



Automobile Theft Prevention Program

Fiscal Year 2024

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes § 3.197: This report cost approximately \$5,190.00 to prepare, including staff time, printing, and mailing expenses. *Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, Braille, or audio recording. Printed on recycled paper.*

Program Background

The Automobile Theft Prevention Program was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1996. The program is authorized under Minn. Stat. § 65B.84 and is funded by a 50¢ per vehicle surcharge¹ collected every six months from automobile insurance carriers that provide comprehensive insurance coverage issued in the State of Minnesota. The program utilizes this funding for a competitive grant process for activities to address automobile theft in the State of Minnesota.

- 2004 - Program was statutorily transferred to the Minnesota Department of Commerce and managed by the Commerce Fraud Bureau since 2009.
- 2017 - Legislature expanded scope to include automobile-related theft crimes.
- 2020 - Special Agent from Commerce Fraud Bureau assigned as State's Automobile Theft Prevention Grant Coordinator.
- 2021 - Legislature allocated \$400,000 for Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot Program and appropriated \$500,000 to establish an equipment library to be made available to all law enforcement agencies in Minnesota to support efforts to combat automobile theft.
- 2023 - Added an Auto Theft Analyst to assist with looking at auto theft trends statewide and grant management.
- 2024 - Commerce Fraud Bureau Supervisory Special Agent assumed the duties of the authorized grant representative while the coordinator role was expanded to include distributing equipment obtained for the equipment lending library.

Scope of This Report

The information in this report is presented as mandated by Minn. Stat. § 65B.84, subd. 2, to report the activities and expenditures of the Automobile Theft Prevention Program and Minn. Stat. § 325E.21 subd. 2b(g) on the progress, results, and findings of the Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot. The period covered in this report covers Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. The adjustment to fiscal year reporting was made to more accurately reflect the activities of the grants, which are awarded on a fiscal year basis.

The statistical information provided in this report was derived from Minnesota Law Enforcement Agencies' reporting to the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) and from data submitted to the Automobile Theft Prevention Program by grant recipients.

¹ Only passenger vehicles, motorcycles, and light trucks are included. Fleet vehicles, recreational vehicles, and larger trucks are not subject to the surcharge.

Statewide Analysis

From July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024 (FY 2024), 13,311 automobile thefts were reported in Minnesota, a 24% decrease (4,139 fewer offenses) compared to the same period last year (FY 2023). The automobile theft rate per 100,000 people dropped from 305 in FY 2023 to 232 in FY 2024.²

The Twin Cities metropolitan area continues to account for most automobile thefts in the state. In FY 2024, 11,611 thefts occurred in the seven-county metro area, representing 87% of the statewide total. Within the metro area, Washington and Ramsey Counties saw significant reductions of 46% and 37%, respectively, while Carver County experienced a 21% increase.

In contrast to Minnesota's downward trend, according to FBI data, the national automobile theft rate increased from 274.5 in the calendar year 2022 to 283.5 in the calendar year 2023. For the same period, the BCA reported Minnesota's calendar year 2023 motor vehicle theft rate at 271.8, which is 4% lower than the national average but still higher than the Midwest Region's rate of 259.9.³

Automobile Theft Prevention Grant Program Overview

Beginning in FY 2024, two different grants were awarded by the Automobile Theft Prevention Program. One was a three-year grant for agencies to employ an investigator dedicated to investigating automobile thefts. The other grant funded relevant equipment and other costs related to automobile theft investigation and prevention. This general grant was awarded for two years.

Seventy-six percent of Minnesota's automobile thefts in FY 2024 occurred in the jurisdictions of the 32 law enforcement agencies that received grant funding.

