



COUNCIL AGENDA: 5/16/2023

ITEM: 5.1

FILE NO: 23-694

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Toni J. Taber, CMC
City Clerk

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: May 16, 2023

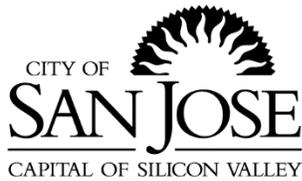
SUBJECT: City Initiatives Roadmap: BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight Status Report

Recommendation

As recommended by the Transportation and Environment Committee on May 1, 2023, accept the status report on BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight analysis, design, and testing work to improve vehicle complaint case handling, coordinating cross-department response and outcomes as part of the approved City Initiatives Roadmap for 2022-2023.

CEQA: Not a Project, File No. PP17 009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action. (Transportation/Information Technology/Police/Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services/Planning, Building and Code Enforcement)

[Transportation and Environment Committee referral 5/1/2023 - Item (d)4]



Memorandum

TO: TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Khaled Tawfik
John Ristow
Jon Cicirelli
Chris Burton

SUBJECT: CITY ROADMAP: BEAUTIFYSJ VEHICLE BLIGHT STATUS REPORT

DATE: April 18, 2023

Approved

Date

4/21/23

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the status report on the Beautify San José Vehicle Blight project. This project involves analyzing, designing, and implementing enhancements to improve how vehicle related concerns are handled, as well as coordinating cross-departmental responses and outcomes as part of the approved City Initiatives Roadmap for 2022-2023 and cross reference to City Council.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

Vehicle blight and parking complaints emerged as a top issue for all City Council District Offices over the past three years and carried the City's lowest customer satisfaction rating in San José 311 at 17% Good to Very Good at the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022. Issues have evolved beyond parking violations, towing stolen and abandoned vehicles, and investigating code violations on private property. Vehicles causing blight in neighborhoods, intense demand for parking spaces in more densely populated residential areas, and the growth of impacts from lived-in vehicles on streets challenge standard service models for urban communities. For San José, City Council prioritized addressing these complaints in the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 City Initiatives Roadmap, along with being highlighted in the Mayor's March Budget Message for FY 2023-2024.

Over six months, a cross-department team worked closely to redesign processes and establish short-term and long-term goals for process and systems enhancements. Some of the identified enhancements were implemented and are showing early positive impacts on customer satisfaction. Results from a pilot program to investigate vehicles reported as being stored on public streets (72-hours) will inform further changes. Improvements from the redesign work were categorized into six focus areas:

1. Processes – Staff used a design process involving the Transportation (DOT), Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS), San José Police (SJPd), Planning Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE), Housing (HSG), and Information Technology (ITD) departments and the City Manager’s Office of Communications (CMO COMM) to understand residents’ concerns, staff requirements, service request and investigation patterns, and internal processes. Departments collaborated to identify changes that target core issues, redesigning the City’s processes to be more responsive, effective, less bureaucratic, and to achieve customer service and performance objectives.
2. Policies – The current assembly of statutes, ordinances, and City process are insufficient to address the modern urban problem of vehicle blight as it presents in San José. In partnership with the City Attorney’s Office and the City Manager’s Office of Administration, Policy, and Intergovernmental Relations, the project team is exploring changes geared toward providing tools and capabilities that better position San José to address vehicle-related issues. This includes potential enforcement of 72-hour parking restrictions, use of streets for storage of boats and trailers, means to address blight and safety impacts caused by vehicles, and off-street issues not contemplated by the California Vehicle Code such as vehicles in parks and on trails.
3. San José 311 (SJ311) – During the redesign process, staff identified ways to improve the SJ311 application by utilizing improved case tracking and integrations that encourage collaboration among departments and enhance public engagement. These improvements couple with new 311 Customer Contact Center processes to respond to and handle cases in a manner that improves responsiveness, resident understanding, and satisfaction ratings.
4. Resources – Staff has identified opportunities to reallocate 10%-20% of vehicle abatement proactive patrol resources to complaint-based investigations. DOT continues its work with the Human Resources Department to improve hiring processes to address the current 14% vacancy rate. Additionally, staff recommends designating the ongoing Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve for the following: to create capacity for 10,000 additional investigations per year; fund the creation and deployment of education, marketing, and communication plans for vehicle related complaints and SJ311; provide staff training; and tap customer contact representatives to play a larger customer service role with residents to handle non-infraction complaints.
5. Communication and Education – The project design includes opportunities to improve communication and promote public awareness regarding service restrictions and limitations. In addition, the project identified marketing opportunities for educational campaigns.
6. Employee Safety – The vehicle complaints of today necessitate engagement with a broad group of constituencies and associated work that goes beyond interactions related to traditional citation and abatement. To keep City employees safe and to give them tools

needed to be successful, departments identified training needs in areas such as de-escalation for safety, managing crisis and mental health events, recognizing and interacting with individuals with mental health conditions and/or addictions, providing mental health first-aid, and working with populations who have experienced grief and trauma.

Staff will present 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 Committee will understand and provide 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. Staff will refine efforts based on input received.

BACKGROUND

The BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight initiative is part of the Clean, Vibrant, and Inclusive Neighborhoods and Public Life enterprise priority in the 2022-2023 City Initiative Roadmap¹. The Mayor's March Budget Message² for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 also identifies *Cleaning Up Our Neighborhoods* as one of four priority focus areas and recommends continuing the work to reimagine the City's Vehicle Abatement Program and San José 311 (SJ311) to enhance the City's vehicle blight outcomes and measurably improve program effectiveness and resident satisfaction.

The complexity of the vehicle related complaints is impacted by several factors including the need for coordination between multiple departments to ensure dependent services are not disjointed or delayed and correlating performance measures and customer satisfaction results for a clear understanding of the challenge. This recognizes siloed service delivery is not effective in addressing these problems. Achieving success now necessitates coordination and collaboration across a minimum of five departments and contracted vendors.

Customer Satisfaction:

The Abandoned Vehicle service has been the lowest-rated SJ311 service for multiple years. In FY 2021-2022, 16.7% of customers rated the service as Good or Very Good. Motivated by the City Initiatives Roadmap and poor customer satisfaction rating, staff initiated a project to gain a better understanding of the issues and find a comprehensive solution to ensure true collaboration with all impacted departments.

