

July 29, 2025

MEMORANDUM

To: Public Safety Committee
From: Greg Doss, Analyst
Subject: Expanding the use of Seattle Police Department (SPD) Closed-Circuit Television cameras (CCTV) and adding new capabilities to the SPD Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC)

On July 31, 2025, the Public Safety Committee will discuss two executive drafted ordinances that would expand SPD's use of existing surveillance technologies:

- TMP-11624 would authorize SPD to install and use CCTV cameras in three new/additional locations at Capitol Hill, the Stadium District, and areas near Garfield High (see Attachment 1); and
- TMP-11625 would authorize SPD to access and continuously record Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) traffic management camera footage at the RTCC (see Attachment 2).

SPD and Executive staff will give a presentation on the planned expansion of these systems, which the City Council authorized last year as a pilot project, and which are subject to an evaluation that will provide phased results in 2026 and 2027.

Though presented in separate pieces of legislation, the underlying technologies and policy considerations will be discussed together in this memo due to the integrated nature of the technologies as elements of the Executive's [Technology Assisted Crime Prevention Pilot Project](#) (TACPP).

Background

The City's Surveillance Ordinance ([ORD 125376](#)), requires that the City Council approve by ordinance any material updates to the data and privacy protection policies that govern the CCTV and RTCC systems. These policies are outlined in documents called Surveillance Impact Reports (SIRs), which were reviewed and approved by the Council in October 2024:

- [ORD 127110](#) approved use of CCTV, and the associated SIR policies, for three pilot areas: (1) Aurora Ave N 85th to 145th, (2) Downtown Core and Belltown, and (3) Chinatown / International District; and
- [ORD 127111](#) approved use of the RTCC, and the associated SIR policies, to integrate dispatch, camera, officer location, 911 calls, records management systems, and other information into a "single view" to alert RTCC staff to a serious criminal event, see multiple streams of information overlaid on a map view, and convey information to officers responding in the field.

A 2024 Central Staff Memo (see Attachment 3) describes in detail the CCTV and RTCC systems, their intended use by SPD, as well as the data protection and privacy policies outlined in the SIRs for these systems.¹ The memo provides an in-depth analysis of potential civil liberties impacts, potential disparate impacts on historically targeted communities and vulnerable populations, and the public engagement process used to solicit feedback on the technologies.

When reviewing the proposed ordinances in 2024, the Council passed several amendments that placed additional restrictions on the technologies. Following is a summary of the amendments:

- A requirement that SPD provide at the end of 2025 and at the end of 2026 a report on the evaluation assessments that will be conducted as detailed in the SIRs,
- A requirement to include in the evaluation of the TACPP a study reporting on the appropriateness, feasibility, and cost of additional potential future CCTV deployments, to include an examination of the Alki and Harbor Avenue areas of West Seattle,
- A requirement that SPD provide to the Public Safety Committee notification that the department will integrate private camera footage into its RTCC, and identification of policies that would govern the use of such systems,
- A requirement that SPD report to the Public Safety Committee, by December 31 of each year, beginning in 2025, information about any subpoenas, warrants, and public disclosure requests for CCTV data,
- A requirement that SPD not disclose CCTV data in response to a records request made under the Public Records Act (chapter 42.56 RCW), or otherwise publicly disclose CCTV data, in a manner inconsistent with SPD protocols governing redactions, including protections for victims of crime, minors, and health care facilities, and
- A request that SPD include in any contract with a vendor for RTCC and CCTV: (1) a requirement that the vendor immediately notify SPD if the vendor receives a warrant or subpoena seeking SPD RTCC data for any purpose, including purposes related to reproductive healthcare or gender-affirming medical services; and (2) a requirement that the vendor retain legal counsel to challenge any such warrant or subpoena and advise of outcome or existence of warrant after expiration.

TMP-11624 and TMP-11625

TMP-11624 would approve and accept the material updates to the CCTV SIR and Executive Overview. The initial CCTV pilot deployment areas are Aurora Avenue North, Belltown and the Downtown Commercial Core, and the Chinatown-International District. The material update adds the Stadium District, the area around Garfield High School, and the Capitol Hill Nightlife District to the list of eligible CCTV deployment areas. It clarifies that CCTV video recordings are automatically purged by the system up to 30 days after the date of recording, or until determined that all evidence material to an incident under investigation has been transferred to secure storage.