Dedicated Investigator Auto Theft Prevention Grant

The Automobile Theft Prevention Program continued the grant opportunity introduced in the last biennium, offering funding to agencies that assign an investigator to focus on auto thefts in their community. Agencies with at least 75 auto thefts and recoveries per year were eligible for \$12,000 annually if they assigned all auto theft cases to a single investigator. Those with at least 250 auto thefts and recoveries per year could receive \$100,000 annually for assigning a full-time investigator to these cases. Agencies with over 500 auto thefts were eligible for multiple positions. Agencies could also consolidate to meet higher eligibility thresholds. All

² The rate per 100,000 people was calculated using the U.S. Census Bureau - Population and Housing Unit Estimates of 5,714,300 Minnesota residents on July 1, 2022, and 5,737,915 residents on July 1, 2023.

³ Note: the difference between the BCA's vehicle theft rate of 271.8 and the grant-reported rate of 229 is due to the BCA reporting on a calendar year while this report's data reflects a fiscal year.

participating investigators also received funding for specialized training and attendance at intelligence meetings. The grant was extended from two to three years based on the program's success and participant feedback.

Dedicated Investigator Grant Recipients

For FY 2024, 13 agencies requested positions. Table 1 lists the 10 agencies receiving the grant as well as the number of funded positions.

Dedicated Investigator Grant Recipients	
Coon Rapids Police Department (1)	Maplewood Police Department (2)
Duluth Police Department (1)	Minnetonka Police Department (1)
Edina Police Department (Part-time)	Ramsey County Sheriff's Office (3)
Fridley, Columbia Heights, and Spring Lake Park Police Departments Combined (1)	Roseville Police Department (1)
Hennepin County Sheriff's Office (2)	Saint Paul Police Department (1)

Table 1. Dedicated Investigator Grant Award Recipients and Number of Positions

Dedicated Investigator Grantee Performance

During FY 2024, investigators funded by the Dedicated Investigator Grant recovered 479 vehicles with an estimated value of \$10,969,396.00. Figure 1 details the number of arrests and stolen vehicle recoveries made by dedicated auto theft investigators per quarter.

Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of the different types of auto theft cases investigated by grant-funded dedicated investigators per quarter. The data was collected from quarterly grantee reports. "UUMV" as used in Figure 2 is Unauthorized Use of a Motor Vehicle. These are cases where a vehicle is primarily used for quick transportation. Grantees report many vehicles in the UUMV category are used to commit other crimes. "Permanent" are those cases where the offender attempts to keep the vehicle, such as removing the VIN, removing the license plates, painting the vehicle, or selling the vehicle. Finally, "Organized" as used in Figure 2 includes theft rings and chop shops who conspire or operate for the purpose of financial gains.