¹ 2022-2023 City Initiatives Roadmap:
<https://www.sanJoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/86061/637889777025900000>

² March Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2023-24:
<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/95379/638143945589500000>

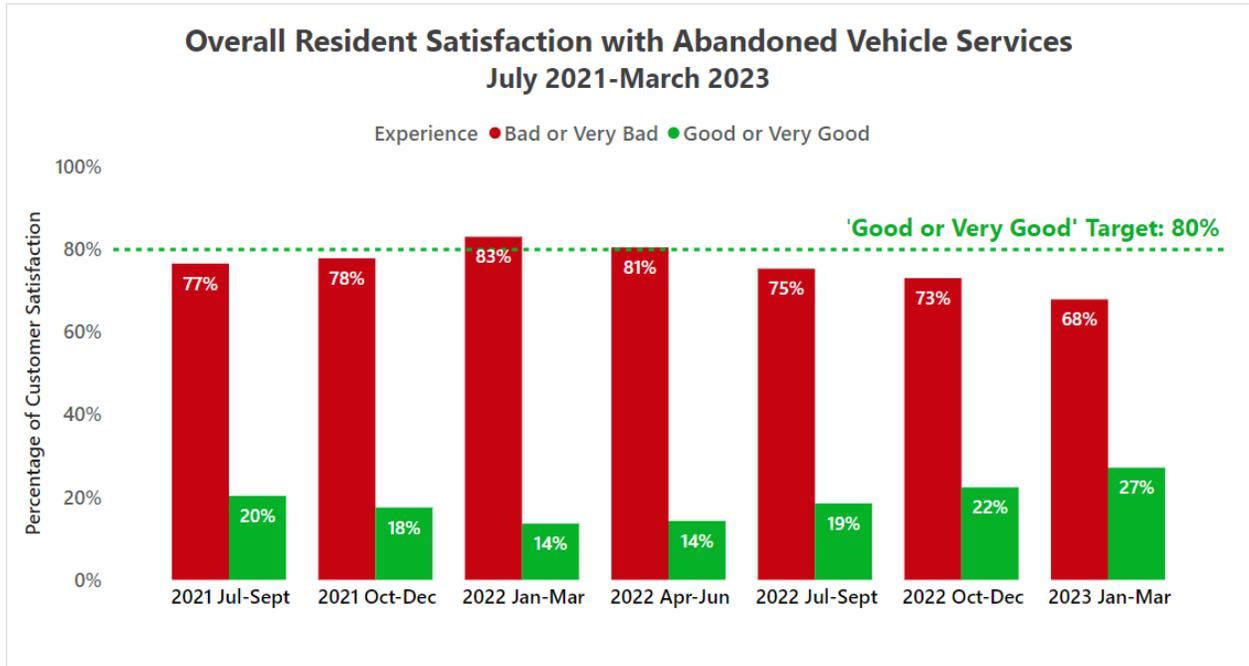


Figure 1 – Overall Abandoned Vehicle Customer Satisfaction

Volume of Vehicle Abatement Service Requests:

Since the inception of SJ311 (previously My San José), the Abandoned Vehicle Program has been one of the most requested services on SJ311. Pre-pandemic, service request volumes reached over 60,000 annually and, while Abandoned Vehicle service requests have not returned to pre-pandemic levels (approximately 29,000 requests in FY 2021-2022 and an estimated 31,000 in FY 2022-2023), service request volume is trending upwards.

Vehicle Abatement / Vehicle Blight Complexity:

Multiple departments are involved in responding to and addressing vehicle-related concerns submitted through SJ311. Departments receive requests from many different contact sources. Related workflows, tracking, and customer communications happen through disparate systems. The absence of a centralized case management tool, in addition to a lack of process consistency among departments, prevents a full view of service delivery and satisfaction, while also hindering collaboration between departments. This impacts the customer journey, and both City Council Offices and City departments have heard resident complaints of confusing, inconsistent, and frustrating responses by the City.

Some reported vehicle concerns are straightforward. Others have multiple stakeholders, legal limits, and/or required steps that must occur over time. For example, California Vehicle Code (CVC) defines an inoperable vehicle violation and gives Parking and Traffic Control Officers (PTCOs) legal enforcement authority. Inoperable vehicles can be towed immediately when

identified and therefore can be addressed during the initial field investigation. However, storage on-street (72-hour) violations require several field visits to investigate and document the violation(s) to meet the legal threshold for towing. Similarly, code enforcement on private property requires notification of the property owner and providing them the opportunity to correct any issues, which can take months. Generally, vehicle complaints involve assessment of a violation, investigation, determination of violation and factors for citation or towing, collection of necessary evidence to uphold enforcement action, and communications with residents through to completion.

More recent patterns of blight complaints have even higher complexity that moves them from an *abatement* service type to an *ongoing management* scenario. For example, a large recreational vehicle (RV) that is lived-in, potentially leaking bio-waste, and surrounded by trash that is overflowing into the public right-of-way has legal limits on action and typically requires a multi-departmental coordinated effort involving DOT (address the vehicle), Housing (supportive services for the individuals), Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services – BeautifySJ (address the trash), and a variety of vendors such as tow contractors and environmental clean-up vendors. The work of some groups can occur concurrently. At other times, department work is serial and dependent on other steps and determinations. Because these vehicles are often moved periodically, they are less likely to be found in violation of parking regulations or restrictions, thus disqualifying them from enforcement under current laws.

Vehicle Abatement Program Operations:

During the pandemic, the Vehicle Abatement Program transitioned from a reactive model that was complaint-driven, to a proactive program. Customer reports automatically triggered an abandoned vehicle investigation regardless of the condition of the vehicle reported. Under the previous reactive model, approximately 45% of the vehicles moved before the initial field investigation was scheduled, resulting in wasted investigation cycles. In addition, this complaint-driven service delivery was concentrated in neighborhoods with high rates of compliance. This pattern resulted in inequitable outcomes in city neighborhoods correlated with low-income and communities of color.³ The proactive model achieves a more equitable distribution of vehicle abatement.

The current Abandoned Vehicle Program deploys two distinct operational approaches providing equitable and effective services to San José communities. A combination of proactive and reactive services allows DOT's Parking Compliance Unit (PCU) the ability to efficiently identify and remove vehicles parked on city streets that are most likely abandoned. This approach has resulted in an increased tow rate from less than 7% to 26% and increased efficiency in deployment of staff resources. In lieu of responding to every service request received, staff is qualifying and prioritizing requests before investigation. Reported vehicles that meet conditional criteria are investigated. Improvements to the triage process are a part of staff's analysis.

