

10. FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget - Pasadena Police Department

Please find below my comments regarding technology acquisition and the forms of funds utilized to purchase many of these technologies relating to the Pasadena Police Department (PPD), FY 2025 Proposed Budget.

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Shotspotter (AKA SoundThinking¹) is ineffective and should be discontinued

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It is unclear from the proposed FY 2025 budget if Shotspotter will be continued after the conclusion of the 3-year pilot. The disappointing performance of Shotspotter in Pasadena is in-step with other cities across the nation who are finding that this gunshot detection technology does not deliver on its promises, is unreliable, ineffective, resource intensive and a threat to civil liberties.

Despite PPD's glowing presentation on Shotspotter's performance,² reporting which analyzed the data revealed that PPD's responses to Shotspotter alerts led to dead ends 75% of the time and spent 285 hours responding to alerts.³ Those are resources that are pulled away from doing other police work.

AXON Signal Sidearm deployment status

PPD's 2024 FY budget stated that "*The implementation of these Axon product tools have a project start date of April 2023.*" A year later and the deployment of Signal Sidearm is still unclear.

Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPR) are a threat to civil liberties and need better data minimization and data sharing protocols

Despite spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on ALPRs, the public and Council does not receive reporting on the efficacy of the equipment. Moreover, in 2020 City Council directed staff to strengthen data protections in the Vigilant Solutions contract to: "*Include provisions in the contract prohibiting data sharing by Vigilant Solutions for monetary reasons and to limit any data sharing to law enforcement agencies only.*"⁴ However, to date there's no confirmation that this clause was implemented and that Vigilant is not in fact using law enforcement ALPR data for commercial purposes.

I urge PPD and City Council to enact stronger data protection and minimization measures, especially now in a post-Dobbs environment that has turned the act of obtaining reproductive care into a precarious endeavor and the fact that PPD is currently installing more ALPR cameras in the City.

Flock - the ALPR vendor of the stationary cameras being installed in the City - recommends a data retention period of 30 days and is what more than 90% of their customers have implemented. Recently, Governor Newsom and CHP issued a statement that Flock cameras installed in Northern California will have a 28-day retention period and prohibits out of state sharing in accordance with the legal bulletins issued by the California Department of Justice.⁵ As confirmed through public records earlier in 2024, PPD still shares ALPR data with out of state agencies.

¹<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/bay-area-crime-tech-firm-shotspotter-rebrands-as-stock-tanks-with-new-chicago-mayor/ar-AA19JDbq>

²<https://www.pasadenanow.com/main/six-months-later-police-say-shotspotter-a-worthwhile-tool>

³<https://knock-la.com/data-shows-shotspotter-leads-to-dead-ends-and-wasted-resources-in-pasadena/>

⁴https://ww2.cityofpasadena.net/2022%20Agendas/Jan_24_22/AR%207%20SUPPLEMENTAL%20CORRESPONDENCEpdf.pdf

⁵<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2024/04/02/governor-newsom-announces-contract-to-install-480-new-high-tech-cameras-in-east-bay-to-improve-public-safety/>

⁶<https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/2023-dle-06.pdf>

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Asset Forfeiture Fund & Homeland Security Grant Fund used for military and surveillance equipment

	FY 2021 ⁷ Actual	FY 2022 ⁸ Actual	FY 2023 Adopted	FY 2023 ⁹ Actual	FY 2024 Adopted	FY 2024 ¹⁰ Revised	FY 2025 ¹¹ Proposed
Asset Forfeiture Fund (207)	\$232,000 (+51%)	\$431,000 (+86%)	\$415,000	\$868,113 (+101%)	\$801,000	\$2,314,201 (+167%)	\$591,927
Homeland Security Grant (230)	\$79,000 (+3850%)	\$152,000 (+92%)	\$0	\$165,528 (+9%)	\$213,000	\$814,747 (+392%)	\$145,000

Pasadena PD’s ever-growing reliance on asset forfeiture funds and homeland security grants perfectly demonstrates that the asset forfeiture process is a lucrative endeavor for law enforcement, incentivizes bad policing practices, and harms everyday people. According to a 2022 report, research suggests that law enforcement agencies who collect higher shares of their revenue from fines, fees, and forfeitures solve crime at significantly lower rates and can have a detrimental effect on community and police relations.¹² Despite recent reforms, law enforcement departments across the state are supplementing their budgets significantly through asset forfeiture.

Furthermore, in deciding how to use these funds, law enforcement is often left with the ability to unilaterally decide what is “nice to have”. Instead of supporting community programs, law enforcement often utilizes these funds for other priorities such as acquiring military equipment¹³ and surveillance equipment.¹⁴ For example, PPD recently acquired a cell site simulator at a cost of more than \$1.2 million.¹⁵

Worse, the funds that do make their way back into law enforcement operations disproportionately go to policing communities of color. In 2014, 85% of asset forfeiture dividends in California went to agencies in majority minority communities.¹⁶ To say that people of color are paying for the privilege to be more heavily policed would be an understatement.

Moreover, the general public does not agree with law enforcement being able to keep property that has been seized. According to a 2016 YouGov survey, 76% do not think law enforcement should not keep

⁷<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/finance/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2023-Section-19-Police.pdf?v=1717447352057>

⁸<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/finance/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2023-Section-19-Police.pdf?v=1717447352057>

⁹<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/finance/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2024-Section-17-Police.pdf?v=1717447545909>

¹⁰<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/finance/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2025-Recommended-Operating-Budget.pdf?v=1717393081552>

¹¹<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/finance/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2025-Recommended-Operating-Budget.pdf?v=1717393081552>

¹²<https://americansforprosperity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/AFP-Sheriff-Ret-Currie-Meyers-White-paper-The-impact-of-fines-fees-and-forfeitures-on-policing.pdf>

¹³https://afsc.org/sites/default/files/2022_Equipped_for_wa_CA_web.pdf

¹⁴https://www.normantranscript.com/community/agenda-item-pulled-amid-concerns-about-armored-vehicle-purchase/article_cf8f5954-5ef5-11ed-8d74-2fa1e8fa0b01.html

¹⁵<https://www.cityofpasadena.net/commissions/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2023-04-19-Public-Safety-Committee-Meeting-Agenda.pdf?v=1684879256557>

¹⁶https://www.aclunc.org/docs/aclu_california_civil_asset_forfeiture_report.pdf

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seized assets, instead, 48% think the funds should go to the state's General Fund.¹⁷ Asset forfeiture funds are not "pennies from heaven"¹⁸ and should not be supplementing PPD's budget to acquire surveillance or military equipment.

Pasadena needs to implement privacy compliance practices with more transparency, accountability and oversight

As a key PPD initiative is to bring in more technology to its department coupled with growing concerns over privacy implications, the City needs to establish a more formal way to vet these technologies, ensure adequate oversight, and formally and frequently conduct evaluations about the efficacy of equipment and processes. Shotspotter would have been better evaluated from the onset, metrics for success set, and objectively evaluated on performance. The cell site simulator procurement and acquisition process - delayed by almost a year - could have been conducted more efficiently. With great budgets comes great responsibility (and scrutiny).

Yadi

Pasadena City Council Meeting

June 3, 2024

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¹⁷<https://www.cato.org/survey-reports/policing-america-understanding-public-attitudes-toward-police-results-national#>

¹⁸<https://www.columbiaheartbeat.com/columbia-life/crime/932-100714>