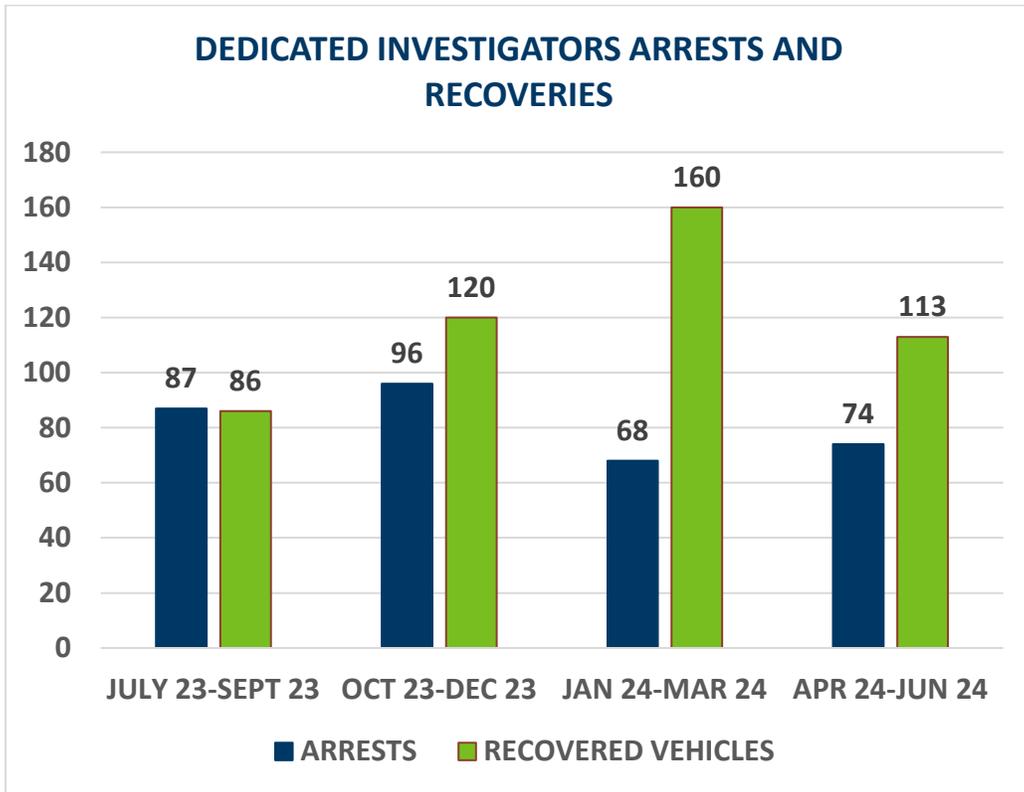


Figure 1. Dedicated Investigator Arrests and Recovered Vehicles

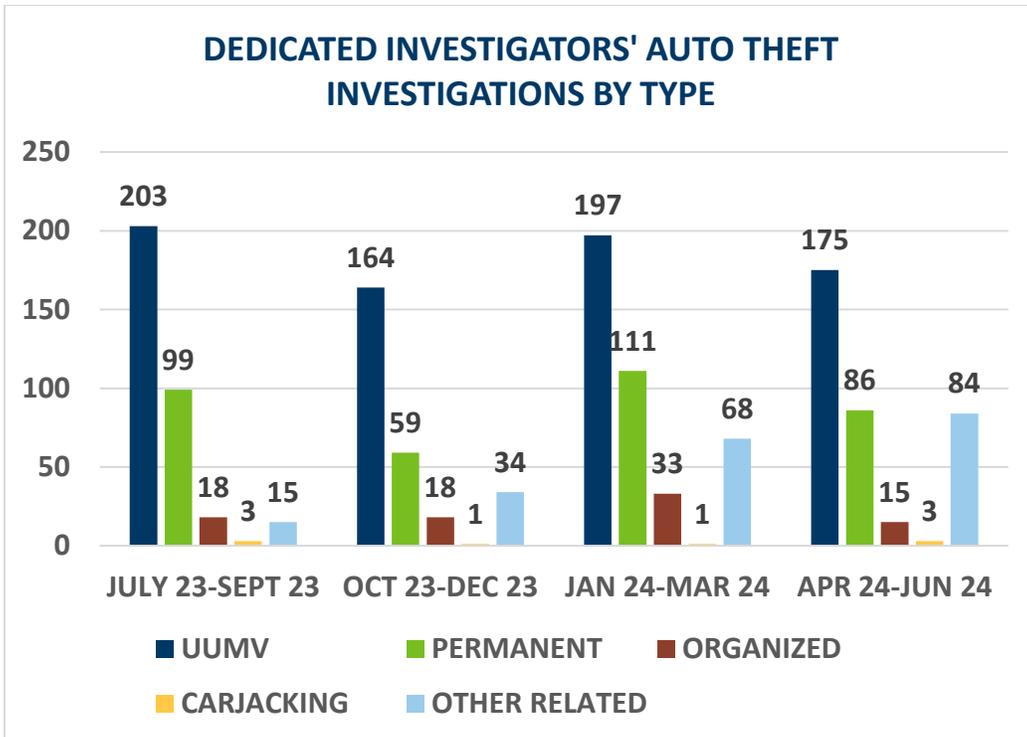


Figure 2. Types of Auto Theft Investigated by Dedicated Investigators

General Auto Theft Prevention Grant

Agencies requested a total of \$4,586,394.13 from the General Auto Theft Prevention Grant for FY 2024. The Commissioner approved grants totaling \$3,123,928.98 under this program. The amount awarded represents 68% of the FY 2024 applicant funding requests. The grant funds were distributed to 31 law enforcement agencies, four prosecutor offices, one public benefit corporation, and one law enforcement collaborative effort that includes a non-profit group.

