Pierce County

Performance Audits

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To: Criminal Justice Task Force and Performance Audit Committee

From: Matt Temmel, Performance Audit Coordinator MT
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Re: **"SIPs" AND "FREQUENT FLYERS"**

Introduction

Last month, we presented a descriptive analysis of Compliance Releases and "SIPs" from the Pierce County jail. (In a "SIP, or "Special Identification Procedure," an arrested person is brought to the jail, technically booked, identified, fingerprinted, given a citation to appear in court, and then released.) We have carefully reviewed last month's analysis, made some minor revisions to the memo, added more data to provide a detailed breakdown of SIPs by highest charge, and "reissued" the memo. Copies are available at today's meeting of the Criminal Justice Task Force.

This memo continues the analysis and concerns two kinds of "frequent flyers:"

1. Persons who were SIP'd and then re-arrested in the Hilltop and other nearby locations, and
2. All persons arrested in the Hilltop and other nearby areas since 2006, with emphasis on those with multiple arrests.

Research Questions and Methodology

The data clearly indicate that a majority of SIPs are brought to the Pierce County jail from outside Tacoma. Community advocates are concerned that the SIP process results in bringing non-local residents to the area around the jail, thus adding an influx of people to the local community who may commit crimes. These concerns have been raised in task force discussions and in other public meetings, such as a well-attended meeting on March 20, 2008 at the Evergreen State College, Tacoma. The concerns are plausible and have been expressed so often that the City of Tacoma has organized a planning team to look into the issues.

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To address the concerns, we analyzed how many persons who have been SIP'd since 2006 were later rearrested in the Hilltop and other nearby locations in central Tacoma. The research questions are two-fold:

1. How often are persons who have been "SIP'd" later arrested (booked or cited) in the Hilltop or other nearby areas of downtown or central Tacoma?

2. Of the SIPs later arrested in those areas, how many persons had been arrested outside of Tacoma prior to being SIP'd?

Three data sets were used to conduct the analysis. First, we had detailed data on every person SIP'd since January 2006. Second, we consulted jail booking records when needed to gain further information on individual cases.

Third, we obtained data on all arrests since January 2006 in an area of 22 census blocks that cover the Hilltop and other nearby places in central Tacoma, including the areas around Wright Park, County-City Building and the jail, downtown Tacoma, and areas east of downtown stretching to Interstate 5.

Attachment 1 shows the study area. In general, the study area is bounded on the west by State Street or Sprague Avenue, on the south by Interstate 5, on the east by Dock Street, and on the north by Division Avenue, with a small incursion into the North End.[1]

To answer the research questions, we used the following methodology:

1. Identify all SIPs since January 1, 2006.

2. Identify all SIPs who were later arrested (booked or cited) in the 22 census blocks, while distinguishing between the Hilltop and the other areas.

3. Of the SIPs who were later arrested in the 22 census blocks, review booking records to identify the arrest location and the person's residence address prior to being SIP'd.

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[1] The arrest data were provided by the Law Enforcement Agency at the request of the Pierce County Corrections Bureau. We are grateful for their valuable assistance.

Hilltop is defined to include census blocks 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 168, 176, 177, 188, and portions of blocks 169 and 171 (around the jail and County-City Building). Hilltop thus covers the area between State Street or Sprague Avenue on the west, Center Street on the south, Division Avenue on the north, and Court F on the east (the alley above Tacoma Avenue).

Central Tacoma, Wright Park area, is defined to include census blocks 155, 157, and 167 (north and east of Wright Park stopping at South 7th). Central Tacoma, downtown, is defined to include portions of census blocks 169 and 171 (around the jail and County-City Building) and all of blocks 170 and 172 (downtown). Central Tacoma, downtown east, is defined to include census blocks 175 and 178 (from South 15th to I-5).

Lastly, considering the broader meaning of the colloquial term "frequent flyers," we analyzed the arrest data in the 22 census blocks since January 2006 to get a general picture of the population and identify how many people were arrested multiple times. The number of re-arrests in that population was then compared with the number of SIPs who were rearrested in the same census blocks.

