

2025 Surveillance Impact Report

Tracking Devices

Seattle Police Department

Surveillance Impact Report Versions:

- 2022 Surveillance Impact Report: Seattle Police Department Tracking Devices adopted by [Ordinance 126776](#) on 2/28/2023.
- 2025 Surveillance Impact Report: Seattle Police Department Tracking Devices

Surveillance Impact Report (“SIR”) overview

About the Surveillance Ordinance

The Seattle City Council passed Ordinance [125376](#), also referred to as the “Surveillance Ordinance,” on September 1, 2017. SMC 14.18.020.b.1 charges the City’s executive with developing a process to identify surveillance technologies subject to the ordinance. Seattle IT, on behalf of the executive, developed and implemented a process through which a privacy and surveillance review is completed prior to the acquisition of new technologies. This requirement, and the criteria used in the review process, are documented in [Seattle IT Policy PR-02](#), the “Surveillance Policy”.

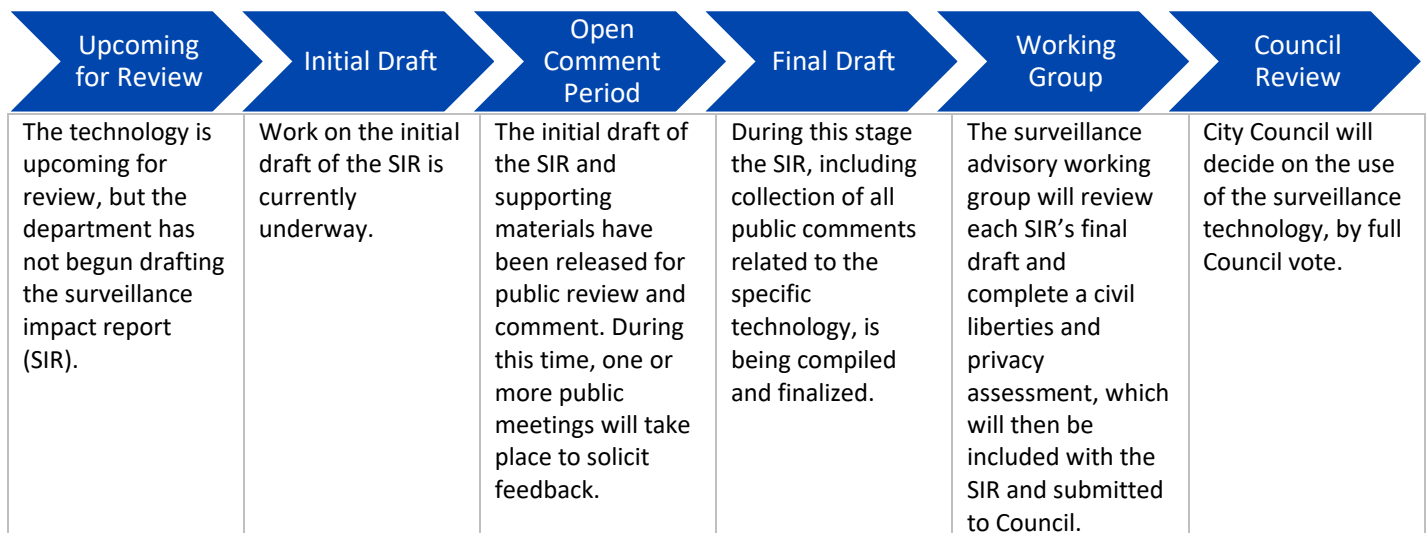
How this Document is Completed

This document is completed by the requesting department staff, support and coordinated by the Seattle Information Technology Department (“Seattle IT”). As Seattle IT and department staff complete the document, they should keep the following in mind.

1. Responses to questions should be in the text or check boxes only; all other information (questions, descriptions, etc.) Should **not** be edited by the department staff completing this document.
2. All content in this report will be available externally to the public. With this in mind, avoid using acronyms, slang, or other terms which may not be well-known to external audiences. Additionally, responses should be written using principally non-technical language to ensure they are accessible to audiences unfamiliar with the topic.

Surveillance Ordinance Review Process

The following is a high-level outline of the complete SIR review process.



Privacy Impact Assessment

Purpose

A Privacy Impact Assessment (“PIA”) is a method for collecting and documenting detailed information collected in order to conduct an in-depth privacy review of a program or project. A PIA asks questions about the collection, use, sharing, security and access controls for data that is gathered using a technology or program. It also requests information about policies, training and documentation that govern use of the technology. The PIA responses are used to determine privacy risks associated with a project and mitigations that may reduce some or all of those risks. In the interests of transparency about data collection and management, the City of Seattle has committed to publishing all PIAs on an outward facing website for public access.

When is a Privacy Impact Assessment Required?

A PIA may be required in two circumstances.

1. When a project, technology, or other review has been flagged as having a high privacy risk.
2. When a technology is required to complete the surveillance impact report process. This is one deliverable that comprises the report.

1.0 Abstract

1.1 Please provide a brief description (one paragraph) of the purpose and proposed use of the project/technology.

Seattle Police Department (SPD) utilizes geolocation trackers to track and locate vehicle information during criminal investigations. Geolocation trackers are devices that SPD utilizes as a tool to locate and track the movements and locations of vehicles. Covert trackers are utilized only after obtaining legal authority via a court order or consent, and once the consent or terms of the order have expired all data collected is maintained only in the investigation file.

A category of GPS trackers (police pursuit management technology) are utilized to tag and track fleeing vehicles as a safer alternative to vehicle pursuits. In accordance with RCW 10.116.060.2.d, which requires agencies to “develop a plan to end the pursuit through the use of available pursuit intervention options,” This specialized GPS tracker allows SPD to track the precise location of a vehicle for which probable cause or reasonable suspicion of involvement in a crime has been established and accomplish the task of recovery or arrest without the need for initiating or continuing a vehicle pursuit.

