
District Court

DISTRICT COURT

Mission **District Court**

The King County District Court will serve the public by: Providing an accessible forum for the fair, efficient, and understandable resolution of civil and criminal cases; and by maintaining an atmosphere of respect for the dignity of all individuals.

ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

The King County District Court is the county's court of limited jurisdiction. It adjudicates all misdemeanor cases for unincorporated King County and state filed cases from Washington State Patrol and other state law enforcement agencies, plus the 12 jurisdictions that contract with District Court for their municipal court services. It operates these specialty courts: Mental Health Court, Re-Licensing Court and Domestic Violence Court. In addition, the court provides probation and passport application services, and is the venue for civil cases up to \$75,000. The court currently has 21 judges and one commissioner.

Between 2005 and 2009, District Court's total case filings grew by 10 percent, with areas of growth in criminal traffic offenses, non-criminal traffic infractions and small claims. The greatest area of growth in the court comes from contract city case filings, which account for approximately 30 percent of the court's total case filings. District Court is in its second year of the initial five-year term of a full cost recovery contract with 12 suburban cities. City cases are filed directly into District Court by each city's prosecutor. In addition to adjudicating cases, the court provides probation services for city probationers, with the exception of Bellevue. The contract stipulates that after an annual reconciliation process each city pays the full cost of court services required to process its total case filings for that given year.

Total contract city case filings have increased 8 percent since 2005 and are projected to increase further in 2010 as a result of local public safety policy decisions. For example, in mid 2009 the cities of Bellevue and Burien deployed red light photo enforcement cameras at several intersections throughout their cities, while the City of Redmond implemented a new public parking program in its downtown core. Together these three local programs are projected to increase the court's filings by 10,000 cases in 2009 alone. In 2010, the City of Redmond will also deploy several red light photo enforcement cameras, resulting in a further increase to District Court's contract workload. To accommodate the increase in contract city caseload the court will fill seven existing vacant court clerk positions. The salaries and benefits of these positions will be fully backed by the city contracts through the court's full cost recovery model. In addition, a court analyst position will be partially backed by contract revenue and revenue generated by fare evasion tickets on Sound Transit's Link Light Rail—another new source of work for the court.

The Washington Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) conducted a workload analysis concluding that the court's judicial workload increased by 46 percent between 2004 and 2007. Additional workload increases are anticipated in contract as well as non-contract areas in 2010. For example, in 2010 the Washington State Patrol will dedicate seven to eight new troopers to King County for drunk driving patrols. This effort is expected to result in 1,200 more Driving Under the Influence (DUI) charges in 2010, a 28 percent increase over 2008. In response to the AOC report, the 2009 State Legislature enacted ESB5135, which authorizes a phased approach to increasing King County District Court judges by two in 2009, two in 2010, and one in 2011 for a total increase of five new judicial positions. The 2010 Executive Proposed Budget provides FTE authority and no expenditure authority for the two 2009 judges. These positions are a priority for the court and in recognition of the financial crisis facing the county's General Fund the court has agreed to absorb the costs of the positions in its base budget. It is able to do so because the \$454,678 unfunded mandate contra was restored in 2010 PSQ, meaning the court can maintain its

2009 level of staffing and pay for the new judges without a budget increase. The 2010 Executive Proposed Budget includes both FTE and expenditure authority for the two 2010 judges. These judges will be fully revenue backed by a new Ex Parte fee the court began collecting in July 2009.

The Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) anticipates beginning tolling on the State Route 520 Bridge in June of 2011. District Court has jurisdiction over state highways and the State Legislature has passed legislation identifying the court as the venue to handle infractions. WSDOT has estimated there could be approximately 2.28 million infractions per year on the bridge, which is more than the total number of all traffic infractions filed in the state in 2008. This is a significant new body of work and extensive planning is needed to ensure the court will be ready the first day infractions roll in. To that end, the 2010 Executive Proposed Budget funds a TLT project manager position whose scope of work will include developing an operational plan for tolling; managing the acquisition and development of relevant technology needs; working with stakeholders, including county agencies and WSDOT; as well as working with and reporting to District Court's leadership team. This relatively small investment in planning will pay dividends in the event the State Legislature makes a final decision that the court will handle the infractions. Toll infractions could generate millions of dollars in new revenue for the county, which will support the costs of the District Court toll enforcement program.