Re-Arrests of SIPs

Table 1 shows the number of persons who were SIP'd since 2006 and the number rearrested in the study area, that is, in the 22 census blocks that cover the Hilltop and other nearby parts of central Tacoma. Table 2 shows more specifically where the re-arrests took place.

Table 1

Re-Arrests of SIPs in the Study Area

	2006	**2007**	**2008**
SIPs	867	3166	1039
Number rearrested in the study area	53	210	32
Percentage rearrested	6.1%	6.6%	3.1%

Table 2

Re-Arrest Location

	2006	2007	2008
Tacoma – Hilltop	17	75	12
Central Tacoma (other parts of the 22 census blocks)	19	84	13
Other Tacoma (outside of the study area)	0	1	3
No Data (arrest location is not stated in the data)	17	50	4
Total	53	210	32

Table 3 shows where the re-arrested persons were arrested prior to being SIP'd.

Table 3

Arrest Location prior to SIP

	2006	2007	2008
Tacoma – Hilltop	23	55	7
Central Tacoma (other parts of the 22 census blocks)	8	56	8
Other Tacoma (outside of the study area)	14	66	14
Outside Tacoma	**8**	**33**	**3**
Total	53	210	32

The previous table shows in blue font the number of SIPs from outside Tacoma who were later re-arrested in the study area. The highest number is 33 (for 2007), which is 1% of the total SIPs that year. The percentages for the other years are less than 1%.

Table 4 provides further detail on the SIPs from outside Tacoma by showing their re-arrest location.

Table 4

Rearrest Location for SIPs Not from Tacoma

	2006	2007	2008
Tacoma – Hilltop	2	14	0
Central Tacoma (other parts of the 22 census blocks)	6	9	1
Other Tacoma (outside of the study area)	0	1	1
No Data (arrest location is not stated in the data)	0	9	1
Total	8	33	3

Lastly, for the SIPs not from Tacoma who were rearrested in the study area, Table 5 shows the time between the SIP and the re-arrest.

Table 5

Time between SIP and Re-Arrest for Those Not from Tacoma

SIPs from Outside Tacoma	2006	2007	2008
Number re-arrested in study area in up to 10 days	3	6	0
Number re-arrested in study area in 11 to 30 days	0	4	0
Number re-arrested in study area after 30 days or more	5	23	3
Total SIPs from Outside Tacoma Rearrested in Study Area	8	33	3

Based on the above data, we conclude that the arrest data provide little support for the concern that SIPs are having an adverse impact on public safety in the Hilltop and other areas of central Tacoma.

Arrests and Re-Arrests in the Study Area

To obtain a larger portrait of arrest activity, we analyzed the arrest data since January 2006 in the study area, which covers the Hilltop and other nearby parts of central Tacoma. Over a period of almost two-and-a-half years (January 1, 2006 to June 18, 2008), the police made a total of 6,488 arrests, as shown below.

Table 6

Arrests in the Study Area, 1/1/2006 to 6/18/2008

	Individuals		Arrests	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
One-Time Arrests	3,723	80%	3,723	57%
Multiple Arrests	946	20%	2,765	43%
Total	4,669	100%	6,488	100%

It can be seen above that 20% of the individuals made up 43% of the arrests.

An "arrest" may involve a booking into jail or a citation. Approximately 70% of the arrests were bookings and 30% citations.

Of the 4,669 individuals who were arrested, we counted 946 (or 20.2%) who were arrested more than once, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Re-Arrests in the Study Area, 1/1/2006 to 6/18/2008

Number of Persons	Number of Arrests
571 persons	2
187 persons	3
89 persons	4
32 persons	5
17 persons	6
15 persons	7
10 persons	8
13 persons	9
12 persons	10 or more
946 Total Re-Arrests	

It is hard to summarize the types of "arrest charges" against the persons who were arrested multiple times.[2] In general, the charges are more serious than for the SIP population, because the SIP procedure by definition is used only for less serious charges. A considerable number of the charges in this population are felonies, such as possession of drugs, burglary, theft, assault, and even two cases of aggravated murder. Most of the multiple arrests, however, were for minor crimes such as DWLS (Driving with License Suspended), various forms of

[2] "Arrest charges" are those filed by the police and referred to the prosecutor. These are different from the charges filed (or not filed) by the prosecutor, and also different from the charges on which a person may be convicted.

misdemeanor assault, SODA violations (Stay Out of Drug Area), SOAP violations (Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution), and shoplifting, to name just a few. The list of charges for the re-arrested persons runs to 55 pages.