1.2 Explain the reason the project/technology is being created or updated and why the PIA is required.

Tracker technology directly tracks and collects location information of vehicles and indirectly tracks and collects the same information about individuals. Despite the requirement that covert trackers be utilized only pursuant to a search warrant or with consent, this could raise potential privacy concerns, such as general surveillance or tracking of the general public.

GPS pursuit mitigation trackers also directly track and collect location information of vehicles and, indirectly, their occupants. While this technology is limited by policy to vehicles for which there is reasonable suspicion or probable cause, they could raise potential privacy concerns, such as general surveillance or tracking of the general public.

2.0 Project / Technology Overview

Provide an overview of the project or technology. The overview gives the context and background necessary to understand the purpose, mission and justification for the project / technology proposed

2.1 Describe the benefits of the project/technology.

Trackers allow SPD to remotely track vehicles electronically and to locate vehicles and individuals that are sought in connection with an active criminal investigation. They are utilized in these cases with the consent of a witness, a confidential informant, or within the scope of a judicially issued search warrant. They may also be used as a police pursuit management tool, where they can provide a critical alternative to high-speed pursuits that can endanger the safety of both residents and police personnel. Without this technology, SPD would be unable to collect important evidence in some criminal investigations and subject community members to the dangers of high speed pursuit situations.

2.2 Provide any data or research demonstrating anticipated benefits.

The primary benefit of the covert tracking systems is in the gathering of evidence used in the resolution of criminal investigations. Proper gathering of location evidence of criminal activity by the police supports SPD's mission to prevent crime, enforce the law, and support quality public safety. "The value of employing electronic surveillance in the investigation of some forms of serious crime, in particular organized crime, is unquestionable. It allows the gathering of information unattainable through other means."¹

In the case of the United States vs. Katzin, the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled law enforcement officials are allowed to use location tracking devices to trace a suspect's vehicle and monitor their activity once a warrant is properly obtained—which prevents law enforcement from trampling on a person's Fourth Amendment rights that protect them from "unreasonable searches and seizures."²

GPS pursuit mitigation tracking devices also offer an alternative to the need for vehicular pursuit of suspect vehicles. This only occurs when an officer has the equivalent of probable cause or reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing (including fleeing temporary detention like a traffic stop) and the apprehension of the fleeing suspect is needed but the danger of a pursuit is not reasonable. The device is then removed, and the location tracking ends at the point at which police detain the suspect vehicle. The vehicle-mounted GPS launcher has the ability to tag, track, and locate without compromising officer and community safety. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) recently conducted a study that showed that, "when properly deployed, (it) had a positive impact on the pursuit outcome for apprehensions."³

¹ https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/Law-Enforcement/Electronic_surveillance.pdf

² <https://info.rastrac.com/blog/police-gps-tracking>

³ <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250549.pdf>

2.3 Describe the technology involved.

Covert tracking technology consists of interconnected hardware and software. The hardware, a real-time tracking and data logger, is a compact unit that adheres to or rides along with a targeted vehicle. These trackers are location tracking devices that report latitude and longitude coordinates on a pre-determined schedule that can be adjusted by users remotely. The hardware also logs high temperature alerts, low battery alerts, device removal, power/shut down alerts and battery level. The software consists of an online portal that collects the information captured by the hardware, and allows for graphic representation of that information, including mapping of locations and movement, alerts for established events (i.e., a vehicle has moved beyond an established boundary, etc.), and scheduling of “check-ins” (the reporting interval records the locations set in seconds, minutes or hours).

The data captured by a device is downloaded out of the online portal after the conclusion of a tracking schedule (due to the expiration of a search warrant or an investigation) and is provided to the Officer/Detective leading the investigation. The data is then purged from the software and the hardware is reset for future deployment, meaning no data captured is stored in any location other than the investigation file. This is in keeping with Washington State Retention Schedule for Records Documented as Part of More Formalized Records ([GS2016-009](#)). It requires that such records be retained “until verification of successful conversion/keying/transcription then destroy.”

In the beginning of 2020, cellular providers in the USA announced that the existing 3G cell networks would be decommissioned in 2022 as the newer 5G networks were phased in. Many of the existing SPD tracking devices were tied to the older 3G network and have been or will need to be replaced with similar-functioning updated 5G versions of the same location tracking technology.

In the case of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers, the GPS launcher deploys a GPS tracking tag onto a suspect vehicle. Once the GPS tag is attached to the vehicle, it communicates positional data to a mapping platform in real time. Law enforcement can then plan and coordinate an informed tactical response to make a safe arrest while maintaining community and officer safety. It is important to note that the GPS tag has a limited battery life (approximately 8 hours), preventing the possibility of long-term surveillance.

2.4 Describe how the project or use of technology relates to the department’s mission.

Utilizing location tracking devices to locate vehicles in pursuit of an investigation helps SPD to mitigate serious and/or violent criminal activity and reduce crime.

GPS pursuit mitigation trackers allow SPD to effect the arrest of fleeing suspects in vehicles without the need for vehicle pursuits that can place the public, the suspect, and officers, in danger.

2.5 Who will be involved with the deployment and use of the project / technology?

Maintenance and utilization of covert vehicle trackers is managed by the Technical and Electronic Support Unit (TESU).

For deployment of location covert trackers for investigations by TESU, the requesting Officer/Detective completes requests for deployment (including a Request Form that must be completed, which includes the active search warrant number). A TESU supervisor then approves the request before a tracking device is assigned and deployed to an investigating Officer/Detective. All requests are filed with TESU and maintained within the unit, available for audit.