The grantees used these funds to pay prosecution staff, furnish analytical support, obtain equipment, create training opportunities, provide Minnesota State Patrol air support, and pay overtime for automobile theft investigations. Tables 2, 3 and 8 provide lists of General Grant recipients by category and their awards.

Law Enforcement Agencies

Law enforcement agencies were awarded \$1,973,158.38 in grants, which accounted for 63% of general auto theft grant dollars. Table 2 lists the grantees and their award amounts.

Law Enforcement Agencies	Award
Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council ⁴	\$204,323.42
Becker County Sheriff's Office ⁵	\$10,800.00
Brooklyn Center Police Department	\$33,465.00
Bloomington Police Department	\$49,379.00
Duluth Police Department	\$6,243.84
Eden Prairie Police Department	\$82,975.00

⁴ Includes Anoka County Sheriff's Office, Blaine Police, Centennial Lakes Police, Coon Rapids Police, Anoka Police, Fridley Police, Spring Lake Park Police, Columbia Heights Police, Lino Lakes Police, Ramsey Police, St. Francis Police

⁵ Becker County did not complete the contract and withdrew.

Edina Police Department	\$57,396.61
Hennepin County Sheriff's Office	\$217,000.00
Hibbing Police Department	\$13,910.00
Minnetonka Police Department	\$88,723.00
Minneapolis Police Department	\$332,167.20
Minnesota State Patrol	\$95,481.86
Oakdale Police Department	\$48,217.00
Ramsey County Sheriff's Office	\$231,250.00
Shakopee Police Department	\$30,000.00
South Lake Minnetonka Police Department	\$11,400.00
St. Louis Park Police Department	\$25,271.03
St. Paul Police Department	\$413,905.42
South St. Paul Police Department	\$5,000.00
Woodbury Police Department	\$16,250.00

Table 2. Law Enforcement Agency General Grant Award Recipients

The largest portion of the grant funds awarded to law enforcement was used to purchase equipment related to the investigation of auto theft. The second largest expenditure was on auto theft analysts. Figure 3 shows expenditure by these agencies during FY 2024.

