

**DISTRICT COURT
OPERATIONAL MASTER PLAN
APRIL 2005**

Acknowledgements

The following persons and organizations contributed their expertise, enthusiasm, patience, and time to the development of this Operational Master Plan:

Honorable Corinna Harn, District Court Presiding Judge; Co-Chair
Maura Brueger, Deputy Chief of Staff, King County Executive Office; Co-Chair
Honorable Larry Gossett, King County Councilmember
Honorable Kathy Lambert, King County Councilmember
Honorable Barbara Linde; District Court Assistant Presiding Judge
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King County Prosecutor's Office
King County Public Defender
King County Superior Court
King County District Court Contracting Cities
King County Sheriff
Washington State Patrol
Washington State Office of the Administrator of the Courts

The District Court will be a better court because of their contributions. Thank you.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between March 2004 and April 2005, representatives from the King County Executive, the King County Council, the King County District Court, Contracting Cities and other stakeholders engaged in an intensive strategic and operational planning effort for the King County District Court. The process resulted in a careful and in depth assessment of the District Court's operations, services and role in the criminal justice system now and in the future.

This assessment indicated that King County and the District Court have already identified and implemented certain efficiencies and improvements in the District Court's operations. Other improvements and efficiencies were underway but not completed yet. This Operational Master Plan supports the District Court in its efforts to find efficiencies and improve its service levels. It also reaffirms the District Court's Mission and Vision Statements (see Table 1, page 8).

Based on the District Court's Mission and Vision Statements, this Operational Master Plan presents the following eleven strategic recommendations intended to guide the District Court for the next five to ten years:

Keynote Statement

The County will strive to provide District Court services in accordance with the Court's Mission and Vision and County policy.

1. Court of Choice

Retain for the long term the aspiration to be the court of choice for limited jurisdiction in the County, focusing energy and resources on improving operations and services, balancing the needs of citizens, the Court, the County and the cities.

2. Quality Service Standards

Develop and apply quality service standards and measures for District Court operations, including but not limited to (a) access to justice; (b) case flow management; (c) customer service; (d) jury management; (e) court productivity and (f) collections.

3. Problem Solving Courts

Continue to support Problem Solving Courts, improving access to Problem Solving Courts, and incorporating Problem Solving Courts in the Court's planning process.

4. Unification and Centralization

Continue and make explicit the strategy of improving efficiency through unification of governance, administration and planning, centralizing workload where appropriate.

5. Technological Improvements

Continue to develop and implement technological improvements, such as “paperless” case processing and E-filings that support District Court operations and increase access to court services and information.

6. City Contracts

Continue to support the Court’s function to serve cities through contracts.

7. Service and Facility Flexibility

Support flexibility in providing services and facilities for District Court customers.

8. Facilities

Continue to support a unified, Countywide District Court, utilizing existing facilities, to provide for a more equitable and cost effective system of justice for the citizens of King County.

- A. Ensure Court facilities promote system efficiencies, quality services and access to justice.
- B. Consolidate District Court facilities that exist in the same city.
- C. Reconsider facilities if there are changes with contracting cities or changes in leases.
- D. Work with cities to develop a facility master plan as it relates to the District Court.

9. Study Court Integration

Study the integration of District Court, Superior Court and the Department of Judicial Administration assuring that the needs of District Court are met; and best practices are considered.

10. Work with Stakeholders

Work together with stakeholders to gain state and local cooperation and assistance to meet the needs of the judicial system.

11. Additional Resources

Recognize that implementation of these strategic and operational recommendations may require reallocation or commitment of additional resources.

These recommendations should be taken as a whole and are in no particular order of importance.

INTRODUCTION

The 2004 annual budget for King County, as adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council, provided for the development of an Operational and Facility Master Plan for the King County District Court.¹ The District Court's Mission and Vision statements were the foundation for the Operational and Facilities Master Plan. (See Table 1.)