The hardware and software for GPS pursuit mitigation tracking systems are managed by the RTCC and deployed on police vehicles and via handheld launchers. Individual deployment of the GPS tracking units is determined by the police officer involved in determining probable cause or reasonable suspicion for the stop of a vehicle.

3.0 Use Governance

Provide an outline of any rules that will govern the use of the project / technology. Please note: non-City entities contracting with the City are bound by restrictions specified in the surveillance ordinance and privacy principles and must provide written procedures for how the entity will comply with any restrictions identified.

3.1 Describe the processes that are required prior to each use, or access to/ of the project / technology, such as a notification, or check-in, check-out of equipment.

Each application of covert tracking technology is screened by the TESU supervisor and held to a legal standard of consent or court issued search warrant. The process is as follows: one member of the Unit is tasked with receiving requests for deployment (including a Request Form that must be completed by the requesting Officer/Detective, which includes the active search warrant number). A TESU supervisor then approves the request before a tracking device is assigned and deployed to an investigating Officer/Detective. All requests are filed with TESU and maintained within the unit, available for audit.

Prior to deployment of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers, officers must establish reasonable suspicion or probable cause for the stop of a vehicle. At that point, officers will have the discretion to deploy the GPS pursuit mitigation trackers if it appears the vehicle may flee. Additionally, if an officer engages in a pursuit with a vehicle, they can deploy a tracker and terminate the pursuit, relying on the tracker to follow the vehicle.

3.2 List the legal standards or conditions, if any, that must be met before the project / technology is used.

Covert tracking devices are only utilized with express consent or search warrant authority. SPD must comply with all legal requirements for securing consent or a search warrant (see [US v. Jones](#) and [State v. Jackson](#)).

GPS pursuit mitigation trackers are only deployed when an officer has established reasonable suspicion or probable cause for the stop of a vehicle, the same standard as established by RCW 10.116.060.

3.3 Describe the policies and training required of all personnel operating the project / technology, and who has access to ensure compliance with use and management policies.

Unit supervisors are responsible for screening all deployments as well as ensuring that staff receive adequate training specific to the involved technologies.

TESU personnel are trained by the vendor in the use of the hardware and software. When an Officer/Detective requests and deploys a tracking device from TESU, TESU personnel train the Officer/Detective in the tracker's use.

If the geolocation tracking device is being utilized pursuant to a search warrant, the warrant dictates the scope and parameters of the information collected.

[SPD Policy 6.060](#) requires that "information will be gathered and recorded in a manner that does not unreasonably infringe upon: individual rights, liberties, and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the State of Washington, including freedom of speech, press, association, and assembly; liberty of conscience; the exercise of religion; the right to petition government for redress of grievances; and the right to privacy."

Officers are required to be trained in the policies and use of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers prior to deploying the equipment. Officers are trained by the Education and Training Section using training developed by SPD in collaboration with the technology vendors. Use of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers is monitored using the vendor software, as well as integrations to the Real Time Crime Center, and documented in police reports stored and maintained in the SPD RMS. Use of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers are reported via radio as soon as feasible and use acknowledged by an SPD supervisor.

4.0 Data Collection and Use

4.1 Provide details about what information is being collected from sources other than an individual, including other IT systems, systems of record, commercial data aggregators, publicly available data and/or other City departments.

Officers/Detectives obtain search warrants or consent to deploy vehicle tracking devices. The information is gathered consistent with [SPD Policy 6.060](#), such that it does not reasonably infringe upon “individual rights, liberties, and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and the State of Washington, including freedom of speech, press, association, and assembly; liberty of conscience the exercise of religion; the right to petition government for redress of grievances; and the right to privacy.”

Vehicle tracking data is temporarily stored by third-party vendors (as described in 2.3 above), until the schedule for collection of data has expired (per the search warrant or consent authorities), at which time all data collected is downloaded and attached to the investigation file. This is in keeping with the [Washington State Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule](#) Disposition Authority Number GS2016-009 Rev. 0, governing retention of records documented as part of more formalized records, and requiring that SPD “retain until verification of successful conversion/keying/transcription, then destroy.”

The only data collected by the GPS pursuit mitigation tracker is date, time, location (to include latitude/longitude), remaining battery life, the speed of the tag when moving, all of which is retrieved from the tracker itself. No other data is pulled in by GPS pursuit mitigation trackers.

4.2 What measures are in place to minimize inadvertent or improper collection of data?

Equipment deployment is constrained to the conditions stipulated by the consent or court order providing the legal authority. All deployments of tracking technology are documented and subject to audit by the Office of Inspector General and Federal Monitor at any time.

Data collected is provided to the case Detective for the investigation and no data is retained by the Technical and Electronic Support Unit.

The GPS pursuit mitigation tracker is applied to the vehicle in question by aiming with the launcher. No other information about the vehicle is collected. If a vehicle is inadvertently tagged, the tracker will be retrieved as quickly as possible and deactivated by the officer. Such deployments will be documented.

4.3 How and when will the project / technology be deployed or used? By whom? Who will determine when the project / technology is deployed and used?

Officers/Detectives will provide written consent and/or a court approved warrant for covert vehicle tracking technology deployments, via the Request Form process. The Technical and Electronic Support Unit Supervisor will screen all tracking technology deployments to ensure that the appropriate authorities are in place before approving deployment of tracking technology.

Officers who have established probable cause or reasonable suspicion to stop a vehicle are able to deploy GPS pursuit mitigation trackers. Use of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers are reported via radio as soon as feasible and use acknowledged by an SPD supervisor.

4.4 How often will the technology be in operation?

Trackers are used, as appropriate, when supported by a search warrant or consent (of a witness or a confidential informant), in conjunction with an active investigation, or when use of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers is needed to prevent the need for the pursuit of a vehicle for which there is probable cause or reasonable suspicion to stop. The length of time that any one covert tracker might be utilized in an investigation is established, and constrained, by parameters established within the requisite search warrant. The battery of a GPS pursuit mitigation tracker is about eight (8) hours.

