



Arizona Automobile Theft Authority **Five-Year Strategic Plan FY19 – FY24:**

The AATA's mission is to prevent and combat auto theft through a statewide cooperative effort by supporting law enforcement, vertical prosecution, and prevention programs across Arizona.

History - The Arizona Automobile Theft Authority (AATA) was established by the Arizona Legislature in 1992 to create a statewide effort to reduce auto theft. Per A.R.S. § 41-3451, the Agency is governed by a 12-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Governor, statute, and/or law enforcement organizations.

The AATA is funded through semi-annual assessments of over 400 insurance companies writing auto policies in Arizona. The Agency receives NO funding from the State's General Fund. The AATA is recognized as a national model for sustainable auto theft reduction strategies.

The AATA functions as the lead agency in a statewide network of law enforcement, criminal justice, and crime prevention partners working together to combat auto theft crimes across Arizona. By focusing resources in these areas, the AATA and its statewide partners are impacting the state's auto theft rate.

This year the Authority celebrated its 25th Anniversary (1992-2017) of continued service to Arizona citizens as we work collaboratively to reduce auto crimes across the state. Arizona has seen a 57% decrease in vehicle thefts since inception.

Funding – The AATA collects approximately \$6.2 million annually from the insurance industry. Nearly 90% of collected funds are issued for Law Enforcement, Vertical Prosecution and Public Awareness Grant programs administered by AATA staff. The Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force remains our largest grantee project at \$3,650,000 annually or 70% of total budget for continued enforcement and investigative efforts. The AATA also administers the free, statewide Watch Your Car decal program, sponsors free VIN Etching events, and numerous community & police-based prevention projects. Our message encourages the public to be diligent about practicing theft prevention and utilize a "layered approach" to protection.

Challenges – As we celebrate the Agency's 25th year, we are in a funding crisis – FY'17 marked the third straight year with no appropriation increase from the Arizona Legislature, which resulted in program and budget cuts during the last few years. In addition, all funds collected by the AATA are not able to be spent, creating a fund balance, and no available funding for enforcement and innovative technology. The Auto Theft Task Force has received cuts in funding and officer positions; the Vertical Prosecution Grant programs were also cut despite an increase in caseloads. Despite efforts to expand the prosecution program into more counties, it remains in

only six of the fifteen counties; no additional targeted counties (Cochise and Yuma) can be added due to current funding issues.

Results - Arizona has seen a 57% decrease in vehicle thefts since the AATA's inception. The agency and its law enforcement partners and grantees all work together to prevent, identify, and prosecute auto theft crimes across Arizona. In 2016, the Auto Theft Task Force alone recovered 1,561 stolen vehicles, made 369 felony arrests, and provided 2,084 assists to other law enforcement agencies. Last year, AATA grant funded Vertical Prosecutors filed over 1,500 auto theft charges and secured nearly \$1million in restitution for victims.

Current Trends - In 2016, auto theft rates increased 6.6% nationwide. Arizona's theft rate increased 8.1% from 2015 to 2016. Based on preliminary data for 2017, authorities estimate similar, if not higher increases for this year.

Although auto theft rates have declined significantly the past two decades, it has NOT been eradicated. In fact, both individual thieves and crime rings continue to evolve using increasingly sophisticated means to steal cars, causing a ripple effect of criminal activity.

Vehicle crime is often a high impact crime correlating with carjackings, home burglaries & invasions, drug trafficking, homicide and sophisticated financial/insurance fraud schemes.

Arizona currently ranks tenth (10th) in the nation for vehicle thefts per capita (theft rate per 100,000 population) and ninth (9th) for total stolen vehicles.

In 2016, six out of ten MSA's (Metropolitan Statistical Area), with the highest theft rates were in California. The Phoenix MSA once ranked the #1 "Hot Spot" for auto theft in the United States now ranks #52; Tucson, which previously held the #2 spot, fell to #89; Yuma #138.

The AATA will continue to increase its footprint to the rural areas of the state where auto theft is an ongoing problem, with limited local resources to support efforts.