Table 1

KING COUNTY DISTRICT COURT MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

I. King County District Court Mission Statement
<p>A. The King County District Court will serve the public by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing an accessible forum for the fair, efficient, and understandable resolution of civil and criminal cases; and• Maintaining an atmosphere of respect for the dignity of individuals.
II. King County District Court Vision Statement
<p>A. The King County District Court will be the preferred forum in King County for the resolution of all cases of limited jurisdiction.</p> <p>B. To provide the highest quality of justice, the King County District Court will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Protect the public safety by providing resources to hold convicted offenders accountable for their actions;(2) Work as an independent branch of government with other units of government to achieve common goals;(3) Make effective use of taxpayers' resources;(4) Continuously ascertain and respond to the needs and expectations of all court users;(5) Provide a uniform and predictable level of service;(6) Provide efficient, convenient, and safe facilities;(7) Seek out and use modern technology and equipment;(8) Serve as the coordinator for all the services necessary for an effective judicial system;(9) Maintain a diverse and professional workforce;(10) Maintain sentencing options and sentence offenders appropriately;(11) Educate the justice system community, legislative, and executive agencies, and public about the courts; and(12) Respect the diversity of the community.

¹ Pursuant to King County Code Section 4.04.020 LL an "Operational master plan" means a comprehensive plan for an agency setting forth how the organization will operate now and in the future. An operational master plan shall include the analysis of alternatives and their life cycle costs to accomplish defined goals and objectives, performance measures, projected workload, needed resources, implementation schedules and general cost estimates. The operational master plan shall also address how the organization would respond in the future to changed conditions."

A Steering Committee was formed consisting of representatives from the County Council, the County Executive, the District Court, and Contracting Cities. Other stakeholders also actively participated in the process including the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Public Defender, the King County Bar Association, and Superior Court. The Steering Committee was co-chaired by the King County District Court Chief Presiding Judge and the Deputy Chief of Staff for the King County Executive's Office. (See Table 2 for the names of the Steering Committee members, primary staff and participants.) The Steering Committee began meeting in March of 2004 and has met regularly since that time.

Table 2

Participants

Steering Committee Members

Honorable Corinna Harn, District Court Presiding Judge; Co-Chair
Maura Brueger, Deputy Chief of Staff, King County Executive Office; Co-Chair
Honorable Larry Gossett, King County Councilmember
Honorable Kathy Lambert, King County Councilmember
Honorable Barbara Linde; District Court Assistant Presiding Judge
Terri Flaherty, Sr. Policy Analyst, King County Office of Management and Budget
2 Suburban City Representatives – representation will rotate based on availability

- David Cline, City of Burien
- Diane Carlson, City of Bellevue
- Nina Rivkin, City of Redmond
- Julie Modrzejewski, City of Shoreline

Primary Staff

- Tricia Crozier, District Court
- Toni Rezab, OMB, Project Manager
- Kathy Brown (or designee), Director of Facilities Management

Participants²

Councilmember Julia Patterson, King County Council
Clifton Curry, King County Council Staff
Polly St. John, King County Council Staff
Tom Kelly, King County Bar Association
Calvin Hoggard, King County Facilities, Real Estate Services Section Mgr.
Dan Satterberg, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Mark Larsen, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Margaret Nave, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Anne Harper, Office of the Public Defender
Paul Sherfey, King County Superior Court
Kelli Carroll, King County Office of Management and Budget
Donna Brunner, King County District Court

² Not all participants attended every meeting

The purposes of the Steering Committee and objectives of the OMP are:³

In alignment with the District Court Mission & Vision Statements, evaluate and recommend methods for providing the delivery of court services (defining what services and level of services) and the costs of services (judicial, staff, and facilities).

Identify system efficiencies and develop recommendations for service delivery while continuing to meet mandated requirements in a fiscal climate of declining resources, being cognizant that District Court is part of a larger system of justice.

Analyze services and service delivery in the context of the larger criminal justice system, including identifying mandated versus non-mandated services and the impact to the District Court and larger criminal justice system of providing, not providing, or changing these services.

The Steering Committee members, participants and stakeholders contributed a wealth of experience and expertise to the process. In addition, a consultant was retained to provide independent expertise to the Steering Committee.

Based on the Steering Committee's analysis and expertise, the Steering Committee developed eleven strategic recommendations and a series of operational recommendations associated with the strategic recommendations to form the basis of this Operational Master Plan (Steering Committee Recommendations and Initial Report dated March 29, 2005, is included in Appendix 1). The Steering Committee's recommendations include general recommendations regarding facilities that will be used in the facilities master planning process. The County has committed to continue to work with cities and other stakeholders in the development of the Facilities Master Plan (FMP). It is anticipated that the FMP will be completed in April 2006.