³ Information Memorandum: Vehicle Abatement Program, March 7, 2022:
<https://www.sanJoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/82903/637823385939300000>

Towing enforcement actions require Parking and Traffic Control Officers (PTCOs) to ensure legal compliance and documentation by conducting a multi-step investigation, not factoring in the condition or the cargo nor contents of the vehicle. The Vehicle Abatement Program is tracking to remove at least 3,320 vehicles by the end of the current fiscal year. While the annual number of towed vehicles has remained consistent over recent years, residents are dissatisfied with the outcomes. Post-pandemic community concerns about lived-in vehicles and vehicle blight, coupled with frustrations with neighborhood parking availability and patterns, produces the consistently low customer satisfaction ratings noted.

Handling Complaints with Compassion:

Guiding the City's approach to parking enforcement are a deep commitment to empathy and compliance. Focus is on an impact-aware compliance approach, aiming to issue warnings and seek voluntary compliance whenever possible. Issuing citations and towing vehicles are used when necessary. This recognizes that citations and tows can have significant financial implications for the City's most vulnerable populations.

The City's DOT teams are aware of the impact enforcement actions have on the condition of San José streets, as well as the personal employment and housing considerations of those who receive enforcement action. Customer satisfaction data related to the Vehicle Abatement Program provides an important but only unfinished perspective, as it doesn't include the lived experience of individuals who cannot afford to pay citations and risk unemployment and homelessness if they receive fines and fees. Balancing the community's need to address vehicle blight and clean streets, while helping our residents experiencing distress, is difficult.

Staffing Challenges within the Parking Compliance Unit (PCU):

The PCU in DOT continues to be impacted by position vacancies, limiting full response to vehicle-related complaints. However, the trend is now heading in a positive direction. Changes to pay scale approved by City Council, combined with DOT and Human Resources efforts to recruit, hire, onboard, and train new officers, are improving vacancy rates. During the pandemic (FY 2020-2021 and FY 2021-2022), vacancy rates for the PTCO classification peaked at about 23%. As of April 1, 2023, vacancy rates have improved to 14%. During this period, 25 new PTCOs were hired and 17 PTCOs separated, some promoting to higher positions in Code Enforcement. DOT uses a continuous posting for PTCOs and is committing significant efforts on filling vacancies.

ANALYSIS

Under the sponsorship of the City Manager's Office, ITD and DOT launched a project in October 2022 with a multi-department team collaborating on reimagining the response, resolution, and tracking of vehicle complaints for higher effectiveness and resident satisfaction.

The BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight initiative project team includes representatives from ITD, DOT, PRNS, SJP, HSG, and PBCE, and the City Manager's Office.

Engaging in a Human-Centered Design (HCD) process, the cross-departmental team developed an understanding of the personas, fulfillment criteria, and customer experiences that are impacting current service and customer satisfaction outcomes. HCD work resulted in identifying opportunities for improvement for quick design of solutions and testing of results.

To amplify the level of collaboration and heighten the project's focus on using data analysis to dig deeper into understanding vehicle blight issues in San José, how they relate to customer concerns and expectations while identifying potential solutions to address pain points, ITD and DOT identified the need to create a temporary position to serve as the Product Owner for the project within ITD. The Product Owner role is focused on work that produces value, making processes more effective and responsive for stakeholders. In March 2023, the City assigned the Parking and Downtown Operations Division Manager to serve in this temporary special assignment.

The project team's goals for the BeautifySJ Vehicle Blight initiative include:

- Design efficient workflows that result in effective processing and achieving ~70% Good to Very Good customer satisfaction
- Create one-voice communication with residents based in empathy, kindness, and education across departments
- Convey service expectations clearly through public education, pre-submittal information, and communicating California State regulations
- Enhance options and prompts for residents to provide required information to meet investigation criteria and minimize the need for additional information
- Promote seamless integration between SJ311 and departmental work systems
- Provide status lookups for stakeholder information access to improve collaboration and communication
- Ensure consistency and proper handling of vehicle blight concerns and related service requests regardless of how and where they are reported
- Demonstrate to customers and communities how their civic engagement is positively impacting the city

Focused on accomplishing these goals, the project team developed an analysis to further breakdown and understand the critical components of the customer service gaps as they relate to data, people, processes, and systems.

Understanding Operational Challenges and Identifying Process Improvement Opportunities:

Evolving Abandoned Vehicle Abatement Program Demands:

DOT currently triages vehicle service requests received through SJ311, identifying those for investigation that meet any one of several established conditional criteria. Through data analysis, qualifying investigation criteria were developed over time to help staff identify which vehicles are more likely to be abandoned and therefore potentially eligible for enforcement action. An **abandoned vehicle** is one that has been discarded by the owner with the intent not to return or own the vehicle any longer. A **stored vehicle** is one that is parked for an extended period on the street and potentially not used frequently; however, the owner’s intent is not to give up ownership. The City’s Vehicle Abatement Program was designed to identify, and tow abandoned vehicles. Abatement of abandoned vehicles is now only about 25% of the PCU’s workload.

Figure 2 outlines the tow rate for each criterion used by DOT for vehicle abatement triage. The identified tow rates help demonstrate the challenge in identifying a potentially abandoned vehicle based only on its appearance.

Vehicle Condition Criteria Used During SJ311 Service Request Triage to Qualify Vehicles for Investigation	% of Vehicles Towed When Condition Was Observed (FY 2022-2023 Tow Rate)
Inoperable vehicles (as defined by CVC)	76%
Displaying multiple aged or weathered citations	37%
Missing tire or wheel	37%
Unsecured/ Open doors or trunk	26%
With significantly flat tire(s)	24%
Missing or have shattered windows	23%
Vandalized/ Graffiti (non-commercial vehicle)	23%
Displaying salvage, accident, or auction markings on windshield	22%
On Jacks/ Blocks	22%
Have deployed airbags/ Significant damage	21%
Attracting illegal dumping activities	16%
Missing both front and back license plate	16%
Unattached trailer	8%

Figure 2 – Vehicle Abatement Investigation Criteria and Tow Rates

Proactive Patrol and Resource Realignment:

To supplement the City’s response to triaged public service requests, proactive patrols are utilized where PTCOs drive every city street to identify inoperable and abandoned vehicles that have not been previously reported by the public through SJ311. Approximately 51% of all

vehicle abatement investigations are triggered through proactive patrols and 49% are initiated because of service requests submitted via SJ311. A breakdown of the 6,419 vehicle investigations completed during the first half of FY 2022-2023, by Council district is provided in Attachment A.

