

2015 - 2016 Seattle City Council Green Sheet

Ready for Notebook

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Budget Action Title: Impose a budget proviso on the Seattle Police Department budget in 2015 and 2016 for acoustic gunshot locator system

Has CIP Amendment: No Has Budget Proviso: Yes

Councilmembers: Bagshaw; Harrell; Licata

Staff Analyst: Mark Baird

Council Bill or Resolution:

Date		Total	SB	BH	SC	TR	NL	TB	JG	MO	KS
	Yes										
	No										
	Abstain										
	Absent										

Budget Action description:

This green sheet imposes a proviso on the Seattle Police Department (SPD) budget in 2015 and 2016 for an acoustic gunshot locator system (AGLS). Specifically, it imposes the following budget proviso:

“Of the appropriations in the 2015 budget for the Seattle Police Department’s Field Support Administration BCL, \$250,000 is appropriated (and of the amount endorsed for 2016, \$250,000 is expected to be appropriated) solely for an acoustic gunshot locator system (AGLS) and may be spent for no other purpose.”

Background

Acoustic Gunshot Locator System

Recently, there has been concern over increases in violence – particularly violence associated with firearms in the City of Seattle. A spate of highly publicized shootings and the Mayor’s recent “Summer of Safety” focus has brought the issue to the fore. Random gunshots are often an indicator of a violent act or violence to come in a community. However, research shows that they are dramatically underreported in communities

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throughout the country. The underreporting of random gunshots hampers efforts to identify hot spots and to reduce gun violence to ensure the safety of the citizenry. This makes it difficult to determine just how prevalent random gunfire – and by extension, gun violence - may be in a community. At times, even victims refuse to cooperate with the reporting of these incidents. The recent discovery of a man shot in the stomach in Rainier Valley serves as an example of this.

Recent UW research findings show that gun violence victimization begets further gunshot victimization. Once gun-related violence is set in motion, it appears difficult to escape it. Victims return to the community only to once again be confronted by gun-related violence and gunshots that may or may not be reported to the police. When coupled with the underreporting of random gunfire, the two issues may aggravate gun-related violence in the community.

Acoustic gunshot location systems (AGLSs) use a series of microphones and sensors that are placed throughout an area to acoustically identify gunshots. The systems are designed to detect various gun types and calibers (bullet size and strength). Using acoustic triangulation, they identify gunshots from other acoustical interference and using geographic information systems (GIS) provide an accurate location of where the shots took place. The AGLS communicates gunshot information to either a dispatch center or directly to law enforcement officers in their patrol vehicles. This includes an accurate count of the number of shots fired during a single incident and over time in an area covered by AGLSs. Some systems interface with existing video cameras and direct them to focus on an area where the system detected shots, or it can mark recorded video in an attempt to gather more visual evidence to identify the shooter, a vehicle, or a victim. A two to five square mile area of coverage costs approximately \$250,000 to \$500,000 annually. The fees cover all vendor-related costs. There could be department expenditures in addition to this. Additionally, this is an ongoing cost that requires an annual investment to continue operating the system. Increases in the coverage area would increase the ongoing cost.

An AGLS could function as part of a comprehensive, targeted approach to decrease gun-related violence in the community. AGLS would be deployed in an analytically identified ‘hot spot.’ SPD would employ a proven gun-violence reduction strategy – comprised of focused patrol activities, and treating gunshot victims against becoming a victim again. Leveraging the recent work done by UW researchers, Council will also examine funding the development and implementation of a program to care for victims of gun violence in the hope of reducing their re-victimization. Both these efforts strive to reduce gun violence. This pilot will also require a third party evaluation. Because of the size and scope of this option, this should be seen as a multi-year endeavor.