The re-arrest data can provide a basis to evaluate the number of persons who were SIP'd and then rearrested. As shown above in Table 1, 6.1% of the SIPs in 2006 and 6.6% in 2007 were arrested in the study area after being SIP'd, although usually not very close in time to the SIP. This is a considerably lower figure than the 20.2% general re-arrest rate in the study area since January 2006.

Arrests of Homeless or Transient Persons

In analyzing the arrest data from the 22 census blocks, we found that many of the arrestees were homeless or transient. It is old news that Tacoma has many homeless people. But it was surprising to us to learn how many of the total arrestees and how many of those booked into jail from the study area are homeless or transient.

To identify that population, we examined the "arrestee address" reported by the police in the arrest data. The total number of homeless or transient people is a combination of at least two groups: (a) those whose address is listed as "homeless," "transient," or "none," and (b) those listed as living at Nativity House, the Rescue Mission, or King Center.

Table 8 (next page) shows the number of homeless or transient people, according to the arrest data. The table presents two different ways of looking at the number of homeless or transient persons as a proportion of the study population.

- The figures to the left refer to bookings and contain duplication because some individuals had multiple bookings. The 4,487 total bookings cover approximately 3,210 individuals.

- The figures to the right are an unduplicated count of the individuals with multiple arrests. Of the 946 total individuals, 872 were booked into jail, and 74 were not booked but received a citation (at least twice).

Table 8

Homeless or Transient People Arrested in the Study Area

January 1, 2006 to June 18, 2008

	Total Bookings (N = 4487)		Repeat Arrestees (N = 946)	
Arrestee Address	Number of Bookings	Percentage of Bookings	Unduplicated Number of Persons	Percentage of Repeat Arrestees
"Homeless"	60	1.3%	18	1.9%
"Transient"	764	17.0%	236	24.9%
"None"	14	0.3%	0	-
Nativity House	59	1.3%	7	0.7%
Rescue Mission	57	1.3%	11	1.2%
King Center	29	0.6%	7	0.7%
TOTAL	**983**	**21.9%**	**279**	**29.5%**

Source: Calculated by performance audit staff from arrest data for the Study Area (22 census blocks in Hilltop and nearby areas in central Tacoma).