During proactive patrols, a team of five (5) PTCOs is deployed to drive every city street approximately every 14-days resulting in over 5,200 abandoned vehicle investigations in FY 2021-2022. The team is on track to complete over 6,500 proactive patrol investigations in FY 2022-2023. Proactive patrols are an impactful part of the Abandoned Vehicle Program, and with a substantial data set now available, DOT has completed a program impact analysis identifying areas where proactive patrols are most effective and therefore most needed. Specifically, the number of proactive patrols conducted, the number of investigations completed, and the number of vehicle tows were aggregated by police sub-districts across the city. When combined, those areas identified as recording 87% of all FY 2022-2023 Q1 and Q2 proactive investigations and 60% of proactive patrol related tows were identified as high impact areas. Based on DOT's analysis, realignment of proactive patrol resources should occur to increase the frequency of patrol in these high impact areas. Proactive patrols should continue, at a lower frequency in areas where the number of investigations initiated, and the resulting enforcement actions (tows) were low. This will free up resources to increase proactive patrol frequency in areas where it is most impactful. Figure 3 identifies the areas (noted in green) in the city where communities can expect to see an increase in the number and frequency of proactive patrols. Yellow shaded areas of the map will accordingly see a decrease in the frequency of proactive patrols. DOT has begun to adjust proactive patrol officer deployment and estimate new proactive patrol cadence timelines. This work is expected to be completed by the beginning of FY 2023-2024.

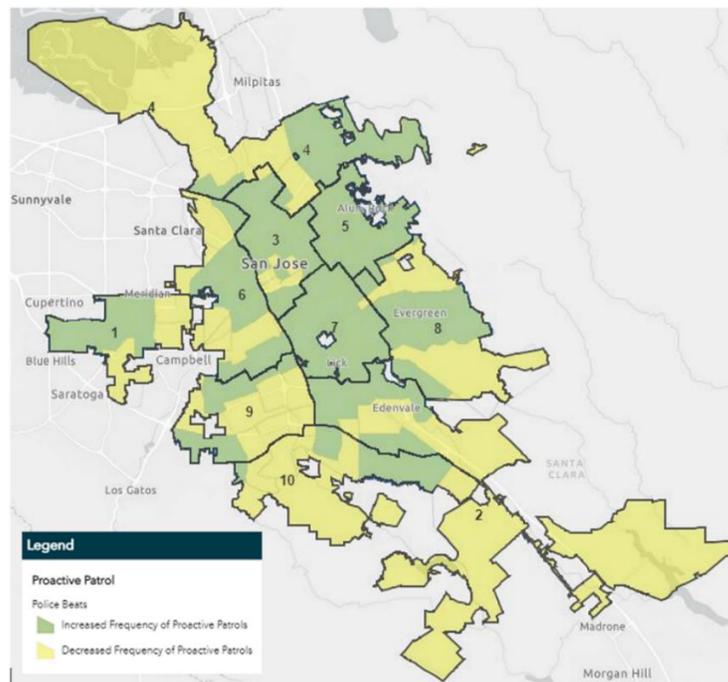


Figure 3 – Anticipated Changes to Citywide Proactive Patrol Frequency

Understanding Customers' Perspective:

To best serve our communities, we must understand the problem through the eyes of our customers. Through this people focused approach it was important to listen to our customers and understand their concerns.

Customer Concerns Funnel Analysis:

Customers are utilizing the Abandoned Vehicle SJ311 reporting tool to alert the City of all types of vehicle related issues, not just abandoned vehicles. Additionally, customers report vehicle related issues to multiple departments through a variety of channels. To better understand the specific vehicle concerns and issues customers are reporting, staff reviewed reports from SJ311, DOT, PBCE, and SJPD. The tone and subject matter of customer concerns was very similar across departments. A funnel analysis was completed based upon DOT specific data as it was the most complete, accessible, and accurate data set available. According to FY 2021-2022 data, the most common concerns voiced by customers were related to:

- General Illegal Parking Activity
- Abandoned or Inoperable Vehicles
- Specific Types of Vehicles
- Nuisance/ Disliked Vehicles
- Potentially Stolen Vehicles
- Lived-in/ Encampment Vehicles
- Potential Illegal Activity
- Environmental/ Garbage

Through the review of customer comments submitted with DOT Abandoned Vehicle service requests, 30,601 occurrences of specific vehicle related situations were identified by staff. Figure 4 outlines the breakdown of the concerns by type and volume. General illegal parking issues were by far the most voiced concern (75%) and included requests for services for enforcement of blocked fire hydrants, access ramps, bike lanes, residential permit parking and storage on-street (72-hour) violations, as well as other requests. These types of requests are outside the traditional scope of the Vehicle Abatement Program as it focused on identifying and towing abandoned vehicles. Enforcement of illegally parked vehicles is the responsibility of the PCU's Safety Patrol team. The Safety Patrol team does not provide on demand service as illegally parked vehicles tend to move on relatively quickly and before a PTCO can respond to the reported location. Regular citywide patrols for safety violations are equitable, efficient, and effective when citations are issued for identified violations.



Figure 4 - FY 2021-2022 DOT Vehicle Abatement Service Request – Specific Customer Concerns Expressed

In understanding *what* our customers are most concerned about and the volume of their concerns through the funnel analysis, staff identified three (3) core categories that vehicle related service requests fall into.



Figure 5 - Vehicle Related Concern Categories

Breaking down customer concerns into categories identified potential solutions more easily. This method allowed staff to better understand the issue and assess where challenges lie, while also considering the City's current resources, abilities, and needed tools to address the concerns. Additionally, it helped staff recognize customer service improvement opportunities.

1. Abandoned Vehicles (12%)

Reported vehicle related concerns falling into this category tend to be less complex and have specific traits or characteristics making them easier to identify during proactive patrols and through DOT's service request triage process. In addition, these concerns have direct and clear enforcement mechanisms and processes. Abandoned, inoperable and stolen vehicles are included in this category and typically meet the legal parameters to be towed. Lastly, due to their condition and status, these vehicles tend to stay in the same location and do not typically require additional field visits to address because they remain stationary. Once identified, addressing these issues usually results in quick and recognizable enforcement action, as such, customer satisfaction is positively impacted.

