

Vehicle Abatement: Improvements to Timeliness, Oversight, and Customer Service Can Enhance the Vehicle Abatement Program

A Report from the City Auditor

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Presenters: Joe Rois, City Auditor

Gitanjali Mandrekar, Assistant City Auditor

Michael O'Connell, Program Performance Auditor

Dilnoza Khudoyberganova, Program Performance Auditor

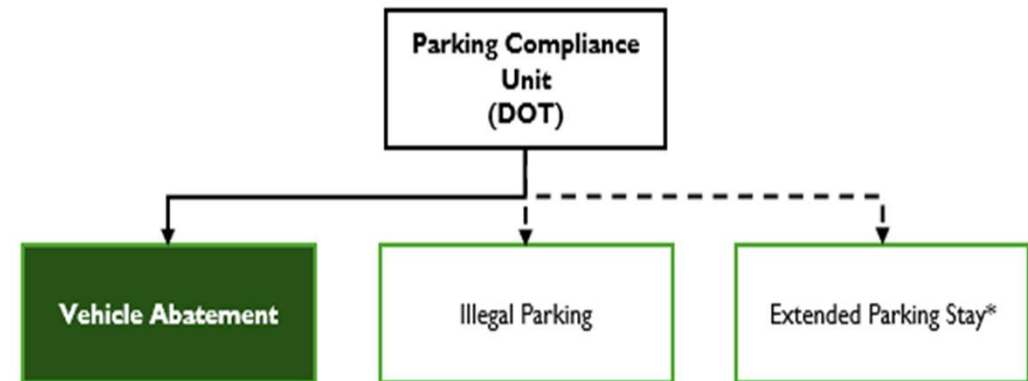
Transportation and Environment Committee

Agenda Item (d) I

Background

- The Vehicle Abatement program is responsible for identifying vehicles that are potentially abandoned, inoperable, or present significant health, safety, or extreme blight concerns.
- Between July 2025 and March 2026, there were about 10,000 vehicle abatement cases.

DOT's Vehicle Abatement Program Addresses a Subset of SJ311 Vehicle Concerns





Finding I: The Vehicle Abatement Program Meets Case Closure Goals but Can Better Align Resources and Performance Targets with Service Demand

- 98 percent of cases were closed within 14 days, and 80 percent through voluntary compliance (Jul 2025 - Mar 2026).
- The Department should consider clarifying towing guidelines for vehicles with expired registration or multiple safety or blight-related conditions.
- Proactive patrols covered an average of 57 percent of city streets within the program's 14-day target (Oct 2025 - Apr 2026).

Recommendations: The Department of Transportation should:

- Consider options to expedite towing vehicles with multiple or specific conditions, including expired registrations
- Reassess proactive patrol targets and use a data-driven approach for proactive patrol assignments
- Update performance measures to better reflect current operations

Finding 2: The Vehicle Abatement Program Can Strengthen Documentation and Supervisory Review

- Staff's daily logs and vehicle activities did not always align, and the number of case visits varied across proactive patrol staff.
- More consistent daily activity reporting and supervisory review practices would provide greater visibility into staff activities and program performance.
- DOT is currently exploring route and map optimization tools to support proactive patrol operations.

Recommendations: The Department of Transportation should:

- Update guidelines and expectations for tracking field activities and supervisory review
- Continue reviewing options for route optimization tools for proactive patrol



Finding 3: Better Customer Communications and Program Information Can Improve Transparency and Access

- SJ311 communication can better inform customers about expected response times and investigation outcomes.
- The Department can better ensure consistency about the Vehicle Abatement program across communication channels.
- Some program information is not fully translated into all languages required under the City's Language Equity Policy & Guidelines.

Recommendations: The Department of Transportation should:

- Review and align standardized messaging across customer communication channels
- Fully translate the vehicle abatement warning

Conclusion

Our audit report includes a total of 8 recommendations.

We would like to thank the Department of Transportation and the Information Technology Department for their time and insight during the audit process.

The audit report is available at www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor