballistic Door Panels	A-Pillar Mounted Spot Lamps	EZ Lift Dual Drawer System	Push Bumper	Locking Rifle/Shotgun Mount
Seattle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
King County	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Portland	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Sacramento	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
San Jose	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Spokane	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of survey of local law enforcement agencies (King County, WA; Spokane, WA; Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; and San Jose, CA).

## FLEET SIZE AND PROCUREMENT CHALLENGES

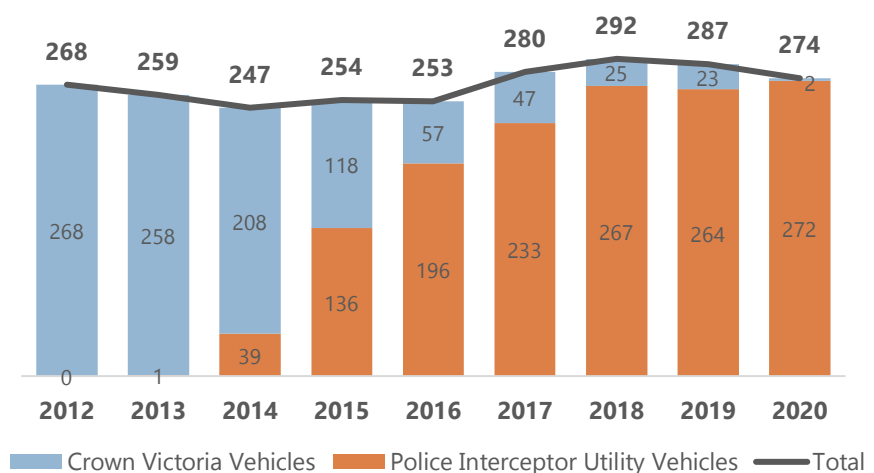
### Section Summary

In this section, we share information on the size of SPD's patrol fleet and how it has changed over time. SPD had 272 PIUs in their fleet at the end of 2020. We also discuss current procurement challenges faced by the City due to supply chain issues in the auto industry. This has increased the lead time for PIUs, and it is uncertain when procurement will improve. SPD has 92 PIUs due for replacement in 2021 and 2020, and these vehicles have not been ordered. Getting behind on ordering replacement vehicles will have a cascading impact into future years and could have negative financial and operational impacts on the City.

### Size of SPD's Patrol Fleet

**SPD had 272 PIUs in their fleet at the end of 2020.** We reviewed the year end counts of SPD patrol vehicles since 2012. SPD had an average annual count of 268 patrol vehicles from 2012-2020. Exhibit 9 shows the number of patrol vehicles SPD had in service at year end from 2012-2020. This chart also shows SPD's transition from using the Crown Victoria to the PIU as their primary patrol vehicle. As shown in the graph, as of 2020, SPD's patrol fleet is almost entirely PIUs.

**Exhibit 9: Size of SPD's patrol fleet, 2012-2020**

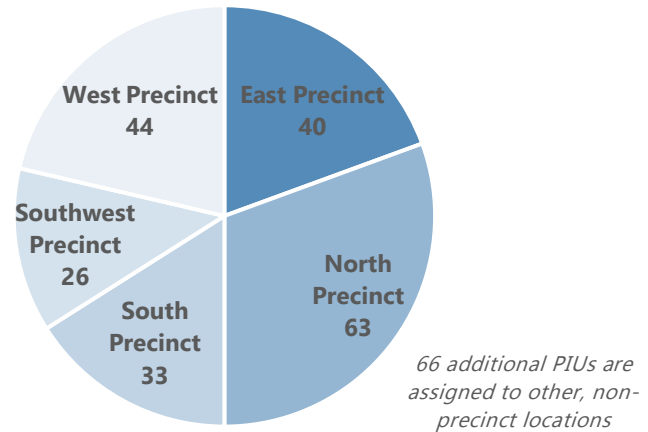


Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of Department of Finance and Administrative Services data.

**SPD purchases one patrol vehicle for every three officers.** SPD told us that they determine how many patrol vehicles to have using the metric of three officers for every one patrol vehicle; this

corresponds to the number of police shifts SPD schedules per day. We did not evaluate the appropriateness of this metric, or perform a right size analysis to determine how many patrol vehicles SPD should have. See Exhibit 10 for how patrol vehicles are dispersed among the five police precincts.

**Exhibit 10: PIUs assigned to each SPD precinct, 2020**



Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of Department of Finance and Administrative Services data.

## Current Procurement Challenges

**The auto industry is experiencing parts delays and vehicles are taking longer to procure.** The COVID-19 pandemic caused a worldwide closure of many businesses and factories, slowing or in some cases halting production. At the same time, electronic devices were in high demand, creating a backlog of orders. This created a global shortage of raw materials, such as semiconductors, that are used to make vehicles. Vehicle production has significantly slowed, and public and private consumers are having to wait longer to receive vehicle orders. It is difficult to predict how long these supply chain issues will persist. FAS told us they are experiencing these impacts across many vehicles they order for the City, including PIUs.

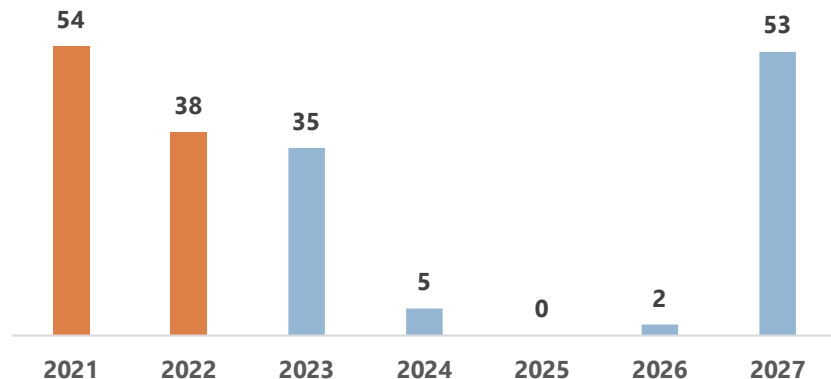
**The 92 PIUs needed for replacement in 2021 and 2022 have not been ordered.** In 2020, the City Budget Office (CBO) put a hold on ordering patrol vehicles due to uncertainties about the City's financial condition amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant that FAS was unable to order new PIU's to replace the older PIU's due for retirement.

CBO lifted this procurement hold in early 2021, and FAS ordered the replacement PIU's needed for 2020. However, CBO did not approve FAS to purchase the PIU's needed for 2021 or 2022, per FAS's planned vehicle replacement schedule. See Exhibit 11. Further, CBO did not approve FAS to order PIUs to cover unplanned replacement needs, such as totaled vehicles. At the time of our audit, CBO, FAS,

and SPD were in the midst of discussing SPD's patrol vehicle needs, and whether a reduction in fleet size was warranted because of patrol officer vacancies and other issues.

**Exhibit 11: Number of planned PIU replacements by year**

The 92 PIU replacements needed for 2021 and 2022 have not been ordered



Source: Seattle Office of City Auditor analysis of Department of Finance and Administrative Services data.

**SPD will need to keep older patrol vehicles in service longer, which can cause long-term issues.** FAS told us that if they are not able to order replacement patrol vehicles, they will need to delay the retirement of older vehicles. FAS determined the optimal useful life period for gasoline PIUs as five years and hybrid PIUs as seven years. Keeping PIUs in service longer than this timeframe can create negative impacts for both FAS and SPD:

- **Maintenance costs** – Older vehicles cost more to maintain and keep running. This increases the overall lifecycle cost of the vehicle beyond what was originally budgeted.
- **Reliability** – Older vehicles can be less reliable and experience breakdowns and need emergency repairs. This negatively affects SPD operations, and creates more unplanned work for FAS mechanic staff.
- **Technology** – As the technology components in older vehicles age, City staff need to uninstall and replace them with updated technology tools. This takes a vehicle out of service, and creates more work for City staff.
- **Resale value** – Running a vehicle well beyond its useful life will decrease the amount the City can sell the vehicle for. This increases the overall lifecycle cost of the vehicle.
- **Environment** – FAS is replacing all gasoline PIUs that are due for replacement with hybrid models, which will reduce fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The City's Green



Fleet Action Plan aims to have an all hybrid PIU fleet by 2025; delaying the replacement of gasoline models with hybrid vehicles means it will take longer for the City to achieve this goal.