2. Illegal Parking (72%)

Reported vehicle related concerns falling into this category tend to be more widely varied in both the potential parking violation of concern and DOT's ability to identify and document a violation occurred. Vehicles parked in the same location without moving (Storage On-Street/ 72-hour), blocking a red curb, fire hydrant, bike lane and other general illegal parking concerns are included in this category. Vehicles associated with these concerns tend to move or relocate to another location before a PTCO is available to respond/conduct a field visit to investigate. When the vehicle is found in the reported location, owners often voluntarily comply with parking rules, restrictions, and regulations when they are explained or if a warning is provided. If a violation is observed and can be documented by a PTCO, enforcement action can be taken. Per the CVC, the only legal enforcement mechanism allowed for most parking violations is a citation.

3. Nuisance (16%)

Reported vehicle concerns falling into this category tend to be about issues that do not have a direct tie to a parking or other enforceable violation. This can include nuisance concerns about dirty vehicles or vehicles with cosmetic damage, certain types of vehicles (boat, trailer, motorhome, scooter, etc.), lived-in vehicles or vehicles leaking/ dumping waste/ fluid or are full of trash. Currently, BeautifySJ is developing solutions for non-compliant vehicles that have biowaste discharges onto streets/ storm drains or substantial debris located next to a vehicle. While parking enforcement action often isn't warranted or legally feasible in these cases, options to help mitigate some of a reporting customer's angst may be available through referrals to vehicle blight partners. For example, a lived-in vehicle cannot be towed, but when referred to the Housing Department outreach can be provided, and services offered to the inhabitants. Additionally, if there is trash, illegal dumping, or biowaste discharge occurring near a lived-in vehicle, referring the issue to BeautifySJ can result in cleanup of the area. In these scenarios, the possibility of a more

neutral customer satisfaction score can be achieved by providing public education through clear, informative, and empathetic messaging.

Understanding Complementary Data:

San José Registered Vehicle Analysis:

According to data provided by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), as of April 1, 2023, there are 1,534,738 vehicles registered within San José city limits. When considering there are close to 1M residents living in San José and approximately 75% of the population is age 18 or older and younger than 75, at most 729,505 of San José residents are of driving age. Further, it is fair to assume that at least 10% of those identified as driving age and living in San José, are not actually licensed to drive. This implies that there are around 2.3 vehicles for every one potential driver living in San José. This high ratio does further influence the perception that there are a significant number of vehicles regularly stationed and taking up parking in San José. The high volume of resident/ business vehicles can have an impact on vehicle blight, parking occupancy, and the rate or level of illegal parking. Of the almost 1.6M vehicles associated with San José addresses, 321,820 (21%) have vehicle registrations that have been expired for longer than 6-months.

Per the CVC, PTCOs are authorized to tow vehicles when a vehicle registration is expired more than 6-months, however, typically the PCU focuses their efforts on enforcing situations where registration violations are more egregious (expired 1-year or longer). When addressing expired registration, the PCU currently uses an extended enforcement timeline to adequately compensate for any DMV delays related to the processing and mailing of registrations, and to better balance the impacts of towing on individuals that may be in a financial situation impacting their ability or decision to register their vehicle in a timely manner. During the first half of FY 2022-2023, through the Vehicle Abatement Program, the PCU towed 708 vehicles for gross expired registration violations. This equates to approximately 43% of vehicle abatement tows during the time period. Increasing towing activities to include towing upwards of 300K vehicles a year for expired registration may improve the city's vehicle blight situation, however, this could create new and potentially unintended consequences as there could also be potential steep financial impacts for vehicle owners and resource capacity issues for the Vehicle Abatement Program.

The preliminary DMV data set will need further refinement to better facilitate understanding and application of information to San José parking and enforcement activities, as it is likely that not all the registered vehicles in San José are privately owned and a portion of them are commercial, recreational, or other types of vehicles/ trailers. Prior to recommending or making any changes to how the PCU and the City view the enforcement of expired vehicle registration, it would be prudent to know if:

- DMV registration holds are impacting the number of expired registrations in San José
- San José's current enforcement approach is capturing an adequate percentage of the population of vehicles with expired registrations (enforcement rate)

- Certain areas of the city are experiencing higher rates of expired registration and how occurrences of expired registration align with the Equity Atlas Map
- Vehicles are towed for expired registration what percentage of them are recovered by the owner and at what approximate cost



Figure 6 - San José Registered Vehicle Status as of April 1, 2023

Understanding the Problem Through Analytical Outcomes:

A Human-Centered Design approach was utilized to assist the cross-functional team in comprehending the personas, fulfillment criteria, and customer experiences that will be required to achieve the team's service and satisfaction objectives. Through the Human-Centered Design process and the data analysis outlined above, the following seven focus areas have been identified as vehicle blight- reporting, processing, and service delivery improvement opportunity focus areas. Enhancements and updates that work to address these areas will have positive impacts on the Vehicle Abatement Program, the City's collaborative approach to address vehicle blight, and overall customer satisfaction. In addition, it is anticipated that this work will encourage continued, and hopefully elevated engagement and use of SJ311.

1. Operational and Program Enhancements
2. SJ311 – Customer Reporting Redesign
3. Optimize Resources and Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve
4. Abandoned and Illegally Parked Vehicles
5. Stakeholder and Customer Communication, Education, Expectations and Engagement
6. Employee Training and Tools
7. City Policies and Citywide Direction

Identified Opportunities for Maximum Impact to Customer Satisfaction:

Each of the seven focus areas touch on identified stakeholder and customer pain points that are impacting customer usability, satisfaction, and outcomes. Creative solutions to address these challenges have been identified and prioritized by staff. In several focus areas significant work is already underway. Other areas will require additional planning and analysis.

Focus 1: Operational and Program Enhancements

1. Concern:

An information and data gap exists around understanding the “why” behind customers’ requests for service. There is a clear understanding of what customers report, but not an in-depth understanding of what is triggering or motivating an individual to report.

