



**King County**

# Traffic Enforcement Performance Measures

*King County Auditor's Office  
Larry Brubaker  
Senior Principal Management Auditor*

*January 18, 2011  
Government Oversight and Accountability Committee*

# Background

---

- Traffic enforcement activities in the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) are funded by a transfer from the roads fund.
- 2010 Budget Ordinance requested county auditor to:
  - Validate Sheriff's quantification of traffic enforcement costs and benefits; or
  - If such measures don't exist, create them and benchmark against other jurisdictions.
- Sheriff has a 9 FTE motorcycle traffic enforcement unit, and traffic enforcement is also a part of normal patrol duties.

# Summary of Findings

---

- KCSO does not compile formal performance measures for traffic enforcement activities.
- KCSO and Department of Transportation (DOT) collect information on costs (inputs), number of traffic citations (outputs), and accident rates (outcomes), but no attempt is made to identify a cause and effect relationship between inputs, outputs, and outcomes.

## Summary of Findings (continued)

---

- The type of data collected by King County was typical of other jurisdictions. We found no examples of jurisdictions with measures establishing a cause and effect relationship between traffic enforcement inputs, outputs, and outcomes.
- We also found no guidelines for establishing traffic enforcement performance measures, and little academic research attempting to identify the effectiveness of traffic enforcement activities.

# Conclusions

---

- While King County does not measure the effectiveness of traffic enforcement activities, we found no examples of guidance for how to do so, no examples of other jurisdictions who do so, and little academic research attempting to do this.
- If the council would like the county to have performance measures that show the outcomes of traffic enforcement activities funded by county roads funds, it should consider directing the Sheriff's Office and the DOT to conduct a pilot project for exploring how best to do so.