**PIU lead time is long and uncertain.** At the time of our audit, the lead time on a PIU was about 18 months. That means that about 18 months elapse from the time FAS places a new vehicle order to when the vehicle is ready for service and can be used by SPD. About eight months of that time is at the Ford dealer, and about 10 months is upfitting. According to FAS, this is about six months longer than under normal conditions, due to current supply chain issues.

**Getting behind on ordering replacement vehicles will have a cascading impact into future years.** Vehicle replacements that are not ordered within the current year are added to next years workload, creating a backlog of vehicle orders. This puts more strain on suppliers and internal City resources responsible for getting vehicles ready for service. FAS officials expressed concerns about having sufficient internal resources to upfit and maintain vehicles, because they have an aging workforce and there is a nationwide shortage of skilled labor. Thus, delaying vehicle ordering could have long-term impacts on the City's ability to provide SPD with the vehicle resources it needs.

**Patrol fleet reductions can occur without impacting FAS' vehicle retirement schedule.** In 2020 SPD experienced record high attrition levels among sworn employees. Because there are fewer officers on staff, SPD may not need all their older patrol vehicles replaced at a one to one ratio. FAS should still retire vehicles according to their retirement schedule, and make any fleet reductions by purchasing fewer vehicles than are retired. SPD will likely still need patrol vehicles purchased every year, to replace some retired vehicles and to replace totaled vehicles.

## Recommendation 1

**The City Budget Office should allow the Department of Finance and Administrative Services to expend funds in accordance with the vehicle replacement schedule so that patrol vehicles can be retired according to their determined useful life.**

## Recommendation 2

**If the City Budget Office wants to reduce the number of patrol vehicles in the Seattle Police Department's fleet, they should continue to retire vehicles according to their retirement schedule, and make reductions by purchasing fewer new vehicles.**



**Even under normal business conditions, FAS struggles to replace vehicles within a one-year timeframe.** As part of the City's regular budget process, CBO gives FAS authority to purchase new vehicles in the same budget year that the vehicle replacements are needed. This means that FAS has one year to order, receive, and upfit all the replacement vehicles needed to retire the older vehicles promptly at the end of their useful life. FAS officials told us that this is too short of a timeframe to accomplish this work.

When FAS orders PIUs, they often need to break up a larger order into smaller orders, because FAS does not have the resources needed to handle the workload of receiving many PIUs at once. FAS will spread out orders throughout the year to balance this work. Because of these resource constraints, SPD does not receive all the PIUs they need for replacement in the same year that they were ordered. This means that older vehicles are not replaced timely, creating cost and operational impacts for the City.

FAS officials told us that ordering PIUs one year in advance of when the replacement is needed (instead of within the same year) would allow FAS sufficient time to get the new vehicles in service by the year that the older vehicles are due for retirement.

### Recommendation 3

**The City Budget Office and the Department of Finance and Administrative Services should change the procurement decision-making process so that vehicles can be purchased one year in advance of their retirement year.**

### Survey Results – how are other jurisdictions dealing with these challenges?

#### **Some jurisdictions report facing similar procurement challenges.**

We surveyed local law enforcement departments and asked them if they were experiencing procurement challenges in ordering patrol vehicles because of industry supply chain issues. The five departments that participated in our survey reported the following:

- City of Sacramento, CA upfits their vehicles in-house, and reported having no issues getting patrol vehicles ready for service.
- City of Portland, OR has not ordered vehicles since the supply chain issues began.
- King County, WA reported experiencing delays, and is ordering vehicles earlier so that their vehicle replacement schedules are not disrupted.
- Spokane, WA also reported having procurement issues, and told us they rotate the use of their vehicles to minimize usage.

- San Jose, CA said they have had issues ordering parts, and they try to keep their stock supply up to compensate.

## OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

### Objectives

Seattle City Councilmember Andrew J. Lewis requested that we examine the City of Seattle's (City) procurement of Seattle Police Department (SPD) patrol vehicles. Our objectives were to answer the following questions:

- Purchase and Maintenance Costs: What are the purchase and annual maintenance costs of SPD patrol vehicles? How do these costs compare to the patrol vehicles of other jurisdictions?
- Upfitting Selections and Costs: What items does SPD add to patrol vehicles, what is their purpose, and what are the purchase and installation costs? How does this compare to what similar jurisdictions select and spend on upfitting?
- Fleet Size and Procurement Challenges: How has the size of the fleet changed over time, and how does the City determine the number of patrol cars to have? What challenges does the City face in acquiring and maintaining patrol vehicles, and what is being done to address these issues?

### Scope

The scope for this audit included all SPD patrol vehicles, including the Police Interceptor Utility (PIU) from 2013-2020. We also included data on Crown Victoria vehicles to analyze fleet size from 2012-2020.

### Methodology

To accomplish the audit's objectives, we performed the following:

- Analyzed PIU purchase and maintenance cost data from 2013-2020 using financial data from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS)
- Analyzed PIU upfitting items and costs from contract and invoice documents
- We surveyed 11 local law enforcement agencies to compare their patrol vehicle choices to SPD's. We received responses from five agencies: King County, WA; Spokane, WA; Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; and San Jose, CA.
- Analyzed FAS's fleet data to determine the annual size of SPD's patrol fleet from 2012-2020
- Interviewed officials from FAS, SPD, and the City Budget Office
- Researched relevant fleet management best practices

- Conducted one site visit to the City's Radio Shop to observe one portion of the upfitting process
- Participated in one ride along in a PIU to observe the equipment in operation

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our finding and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our finding and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

## APPENDIX A

### Department Responses



December 8, 2021

#### MEMORANDUM

To: David Jones, City Auditor  
Melissa Alderson, Auditor-In-Charge

From: Mark Baird, Chief Operating Officer  
Seattle Police Department

Subject: SPD Response to Audit of Seattle Police Department Patrol Vehicle Procurement

Thank you for providing an opportunity to review and respond to the Seattle Police Department (SPD) Patrol Vehicle Procurement Audit report. This audit of SPD's vehicle procurement took place at Councilmember Lewis' request. The request asked the City Auditor to review the purchase and maintenance costs, upfitting and selection costs, fleet size, and procurement challenges associated with SPD's patrol vehicles. Part of the Auditor's work included a survey of like agencies' procurement costs and issues.

The audit outlines three recommendations related to procurement of SPD patrol vehicles. It recommends that the City Budget Office allow the Department of Finance and Administrative Services to expend funds in accordance with the vehicle replacement schedule so that patrol vehicles can be retired according to their determined useful life. SPD agrees with this recommendation and sees it as an important part of keeping patrol vehicles modern, running, and cost effective. The audit also recommends that The City Budget Office and the Department of Finance and Administrative Services change the procurement decision-making process so that vehicles can be purchased one year in advance of their retirement year. Here again the department agrees with the recommendation. This will allow for a timely replacement cycle and ensure that aging vehicles are replaced with new, energy efficient vehicles that are less expensive to operate and maintain.

The audit also recommends that if the City Budget Office wants to reduce the number of patrol vehicles in the Seattle Police Department's fleet, they should continue to retire vehicles according to their retirement schedule and make reductions by purchasing fewer new vehicles. SPD has concerns about any prospect of decreasing the patrol vehicle fleet size and does have issue with the recommendation. As the audit notes, aging vehicles are more expensive to maintain. They are out of service more frequently and for longer periods of time and are a less green alternative. Additionally, with known supply chain issues that have created significant delays, getting additional vehicles can take more than a year. As the department works to increase its staffing, it does not want to see a scenario where it has additional patrol resources available to work in the precincts but then does not have the vehicles for them to patrol and respond to calls. While the department recognizes that this is merely a process recommendation – since the audit did not assess the size of the patrol fleet or the patrol fleet's actual vehicle needs – SPD disagrees with any suggestion of choosing to forgo replacing patrol vehicles that are due to be replaced as a result of their years of service.

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Seattle Police Department, 610 Fifth Avenue, PO Box 34986, Seattle, WA 98124-4986

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SPD Response to Audit of Seattle Police Department's Patrol Vehicle Procurement  
December 9, 2021  
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This is not a call to increase the patrol fleet, it is about the need to maintain and modernize the existing patrol fleet on the currently established schedule.