³ Quoted from the Charter for the District Court Steering Committee and the Scope of Work.

KING COUNTY DISTRICT COURT BACKGROUND

A. Overview of the King County District Court

The King County District Court is the largest court of limited jurisdiction in the State of Washington and is currently responsible for processing approximately a quarter of a million matters per year.⁴ The King County District Court is a leader in many areas involving public safety and access to justice, including:

1. The Court has the greatest number of problem solving courts within a court of limited jurisdiction in the State of Washington.⁵
2. The Court has established judge-supervised probation for the purposes of public safety and reduction of recidivism.
3. The Court has access to and uses a variety of highly successful jail alternative programs.
4. The Court is the most technologically advanced court of limited jurisdiction in the State of Washington.
5. The Court has improved access to justice by having multiple facilities linked together as one court through governance and technology so that the user can pay a ticket, clear a warrant, find out about their case, file legal papers, or research a case at any location.

The District Court of King County is part of the Judicial Branch of King County Government and funded primarily through King County's Current Expense (CX) fund.⁶ The District Court generates revenues from contracts for court services with cities, fines and costs imposed, filing fees, probation fees and passport fees.

As a court of limited jurisdiction, the District Court is responsible for the following types of matters (see Table 3 for the two primary statutes granting jurisdiction to the District Court):

- Civil Litigation matters up to \$50,000
- Small Claims matters up to \$4000
- Nuisance Violations
- False Alarm hearings
- Vehicle Tow and Impound hearings
- Anti-harassment Orders
- Domestic Violence Protection Orders
- Name Changes
- Infractions (traffic, non-traffic and parking)
- Misdemeanor and Gross Misdemeanor criminal cases,

⁴ Citizens are the most likely to have contact with the judicial system through a court of limited jurisdiction. For comparison, King County Superior Court processes approximately 70,000 cases annually.

⁵ A "problem solving court" is a court that uses a deliberate approach, focusing on the root cause that has brought a defendant within the jurisdiction of the court.

⁶ In addition to CX funding, the court has received limited funding for special projects, including Electronic Court Records, from other County sources.

Felony Expedited cases
Felony Preliminary hearings
Search Warrants
Garnishments and other Supplemental Proceedings
Lien Foreclosure and Forfeiture hearings
Death Inquests

District Court judges are also authorized to provide Superior Court assistance through judicial portability.

Table 3 General Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction Statues

RCW 3.66.020 Civil jurisdiction.

If the value of the claim or the amount at issue does not exceed fifty thousand dollars, exclusive of interest, costs, and attorneys' fees, the district court shall have jurisdiction and cognizance of the following civil actions and proceedings:

- (1) Actions arising on contract for the recovery of money;
- (2) Actions for damages for injuries to the person, or for taking or detaining personal property, or for injuring personal property, or for an injury to real property when no issue raised by the answer involves the plaintiff's title to or possession of the same and actions to recover the possession of personal property;
- (3) Actions for a penalty;
- (4) Actions upon a bond conditioned for the payment of money, when the amount claimed does not exceed fifty thousand dollars, though the penalty of the bond exceeds that sum, the judgment to be given for the sum actually due, not exceeding the amount claimed in the complaint;
- (5) Actions on an undertaking or surety bond taken by the court;
- (6) Actions for damages for fraud in the sale, purchase, or exchange of personal property;
- (7) Proceedings to take and enter judgment on confession of a defendant;
- (8) Proceedings to issue writs of attachment, garnishment and replevin upon goods, chattels, moneys, and effects;
- (9) All other actions and proceedings of which jurisdiction is specially conferred by statute, when the title to, or right of possession of real property is not involved; and
- (10) Actions arising under the provisions of chapter 19.190 RCW.

RCW 3.66.060 Criminal Jurisdiction.