In 2009, the State Legislature enabled King County to supplant up to 50 percent of the revenues generated by the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) sales tax. The legislation ramps down the amount that can be supplanted by 10 percent per year over five years. The 2010 Executive Proposed Budget assumes that 30 percent of MIDD revenues in 2010 will be redirected to support existing mental health and chemical dependency programs. To reduce the burden on the General Fund District Court's Mental Health Court budget will be shifted onto the MIDD Fund for at least the next three years.

2010 Proposed Budget for District Court 0010/0530

Code	Item Description	Expenditures	FTEs *	TLTs
Program Area				
LSJ				
	2009 Adopted	26,147,480	252.75	0.00
	Status Quo**	(1,084,570)	0.00	0.00
	Status Quo Budget	25,062,910	252.75	0.00
	Contra Add Back	2,019,524		
Annexations/Incorporations				
AX04	North Highline Annexation (-\$70,899 Revenue)	(430,961)	0.00	0.00
		(430,961)	0.00	0.00
Contract Backed Increases				
RB03	Court Analyst Position (\$148,334 Revenue)	99,158	0.00	0.00
RB04	Contract Cities Court Clerk Positions (\$422,331 Revenue)	422,331	0.00	0.00
		521,489	0.00	0.00
Justice System Services				
PC01	Annualize 2009 Judicial Officers	0	2.00	0.00
PC02	SR 520 Tolling Project Manager	103,308	0.00	1.00
RB02	2010 Judicial Officers (\$355,555 Revenue)	346,142	2.00	0.00
		449,450	4.00	1.00
MIDD Supplantation				
MI01	MIDD Supplantation of Mental Health Court	(622,516)	(4.30)	0.00
		(622,516)	(4.30)	0.00
New Revenue				
AS05	Relicensing Program Driving Abstract Fee (\$9,500)	0	0.00	0.00
AS07	Copy Fees (\$9,000)	0	0.00	0.00
AS09	Sound Transit Unlawful Transit Conduct (\$500)	0	0.00	0.00
AS10	Non-Sufficient Funds Fee (\$3,650)	0	0.00	0.00
AS11	Preparing Certified Copy Fee (\$1,000)	0	0.00	0.00
		0	0.00	0.00
Operational Shutdown Savings				
CR45	Operational Shutdown Savings Contra	(487,982)	0.00	0.00
		(487,982)	0.00	0.00
Technical Adjustments				
TA01	Issaquah Court House Refinancing	(499,205)	0.00	0.00
TA50	Revenue Adjustment of \$357,124	0	0.00	0.00
CR01	Flexible Benefits	(145,512)	0.00	0.00
CR07	Technology Services Operations & Maintenance Charge	(32,467)	0.00	0.00
CR08	Technology Services Infrastructure Charge	8,863	0.00	0.00
CR09	Geographic Information Systems Charge	(126)	0.00	0.00
CR10	Office of Information Resource Mgmt Ops Charge/Rebate	(18,881)	0.00	0.00
CR11	Telecommunications Services	8,932	0.00	0.00
CR12	Telecommunications Overhead	(4,323)	0.00	0.00
CR13	Motor Pool Usage Charge	(3,479)	0.00	0.00
CR14	Facilities Management Space Charge	(86,158)	0.00	0.00
CR15	Insurance Charges	(8,762)	0.00	0.00
CR16	Radio Access	(27)	0.00	0.00
CR17	Radio Maintenance	18	0.00	0.00
CR25	Financial Services Charge	(13,780)	0.00	0.00
CR26	Retirement Rate Adjustment	(423,574)	0.00	0.00

District Court

2010 Proposed Budget for District Court 0010/0530

Code	Item	Description	Expenditures	FTEs *	TLTs
CR27		Industrial Insurance Rate Adjustment	(2,248)	0.00	0.00
CR35		Underexpenditure Contra	48,742	0.00	0.00
CR37		Facilities Management Strategic Initiative	1,253	0.00	0.00
CR39		COLA Adjustment	(12,292)	0.00	0.00
CR40		Merit Adjustment	(4,772)	0.00	0.00
Total Change Items in 2010			(1,187,798)	0.00	0.00
2010 Proposed Budget			25,324,116	252.45	1.00

* FTEs do not include temporaries or overtime.

