



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Kymber Waltmunson, County Auditor

Traffic Enforcement: Strategies Needed to Achieve Safety Goals

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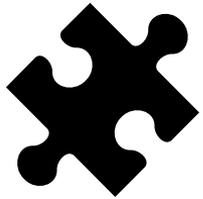
GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY & OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

June 14, 2022

Key takeaways



Reasons for traffic stops are different depending on area served



KCSO lacks strategies for traffic safety



Nationwide, jurisdictions examining alternatives for traffic enforcement

Traffic stops

- Purpose of the traffic stop
 - Criminal
 - Traffic enforcement
- Traffic stops inherently include risk

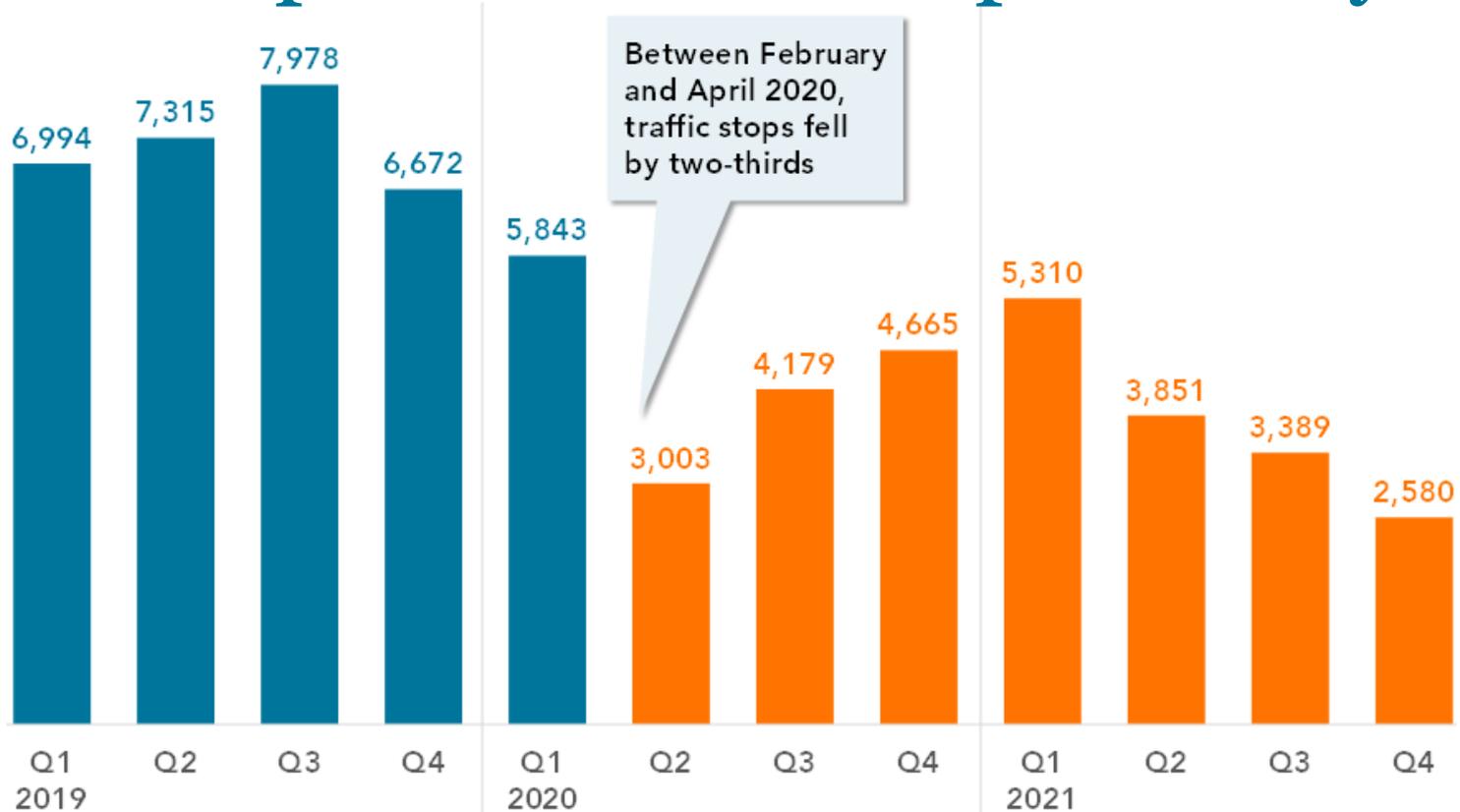


Sheriff's Office Goal

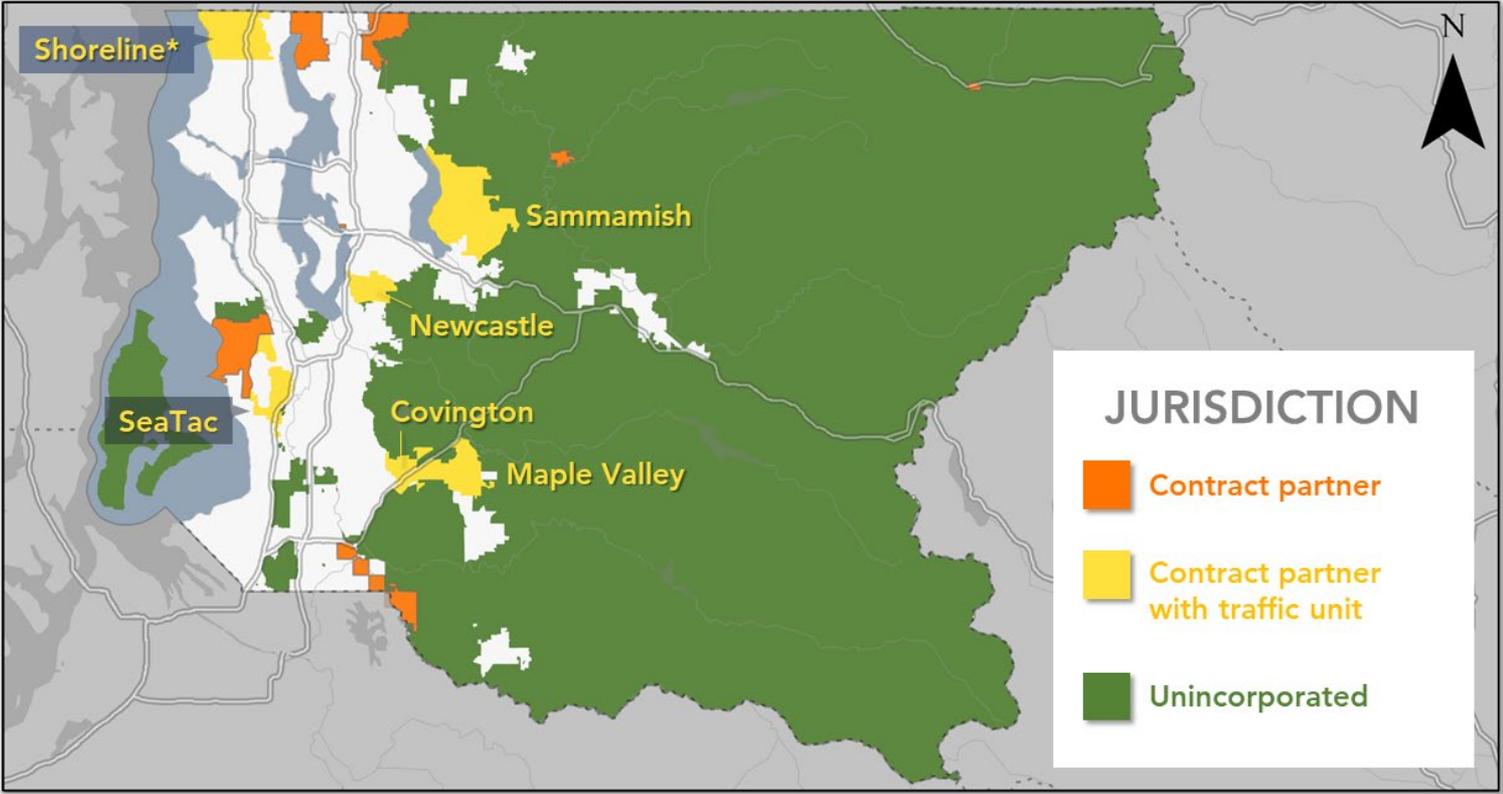
“ Improve traffic safety by reducing impaired and unsafe driving behaviors and traffic collisions. ”