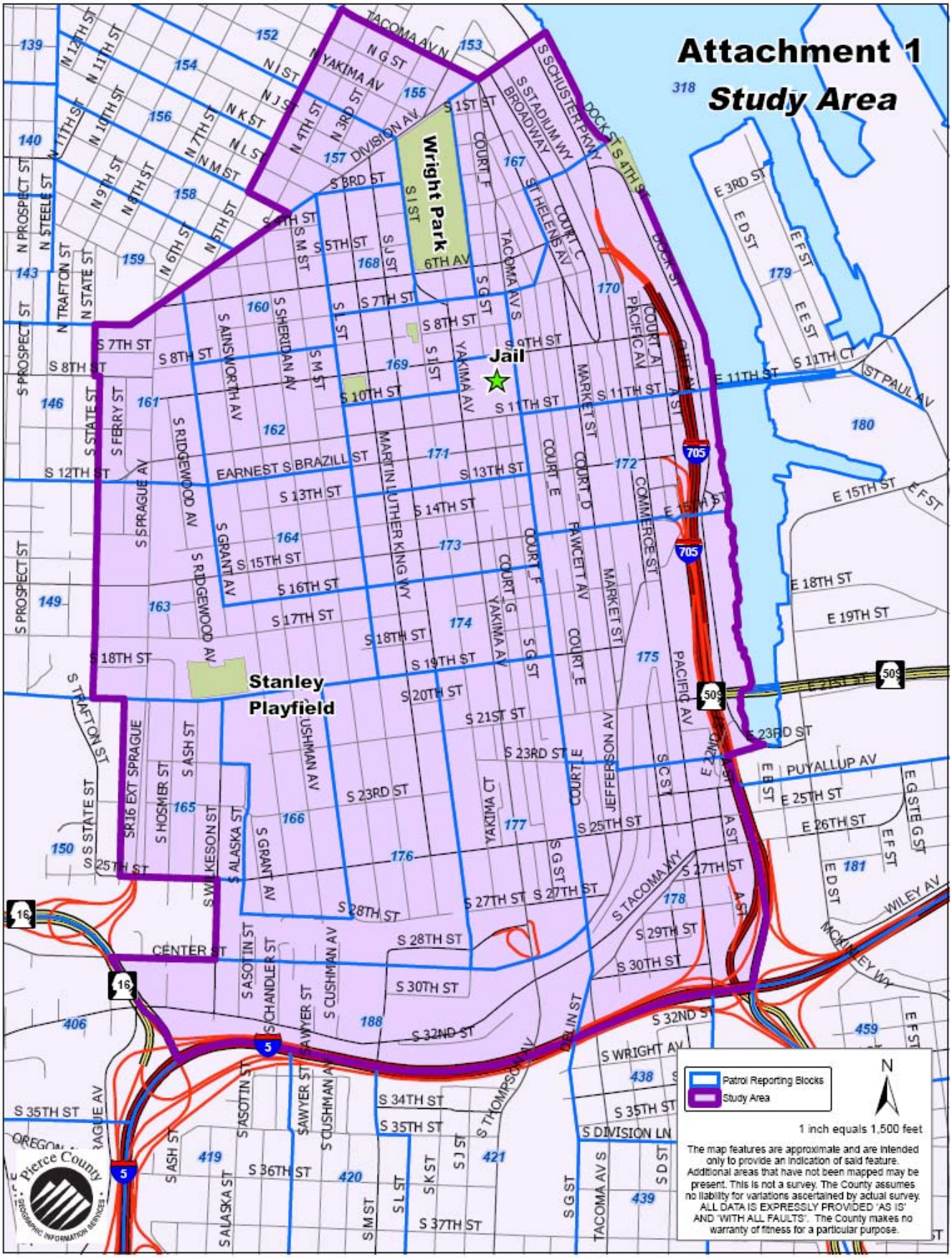
The table indicates that 21.9% of the bookings and 29.5% of the repeat arrestees, or "frequent flyers," were homeless or transient. **However, the actual figures are higher**. Many arrestee addresses are coded in the arrest data as "unknown" or "null" (no data entry). We searched booking records and found that at least one-third of the people with "unknown" and "null" addresses in the arrest data were homeless or transient. Overall, after taking this data issue into consideration, it appears that approximately 25% of the total bookings and 33% of the repeat arrestees were homeless or transient.

Conclusion

This analysis began as an exploration of whether people from outside Tacoma who are brought to the Pierce County jail and then SIP'd are having an adverse impact on public safety in the Hilltop and other nearby areas in central Tacoma. Very little support for that hypothesis can be found in the arrest data from the 22 census blocks.

However, the arrest data reveal a much larger issue – approximately one-third of the "frequent flyers" from the study area are homeless or transient. It will be a challenge for policy makers to address that issue effectively. In our opinion, that issue has a far larger impact on the jail and on public safety in the surrounding areas than the jail's decision to SIP an increased number of persons starting in 2007.

Attachment


Attachment 1
Study Area
Wright Park
Jail
Stanley Playfield
Patrol Reporting Blocks
Study Area
N
1 inch equals 1,500 feet
The map features are approximate and are intended only to provide an indication of said feature. Additional areas that have not been mapped may be present. This is not a survey. The County assumes no liability for variations ascertained by actual survey. ALL DATA IS EXPRESSLY PROVIDED 'AS IS' AND 'WITH ALL FAULTS'. The County makes no warranty of fitness for a particular purpose.
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