Surveillance Impact Report (SIR) Material Update

Seattle Police Department (SPD) Tracking Devices SIR

May 13, 2025

Purpose of Proposed Legislation

- Original Surveillance Impact Report (SIR) for Tracking Devices technology was passed by the City Council on **2/28/23** (Ordinance 126776).
- SPD has received a **$250,000 grant** from the WA State Dept. of Commerce for Law Enforcement Pursuit Technology, which will help local law enforcement mitigate vehicle pursuits.
- SPD acquiring pursuit mitigation GPS tracker launchers qualifies as a material update, therefore requiring this proposed legislation.
- Section 14.18.020.F of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) states that "*[a]ny material update to an SIR, such as to change the purpose or manner in which a surveillance technology may be used, shall be by ordinance.*" SMC 14.18 does not require material updates to go through the same process as the original SIR.

Tracking Devices (Original SIR)

What is the technology?

- Geolocation trackers are cellular devices that SPD utilizes as a tool to locate and track the movements and locations of vehicles.
- These trackers are location tracking devices that report latitude and longitude as well as other device information such as high temperature alerts, device removal, power/shut down alerts, and battery level.

Why do we use the technology?

- The primary benefit of these 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.
- Trackers allow SPD to remotely track vehicles electronically. They also allow SPD to locate vehicles and individuals that are sought in connection with an active investigation. They are only utilized with consent of a witness, a confidential informant, or within the scope of a judicially issued search warrant.

Tracking Devices (Original SIR)

Data Collection

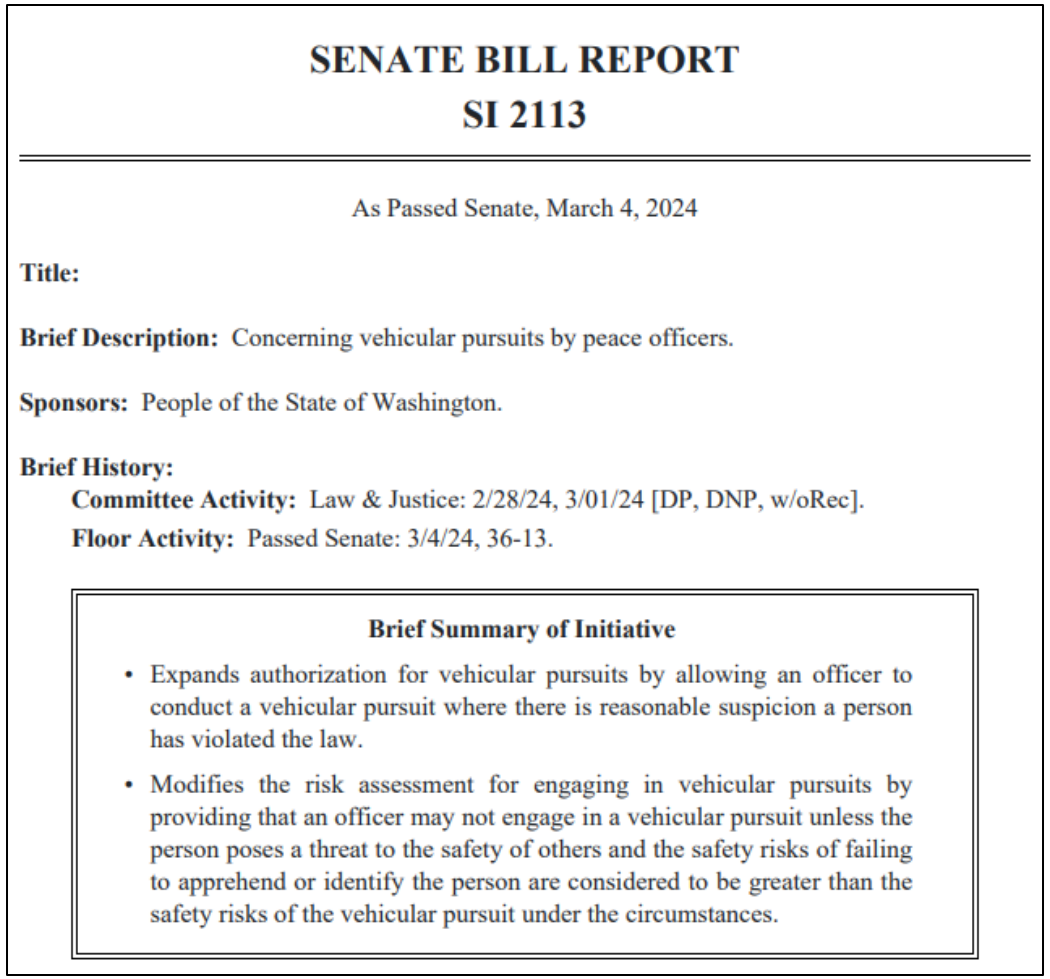
- Tracking devices are only utilized with express consent or search warrant authority. These devices report latitude and longitude coordinates on a pre-determined schedule that can be adjusted by users remotely.
- Data collected from the tracking devices is provided to the requesting Officer/Detective for inclusion in the investigation file and is stored following evidence guidelines.

Protections

- All deployments of these devices are documented by TESU and subject to audit by the Office of Inspector General and the federal monitor at any time.
- 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."

What is the Material Update?

- SPD is seeking this tool 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,*" ensuring compliance with recent state law updates regarding pursuit mitigation.
- 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.
- 25 SPD patrol vehicles will be equipped with GPS tracker launchers.
- All sworn SPD officers will be trained in the use of pursuit mitigation GPS trackers.
- Pursuit mitigation GPS trackers will be monitored primarily by the Real Time Crime Center and information will be relayed to patrol units in the field. Patrol units can also monitor the trackers' location directly if RTCC is unavailable.



SENATE BILL REPORT
SI 2113

As Passed Senate, March 4, 2024

Title:

Brief Description: Concerning vehicular pursuits by peace officers.

Sponsors: People of the State of Washington.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/28/24, 3/01/24 [DP, DNP, w/oRec].
Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 3/4/24, 36-13.

Brief Summary of Initiative

- Expands authorization for vehicular pursuits by allowing an officer to conduct a vehicular pursuit where there is reasonable suspicion a person has violated the law.
- Modifies the risk assessment for engaging in vehicular pursuits by providing that an officer may not engage in a vehicular pursuit unless the person poses a threat to the safety of others and the safety risks of failing to apprehend or identify the person are considered to be greater than the safety risks of the vehicular pursuit under the circumstances.

What will not change?

- No changes will be made to the previously approved requirements related to covert tracking systems.

Fiscal Impact

- SPD has received a $250,000 Washington State Department of Commerce Law Enforcement Pursuit Technology grant.
- 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.
- 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.
- Additional grants may be available in the future to provide ongoing funding, should the department decide to increase or continue the deployment.

References

- **Departments in Washington State already using StarChase:**
  - King County Sheriff's Office
  - Lynnwood Police Department
  - Tacoma Police Department
  - Redmond Police Department
  - Everett Police Department
  - Thurston County Sheriff's Office

Questions