FY19 – FY24:

The AATA submitted a budget request of \$7.5 million dollars for FY19 to make up for program cuts occurring during the past three years when the Agency was underfunded. Since FY18, this underfunding has caused reductions in grant funded police officer and prosecutor positions; with NO additional funds available for grantees in other program areas, typically funded by the AATA. The continued underfunding has resulted in the Agency being currently unable to respond to requests for assistance from our criminal justice partners. These are the cuts enacted for FY18:

Four (4) Detective positions were cut from the DPS Auto Theft Task Force
Support staff positions for Maricopa, Pima and Pinal County Attorneys were severely reduced
No new technology or crime fighting equipment money available
No training money
No money for needed upgrades to Agency databases like Watch Your Car

The Agency intends to utilize money in the fund balance, along with increasing insurance revenue, to fund the \$7.5 million dollar budget request. This increase will allow the Agency to restore all cuts from FY18 and would allow for expansion of technology which keeps Arizona in the forefront of investigating, prosecuting and preventing automobile theft in our state. The following is where the additional requested funding increase is projected to be distributed:

\$700,000 to the DPS Auto Theft Task Force to restore the previous cuts in funding

\$1,300,000 to local grants, which include:

To County Attorneys for prosecuting auto theft cases, with emphasis on adding Yuma, Cochise, Yavapai counties to the program

To DPS Auto Theft Task Force for a vehicle replacement grant program

To Arizona law enforcement agencies for technology and equipment with priority given to areas of the state which fall under the Border Strike Force jurisdiction

\$200,000 to the lump sum for upgrades to databases such as the Watch Your Car program and other critical agency needs

Over 90% of the Agency's budget is distributed for Law Enforcement, Prosecution and Public Awareness, with the DPS Auto Theft Task Force being the Agency's largest grantee. The Arizona Automobile Theft Authority is committed to ensuring the safety of Arizona both along the border and from within. It is critical for the Agency to have authorization to spend the money collected for the intended purpose of combating vehicle theft in Arizona. The budget request is in line with the strategic plan to secure the border and to provide grant funding to areas of rural Arizona where auto theft and related criminal activity remain a serious problem.

AATA's Strategic Programs & Goals

LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS

Historically, the majority of AATA funding was for jurisdictions with the highest auto theft rates. This year, a shift in strategy includes expanding outreach and support to all Arizona counties and law enforcement agencies experiencing vehicle theft problems. Essentially, increasing AATA's footprint in rural areas of the state where vehicle theft continues to be an issue. Also, continue to reduce auto theft related crimes, concentrating on border issues and other areas experiencing an increase in criminal activity. Develop and maintain communications with law enforcement and the insurance industry to track trends in auto theft and other vehicular crimes such as fraud, illegal exportation and repatriation of vehicles.

Goal: Equip every Arizona Law Enforcement agency with AATA funded LPR by 2024.

Continue to support Law Enforcement grant projects in smaller counties, concentrating on the Colorado River corridor and along US Route 95, I-8 and I-10.

The AATA coordinates and provides assistance, training to law enforcement agencies on a statewide basis and partners with the Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force and Insurance SIU (Special Investigation Unit) groups. Many smaller Arizona law enforcement agencies do not have full time Detectives dedicated to auto theft investigations; the AATA is committed to providing assistance to all agencies by developing contacts in need of AATA resource support.

VERTICAL PROSECUTION PROGRAMS

Increasing the Vertical Prosecution model to Cochise and Yuma counties, as well as increasing AATA public awareness programs in rural communities across Arizona.

The AATA's Vertical Prosecution Grant program began in FY'01. As the Arizona Vehicle Theft Task Force experienced increasing success in thwarting organized auto theft rings, it became apparent to the Task Force command staff and the AATA that prosecutors were needed with specialized training that were solely dedicated for the purpose of prosecuting and combating auto theft on a statewide basis.

Vertical Prosecution of vehicle theft cases does not exist in Arizona absent funding by the AATA. The complex nature of vehicle theft and the associated organized crime requires the funding of a group of well-trained, dedicated prosecutors to work with the Task Force and statewide law enforcement to continue the successes achieved.