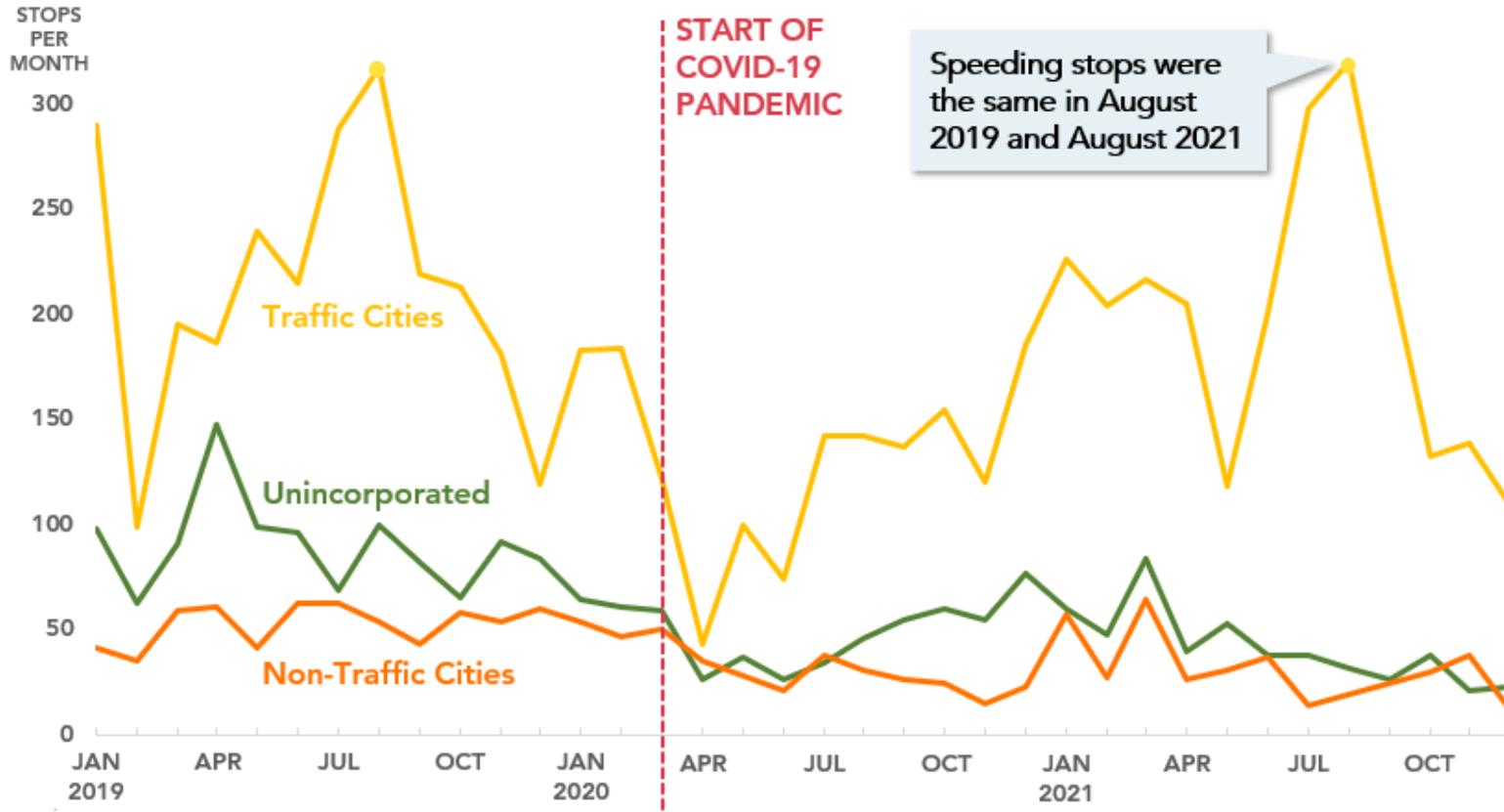
Traffic stops declined over past two years



Some areas have traffic enforcement



Key stop types higher in these areas



Using location-based data is best practice

- National guidance for traffic enforcement
- Use location data to set objectives and measure outcomes
- Sheriff's Office includes these concepts in General Orders Manual



Evaluating traffic stops against objectives

- Cities could explain how stops related to their traffic enforcement objectives
- Sheriff's Office had limited context for stops
- Sheriff's Office does not coordinate with Roads Services Division, contract partners



Recommendation

- ▶ Identify traffic enforcement objectives
- ▶ Develop strategies and use data to assess progress



Recommendation

- ▶ Coordinate with contract partners and Roads to ensure objectives and strategies align



Risk of bias in stops necessitates analysis

- Traffic stops at risk of systemic bias nationwide
- Lack of countywide assessment for bias
- Best practice to collect and consider demographic data



Limited data shows disparities

- Sheriff's Office does not collect or analyze data for all traffic stops
- Existing data shows disparities in uses of force
- Data unable to provide additional detail



Recommendations

- ▶ Collect demographic data for each traffic stop
- ▶ Recommendation 3 of Calls for Service audit addresses data analysis



Alternative approaches

- Change in law or policy to limit stoppable violations
- Creation of civilian traffic enforcement agencies
- Implementation of automated traffic enforcement



Policy changes emphasize safety, equity

Jurisdictions limiting traffic stops to only enforce immediate threats to public safety

Philadelphia



Ordinance change

Virginia



State law change

Seattle



Department policy change

Washington



State law did not pass

King County



Ordinance, state law, and department policy change still possible



Civilian-led agencies face legal hurdles

Hurdles to the creation of non-police traffic enforcement agencies

California

Minnesota



Per state law only sworn police officers can conduct traffic stops

Massachusetts

Berkeley, CA



Lobbying to change state law; may trigger collective bargaining

King County, WA



Changes to state law likely required due to vague definitions



Automation needs thoughtful application

Red light and speed traffic cameras entail benefits and concerns



Effective at increasing traffic safety



Linked to excessive fines, license suspensions, and bankruptcies especially in majority Black and Hispanic ZIP codes



Intentional introduction could mitigate disproportional impacts



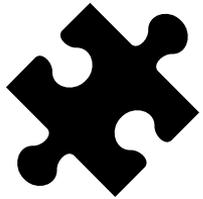
Equity concerns, contract partners may present barriers to widespread implementation in King County



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Thank you

Full report available online at
[KingCounty.gov/Auditor](https://www.kingcounty.gov/Auditor)

Questions?