Proposed Solution:

Adapt current service request intake process to query customers about what specifically concerns them most about the vehicle they are reporting enabling an additional data set that can be used to further understand customer reporting behavior, motivation, and pain points. Anticipated improvement: 1%. (COMPLETE)

2. Concern:

Gaps in existing service deliveries- Biowaste Cleanup Services

Proposed Solution:

The PRNS-BeautifySJ Unit launched a Pilot Recreational Vehicle Pollution Prevention Program in March 2023 to address biowaste discharges from up to 150 lived-in vehicles. Funding to continue the Pilot and expand level of services has been identified in the proposed FY 2023-2024 budget. Anticipated improvement: 1%. (COMPLETE)

3. Concern:

Alignment of Abandoned Vehicle Program with City Customer Service Vision & Standards

Proposed Solution:

Inclusion of Customer Service Vision & Standards (Attachment B) within Vehicle Blight Initiative Project Charter identifying Customer Service as the project’s North Star. Anticipated improvement: 1%. (COMPLETE)

4. Concern:

There is a lack of enforcement focused on addressing lived-in vehicles on city streets.

Next Steps:

Review and drafting of a policy recommendation framework is currently underway. City Manager’s Office is leading a cross-departmental team who will develop an administrative recommendation on potential enforcement activities for lived-in vehicles. A recent point-in-time count conducted by DOT in April 2023 noted that there were approximately 858 vehicles being used for shelter and parked on city streets. Approximately 608 of the vehicles were identified as RVs and motorhomes while 250 were passenger vehicles. Anticipated improvement: 2%. (IN PROGRESS)

Focus 2: SJ311 – Customer Reporting Redesign

1. **Concern:**

When requesting services or reporting concerns, customers do not know what City department to contact or how to contact the City about their concerns.

Proposed Solution:

Create a single point of intake for service requests. All requests flow through SJ311 providing one centralized phone number to reach all city departments. Initiate seamless referrals and warm handoffs of service requests between departments and external partners whenever possible. Anticipated improvement: 3%.

2. **Concern:**

Customer frustration increases when service requests are closed without investigation.

Proposed Solution:

Expand intake criteria allowing customers the opportunity to report more types of vehicle related issues and allow customers the option to re-open a closed, uninvestigated service request one time. Anticipated improvement: 5%.

3. **Concern:**

Customer reporting options are limited to online/ app.

Proposed Solution:

Enable anonymous reporting and relax mandatory photo requirement providing the opportunity for customers to report vehicle blight concerns via the Customer Contact Center expanding the reporting channels to include phone, in-person, live chat, and email. Service requests submitted with photos will continue to be prioritized. Anticipated improvement: 5%.

4. **Concern:**

Customer service requests are unintentionally submitted to incorrect departments or government agencies and are closed with minimal referral information leaving the onus on the customer to follow up and navigate through the City administration and other agencies on their own.

Proposed Solution:

Develop a central triage engine to direct service requests to the correct department regardless of intake point and enable systems to communicate between departments to provide seamless referrals and handoffs of service requests to departments and external partners. Anticipated improvement: 2%.

Focus 3: Optimize Resources and Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve Funds

1. Concern:

Lack of investigation into reported concerns related to vehicles potentially stored on public streets (72-hours).

Proposed Solution:

Expand current pilot program (See Focus Area 4.1 below) focused on investigating vehicles reported as being stored on public streets for extended periods of time. Increased contractor staffing, up to 3.0 FTE, would provide bandwidth to investigate up to 10,000 additional vehicles annually. The 2022-2023 Adopted Operating Budget included ongoing funding of \$300,000 for the Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve in the General Fund. Staff recommends reallocating \$250,000 from this reserve to support the additional contractual services. Adjustments to proactive vehicle abatement patrols (See *Proactive Patrol Analysis and Resource Realignment* above) may allow for the reallocation of 0.5 FTE of a PTCO to provide up to 1,000 annual enforcement actions, with no additional cost increase. Anticipated improvement: 8%.

2. Concern:

Service requests that are chronic and repetitive in nature related to vehicles found to be in compliance with parking rules, regulations, and restrictions, when investigated have the potential to overwhelm resource capacity, thereby causing operational impacts.

Proposed Solution:

Increase investigation efficiency by placing a temporary hold on new service requests related to recently investigated and compliant vehicles. Customer communications will explain the reason for the hold, provide information on the most recent investigation and provide an opportunity to be alerted when the hold expires. Anticipated improvement: 1%.

3. Concern:

Incomplete or inaccurate information provided by customers during the service request intake process can impact service delivery efficiency and staff productivity. Administrative staff timeliness is impacted during the triage and officer deployment process and field staff are impacted when attempting to locate and process vehicles for investigation.

Next Steps:

Explore the feasibility of incorporating Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology into the service request intake process allowing customers to use their smartphones to scan license plates when submitting service requests, significantly improving the accuracy of one of the most critical data points, vehicle license plates and reducing manual data entry for customers. Anticipated improvement: 1%.

4. Concern:

Proactive Vehicle Abatement patrols are an important part of the Abandoned Vehicle Program, however, not every city street is impacted by vehicle related concerns in the same way or at the same level.

Proposed Solution:

Realign proactive patrol resources by increasing the frequency of patrol in high impact areas, where historical data indicates the number of investigations and enforcement actions (tows) are high. Reduce patrol frequency in areas where patrols have identified few investigations and have low tow rates. Anticipated improvement: 5%. (IN PROGRESS)

Focus 4: Abandoned and Illegally Parked Vehicles

1. Concern:

Lack of investigation into reported concerns related to vehicles potentially stored on public streets (72 hours).

Proposed Solution:

Initiate a pilot program focusing on investigating vehicles reported as being stored on public streets for extended periods of time to better understand the impacts a potential full/ larger program would have on staffing resources, what expected outcomes might be and the potential impact investigations and issuance of citations would have on customer satisfaction. Additionally, the pilot will serve as an opportunity to test new vehicle qualifying criteria and other program framework. Anticipated improvement: 8%. (IN PROGRESS)

2. Concern:

Customers express difficulties related to the level of effort required and long wait times when attempting to report illegally parked vehicles via SJPD's non-emergency phone line.

Proposed Solution:

The reimagined SJ311 intake process will expand to allow for the reporting of illegally parked vehicles shifting the call taking away from SJPD non-emergency and providing customers with an easier and quicker reporting option. Anticipated improvement: 1%.

3. Concern:

Lack of enforcement of expired registration violations pertaining to vehicles parked on public streets.

Next Steps:

Conduct further data analysis to understand factors impacting the volume of expired registrations, the areas of the city most impacted by expired registrations and equity

impacts related to potential enforcement approaches. Anticipated improvement: 5%. (IN PROGRESS)

4. Concern:

Customers have expressed concern over unpowered vehicles including construction/ debris/ boat trailers, toy haulers and 5th wheels parked or being stored on city streets.