Goal: To expand the Vertical (Auto Theft) Prosecution model to Cochise and Yuma Counties by 2020.

Currently, limited funding and resources available for statewide Vertical Prosecution program impact the recruitment and retention of more partners. The AATA plans to expand the AATA's Vertical Prosecution Program across Arizona, focusing on smaller counties impacted by vehicle theft. Plans include determining counties (large and small) to be funded, provide training and instruction on the Vertical Prosecution Program model and ensure grant agencies are following guidelines set forth by the AATA.

PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMS

AATA's Public Awareness programs have been an effective tool for the agency and its law enforcement partners in the reduction of auto theft on a statewide basis; however, these programs have been minimized and less of a funding priority in recent years.

Goal: Increase Statewide Public Awareness and AATA Outreach Programs

Collaborate with statewide law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to identify current trends to develop innovative prevention and public awareness programs/services. Assist with the development of grant programs for these agencies to initiate prevention and public awareness programs in each Arizona county. Identify new, innovative programs and strategies for statewide impact.

The AATA will continue to provide equipment, literature and promotional items, along with other AATA resources, which provide agencies the ability to target specific needs of their community and to empower vehicle owners to protect their property. Through statewide, coordinated liaison activities, contact and develop partnerships with state/local law enforcement and prosecution agencies

Tailgate theft prevention – Arizona currently ranks 4th in the United States for tailgate thefts. AATA Staff are currently working to develop a tailgate theft prevention campaign to increase awareness, offer DIY tailgate lock kits, along with information on after-market tailgate locks and tracking devices.

Carjacking awareness & prevention campaign - As technology improves, the anti-theft capabilities of vehicles, carjacking crimes have, and will continue to rise. Develop a public awareness program specific to carjacking crimes. Share with statewide law enforcement and developed partners along with community groups and public speaking engagements.

AATA AGENCY, ADMINISTRATIVE & LEGISLATIVE GOALS:

Goal: Work with Stakeholders, Insurance partners, Lobbyists and AATA Board Legislative Subcommittee to advance Agency Legislative strategies.

The appropriated budget for the AATA needs to be increased to reflect the current financial situation regarding revenue collections. The Authority is not authorized to spend all the money it collects, causing a surplus. This surplus is increasing yearly, and the agency is not able to

1) Increase the AATA's appropriated budget from \$5.3 to \$7.5 million dollars

The AATA is requesting an appropriation increase, which does NOT affect the Arizona General Fund, from \$5.3 million dollars to \$7.5 million dollars for FY19. These monies would come from the agency's projected collection of approximately \$6.2 million dollars for FY18 and the current structural surplus created by past collections of \$2.9 million dollars (anticipated fund balance on July 1, 2018). We will be able to restore the cuts to DPS and increase our grant awards to areas where auto theft is a problem.

2) Insert the following language in governing statute to allow access to fund balance

“All Automobile Theft Authority fund receipts received by the Automobile Theft Authority in excess of the current fiscal year appropriation, are appropriated to the Automobile Theft Authority. Before the expenditure of any Automobile Theft Authority fund monies in excess of the current fiscal year appropriation, The Automobile Theft Authority shall submit the intended use of the monies for review by the Joint Legislative Budget Committee. The Automobile Theft Authority can seek approval from the JLBC to expend up to the limit of the funds contained in the Automobile Theft Authority fund.”

At this time, the \$7.5 million dollar budget request is the most critical item. Without this, there will certainly be additional cuts to programs.

AATA FUND BALANCE (PROJECTED)

Projection: Revenue Increases over 10 years, Appropriations are held at FY19 Budget Request levels.

Revenue Growth is projected to be 3% each year over the next 10 years

FY19 Appropriation (Budget) Request: \$7.5 million

Appropriations will exceed revenue in FY19 through FY22, reducing the carry forward fund balance

Fund Balance at the end of FY18 (current year), approximately \$2,914,714

Fund Balance at the end of FY19, approximately \$2,089,151

Fund Balance at the end of FY22 (5 years), approximately \$825,306

Fund Balance at the end of FY27 (10 years), approximately \$3,140,475