

# OVERVIEW

THE AUDITOR  
STATE OF HAWAII

## Management Audit of the Traffic Violations Bureau

### Summary

The Traffic Violations Bureau, within the Hawaii Judiciary, processes citations for violations of state and Honolulu county traffic and other laws. The bureau also prepares drivers' abstracts that list drivers' traffic violations. The bureau handles about 600,000 cases annually.

We found that the manager of the bureau has limited authority to make decisions, making it difficult to manage the operations of the bureau. Requests from the manager face multiple layers of review and frequent delays. The manager lacks control over the bureau's funds, its budget, and receives little information about the bureau's operating costs. To carry out the manager's assigned responsibilities, more delegation of authority is needed.

The bureau's traffic violations computer system (TRAVIS) is old and inadequate for processing traffic citations and drivers' abstracts. As a result, manually intensive procedures have proliferated throughout the citation processing system. The Judiciary's computerization strategy does not meet the bureau's immediate needs. Delays in automating only contribute to continuing, and possibly increasing, backlogs.

During our audit, we found an estimated 20,000 parking citation envelopes remained unopened. Delays in opening envelopes and recording payments result in lost interest income to the State. Delays also increase the likelihood of issuing incorrect penal summonses. We also found abstract processing backlogged by 200,000.

In addition, we found that the bureau needs to improve its management of check deposits, cash register receipts, and the tracing of ownership of transferred vehicles. Its policies and procedures manual is outdated. Finally, the Judiciary has made mixed progress in implementing our previous audit recommendations pertaining to the bureau.

### Recommendations and Response

We recommend that the administrative director of the courts clarify the responsibilities, authority, and reporting relationships of the manager of the Traffic Violations Bureau. We also recommend that the Judiciary establish a separate program budget for the bureau and submit a specific appropriation request to the Legislature for the program. The Legislature should fund the

bureau with its own program identification number in the Judiciary's appropriations act.

The manager of the bureau should investigate the feasibility, costs, and benefits of enhancing the traffic violations computer system (TRAVIS), for example by integrating advanced technology. The manager should independently complete the steps outlined in the computerization planning methodology created for the bureau by the Judiciary and then reevaluate the data, applications, and computer system needs of the bureau. Any proposed system must be coordinated with the Judiciary-wide computer system now being developed.

In addition, we recommend that the Judiciary's Fiscal Office work with the bureau to simplify the process of depositing checks received for fines. The bureau's manager should ensure that a separate party determines if the bureau's cash registers balance at the end of each day and that the policies and procedures manual is updated.

The Judiciary responded that it appreciates our recommendations. It did not respond directly to our recommendation to clarify the responsibilities, authority, and reporting relationships of the manager of the Traffic Violations Bureau or to our recommendation to establish a separate program budget for the bureau. Instead, the Judiciary believed that we were suggesting that the bureau be made a division in the Judiciary's organization. That was not suggested in the audit report nor is it our recommendation. We believe that management of the bureau could be improved simply by clarifying the responsibility and authority of the manager of the bureau and by delegating more authority to the manager.

The Judiciary agrees that TRAVIS is antiquated and says it is working towards replacing it with a more efficient automated system. The Judiciary views our recommendation for the bureau to independently complete the steps outlined in the planning methodology for automating the bureau as slightly inconsistent with recommendations in our prior audits to centralize all information services. The recommendation that the bureau complete the plan, however, is not inconsistent since any proposed system must be coordinated with the Judiciary-wide computer system. We had found that the Judiciary's overall plan is barely underway while the bureau's automation needs require immediate attention.

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