Next Steps:

Review, understand and identify the scope and volume of the concern and level of priority for action. A recent point-in-time count conducted by DOT noted that there were 108 trailers and 45 boats on trailers parked on city streets. Trailers that are not attached to vehicles currently qualify for investigation under the existing Vehicle Abatement Program. During the first two (2) quarters of FY 2022-2023 the PCU investigated 732 unattached trailers. Only 56 (8%) qualified for enforcement action and were towed. Anticipated improvement: 1%. (IN PROGRESS)

Focus 5: Stakeholder/ Customer Communication, Education, Expectations & Engagement

1. Concern:

Customers do not see parking enforcement activities, or visual cues leading to the perception that nothing is being done to address their concerns.

Proposed Solution:

Improved SJ311 dashboard with a new vehicle abatement outcomes section/ map outlining investigations completed and enforcement actions taken (tows) and initiate evidence-based service request close out notifications that include photos. Anticipated improvement: 2%. (IN PROGRESS)

2. Concern:

Customers feel communications are unclear, lack detail and at times use an unempathetic tone.

Proposed Solution:

Reimagined SJ311 Abandoned Vehicle services will set clear customer expectations at service request intake and provide one voice communication experience to residents based in kindness and education. Anticipated improvement: 5%.

3. Concern:

Customers are provided inconsistent and outdated information regarding service deliveries depending on their communication entry point and/or method of accessing information.

Proposed Solution:

Establish SJ311 and the Customer Contact Center as the one main source of information for customers providing one voice communication with customers based in education and kindness. Anticipated improvement: 5%.

4. Concern:

There is a lack of awareness and understanding among several San José communities regarding SJ311, including its purpose, functionality, and the services it provides. Additionally, there is a disconnect between customer expectations and the City's approach to service delivery, especially concerning vehicle-related issues and the policies governing vehicle blight.

Proposed Solution:

Collaborate with SJ311 vehicle blight service partners, community organizations, the City Manager's Office of Communications, and third-party vendors/ contract service providers to formulate a comprehensive plan for communication and customer education. This plan will include identifying opportunities for customer engagement and creating multilingual materials to enhance awareness and understanding of SJ311. Furthermore, the plan will also aim to promote knowledge and understanding of the human aspects and legal parameters adding to the complexity of investigations, timelines, and outcomes associated with vehicle blight service delivery. The Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve could be used to support this effort (up to \$50,000). Anticipated improvement: 3%

5. Concern:

The lack of visibility into overlapping work of other groups and departments among internal stakeholders leads to duplication of effort and hinders collaboration. It also dilutes the understanding of big picture problems and their solutions.

Proposed Solution:

Create and implement a service request management system that promotes transparency within the organization, facilitates collaboration among different departments, and streamlines workflows through automated referral and service delivery assignment capabilities. The system will include improved service request lookup features and read-only views of department work orders and activities. Anticipated improvement: 1%.

Focus 6: Employee Training and Tools

1. Concern:

Field staff and contractors regularly interact with individuals facing mental health challenges, which is resulting in a rise in the frequency of escalations that impact the health and safety of our workforce.

Proposed Solution:

Identify and provide training opportunities for field staff to ensure they are equipped to deescalate situations and remain safe while in the field. The Vehicle Abatement Enhancement Program Reserve fund could be used to support this effort (up to \$50,000).
Anticipated improvement: 1%

Focus 7: City Policies and Citywide Direction

Policies, legislation, and legal approaches are being pursued for the following potential actions. Staff welcomes Committee and City Council feedback:

1. Consider revising the current approach to enforcing expired vehicle registration by adjusting the enforcement trigger to identify vehicles with registration expired over six months but less than a year. This could result in the issuance of additional citations and/ or towing of vehicles, thereby increasing the rate of violation capture. (See Focus Area 4.3 above)
2. Feasibility and desire to establish a new parking program to prohibit the parking of certain types of vehicles (unpowered vehicles including construction/ debris/ boat trailers, toy haulers and 5th wheels) parked or being stored on city streets including the addition of any necessary, new, or updated ordinances or municipal codes. (See Focus Area 4.4 above)

The San José Municipal Code currently provides for the enforcement of parking violations and vehicles with expired registration within the City. The City Attorney's Office can investigate the legality and feasibility of revisions or additions to the San José Municipal Code which may expedite and/ or modify the enforcement of such violations.

3. Feasibility and desire to create an ordinance to define public nuisance/ extreme blight allowing for the immediate cleaning, towing, or junking, of vehicles if danger is presented for pedestrians, bicycles, vehicles or other transportation modes and any associated enforcement programs/ teams required to provide the service. (See Focus Area 1.4 above)

The San José Municipal Code currently defines, and provides for, enforcement of public nuisances within the City. The City Attorney's Office can investigate the legality and feasibility of revisions or additions to the San José Municipal Code which may expedite the enforcement and regulation of conditions which pose a danger to the public.

4. Feasibility of and desire to establish citywide lived-in vehicle enforcement options and approach policy, including the addition of any necessary new or updated ordinances or municipal codes. (See Focus Area 1.4 above)

The enforcement of lived-in vehicles is currently limited by the San José Municipal Code and California law. The City Attorney's Office can investigate the legality and feasibility of revisions or additions to the San José Municipal Code which may expand the enforcement and regulation of lived-in vehicles.

5. Understanding potential impacts and advocacy strategy of proposed legislation:

The City Manager's Office Intergovernmental Relations team (IGR) is currently monitoring Assembly Bill 1082 (Kalra) and Assembly Bill 925 (Ta). Assembly Bill 1082 would prohibit towing or immobilizing a vehicle due to unpaid parking tickets, remove the authority to hold a lien sale to cover towing and storage expenses, and increase the number of unpaid tickets from one to eight before the Department of Motor vehicles can place a registration hold. It would also require processing agencies to give payment plans for unpaid violations to indigent persons and waive penalties for those who are in custody in juvenile facilities, jails, or prisons. Additionally, for those who do not qualify as indigent, processing agencies must provide a payment plan option and give a courtesy warning notice about the program. The IGR team has coordinated analysis of this legislation with DOT to understand impacts to the City's ability to address community safety and cleanliness needs related to vehicle blight. IGR has raised concerns outlined by DOT with the author's office. While the author remains committed to this legislation, they also have a willingness to pursue amendments and IGR is working in concert with DOT to realize these amendments. The League of California Cities has registered in opposition.