4.5 What is the permanence of the installation? Is it installed permanently, or temporarily?

Temporary.

4.6 Is a physical object collecting data or images visible to the public? What are the markings to indicate that it is in use? What signage is used to determine department ownership and contact information?

Physical objects involved in covert tracking deployments are unmarked as their purpose is in support of covert investigations.

GPS pursuit mitigation trackers are visible, as they are normally launched to attach to the rear of a vehicle, in plain view of the public. It is marked with a 10-digit serial number and barcode.

4.7 How will data that is collected be accessed and by whom?

Only authorized SPD users can access the vehicle tracking devices or the data while it resides in the system. Access to the vehicle tracking systems/technology is specific to system and password-protected.

Data removed from the vehicle tracking system/technology and entered into investigative files is securely input and used on SPD's password-protected network with access limited to detectives and identified supervisory personnel.

All SPD employees are backgrounded and access is controlled by SPD Manual Title 12 provisions governing Department Information Systems including [SPD Policy 12.040](#) - Department-Owned Computers, Devices & Software, [SPD Policy 12.050](#) - Criminal Justice Information Systems, [SPD Policy 12.080](#) – Department Records Access, Inspection & Dissemination, [SPD Policy 12.110](#) – Use of Department E-mail & Internet Systems, and [SPD Policy 12.111](#) – Use of Cloud Storage Services.

Data collected by the deployment of a GPS pursuit mitigation tracker is used by SPD personnel to track and locate vehicles for which there is probable cause or reasonable suspicions. These personnel may be patrol, investigations, or RTCC staff capable of broadcasting tracking information to responding units. OIG personnel will also have access for audit purposes.

Information regarding the track is included in police reports stored in the SPD RMS.

4.8 If operated or used by another entity on behalf of the City, provide details about access, and applicable protocols.

No entity, other than SPD personnel, utilize vehicle tracking technology. OIG personnel will have access for oversight requirements.

4.9 What are acceptable reasons for access to the equipment and/or data collected?

To deploy and utilize vehicle trackers, Officers/Detectives must submit a request form that requires proof of consent or search warrant, and active investigation, as evidenced by a GO number. After the scheduled parameters for collection of data expire, data is downloaded from the supporting software, and included in the investigation file. At that point, only SPD personnel involved in the investigation have access to this information.

When an officer has established probable cause or reasonable suspicion for a vehicle, the threshold for deployment and use of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers will have been met.

4.10 What safeguards are in place, for protecting data from unauthorized access (encryption, access control mechanisms, etc.) And to provide an audit trail (viewer logging, modification logging, etc.)?

Only Technical and Electronic Support Unit personnel have access to vehicle tracking equipment and services. Deployment of vehicle trackers follows a specific process (see 2.5 above) that requires consent or search warrant documentation. Access to data is documented with TESU and is made available to any auditing authority.

Only personnel with approved accounts in the GPS pursuit mitigation tracking system will have access to the data. The GPS pursuit mitigation tracking system and associated accounts will be managed by the RTCC system administrator.

5.0 Data Storage, Retention and Deletion

5.1 How will data be securely stored?

Data is securely stored by the vehicle tracking technology vendor and will be transferred to the case investigator only via Seattle Police Department owned and authorized technology. At that time, vehicle tracking data collected by the tracking device is downloaded from the vendor software and resides only with the investigation file.

GPS pursuit mitigation tracking data is stored on the AWS gov-cloud certified infrastructure and encrypted against unauthorized access. Vendors are required to be SOC2/Type II certified to meet City cybersecurity requirements.

5.2 How will the owner allow for departmental and other entities, to audit for compliance with legal deletion requirements?

TESU keeps logs of vehicle tracking device requests, deployments, and access to the equipment. The Office of Inspector General and the federal monitor can access all data and audit for compliance at any time.

GPS pursuit mitigation tracking data retention standards are set by Seattle PD. Upon written authorization, technology vendors will delete data and verify such.

5.3 What measures will be used to destroy improperly collected data?

[SPD Policy 7.010](#) governs the submission of evidence and requires that all collected evidence be documented in a General Offense (GO) Report.

All information must be gathered and recorded in a manner that is consistent with [SPD Policy 6.060](#), such that it does not reasonably infringe upon “individual rights, liberties, and freedoms secured by the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Washington, including, among others, the freedom of speech, press, association and assembly; liberty of conscience; the exercise of religion; and the right to petition government for redress of grievances; or violate an individual’s right to privacy”.

All SPD employees must adhere to laws, City policy, and Department Policy ([SPD Policy 5.001](#)), and any employees suspected of being in violation of laws or policy or other misconduct are subject to discipline, as outlined in [SPD Policy 5.002](#).

5.4 which specific departmental unit or individual is responsible for ensuring compliance with data retention requirements?

Unit supervisors are responsible for ensuring compliance with data retention requirements within SPD.

SPD's Intelligence and Analysis Section reviews the audit logs and ensures compliance with all regulations and requirements.

Audit, Policy & Research Section personnel can also conduct audits of all data collection software and systems. Additionally, any appropriate auditor, including the Office of Inspector General and the federal monitor can audit for compliance at any time.

RTCC System Administrators will manage the GPS pursuit mitigation tracking system to ensure that the retention requirements meet those of SPD.

6.0 Data Sharing and Accuracy

6.1 Which entity or entities inside and external to the City will be data sharing partners?

No person, outside of SPD, has direct access to the covert tracking units or the data. Data obtained from the system may be shared outside SPD with the other agencies, entities, or individuals within legal guidelines or as required by law.

