

Date: April 5, 2011

To: Audit & Finance Committee

From: Jennifer Ruttman, City Auditor

Subject: Audit of Electronic Monitoring Program Savings

cc: Patricia Sorensen, Acting Deputy City Manager  
John Pombier, Acting Asst. to the City Manager  
Frank Milstead, Police Chief  
Matt Tafoya, Presiding City Magistrate  
Paul Thomas, Court Administrator  
Albert Lemke, Deputy Court Administrator

Pursuant to the Council-approved audit plan, the City Auditor's office has completed an audit of the savings generated by the Mesa Municipal Court's electronic monitoring program. The final report is attached.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments about this report.



PO Box 1466  
Mesa, Arizona 85211-1466

mesaaz.gov/auditor

## **AUDIT REPORT**

**CITY AUDITOR**

<b>Report Date:</b> April 5, 2011
<b>Department:</b> Municipal Court
<b>Subject:</b> Audit of Electronic Monitoring Program Savings
<b>Audit Period:</b> October 2009 through September 2010

### **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this audit was to evaluate the cost savings resulting from the Mesa Municipal Court's electronic monitoring (EM) program.

### **SCOPE & METHODOLOGY**

To accomplish our objectives, we:

- Interviewed staff members at the Court, Police, and Information Technology Departments.
- Reviewed electronic monitoring (EM) contract expenses and other documented costs of the program incurred during the audit period.
- Reviewed and analyzed jail cost data for the last 4 fiscal years.
- Reviewed and analyzed program data from the audit period, including EM activity reports as well as Court dates and other case data associated with program-eligible defendants.

### **BACKGROUND**

Mesa pays the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) jail \$188.48 plus \$73.54 per day per defendant to book and house more than 11,000 defendants per year. This amounts to approximately \$5.75 million per year in jail costs. By eliminating the time defendants would otherwise spend in jail awaiting a court hearing, the EM program helps to reduce these costs.

Mesa's EM program was initiated in August 2008 to provide an alternative to traditional pre-trial release programs (such as posting bond) for some defendants. Under the EM program, ankle bracelets equipped with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are used to monitor pretrial released defendants. The equipment and systems needed to monitor these defendants are provided through a State of Arizona cooperative contract with Pro Tech Monitoring, Inc. The electronic ankle bracelets are installed and activated by Detention Officers at the Mesa Police Department Holding Facility and then monitored by Court personnel. During the audit period, 283 defendants were enrolled in the EM program, with approximately 25 defendants active on the system at any given time.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Although the EM program does reduce jail costs, the true financial impact of the program cannot be evaluated by simply reviewing total jail costs over time. This is because there are many variables impacting these costs, including statutory requirements, Police policies and procedures, crime trends, booking and housing rates charged by the jail, availability of prisoner transport services, and others. Therefore, in order to isolate the savings realized solely as a result of the program, we calculated the jail costs that would have been incurred for the specific defendants enrolled in the EM program.

Fortunately, in anticipation of this analysis, each time a defendant was placed on electronic monitoring, the Court staff logged the actual court date that would have been assigned to that defendant if he or she had not been placed on the program. This provided a reliable means to estimate the number of jail days saved. We then applied the current booking and housing rates charged by the jail to the number of jail days avoided by the individual defendants, and the result was a total savings of approximately \$340,000. This amount was then reduced by \$95,000 to account for defendants who would likely have been released on bond if not placed on the EM program (based on historical data), leaving a total jail cost savings of \$245,000.

The Court has also suggested that additional savings has been realized due to jailed defendants being transported back to court an average of seven days sooner than they otherwise would have been if the EM program had not been implemented. This additional savings was estimated to be approximately \$121,000. However, despite considerable analysis of the available data, we were unable to confirm that this savings was realized.

During the audit period, EM program costs included \$81,500 for the monitoring system contract, \$27,600 for staff labor and \$1,600 for miscellaneous supplies and equipment used in the monitoring process. These costs were subtracted from the identified jail savings to determine the net savings from the EM program.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on all available data, it is our opinion that the Court's Electronic Monitoring Program saved the City approximately \$134,300 during the 1-year audit period.

Jail Cost Savings	\$245,000
EM Program Costs	<u>(\$110,700)</u>
Net EM Program Savings	<u>\$134,300</u>