The Chief is grateful to the City Auditor's Office for the comprehensive examination of the SPD's patrol vehicle procurement. Again, thank you for the opportunity to review the draft audit report and provide comments. If you have any questions or would like any additional information on any of the department's efforts discussed in this memorandum, please call me at (206) 684-0764.

cc:

Chief Adrian Diaz, SPD  
Assistant Chief Lesley Cordner, SPD  
Assistant Chief Tom Mahaffey, SPD  
Assistant Chief Eric Greening, SPD  
Assistant Chief Eric Barden, SPD  
Assistant Chief Todd Kibbee, SPD  
Angela Socci, SPD Executive Director of Budget and Policy  
Mike Fields, SPD Executive Director of Human Resources  
Deputy Mayor David Moseley, Mayor's Office  
Ben Noble, CBO  
Jennifer Devore, CBO  
Sarah Burtner, CBO

MRB:lt

**From:** [Noble, Ben](#)  
**To:** [Alderson, Melissa](#)  
**Cc:** [Devore, Jennifer](#); [Burtner, Sarah](#); [Jones, DavidG](#)  
**Subject:** SPD fleet audit  
**Date:** Friday, December 10, 2021 7:53:36 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)

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Melissa,

Thank you for the opportunity for CBO to share the following last observation regarding the draft audit:

SPD's fleet size as it relates to their staffing levels continues to be a policy question CBO believes that all parties, including SPD and FAS, should be invested in examining. Responding to changes and making necessary adjustments helps the city responsibly and sustainably allocate resources. As the use of SPD's vehicles is influenced by SPD's staffing levels, it is crucial to incorporate this dynamic when evaluating the process of replacing and ordering vehicles. Additionally, while CBO's role in approving vehicle purchases was influenced by the immediate financial crisis of COVID, and a very specific strategy to "hoard" cash by avoiding all discretionary purchases, once those issues resolved, CBO lifted the freeze on replacing and purchasing new vehicles. It is perhaps easy in retrospect to forget just how deep the concern was about the about the potential financial impacts of COVID, and why such a freeze was an appropriate response given the unprecedented financial uncertainty we faced in 2020.

Thank you,

-ben.

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## APPENDIX B

### List of Recommendations

**Recommendation 1: The City Budget Office should allow the Department of Finance and Administrative Services to expend funds in accordance with the vehicle replacement schedule so that patrol vehicles can be retired according to their determined useful life.**

Concurrence: FAS concurs

Implementation Plan: current business practice

Estimated Completion Date: current business practice

**Recommendation 2: If the City Budget Office wants to reduce the number of patrol vehicles in the Seattle Police Department's fleet, they should continue to retire vehicles according to their retirement schedule, and make reductions by purchasing fewer new vehicles.**

Concurrence: FAS concurs

Implementation Plan: 2022 purchasing cycle is the first opportunity to reduce the number of vehicles.

Estimated Completion Date: On-going

**Recommendation 3: The City Budget Office and the Department of Finance and Administrative Services should change the procurement decision-making process so that vehicles can be purchased one year in advance of their retirement year.**

Concurrence: FAS concurs

Implementation Plan: Start in 2023 budgeting and purchasing cycle.

Estimated Completion Date: On-going until market availability of vehicles improves, and long lead times are no longer needed.



## APPENDIX C

### Seattle Office of City Auditor Mission, Background, and Quality Assurance

#### **Our Mission:**

To help the City of Seattle achieve honest, efficient management and full accountability throughout City government. We serve the public interest by providing the City Council, Mayor and City department heads with accurate information, unbiased analysis, and objective recommendations on how best to use public resources in support of the well-being of Seattle residents.

#### **Background:**

Seattle voters established our office by a 1991 amendment to the City Charter. The office is an independent department within the legislative branch of City government. The City Auditor reports to the City Council and has a four-year term to ensure her/his independence in deciding what work the office should perform and reporting the results of this work. The Office of City Auditor conducts performance audits and non-audit projects covering City of Seattle programs, departments, grants, and contracts. The City Auditor's goal is to ensure that the City of Seattle is run as effectively, efficiently, and equitably as possible in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

#### **How We Ensure Quality:**

The office's work is performed in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. These standards provide guidelines for audit planning, fieldwork, quality control systems, staff training, and reporting of results. In addition, the standards require that external auditors periodically review our office's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that we adhere to these professional standards.

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