¹ See [2024 RTCC Surveillance Impact Report](#) and [2024 CCTV Surveillance Impact Report](#)

TMP-11625 would approve and accept the material updates to the RTCC SIR and Executive Overview. The material update will provide SPD with the ability to view at the RTCC live feed from SDOT traffic management cameras.² When utilized with the RTCC software, the feed from the SDOT cameras will allow SPD to track vehicles and subjects who are suspected of being involved in criminal activity. The SDOT cameras will be recorded in the same manner as the department's TACPP crime cameras.

The data retention and privacy policies in the updated SIRs have not changed since their adoption by the Council in 2024. The revised SIRs add the new CCTV locations, traffic management camera functionality, and better synch the 30-day retention policy with the state retention policy by adding language that requires deletion of video "up to" 30 days or discovery of video with evidentiary value.

Status of Approved Pilot Project

SPD's Budget includes funding for 12 RTCC Analysts in 2025 and nine additional Analysts in 2026. SPD reports that it has hired 12 analysts, eight of whom are currently staffing the RTCC for up to 20 hours per day, and four of whom are still being backgrounded before they may begin work. Analysts are supporting ongoing investigations by pushing video and incident data directly to patrol units and detectives. Analysts can also provide live updates and still images of suspects, a capability SPD says helps support its "precision policing" model.³ Since the RTCC went live last May, Analysts have assisted patrol officers during real-time events and assisted investigations for active cases. SPD reports that officers have made over 75 arrests in incidents where the RTCC was used.

SPD's 2025 Adopted Budget includes funding for deployment of CCTV in the initial pilot areas (see below), as well as an expansion of cameras on the Aurora Corridor and into the areas surrounding Garfield High School. More information on the costs of all of the proposed sites can be found below.

SPD staff have reported that it will deploy into the initial pilot areas a total of 65 cameras and that all but 16 are currently active. SPD reports that the cameras are already providing the RTCC with significant coverage and allowing analysts to support investigative work and patrol calls for service. Camera status by initial pilot area as of July 6, 2025:

1. Chinatown / International District: 16 out of 20 cameras installed
2. Aurora Ave. N: 10 out of 16
3. Downtown Core: 25 out of 29

More information about current CCTV locations and policy can be found at the [City's CCTV website](#).

² SDOT traffic management cameras are located along major arterials and select intersections. These cameras are different from City-operated traffic enforcement cameras, such as red-light cameras and school zone speed cameras.

³ [GeekWire](#), 'It's a game-changer': Seattle touts high-tech Real Time Crime Center amid privacy concerns, July 15, 2025

Evaluation of Pilot Project

The abstract sections of each SIR indicate that the CCTV and RTCC programs are designed to be a pilot project, with independent researchers conducting an outcome evaluation to be completed two years after implementation. Depending on the outcome of the evaluation, the pilot project may be either discontinued or continued.

To fulfill the evaluation requirements specified in the SIRs, the City's Office of Inspector General for Public Safety (OIG) is in the process of hiring independent academic experts to evaluate the RTCC and the Police Department's use of the RTCC, CCTV cameras, and Automated License Plate Readers. The evaluation team will be led by Principal Investigator Anthony Braga and Co-Principal Investigator Lisa Barao at the University of Pennsylvania's (UPenn) Crime and Justice Policy Lab.

OIG staff have indicated that SPD and UPenn researchers are developing a data collection tool and outlining the terms of the evaluation, which are expected to be included in a \$300,000 contract that will be signed in the upcoming weeks. The department expects that it will be able to provide a process report on the method being used to assess CCTV and RTCC effectiveness, as well as a potential delivery date for the outcome evaluation, to the Council in late 2025.