The district court shall have jurisdiction: (1) Concurrent with the superior court of all misdemeanors and gross misdemeanors committed in their respective counties and of all violations of city ordinances. It shall in no event impose a greater punishment than a fine of five thousand dollars, or imprisonment for one year in the county or city jail as the case may be, or both such fine and imprisonment, unless otherwise expressly provided by statute. It may suspend and revoke vehicle operators' licenses in the cases provided by law; (2) to sit as a committing magistrate and conduct preliminary hearings in cases provided by law; (3) concurrent with the superior court of a proceeding to keep the peace in their respective counties; (4) concurrent with the superior court of all violations under Title 77 RCW; (5) to hear and determine traffic infractions under chapter 46.63 RCW; and (6) to take recognizance, approve bail, and arraign defendants held within its jurisdiction on warrants issued by other courts of limited jurisdiction when those courts are participating in the program established under RCW 2.56.160.

The agencies that file with the Court include:

Washington State Patrol,
King County Sheriff,
City Law Enforcement
Department of Fish and Wildlife,
Department of Natural Resources
Metro Transit Police
University of Washington Police
Washington State Liquor Control Board
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

In addition, over 35,000 private individuals and corporations file cases with the court each year, including small claims, civil suits, protection orders, name changes, citizen complaints, etc.

The District Court currently provides for public access at ten facilities located throughout King County:

1. Aukeen (Kent),
2. Bellevue,
3. Burien,
4. Issaquah,
5. King County Courthouse (Seattle),
6. King County Jail (Seattle—jail calendars only),
7. Redmond,
8. Regional Justice Center (Kent),
9. Shoreline, and
10. Vashon Island (1 day per month).

All of these facilities are county-owned except Bellevue and Vashon, which are leased. The Vashon lease will expire in five years; the Bellevue lease will expire at the end of 2006.

The District Court also has administrative and support staff space at one county-owned building located in Seattle (the Yesler Building). This space does not provide for public access to the Court

The court has three problem solving courts: mental health court, domestic violence court (in two locations) and relicensing court (in two locations).

Out of the approximately 220,000 total filings processed in 2003, about 70,000 filings (or 32%) were the result of service contracts with cities and the remainder was the result of filings that are King County's exclusive responsibility.

B. Status of the Court at the time of the last OMP

The last Operational Master Plan (OMP) was completed in 1995, with an addendum completed in 1997⁷. At the time of the last OMP and addendum thereto, the District Court consisted of 26 judges and one full-time appointed court commissioner. There were nine judicial districts (also known as "Divisions"): Aukeen, Bellevue, Federal Way, Issaquah, Northeast, Renton, Seattle, Shoreline, and Southwest. Each of the nine Divisions operated out of one or more county-owned or leased facilities:

1. Aukeen operated out of a single county-owned courthouse in Kent with three judges.
2. Bellevue operated out of a county-owned courthouse in Bellevue and one leased part-time facility in Mercer Island with three judges.
3. Federal Way operated out of a single county-owned courthouse in Federal Way with three judges.
4. Issaquah operated out of a single leased facility in Issaquah with one judge.
5. Northeast operated out of a single county-owned facility in Redmond with four judges.
6. Renton operated out of a single county-owned facility in Renton with two judges.
7. Seattle operated out of two county-owned facilities (the King County Courthouse and the King County Jail) in Seattle with five judges.
8. Shoreline operated out of a single county-owned courthouse in Shoreline with two judges.
9. Southwest operated out of one county-owned facility in Burien and one leased part-time facility on Vashon Island with three judges.

Each Division had its own on-site court administrator and operated relatively independently of the other court facilities in spite of the court having officially become one court in 1989 pursuant to KCC Section 2.68.005(A). There was no Chief Administrative Officer.

The number of staff working for the district court in the 1995-1997-time period was approximately 285, including one full time court commissioner, 242 court staff and management, and 42 probation staff. The budget for the district court at that time was approximately \$15.6 million and its revenues were approximately \$10 million.

The court provided services under a contract to 21 cities, including Bellevue, Beaux Arts, Clyde Hill, Hunts Point, Medina, Mercer Island, Yarrow Point, Federal Way, Issaquah, North Bend, Snoqualmie, Carnation, Duvall, Kirkland (part of 1995), Redmond, Skykomish, Woodinville, Newcastle, Shoreline, Burien, and Normandy Park. The court services contracts with the cities that were in effect in 1997 were based on a marginal cost formula that set a "per case" filing fee for each city. Not included in the marginal cost formula were the costs for judges, managers, central

⁷ Additionally, the court completed a separate Technology Master Plan (TMP) in 1997.

administration functions, security, pro tem judges and the cost of owning and maintaining courthouses.

