



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND  
CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** John Ristow  
Khaled Tawfik

**SUBJECT: VEHICLE ABATEMENT  
PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT**

**DATE:** May 28, 2023

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Approved

Date: 5/29/2023

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Approve the following adjustments to the 2023-2024 Proposed Operating Budget for the General Fund:

- a. Increase the Transportation Department's ongoing Non-Personal/Equipment budget by \$300,000; and
- b. Decrease the Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve by \$300,000.

## **BACKGROUND**

This Manager's Budget Addendum responds to the direction included in the Mayor's March Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2023-2024, as approved by the City Council, to recommend changes that enhance the City's vehicle blight outcomes, including shifting funding and staffing to processes that produce desired performance and customer service standards, optimizing City processes and department coordination, and improving communication with service requestors.

The 2022-2023 Adopted Operating Budget allocated \$300,000 to an ongoing Vehicle Abatement Program Enhancement Reserve in the General Fund in anticipation of the Administration bringing forward recommendations as part of a future budget process to enhance vehicle abatement program outcomes and community satisfaction. Beginning in October 2022, a cross-department team worked closely to redesign vehicle blight related reporting, workflow and service delivery processes and establish short-term and long-term goals for process and systems enhancements aimed at improving service delivery outcomes and customer service. Improvements from the redesign work were categorized into six improvement areas: Process, Policies, San José 311, Resources, Communication and Education, and Employee Safety. Some of the identified enhancements have been implemented and are showing early positive impacts on customer satisfaction. Early implementations include a pilot program to investigate vehicles reported as being stored on public streets (72-hours). Pilot program results will inform further program and response changes.

## ANALYSIS

On May 16, 2023, staff presented the Vehicle Blight Service work and recommendations that target operational improvements and a 30-point increase in Customer Satisfaction with the City's vehicle-related complaints for FY 2023-2024. The Transportation and Environment Committee (T&E Committee) provided feedback on the Beautify San José (BeautifySJ) Vehicle Blight analysis, identification of core issues and challenges, as well as potential solutions, strategies, policies, and program improvements and enhancements.

Consistent with the recommendations included in the May 16<sup>th</sup> memorandum, the Administration is bringing forward an adjustment to the 2023-2024 Proposed Operating Budget to reallocate the \$300,000 Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve to the Transportation Department's Non-Personal/Equipment budget to: support increased contractual staffing to provide the bandwidth necessary to investigate up to 10,000 additional vehicles annually (\$250,000); and to improve customer communication, education and engagement, and staff training efforts to ensure they are equipped to deescalate situations, manage crises, and remain safe while in the field (\$50,000). Later adjustments may also be recommended based on the results of improvements.

City Council accepted the Beautify San José: Vehicle Blight Status Report<sup>1</sup>, its recommendations, and gave additional direction in two City Council memorandums<sup>2, 3</sup> as part of its motion. Staff will follow up on the direction of the memorandums in future updates to Transportation and Environment Committee:

1. Addressing abandoned and illegally parked vehicles:
  - a. Return to City Council with an ordinance to address the parking of all boats, unoccupied trailers, and other accessories (equipment and signage like advertising, pumps, tanks, etc.) on the street by the end of 2023.
  - b. Improve compliance of the 72-hour parking limit ordinance by more prominently marking vehicles with a large warning message when they have violated the time limit. If they still do not move, provide citations, and eventually tow vehicles.
  - c. Consider expanding and marketing the Free Unwanted Car Pickup program, potentially partnering with a non-profit, that facilitates residents disposing their unwanted vehicles, to include public property.
    - i. Explore ways this can be integrated into the SJ 311 app.
    - ii. Potentially allow vehicle owner to mark the notice of violation or call a number if they want the vehicle towed if they are the legal owner of the vehicle.
  - d. Shift resources to respond to at least 10,000 complaint-based investigations of vehicles that are violating the 72-hour parking ordinance, while continuing focused proactive enforcement.
  - e. Pursue legislative and ordinance changes to address health, safety, and environmental impacts of lived-in vehicles to address dumping bio-waste and other safety hazards.
2. Improving the SJ 311 application:
  - a. Provide more courteous and clear replies to vehicle blight reports.
  - b. Offer an opportunity for one appeal/rebuttal of the decision with guidance given on what the requirements are and why the original complaint did not meet the parameters.

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<sup>1</sup> City Initiatives Roadmap: BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight Status Report to City Council on May 16, 2023: [23-694 - Memorandum \(legistar.com\)](https://legistar.com/View/00000000-0000-0000-0000-000000000000-23-694-Memorandum)

<sup>2</sup> Vehicle Blight Memo from Mayor and Councilmembers Cohen, Kamei, Davis, and Ortiz (5/12/2023): <https://sanjose.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=e95d4e56-2bcd-481d-a221-85ede83c6e1a.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Vehicle Blight Memo from Councilmember Batra (5/12/2023): <https://sanjose.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=0c18ead8-cff9-4390-8988-5c56bd55da4a.pdf>

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3. Develop and present recommendations to the Transportation and Environment Committee (T&E) of how to improve street sweeping performance through enforcement of parking restrictions:
  - a. Explore the use of alternating sweep schedules that allow residents to park on one side of their street on street sweeping day.
  - b. Explore a method for tracking street sweeping and where trouble spots are to focus outreach and enforcement.
  - c. Develop communications and marketing campaign to inform residents of their street sweeping days, including providing sweeping schedules to City Councilmembers' offices to distribute to their districts.
4. Provide a verbal status report every six months to T&E Committee in FY23-24, followed by annual reports in subsequent fiscal years.
5. Investigate methods that can be used to report the number of vehicles that have been towed and impounded but were later released to determine how many vehicles were truly abandoned and how many were reclaimed by their owners.
6. Explore alternative methods that can be used to obtain precise movement and status of a reported vehicle since its initial reporting.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Manager's Budget Office.

/s/  
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Director  
Department of Transportation

/s/  
KHALED TAWFIK  
Chief Information Officer  
Information Technology Department