Data may be shared with outside entities in connection with criminal prosecutions:

- Seattle City Attorney's Office
- King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
- King County Department of Public Defense
- Private Defense Attorneys
- Seattle Municipal Court
- King County Superior Court
- Similar entities where prosecution is in Federal or other State jurisdictions

Data may be made available to requesters pursuant to the Washington Public Records Act, [Chapter 42.56 RCW](#) ("PRA"). SPD will apply applicable exemptions to the data before disclosing to a requester. Individuals have the right to inspect criminal history record information maintained by the department ([RCW 10.97.030](#), [SPD Policy 12.050](#)). Individuals can access their own information by submitting a public disclosure request.

Per [SPD Policy 12.080](#), the Crime Records Unit is responsible for receiving, recording, and responding to requests "for General Offense Reports from other City departments and from other law enforcement agencies, as well as from insurance companies."

Discrete pieces of data collected by these tracking devices may be shared with other law enforcement agencies in wanted bulletins, and in connection with law enforcement investigations jointly conducted with those agencies, or in response to requests from law enforcement agencies investigating criminal activity as governed by [SPD Policy 12.050](#) and [12.110](#). All requests for data from Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) authorities are referred to the Mayor's Office Legal Counsel in accordance with the Mayoral Directive, dated February 6, 2018.

SPD shares data with authorized researchers pursuant to properly execute research and confidentiality agreements as provide by [SPD Policy 12.055](#). This sharing may include discrete pieces of data related to specific investigative files collected by the devices.

GPS pursuit mitigation tracking data will be shared with neighboring law enforcement agencies as needed for operational purposes. As tracked vehicles leave the City limits, it will become necessary for partner law enforcement agencies to have the tracking information to assist with tracking and apprehension. Conversely, other agencies using GPS pursuit mitigation tracking systems may need to share their tracking information with SPD as their tracked vehicles enter the City limits.

As the GPS pursuit mitigation tracking data is included in SPD police reports, the above listed agencies will also have access via investigative files.

6.2 Why is data sharing necessary?

Data sharing is necessary for SPD to fulfill its mission of contributing to crime reduction by assisting in collecting evidence related to serious and/or violent criminal activity as part of investigation, and to comply with legal requirements.

For GPS pursuit mitigation tracking, data sharing is critical, as fleeing suspects often cross jurisdictional boundaries, necessitating interagency cooperation.

6.3 Are there any restrictions on non-City data use?

Yes ☒ No ☐

6.3.1 If you answered yes, provide a copy of the department's procedures and policies for ensuring compliance with these restrictions.

Law enforcement agencies receiving criminal history information are subject to the requirements of [28 CFR Part 20](#). In addition, Washington State law enforcement agencies are subject to the provisions of [WAC 446-20-260](#), and [RCW Chapter 10.97](#).

Once disclosed in response to PRA request, there are no restrictions on non-City data use; however, applicable exemptions will be applied prior to disclosure to any requestor who is not authorized to receive exempt content.

6.4 How does the project/technology review and approve information sharing agreements, memorandums of understanding, new uses of the information, new access to the system by organizations within City of Seattle and outside agencies?

Research agreements must meet the standards reflected in [SPD Policy 12.055](#). Law enforcement agencies receiving criminal history information are subject to the requirements of [28 CFR Part 20](#). In addition, Washington State law enforcement agencies are subject to the provisions of [WAC 446-20-260](#), and [RCW Chapter 10.97](#).

Following Council approval of the SIR, SPD must seek Council approval for any material change to the purpose or manner in which Tracking Devices may be used.

6.5 Explain how the project/technology checks the accuracy of the information collected. If accuracy is not checked, please explain why.

Tracking devices capture location information as it moves in relation to GPS satellites as it moves locations. They may also rely on cellular technology to track its location. The devices do not check for accuracy, as they are simply capturing a live information and sending position information. They are not interpreting or otherwise, analyzing any data they collect.

For GPS pursuit mitigation tracking, officers arriving at the site of a tracked vehicle will validate the vehicle they observe matches the description of the vehicle for which there is probable cause or reasonable suspicion (including license plate where possible), prior to taking any additional enforcement action.

6.6 Describe any procedures that allow individuals to access their information and correct inaccurate or erroneous information.

Individuals may request records pursuant to the PRA, and individuals have the right to inspect criminal history record information maintained by the department ([RCW 10.97.030](#), [SPD Policy 12.050](#)). Individuals can access their own information by submitting a public disclosure request.

7.0 Legal Obligations, Risks and Compliance

7.1 What specific legal authorities and/or agreements permit and define the collection of information by the project/technology?

Covert tracking devices are only utilized with express consent or search warrant authority. SPD must comply with all legal requirements for securing consent or a search warrant; see, [US v. Jones](#) and [State v. Jackson](#)). GPS pursuit mitigation trackers are only utilized when there is probable cause or reasonable suspicion that a vehicle has been involved in a crime, consistent with the RCW governing vehicle pursuits by law enforcement.

7.2 Describe what privacy training is provided to users either generally or specifically relevant to the project/technology.

[SPD Policy 12.050](#) mandates that all employees receive Security Awareness Training (Level 2), and all employees also receive City Privacy Training.

7.3 Given the specific data elements collected, describe the privacy risks identified and for each risk, explain how it was mitigated. Specific risks may be inherent in the sources or methods of collection, or the quality or quantity of information included.

Privacy risks revolve around improper collection of location information of members of the general public. As it relates to covert tracking, SPD mitigates this risk by deploying them consistent to the stipulations outlined in the Washington Privacy Act, [Chapt. 9.73 RCW](#), and only by consent and/or with authorization of a court-ordered warrant. For GPS pursuit mitigation trackers, deployment is limited to vehicles for which probable cause or reasonable suspicion has been established. Additionally, the limited battery life of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers reduces the likelihood of inadvertent tracking of uninvolved parties. The ACLU cited this limitation in their letter addressing the use of GPS pursuit mitigation as a reason they are not concerned with civil liberties related to the use of this technology.