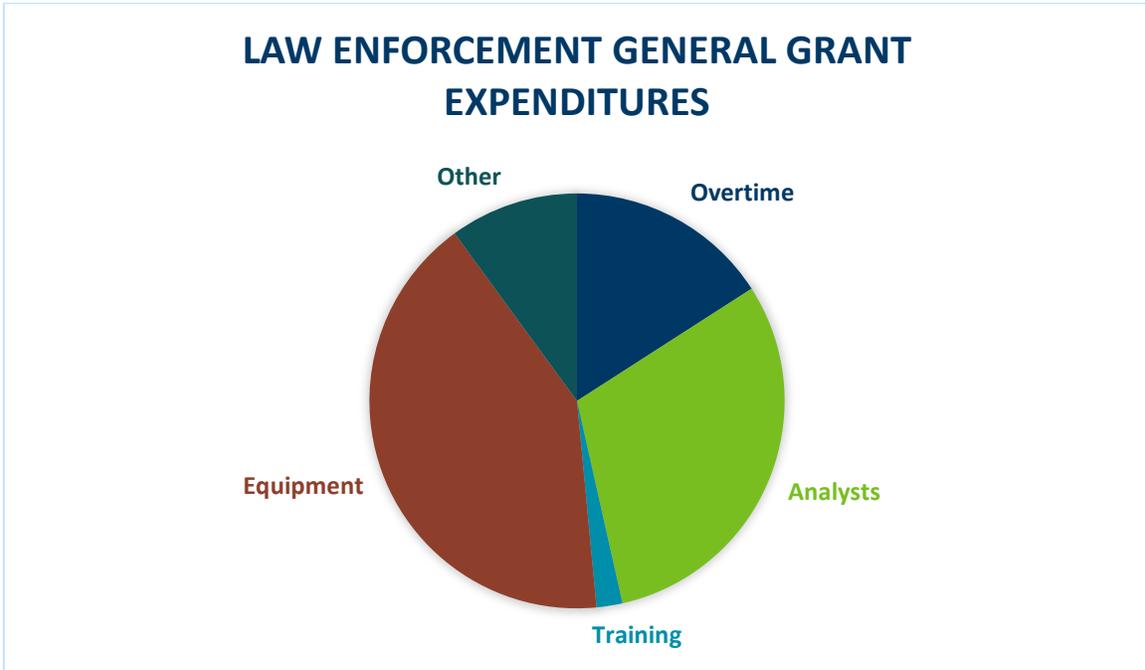


Figure 3. General Grant Expenditures by Law Enforcement

Prosecutor Offices

Four prosecutors’ offices were awarded a total of \$623,942.20 in FY 2024. These funds were primarily spent on costs related to prosecutors and other staff assigned to handle auto theft cases. Table 3 provides an overview of the awards to each office.

Prosecutor Offices	Funds
Anoka County Attorney’s Office	\$117,678.00
Hennepin County Attorney’s Office	\$102,339.60
Ramsey County Attorney’s Office	\$333,806.60
Washington County Attorney’s Office	\$70,118.00

Table 3. County Attorney General Grant Award Recipients

Anoka County Attorney’s Office

The Anoka County Attorney’s Office was awarded \$117,678.00 to support a full-time prosecutor to prosecute auto theft cases where the offender was an adult. Table 4 shows their FY 2024 reporting.

Cases	Referred	Charged	Convicted/Adjudicated	Diversion	Dismissed	Restitution
Adult	129	106	76	1	18	\$98,452.88
Juvenile	23	22	7	0	0	\$2,862.42

Table 4. Anoka County Attorney's Office Grant Data

Hennepin County Attorney's Office

The Hennepin County Attorney's Office was awarded \$102,339.60 to support a full-time prosecutor to prosecute auto theft cases where the offender was an adult. Table 5 shows their FY 2024 reporting.

Cases	Referred	Charged	Convicted/Adjudicated	Diversion	Dismissed	Restitution
Adult	399	231	62	11	10	\$32,509.66
Juvenile	379	262	58	55	17	\$33,541.48

Table 5. Hennepin County Attorney's Office Grant Data

Ramsey County Attorney's Office

The Ramsey County Attorney's Office was awarded \$333,806.60 to support a full-time auto theft charging attorney, a prosecutor to handle adult auto theft cases, an investigator, and training for these staff. Table 6 shows their FY 2024 reporting.

Cases	Referred	Charged	Convicted/Adjudicated	Diversion	Dismissed	Restitution
Adult	414	319	204	8	142	\$130,880.52
Juvenile	65	46	49	2	7	\$0 ⁶

Table 6. Ramsey County Attorney's Office Grant Data

⁶ Restitution was ordered in 5 cases, amounts pending.

Washington County Attorney's Office

The Washington County Attorney's Office was awarded \$70,118.00 to support a part-time prosecutor. Table 7 shows their FY 2024 reporting.

Cases	Referred	Charged	Convicted/Adjudicated	Diversion	Dismissed	Restitution
Adult	41	48	45	3	14	\$51,955.91
Juvenile	6	6	3	0	0	\$0

Table 7. Washington County Attorney's Office Grant Data

Non-profit and Public Benefit Corporation

General grant funds were also awarded to a non-profit organization and a public benefit corporation. Table 8 outlines the grantees and awards.