During the 1995-1997-time period, the Court was governed by an 11 member executive committee, which included the presiding judge, the assistant presiding judge, and one judge from each of the 9 judicial districts. There were also 9 or more separate committees made up of judges and staff that reported to the executive committee.

The court's civil jurisdiction in 1995-97 was \$25,000 for civil matters and \$2500 for small claims.

C. Changes in the Court Since the Last OMP

Many changes, both internal and external, have affected the District Court since the last OMP and addendum were completed. The most significant changes are in the areas of the District Court's budget, administrative and governance structure, information technology, city contracts, the number of judges, and facilities.

(The following list is in alphabetical order for ease of reference.)

Administrative and Governance Changes

- **Chief Administrative Officer:** The Court made a strategic decision to implement the position of Chief Administrative Officer in 2001 with the directive to provide administrative authority over all non-judicial personnel, to achieve uniform court, administrative and personnel procedures and to achieve savings when appropriate through centralization. This reduced the administrative leaders from nine (one for each of the then-existing 9 Divisions) to one.
- **Executive Committee:** In 2002, in advance of the implementation of General Rule 29 by the Washington State Supreme Court, the court significantly streamlined its governance structure, moving from an 11 judge Executive Committee and 26 separate committees to a 5 member Executive Committee. This governing body is made up of the Presiding Judge from each division – East, South and West, plus the Assistant Chief Presiding Judge, and is chaired by the Chief Presiding Judge. The Chief Administrative Officer serves in a non-voting role. At the same time, the court also reduced to 4 committees (Budget, Personnel, Probation and Rules) reporting directly to the Executive Committee and chaired by one of the executive committee members.
- **Leadership Team:** In 2002, the Court eliminated the Court Administrator position that had previously existed for each of the nine Divisions and incorporated some of the court-wide positions that were a part of the Office of the Presiding Judge to create a Leadership Team made up of 8 Directors: the East Division Director, the South Division Director, the West Division Director, the Director of Budget/New Development, the Human Resources Director, the Probation Director, and the Information and Technology Director. This team meets weekly as directed by the Chief Administrative Officer to address the needs of the entire court and to propose and implement improvements within the Court. They have been the leaders in identifying and implementing best practices throughout the court that make the court more efficient, uniform and improve the quality of service provided to the public.⁸

⁸ Changes in policy resulting from “best practices” are adopted and implemented through the Judicial Executive Committee and, if needed, full judges bench.

- General Rule 29: In 2002, the Washington State Supreme Court amended its court rules to require a presiding judge for each court and identifying the duties of the presiding judge by way of General Rule 29. The Presiding Judge and Chief Administrative Officer, with the assistance of the executive committee and leadership team, now administer the court centrally. This has further unified court operations and captured significant economies of scale and other efficiencies.
- Labor Contract Negotiations: The last contract expired on December 31, 2004. Labor Contract negotiations are currently underway between the County (Court and Executive) and the Union.

Annexation Initiatives Become a County Priority

- Pursuant to the recommendations of three independent commissions that the County take steps to encourage the urban unincorporated areas to become part of cities, the King County Executive and King County council have made annexation/incorporation a priority. These annexations/incorporations will affect the caseload of the District Court by either shifting the caseload to a contract city or to non-contract city.⁹ See Appendix 2, Map of Proposed Annexations.

Budget and Staffing Reductions and Increases

- 1995-2000: The court saw fairly steady increases in its budget and staffing levels during these years.
- 2001-2005: Since 2001, the King County CX fund had in excess of a \$135 million deficit due to a poor economy and voter initiatives that have resulted in an on-going structural deficit where expenditures grow at a faster pace than revenues. As a direct result, the District Court's budget was reduced by a total of \$5.6 million over 5 years:

\$0.8 million in 2001
\$2.8 million in 2002
\$1.0 million in 2003
\$0.8 million in 2004
\$0.2 million in 2005