[SMC 14.12](#) and [SPD Policy 6.060](#) direct all SPD personnel to “any documentation of information concerning a person’s sexual preferences or practices, or their political or religious activities must be for a relevant reason and serve a legitimate law enforcement purpose.”

Additionally, [SPD Policy 5.140](#) forbids bias-based policing and outlines processes for reporting and documenting any suspected bias-based behavior, as well as accountability measures.

Finally, see 5.3 for a detailed discussion about procedures related to noncompliance.

7.4 Is there any aspect of the project/technology that might cause concern by giving the appearance to the public of privacy intrusion or misuse of personal information?

Inherent in information obtained through covertly tracking members of the public is the risk that private information may be obtained about members of the public without their knowledge and that their Fourth Amendment protections against “unreasonable searches” may be violated. This risk and those privacy risks outlined in 7.3 above are mitigated by legal requirements and auditing processes (i.e., maintenance of all requests, copies of consent forms and warrants) that allow for any auditor, including the Office of Inspector General and the federal monitor, to inspect use and deployment of tracking devices. The potential of privacy risk is mitigated by the requirement of consent and/or court ordered warrant before the technology is utilized.

The use of GPS pursuit mitigation trackers is limited to vehicles for which probable cause or reasonable suspicion has been established, the same standard set forth in state law for justification of vehicle pursuits. By tracking such a vehicle, it is possible to, by default, track the occupants of that vehicle. However, such occupants would be the subjects of a criminal investigation, either listed as suspects or eliminated through investigative efforts. The same concerns and mitigations listed above for covert tracking systems apply to GPS pursuit mitigation trackers.

In 2014, Jay Stanley, a senior policy analyst for the ACLU, wrote an opinion letter supporting the use of Starchase, a GPS pursuit mitigation tracking vendors long as the technology is used as intended in the exigent moments surrounding a police stop and pursuit, and not to subvert what would otherwise require a warrant. In 2022, Mr. Stanley reaffirmed this position, saying “I have not heard of any civil liberty issues with that technology.”⁴

8.0 Monitoring and Enforcement**8.1 Describe how the project/technology maintains a record of any disclosures outside of the department.**

Each unit maintains logs of deployment. These logs are available for audit, both internally and externally.

Per [SPD Policy 12.080](#), the Crime Records Unit is responsible to receive and record all requests “for General Offense Reports from other City departments and from other law enforcement agencies, as well as from insurance companies.”

Any requests for public disclosure are logged by SPD’s Public Disclosure Unit. Any action taken, and data released subsequently, is then tracked through the request log. Responses to Public Disclosure Requests, including responsive records provided to a requestor, are retained by SPD for two years after the request is completed.

The technology vendor does not provide records to anyone other than Seattle PD, except by department preauthorized data sharing agreements.

8.2 What auditing measures are in place to safeguard the information, and policies that pertain to them, as well as who has access to the audit data? Explain whether the project/technology conducts self-audits, third party audits or reviews.

No formal audits exist for covert tracking device deployments; however, requests to utilize covert tracking devices, as well as logs of deployments, are kept within each unit, and are subject to audit by the unit supervisors, Office of the Inspector General, and the federal monitor at any time.

GPS pursuit mitigation trackers create a record of the deployment, to include the dates, times, locations (including latitude/longitude). These records are maintained in accordance with the Department's retention requirements and can be view at any time by the Office of the Inspector General.

Financial Information

Purpose

This section provides a description of the fiscal impact of the surveillance technology, as required by the surveillance ordinance.

1.0 Fiscal Impact

Provide a description of the fiscal impact of the project/technology by answering the questions below.

1.1 Current or potential sources of funding: initial acquisition costs.

Current ☒ potential ☐

Date of initial acquisition	Date of go live	Direct initial acquisition cost	Professional services for acquisition	Other acquisition costs	Initial acquisition funding source
TBD	June 2025	\$250,000			Dept of Commerce Law Enforcement Pursuit Tech

Notes:

⁴ ACLU "GPS Bullets' Allow Police To Shoot a Tracker Onto a Car, Jay Stanley ([memo included in reference material](#))

1.2 Current or potential sources of funding: on-going operating costs, including maintenance, licensing, personnel, legal/compliance use auditing, data retention and security costs.

Current ☐ potential ☒

Annual maintenance and licensing	Legal/compliance, audit, data retention and other security costs	Department overhead	IT overhead	Annual funding source
\$37,500				Unknown

Notes:

If the GPS pursuit mitigation trackers are determined to be a worthwhile program, the ongoing cost to maintain the 25 launchers' subscriptions is \$37,500.

1.3 Cost savings potential through use of the technology

Cost savings may be seen in reduced liability from decreased number of vehicle pursuits, which often result in litigation. Additionally, pursuits often result in damage to city owned equipment, specifically police cars. This technology can reduce those costs as well by negating the need for pursuits.

1.4 Current or potential sources of funding including subsidies or free products offered by vendors or governmental entities

Additional grants may be available in the future to provide ongoing funding, should the department decide to increase or continue the deployment.

Expertise and References

Purpose

The following information is provided to ensure that Council has a group of experts to reference while reviewing the completed surveillance impact report (“SIR”). Any individuals or agencies referenced must be made aware ahead of publication that their information has been included. All materials must be available for Council to access or review, without requiring additional purchase or contract.

1.0 Other Government References

Please list any other government bodies that have implemented this technology and can speak to the implementation of this technology.

Agency, municipality, etc.	Primary contact	Description of current use
Tacoma Police Department	Deputy Chief Paul Junger	Pursuit mitigation.