** This includes 2009 adopted, initial status quo, and proposed status quo increments. Under FTEs, annualization is included.

*** Please see Budget Transparency Section table at the end of the program plan pages for section information as identified in the Budget Transparency Ordinance No. 16445.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The total 2009 Executive Proposed Budget for District Court is \$25,324,116 and 252.45 FTEs and 1.0 TLT.

Annexations

North Highline Annexation – (\$430,961) Expenditure / (\$70,899) Revenue. On August 18, 2009, the residents of the southern portion of North Highline voted to annex to the City of Burien. The annexation is expected to be effective March 2, 2010. Because responsibility for providing local services to the approximately 14,350 residents of the area will shift to Burien, King County will experience savings across multiple agencies. The annexation will generate \$430,961 in savings for District Court during the last ten months of 2010. District Court will continue to contract with Burien to provide services in this area. The court will have the opportunity to prepare a supplemental in the first quarter of 2010 that would restore all or part of the expenditure reduction depending on how much the contract revenue will increase due to the annexation.

Contract Backed Increases

Court Analyst Positions – \$99,158 Expenditure / \$148,334 Revenue. This proposal funds a vacant court analyst position with revenue from the contract cities and from Sound Transit Light Rail fare evasions. The court analyst will be tasked with data collection and analysis of new caseload from Sound Transit, photo enforcement and parking programs implemented by the contract cities and data from the court's Master Calendar program, as well as respond to requests for information. Seventeen percent of the cost of the position will be backed by city contract revenue with the remainder coming from Sound Transit Light Rail fare evasion tickets. Fare evasion tickets will be for \$124 dollars, with \$68.51 of each ticket staying with the county. Sound Transit fare evasion tickets are estimated to generate \$135,000 in 2010.

Contract Cities Court Clerk Positions – \$422,331 Expenditure / \$422,331 Revenue. This proposal funds seven vacant court clerk positions with city contract revenue. The seven court clerk positions will process the increased case filings from the contract cities as a result of their implementation of new parking programs and red light safety photo enforcement cameras, which are expected to increase case filings by 30,000 or 30 percent in 2010.

Justice System Services

Annualize 2009 Judicial Officers – 2.0 FTEs. SB 5135 increased the number of authorized judicial officers in King County District Court in 2009 from 21 to 23. This proposal gives the court FTE authority for the two new judicial positions. The court will absorb the salaries and benefits associated with these positions within its base PSQ budget. It is able to do so because the \$454,678 unfunded mandate contra from the 2009 Adopted Budget was restored in 2010 PSQ, meaning the court can maintain its 2009 level of staffing and pay for the new judges without a budget increase.

SR 520 Tolling Project Manager – \$103,308 / 1.0 TLT. This proposal would fund a TLT position whose scope of work will include developing an operational plan for tolling; managing the acquisition and development of relevant technology needs; working with stakeholders, including county agencies and the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT); as well as working with and report to District Court's leadership team. SB5556 authorizes District Court to adjudicate toll infractions on the SR 520 Bridge. Tolling represents a potential new line of business for the court and could generate a significant increase in caseload, as well as revenue to support the work once infractions are issued.

2010 Judicial Officers – \$346,142 Expenditure / \$355,555 Revenue / 2.0 FTEs. SB 5135 increased the number of authorized judicial officers in King County District Court in 2010 from 23 to 25. This proposal gives the court expenditure and FTE authority for two judicial positions. These positions will be supported by new revenue from a new ex parte fee. Starting July 2009 the court charges \$20 per hour or portion of an hour for ex parte orders, performing historical searches, compiling statistical reports, and conducting exceptional record searches. Superior Court instituted a similar fee in 2009.