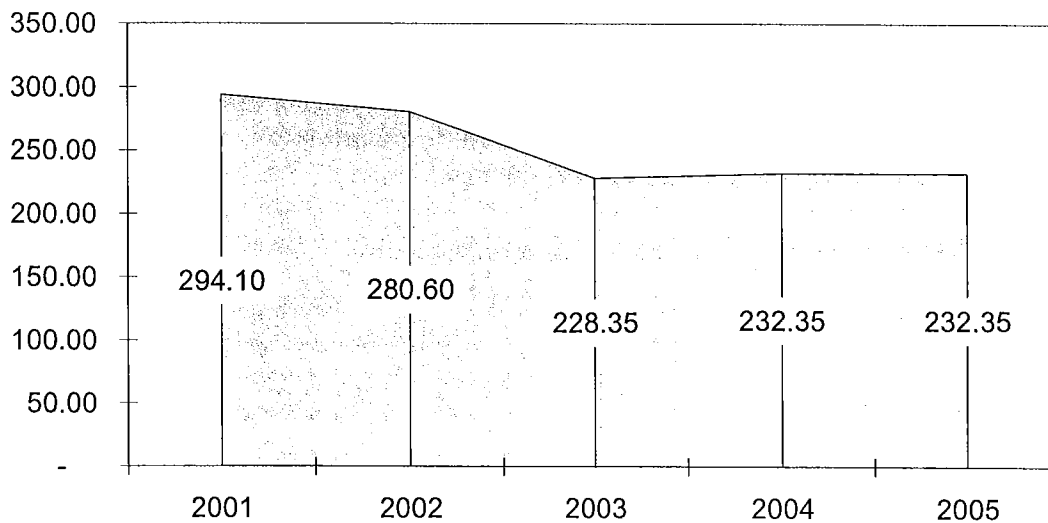
These budget reductions resulted in cuts to court supplies and services. When this was not enough, the court imposed a hiring freeze in August 2001 (in line with the executive branch hiring freeze at the same time) and in May 2002, the court laid off 33 employees. These two measures combined resulted in a net loss of 57.60 positions. The management staff was reduced from 44 to 23, probation staff from 54 to 28.25, administrative support staff from 10 to 8.5, and line staff from 155 to 138. In 2003, the court met its budget with the

⁹ See King County Council Motion No. 2004-0381.

closure of the Renton and Federal Way facilities. (See information regarding Facilities on page 26).

Table 5

Budget FTE/TLT 2001 to 2005

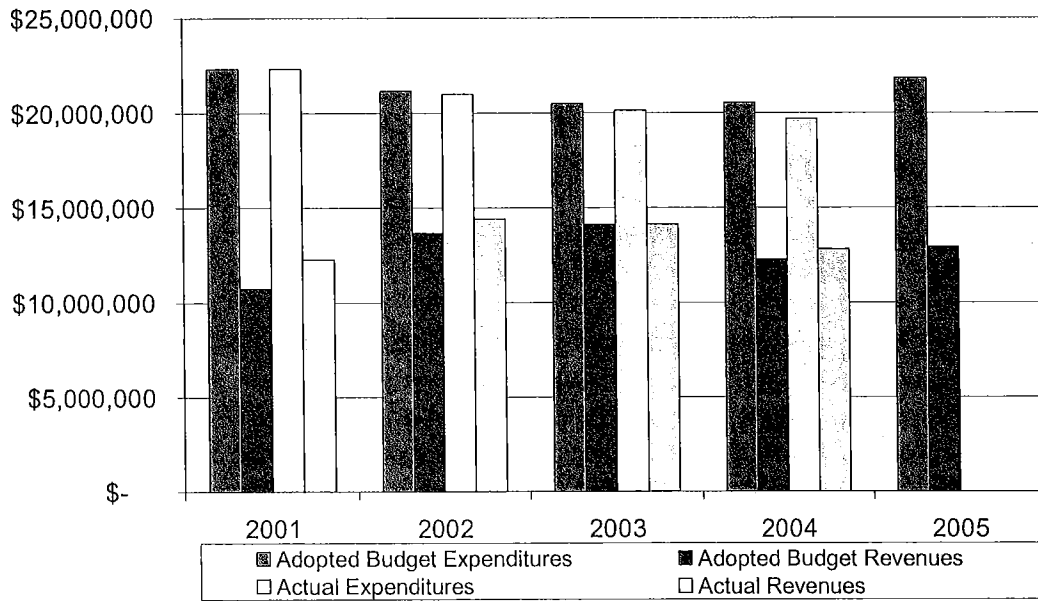


- Adopted budgeted FTEs/TLTs includes mid-year supplemental budget changes.
- In addition to the 232.5 FTEs budgeted in 2005, a request has been made for 12 TLTs through the 1st quarter omnibus process.