2.0 Academics, Consultants, and Other Experts

Please list any experts in the technology under consideration, or in the technical completion of the service or function the technology is responsible for.

Agency, municipality, etc.	Primary contact	Description of current use

3.0 White Papers or Other Documents

Please list any authoritative publication, report or guide that is relevant to the use of this technology or this type of technology.

Title	Publication	Link
GPS Bullets' Allow Police to Shoot a Tracker Onto a Car	American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)	https://www.aclu.org/news/national-security/gps-bullets-allow-police-shoot-tracker-car
Pursuit Technology Impact Assessment	Police Executive Research Forum	https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250549.pdf

Racial Equity Toolkit (“RET”) and engagement for public comment worksheet

Purpose

Departments submitting a SIR are required to complete an adapted version of the Racial Equity Toolkit (“RET”) in order to:

- Provide a framework for the mindful completion of the SIR in a way that is sensitive to the historic exclusion of vulnerable and historically underrepresented communities. Particularly, to inform the public engagement efforts departments will complete as part of the surveillance impact report.
- Highlight and mitigate any impacts on racial equity from the adoption and the use of the technology.
- Highlight and mitigate any disparate impacts on individuals or vulnerable communities.
- Fulfill the public engagement requirements of the surveillance impact report.

Adaptation of the RET for Surveillance Impact Reports

The RET was adapted for the specific use by the Seattle Information Technology Departments’ (“Seattle IT”) Privacy Team, the Office of Civil Rights (“OCR”), and Change Team members from Seattle IT, Seattle City Light, Seattle Fire Department, Seattle Police Department, and Seattle Department of Transportation.

Racial Equity Toolkit Overview

The vision of the Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (“RSJI”) is to eliminate racial inequity in the community. To do this requires ending individual racism, institutional racism and structural racism. The RET lays out a process and a set of questions to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, initiatives, programs, and budget issues to address the impacts on racial equity.

1.0 Set Outcomes

1.1. Seattle City Council has defined the following inclusion criteria in the surveillance ordinance, and they serve as important touchstones for the risks departments are being asked to resolve and/or mitigate. Which of the following inclusion criteria apply to this technology?

- ☐ The technology disparately impacts disadvantaged groups.
- ☐ There is a high likelihood that personally identifiable information will be shared with non-City entities that will use the data for a purpose other than providing the City with a contractually agreed-upon service.
- ☐ The technology collects data that is personally identifiable even if obscured, de-identified, or anonymized after collection.
- ☐ The technology raises reasonable concerns about impacts to civil liberty, freedom of speech or association, racial equity, or social justice.

1.2 What are the potential impacts on civil liberties through the implementation of this technology? How is the department mitigating these risks?

None, per ACLU letter.

1.3 What are the risks for racial or ethnicity-based bias through each use or deployment of this technology? How is the department mitigating these risks?

Include a description of any issues that may arise such as algorithmic bias or the possibility for ethnic bias to emerge in people and/or system decision-making.

None.

1.4 Where in the City is the technology used or deployed?

☒ all Seattle neighborhoods

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ballard | <input type="checkbox"/> Northwest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Belltown | <input type="checkbox"/> Madison Park / Madison Valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beacon Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> Magnolia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Capitol Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> Rainier Beach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Central District | <input type="checkbox"/> Ravenna / Laurelhurst |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Columbia City | <input type="checkbox"/> South Lake Union / Eastlake |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Delridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Southeast |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> Southwest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Georgetown | <input type="checkbox"/> South Park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greenwood / Phinney | <input type="checkbox"/> Wallingford / Fremont |
| <input type="checkbox"/> International District | <input type="checkbox"/> West Seattle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interbay | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> King county (outside Seattle) (Mutual Aid) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> North | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outside King County (Mutual Aid) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northeast | |

If possible, please include any maps or visualizations of historical deployments / use.

If possible, please include any maps or visualizations of historical deployments / use here.

1.4.1 What are the racial demographics of those living in this area or impacted by these issues?

No information at this time.

1.4.2 How does the Department to ensure diverse neighborhoods, communities, or individuals are not specifically targeted through the use or deployment of this technology?

The technology will be equally deployed throughout the city to maximize availability for needed deployments.

1.5 How do decisions around data sharing have the potential for disparate impact on historically targeted communities? What is the department doing to mitigate those risks?

None.

1.6 How do decisions around data storage and retention have the potential for disparate impact on historically targeted communities? What is the department doing to mitigate those risks?

None identified.

1.7 What are potential unintended consequences (both negative and positive potential impact)? What proactive steps can you can / have you taken to ensure these consequences do not occur.

There is potential for officers to default into a pursuit in an effort to apply the tag. This can be addressed by policy and training.

2.0 Public Outreach

2.1 Organizations who received a personal invitation to participate.

Please include a list of all organizations specifically invited to provide feedback on this technology.

1.	2.	3.
----	----	----

2.1 Scheduled public meeting(s).

Meeting notes, sign-in sheets, all comments received, and questions from the public will be included in Appendix B, C, D, E, F, G, H and I. Comment analysis will be summarized in section 3.0 Public Comment Analysis.

Location	
Time	
Capacity	
Link to URL Invite	

2.2 Scheduled focus Group Meeting(s)

Meeting 1

Community Engaged	
Date	

Meeting 2

Community Engaged	
Date	

3.0 Public Comment Analysis

This section will be completed after the public comment period has been completed on [DATE] by Privacy Office staff.

3.1 Summary of Response Volume

Dashboard of respondent demographics.

3.2 Question One: What concerns, if any, do you have about the use of this technology?

Dashboard of respondent demographics.

3.3 Question Two: What value, if any, do you see in the use of this technology?

Dashboard of respondent demographics.

3.4 Question Three: What would you want City leadership to consider when making a decision about the use of this technology?

Dashboard of respondent demographics.