Assembly Bill (925) requires law enforcement officers or people authorized to enforce parking laws to verify using Department of Motor Vehicles Records that a vehicle is not registered before towing it for having expired registration longer than six months. This is problematic for San José by constraining the ability to address vehicle blight and abandoned vehicles. IGR is working with the City's state lobbyists to determine the viability of this legislation. IGR is also working with the League of California Cities to develop an appropriate advocacy strategy, including willingness by cities to collaborate on creating effective and equitable solutions.

Next Steps & Timeline/Schedule:

The cross-departmental Vehicle Blight team has concluded the Process Flow phase of the Human-Centered Design process, which was originally slated to conclude in December 2022. Currently, the team is focused on developing the functional design for the intake process, while also formulating a phased implementation plan to gradually introduce the changes noted to the process above, leading up to the final desired solution. The following outlines the current deployment plan for the enhanced Vehicle Blight service.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The recent user outreach and research conducted to inform the human-centered design approach for the new Vehicle Blight Program identified several common themes: including differences in resident expectations based on their interpretation of codes and City policies, frustration due to lack of on-street parking in residential areas leading to complaints, unclear understanding of what constitutes vehicle blight resulting in complaints on un-addressable items, perception of arbitrary triggers for vehicle blight consideration, residents using work-arounds like adding trash on cars to trigger enforcement, auto-generated email responses lacking specificity and reasoning, and resident frustration with the City's 311 system and perceived deterioration in response to vehicle blight.

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the May 1, 2023, Transportation & Environment Committee meeting.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

/s/
KHALED TAWFIK
Chief Information Officer
Information Technology Department

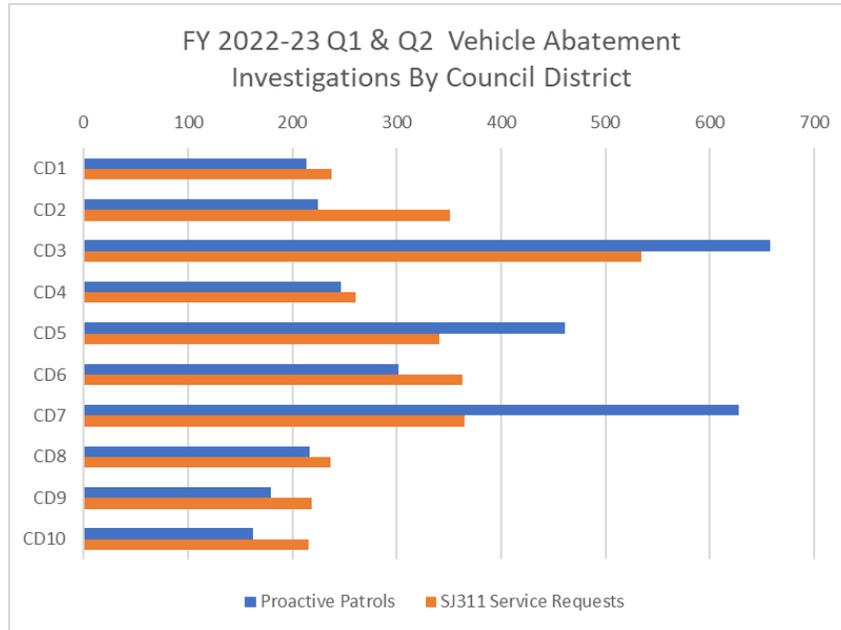
/s/
JOHN RISTOW
Director
Department of Transportation

/s/
JON CICIRELLI
Director
Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services
Enforcement

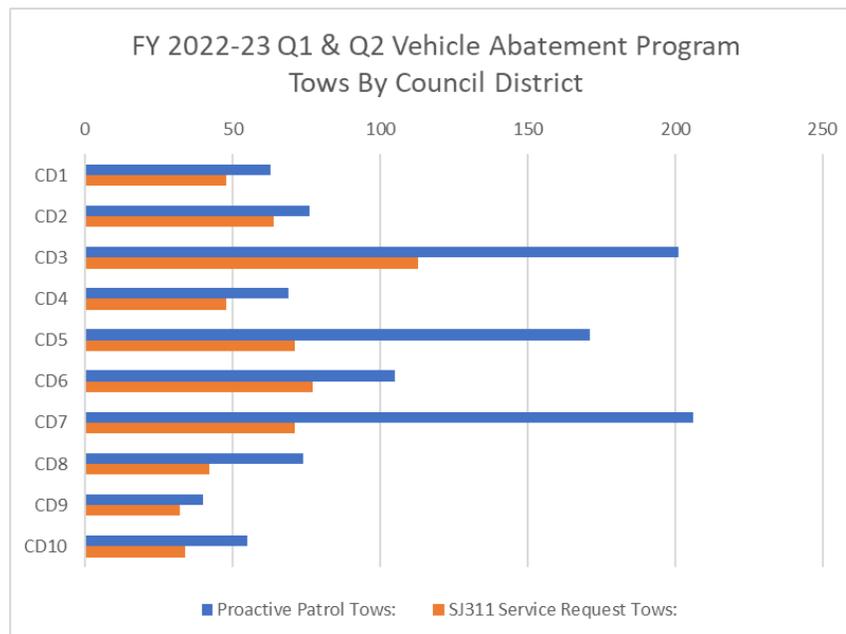
/s/
CHRIS BURTON
Director
Planning, Building, and Code

For questions, please contact Heather Hoshii, Division Manager, at heather.hoshii@sanjoseca.gov.

ATTACHMENT A



FY 2022-2023 Q1 & Q2 Vehicle Abatement Investigations



FY 2022-2023 Q1 & Q2 Vehicle Abatement Investigations Resulting in Tow

ATTACHMENT B

Customer Service Vision and Standards

Standards are guidelines for City employees to deliver customer service and achieve the vision

Vision	Working together to serve our community through reliable, empathetic, and solutions-oriented customer service
Standards	 1. Deliver customer service with a focus on solutions.
	 2. Support a consistent and accessible experience for all customers.
	 3. Work as one team to facilitate a seamless customer experience.
	 4. Enable customers to easily navigate the City on their first try.
	 5. Set expectations for next steps at point of contact and communicate along the journey.
	 6. Treat every customer like their problem matters and we are on the same team to solve it.
	 7. Continually improve our customer service through our people, processes, and technologies.