- Budget/Actual Expenditures and Revenues: The actual budget expenditures and revenues are shown in Table 4 below. Mid-year supplemental requests, disappropriations, carryovers, and cost of living increases are included in the budget figures. Actual data reflects actual expenditures and revenues at year do not include encumbrances. Budget 2005 does not include pending supplemental requests.

Table 4

King County District Court Budget and Actuals 2001 to 2004



- Budget includes mid-year supplemental changes and prior year encumbrance

Budget and Actual Expenditure and Revenue Information

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Adopted Budget Expenditures	\$22,331,728	\$21,149,305	\$20,505,790	\$20,534,576	\$21,836,599
Adopted Budget Revenues	\$10,748,048	\$13,674,223	\$14,101,060	\$12,280,273	\$12,945,629
Actual Expenditures	\$22,329,726	\$21,010,150	\$20,136,402	\$19,694,583	NA
Actual Revenues	\$12,276,472	\$14,416,907	\$14,130,936	\$12,823,149	NA
Adopted Budget FTE	294.10	280.60	228.35	232.35	232.35

2004 Supplemental Budget Request: By way of a supplemental request and appropriation by the King County Executive and the King County Council, the District Court's staffing level was increased by two clerical positions and one court manager. These positions were funded in order to mitigate complaints about the call center's inability to answer telephone calls in a timely manner.¹⁰

- 2005: The District Court's 2005 annual budget reduction was limited to the savings from a District Court Judge's appointment to the Superior Court and the savings from a renegotiated Vashon Island facility lease (totaling approximately \$200,000). In addition, District Court has requested and the Executive has transmitted to the County Council as a part of the first quarter omnibus budget request the addition of 12 term-limited temporary employees (TLT's) to assist the court in the ongoing transitions.
- Technology Funding: The court has been successful in identifying and securing funding through the County's IT program for the implementation of technology projects; most notably, Electronic Court Records in the amount of \$1.2 million.

Future Reductions: King County's CX fund will continue to face ongoing deficits for the foreseeable future. Expenditures continue to grow at a faster pace than revenues due to cost of living increases and cost of labor growing at 5%, while voter initiatives have limited revenue growth to 2%. All agencies funded by the CX will continue to face fiscal challenges.

Call Center, Special Project Team and Payment Center Created

- Call Center and Special Project Team: In 2003, the Court created specialized teams of employees, attempting to capture economies of scale that can be achieved by "grouping" certain types of work. The *Call Center* was formed to answer most the courts half million annual incoming calls. Initially, the call center was not very successful in the area of customer service; however, it has been very successful in reducing the number of phone calls received at the individual facility locations so that the staff at those locations could focus more attention on the backlog of paper work that was growing at an alarming rate. As a second effort to address the District Court's backlogs and declining service levels the *Special Project Team* was created. This team of staff has been able to address isolated service issues but have not been able to meet the overall staffing needs of the court.
- Payment Center: In 2005, the Court created a third specialized team of employees known as the *Payment Center* in order to capture economies of scale and standardization for receipting the millions of dollars of payments that are sent to the court electronically and by mail. It is anticipated that the payment center will assume additional responsibilities, such as bankruptcy filings, as it becomes more established.

¹⁰ These three additional positions did not address staffing issues existing anywhere else in the court.

Casetype Consolidation

- Civil: Due to limited resources and a desire to improve the quality and timeliness of services provided both clerically and judicially, the court has consolidated the majority of its civil caseload at three locations: Issaquah, Seattle and Kent.
- State and King County Criminal Cases and Infractions: The court is currently working cooperatively with the King County Prosecutor's Office, the Office of Public Defense, the King County Sheriff's Office, the Washington State Patrol, the Office of Management and Budget, Facilities and the Executive, toward consolidating state (i.e. non-city) criminal and infraction cases into 6 facilities (plus Vashon Island 1 day per month). The State and unincorporated King County criminal caseload will be heard at three facilities (Redmond, Burien, Seattle-King County Courthouse). State and unincorporated King County infractions, where prosecutors and defense attorneys are not required to appear, will be heard at three different facilities (Issaquah, Shoreline and Aukeen). It is expected that this consolidation will capture efficiencies and, more importantly, improve the quality and level of services provide by the Court, Prosecutor and Public Defense without incurring ongoing additional costs. Of particular note, is the expectation that one or more prosecutors and public defenders will appear at arraignment for all criminal cases, thereby reducing the number of hearings and time to resolution of these types of cases.¹¹

¹¹ The practice of prosecutors and public defenders appearing at arraignment ceased several years ago during the CX fund decline.