3.5 Question Four: General response to the technology.

Dashboard of respondent demographics.

3.5 General Surveillance Comments

These are comments received that are not particular to any technology currently under review.

Dashboard of respondent demographics.

4.0 Response to Public Comments

This section will be completed after the public comment period has been completed on [DATE].

4.1 How will you address the concerns that have been identified by the public?

What program, policy and partnership strategies will you implement? What strategies address immediate impacts? Long-term impacts? What strategies address root causes of inequity listed above? How will you partner with stakeholders for long-term positive change?

5.0 Equity Annual Reporting

5.1 What metrics for this technology be reported to the CTO for the annual equity assessments?

Metrics on covert tracking technology are gathered by the OIG for their annual surveillance technology audits.

Usage reports on GPS pursuit mitigation trackers will be available through the RTCC information portal and reports.

Privacy and Civil Liberties Assessment

Purpose

This section shall be completed after public engagement has concluded and the department has completed the racial equity toolkit section above. The privacy and civil liberties assessment is completed by the community surveillance working group (“working group”), per the surveillance ordinance which states that the working group shall:

“Provide to the executive and the City Council a privacy and civil liberties impact assessment for each SIR that must be included with any departmental request for surveillance technology acquisition or in-use approval. The impact assessment shall include a description of the potential impact of the surveillance technology on civil rights and liberties and potential disparate impacts on communities of color and other marginalized communities. The CTO shall share with the working group a copy of the SIR that shall also be posted during the period of public engagement. At the conclusion of the public engagement period, the CTO shall share the final proposed SIR with the working group at least six weeks prior to submittal of the SIR to Council for approval. The working group shall provide its impact assessment in writing to the executive and the City Council for inclusion in the SIR within six weeks of receiving the final proposed SIR. If the working group does not provide the impact assessment before such time, the working group must ask for a two-week extension of time to City Council in writing. If the working group fails to submit an impact statement within eight weeks of receiving the SIR, the department and City Council may proceed with ordinance approval without the impact statement.”

Working Group Privacy and Civil Liberties Assessment

Respond here.

Submitting Department Response

Description

Provide the high-level description of the technology, including whether software or hardware, who uses it and where/when.

Purpose

State the reasons for the use cases for this technology; how it helps meet the departmental mission; benefits to personnel and the public; under what ordinance or law it is used/mandated or required; risks to mission or public if this technology were not available.

Benefits to the Public

Provide technology benefit information, including those that affect departmental personnel, members of the public and the City in general.

Privacy and Civil Liberties Considerations

Provide an overview of the privacy and civil liberties concerns that have been raised over the use or potential mis-use of the technology; include real and perceived concerns.

Summary

Provide summary of reasons for technology use; benefits; and privacy considerations and how we are incorporating those concerns into our operational plans.

Appendix A: Glossary

Accountable: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Responsive to the needs and concerns of those most impacted by the issues you are working on, particularly to communities of color and those historically underrepresented in the civic process.

Community outcomes: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) The specific result you are seeking to achieve that advances racial equity.

Contracting equity: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Efforts to achieve equitable racial outcomes in the way the City spends resources, including goods and services, consultants and contracting.

DON: “department of neighborhoods.”

Immigrant and refugee access to services: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Government services and resources are easily available and understandable to all Seattle residents, including non-native English speakers. Full and active participation of immigrant and refugee communities exists in Seattle’s civic, economic and cultural life.

Inclusive outreach and public engagement: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Processes inclusive of people of diverse races, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations and socio-economic status. Access to information, resources and civic processes so community members can effectively engage in the design and delivery of public services.

Individual racism: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Pre-judgment, bias, stereotypes about an individual or group based on race. The impacts of racism on individuals including white people internalizing privilege, and people of color internalizing oppression.

Institutional racism: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Organizational programs, policies or procedures that work to the benefit of white people and to the detriment of people of color, usually unintentionally or inadvertently.

OCR: “Office of Civil Rights.”

Opportunity areas: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) One of seven issue areas the City of Seattle is working on in partnership with the community to eliminate racial disparities and create racial equity. They include: education, health, community development, criminal justice, jobs, housing, and the environment.

Racial equity: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) When social, economic and political opportunities are not predicted based upon a person’s race.

Racial inequity: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) When a person's race can predict their social, economic, and political opportunities and outcomes.

RET: "racial equity toolkit"

Seattle neighborhoods: (taken from the racial equity toolkit neighborhood.) Boundaries defined for the purpose of understanding geographic areas in Seattle.

Stakeholders: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Those impacted by proposed policy, program, or budget issue who have potential concerns or issue expertise. Examples might include: specific racial/ethnic groups, other institutions like Seattle housing authority, schools, community-based organizations, change teams, City employees, unions, etc.

Structural racism: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) The interplay of policies, practices and programs of multiple institutions which leads to adverse outcomes and conditions for communities of color compared to white communities that occurs within the context of racialized historical and cultural conditions.

Surveillance ordinance: Seattle City Council passed ordinance [125376](#), also referred to as the "surveillance ordinance."

SIR: "surveillance impact report", a document which captures the fulfillment of the Council-defined surveillance technology review process, as required by ordinance [125376](#).

Workforce equity: (taken from the racial equity toolkit.) Ensure the City's workforce diversity reflects the diversity of Seattle.



Appendix B: Public Comment Analysis

Appendix C: Public Comment Demographics

Appendix D: Comment Analysis Methodology

Appendix E: Questions and Department Responses

Appendix F: Public Outreach Overview

Appendix G: Meeting Notice(s)

Appendix H: Meeting Sign-in Sheet(s)

Appendix I: All Comments Received from Members of the Public

Appendix J: Letters from Organizations or Commissions

Appendix K: Supporting Policy Documentation

Appendix L: CTO Notification of Surveillance Technology