Non-profit and Public Benefit Corporation	Funds
Ramsey County Youth Project	\$374,828.40
Treuth	\$152,000.00

Table 8. Non-profit and Public Benefit Corporation General Grant Award Recipients

Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project

For FY 2024, \$347,828.40 was awarded to Ramsey County to continue administering the Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project. The project was initiated in 2020 after discussions between the Commerce Fraud Bureau and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. These discussions identified that many auto thefts were committed by a relatively small group of repeat offenders, and current enforcement methods were not deterring these offenders. The Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project is funded and governed by a board composed of law enforcement and community members.

As noted above, automobile theft in Ramsey County decreased by 37% in FY 2024. While there are likely multiple causal factors for the decrease, information received from the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office Carjacking and Auto Theft ("CAT") Team and the Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project suggests that the combination of these two programs had an impact. The CAT Team identified, investigated, and arrested many repeat offenders. According to their reporting, approximately 50% of offenders arrested by the CAT Team were juveniles. Many of these juveniles were the same ones that the navigators with the youth project worked with

to reduce recidivism. According to the navigators, juveniles self-report having stolen between 3 and 12 vehicles per week before the program and none while in the program. This reduction in recidivist activity may have contributed to the overall reduction in Ramsey County auto thefts.

Treuth

Treuth, an Illinois-based public benefit corporation, has developed a crime investigative platform and secure communication system for screened Minnesota investigators. This system provides data access, collaboration, and analytics within a secure workspace. Although Treuth has previously been used for retail theft and other investigations, Minnesota is the first state to utilize it for automobile theft investigations. Treuth was awarded \$152,000 for FY 2024.

All grantees are required to enter their auto theft and recovery data into Treuth. The data that the grantees input into Treuth is more detailed than general law enforcement statistics, representing critical information such as a street address, location type (e.g., single-family residence, apartment complex, street/highway, or auto dealership), offense type, and contributing factors (e.g., whether the vehicle was left running, taken by fraud, or involved in a burglary or carjacking). Recovery details are also included, such as vehicle damage or if suspects fled from police. This data is used in part in grant program reporting. The platform also allows for cross-jurisdictional collaboration on auto theft investigations.

Users can search and map data of interest in Treuth using specialized filters and geospatial mapping. This functionality assists law enforcement in narrowing investigative leads, identifying trends, and uncovering connections between suspects and other crimes. Treuth also features an automated link that matches vehicle recoveries with stolen vehicle records, saving officers time and enhancing the accuracy of data maintained by the grant program. However, there is not yet an easy method for deduplicating data in reports.

In addition to its analytic capabilities, Treuth supports third-party applications that can be integrated to enhance investigation outcomes. One such application is Motorola Solutions' commercial and enterprise license plate reader database, which has contributed to the recovery of 16 stolen vehicles valued at \$158,847.

Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot Project

Catalytic Converters are easily stolen from a vehicle, have a high recycle value, and can be quickly sold to buyers to be repurposed or sold for scrap. In addition, once they are removed from a vehicle, they are virtually untraceable, which makes prosecution of their theft extremely difficult. In response to a rapid increase in the number of catalytic converter thefts, the Minnesota Legislature created the Catalytic Converter Theft Prevention Pilot Project in 2021, designed to mark the most at-risk catalytic converters on vehicles with high theft rates.

The Commerce Fraud Bureau administers this program as part of the State's Automobile Theft Prevention Program. The Commerce Fraud Bureau purchased 39,133 CatGuard Labels and partnered with law enforcement agencies and service centers to distribute and install them. Initially, the program targeted 15 vehicle models with the highest reported theft incidence. Later, it expanded to include all gasoline vehicles with an accessible

catalytic converter. Since the pilot-project's inception over 33,500 labels have been distributed in communities throughout the state.

While the deterrence effect of having a marked converter has shown many positive results, interest in the program diminished since Minnesota passed its new catalytic converter law in March 2023. This law requires legitimate proof of ownership to sell a catalytic converter, increases penalties, and closes loopholes (Minn. Stat. § 325E.21). In FY 2024, labels were primarily distributed via small community events. To date, no recoveries of stolen catalytic converters that were marked with CatGuard labels have been reported to the Commerce Fraud Bureau.