Operational Shutdown Savings

Operational Shutdown Savings Contra – (\$487,982). In the face of the severe fiscal challenges across all county funds, the 2010 Executive Proposed Budget includes savings assumptions in an effort to preserve direct services. For 2009, savings were achieved through the implementation of a ten-day building and/or operational closure program, resulting in labor furloughs. The 2010 budget is balanced across all funds assuming that a similar level of savings will be achieved in each agency based on the furlough eligible employees as was adopted for 2009, including 2009 County Council amendments. The specific details of the 2010 plan are still under development, and discussions with labor unions and individual agencies are on-going. Specific plans describing how the 2010 savings will be achieved will be transmitted to the County Council in the coming weeks. To the extent that savings, from labor or other expenses, cannot be fully achieved through temporary and short term building and/or operational closures, the plan will describe additional programmatic reductions and the elimination of additional positions.

MIDD Supplantation

MIDD Supplantation of Mental Health Court – (\$622,516) / (4.30) FTEs. This proposal shifts 4.3 FTE positions associated with Mental Health Court from the General Fund to a MIDD appropriation unit. The FTE positions include three probation officers, the Mental Health Court manager, and the appropriate time of the Mental Health Court judge. The expenditure reduction also includes a loan out labor reduction that is equal to the time spent by court clerks working in the Mental Health courtroom. Expenditure and FTE authority will now reside in the MIDD Fund. This amount does not include COLA, which was transferred with the FTEs to the MIDD appropriation unit via a central account, or Operational Shutdown Savings savings.

New Revenue

Relicensing Program Driving Abstract Fee – \$9,500 Revenue. SSB5610 allows the District Court to charge a reasonable fee for the production and copying of an individual's driving abstract if that individual is involved in a pending case in the court for a suspended license, open infraction or criminal case that has resulted in a license suspension. The court will charge \$5 per driving abstract.

Copy Fees – \$9,000 Revenue. SB 5277 increased the number of fees District Courts is authorized to charge. This new revenue represents the use of this new authority and a charge of \$0.50 per page for the copy of an instrument or file, \$0.25 to copy a document without a seal or electronic format, and \$20 per copy of a compact disk.

Sound Transit Unlawful Conduct – \$500 Revenue. District Court has jurisdiction over regional transit authorities. Filings and fees related to unlawful conduct on a Sound Transit vehicle or in a Sound Transit station will be adjudicated and collected by the court.

Non-Sufficient Funds Fee – \$3,650 Revenue. This proposal increases the non-sufficient funds (NSF) fee from \$25 to \$35 per check. District Court processes an average of 26,000 checks annually, of which 17 percent are returned due to insufficient funds. The court does not anticipate that its collection rate would fall as a result of this fee increase.

Preparing Certified Copy Fee – \$1,000 Revenue. SB5277 increased the number of fees District Courts is authorized to charge. This new revenue represents the use of this new authority to charge \$5 for the first page of a certified copy and \$1 for each additional page.

Technical Adjustments

Issaquah Court House Refinancing – (\$499,205). The King County Real Estate Services Division successfully refinanced the outstanding debt associated with the Issaquah District Courthouse. Originally, the Issaquah Courthouse capital costs were financed thru a Certificate of Participation (COP) and budgeted in the long term lease account in the court's operating budget. As a result of the refinance, the remaining debt will be paid centrally out of General Fund debt service rather than through District Court's operating budget. The proposed reduction represents the elimination of the long term lease account from the court's budget. The refinance will generate roughly \$25,000 of savings annually for the remaining term of the bonds.

Central Rates – (\$688,593). This series of adjustments captures the net effect of countywide charges and results in a \$688,593 reduction in charges to District Court. These reductions reflect efficiencies created by Executive agencies to reduce the cost of services they provide to other county agencies. These changes reflect the County Executive's commitment to creating an efficient government and making administrative reductions before direct service reductions. The efforts of central rate agencies to reduce costs are integral to the County Executive's strategy to address the General Fund deficit, and benefit all county agencies.