System Expansion

The Executive has stated that the Garfield HS and Capitol Hill areas will receive cameras to address pressing public safety needs, including emergent gun violence occurring in the nightlife district and around Garfield High School. Cameras will be deployed in the City's Stadium District to provide security to residents and visitors who will attend the FIFA World Cup games in the spring of 2026.

The Mayor has said that Seattle needs every appropriate tool that's available to reduce gun violence and other felony crimes, address human trafficking, and respond to areas where crime is concentrated. The Executive does not believe that the forthcoming evaluation should be a barrier to effectively using approved technology to meet the program's goals, including the use of additional cameras.

Regarding the addition of SDOT traffic camera feed to the RTCC, the Executive notes that the city is seeking a live-view functionality that is already accessible to the public, and that private entities are currently recording SDOT streams and selling them publicly online. SPD could also view and record the camera feed, but the surveillance ordinance requires approval from the Council before doing so.

Public Review of Proposed Material Updates

The City's Surveillance Ordinance requires that the initial draft of a SIR for a new technology be released for public review and comment. During this time, one or more public meetings will take place to solicit feedback. Additionally, the SIR for a new technology is reviewed by the Surveillance Advisory Working Group, which will complete a Civil Liberties and Privacy Assessment that is submitted to Council. The original SIRs for CCTV and RTCC underwent this process last year. More information can be found in the 2024 Central Staff Memo.

The Surveillance Ordinance does not require the same kind of review for material updates to adopted SIRs. The updated SIR documents attached to TMP-11624 and TMP-11625 were made available for public comment on the Seattle IT Surveillance website from June 3, 2025, to June 23, 2025. The comments can be found in Appendix B of the SIR documents in Attachments 1 and 2 to this memo. The Redlined copies of the material updates can be found at [Seattle IT's Surveillance Website](#).

The Executive has indicated that its public engagement efforts included conversations between the Garfield-Nova neighborhood and the Seattle Public Schools, discussions between SPD, the stadiums, and area businesses, and a briefing given at recent SODO and Pioneer Square Businesses Improvement District meetings. Camera installations for the Capitol Hill nightlife area were discussed at a community forum and through individual meetings with business leaders.

Fiscal Impacts

Last year, SPD received an appropriation of \$1.7 million for the TACPP, which covered initial equipment purchases and installation of Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) in all SPD vehicles, CCTV in the initial three pilot neighborhoods, and software to run the systems at the RTCC. Most of this funding has been spent in 2025 and will be covered through a reappropriation of funding through the City's 2024-2025 Carry-Forward Ordinance, which will receive its first hearing in the Finance, Native Communities & Tribal Governments Committee on July 30, 2025.

Annual maintenance and licensing costs are \$40,000 for the three initial CCTV pilot locations and \$330,000 for the RTCC, all of which are currently funded in SPD's 2025 Adopted Budget. The Council added to the 2025 Adopted budget \$425,000 in funding to cover the potential expansion of CCTV to the Garfield High School neighborhood, and \$200,000 for additional cameras at the Aurora Ave. pilot site.

The Executive plans to request \$200,000 in funding for the Stadium District CCTV cameras soon after the Council passes TMP-11624. The City allocated in the 2025-2026 Adopted Budget unrestricted cumulative reserve and Payroll Expense Tax funding to support the cameras and other infrastructure expenditures for the 2026 FIFA World Cup games. This funding will be directed to SPD in a stand-alone ordinance or as part of the 2025 Year-end Supplemental Budget Request.

The City Budget Office indicates that installation of CCTV cameras in the Capitol Hill area is expected to cost approximately \$400,000 in one-time funding and \$35,000 for annual maintenance and licensing. A funding source for these cameras has not been identified but would likely need to be a general fund appropriation in the 2026 Adopted Budget.

Next Steps

The Public Safety Committee will hold a second hearing and possible vote on both TMP-11624 and TMP-11625 on August 12, 2025.

Attachments:

1. TMP-11624 – SPD Closed-Circuit Television Camera Systems Material Update ORD (as transmitted)
2. TMP-11625 – SPD Real-Time Crime Center Material Update ORD (as transmitted)
3. 2024 Central Staff Memo on CCTV and RTCC

cc: Ben Noble, Director