Table 6
Casetype Consolidation by Facility -
(Already or Currently in Process of Being Implemented)

Caseload for each Contracting City	At Location Closest To Or In Each Contracting City
Civil*	Aukeen (Kent), Issaquah and King County Courthouse (Seattle)
State Criminal Cases (Misdemeanors and Gross Misdemeanors)	Burien, Redmond and King County Courthouse (Seattle)
State Infraction Cases	Aukeen (Kent), Issaquah and Shoreline
Domestic Violence Courts	Regional Justice Center (Kent), King County Courthouse (Seattle)
Mental Health Court	King County Courthouse (Seattle)
Relicensing Courts	Burien and King County Courthouse (Seattle)

* some civil matters are still handled at all locations such as civil antiharassment and protection orders.

City Court Services Contracts and Changes in Contracting Cities

- Economies of Scale and Reduced Fragmentation: Contracts for court services between the County and cities help reduce the overall costs to taxpayers through economies of scale, eliminating the need for duplication of facilities, management staff, and overhead, while simultaneously maximizing access to justice for all citizens in King County and reducing the confusion and delay caused by a fragmented court system.
- Contract Cities and Municipal Courts since 1995: Four newly incorporated cities have opted to contract for court services with the District Court: Covington, Kenmore, Newcastle (until 2005) and Sammamish.¹² Ten suburban cities have started up their own Municipal Courts or are contracting with an existing Municipal Court: Federal Way, Kirkland, Hunts Point, Clyde Hill, Medina, Yarrow Point, Issaquah, Normandy Park, Newcastle and Mercer Island.
- 2000-2004 Contract: In 1999, the King County Executive negotiated a new 5-year renewable contract for court services with 17 cities. This contract substituted a revenue-split formula (75% to the County and 25% to the cities) for the marginal cost/filing fee formula used in the previous contract. This contract increased the revenue that the county was receiving for court services from the cities but did not provide for full cost recovery to the County. The cities who signed the 2000-2004 contracts were: Beaux Arts, Bellevue, Burien, Redmond, Woodinville, Skykomish, Sammamish, Snoqualmie,

¹² Note, for a period of time in the late 1990's Auburn also contracted with the District Court for judicial services.

Normandy Park, Shoreline, Kenmore, Mercer Island, North Bend, Newcastle, Covington, and Duvall. The City of Issaquah did not sign the 2000 contract; however, it operated under the terms of the 2000 contract until 2005.

- **2005-2006 Contract:** In 2004, another new contract for court services was negotiated. This contract commenced at the beginning of 2005 and terminates at the end of 2006 and allows for an extension. This contract continues to use a revenue-split formula but increases the initial revenue split to 86% for the County and 14% to the cities¹³ It also requires an annual reconciliation to assess whether the revenue split was correct, based upon the actual revenues collected and costs incurred.¹⁴ If the estimate is not correct, a refund or a bill is sent to the cities and the split is adjusted. This incorporates the goal set by the Budget Advisory Task Force that the County recovers its full cost for any services that it provides to cities. Equally as significant in this contract is the requirement for regular meetings between the cities and the District Court to insure service level expectations are being met. This contract also gave the cities the opportunity to participate in this OMP/FMP process, particularly in the areas of court facility locations and court services contracts after 2007.

Collections Contract Improvements

- The court has placed a meaningful emphasis on the collections of court fines and fees. This change has resulted in cases being sent to collections earlier in the process when they are significantly more collectable. The court has also negotiated a new collections contract in conjunction with the Seattle Municipal Court (which also allows for other jurisdictions to participate). This contract has resulted in a reduction of the costs that are passed on to defendants, improved collection services, and greater opportunities for defendants to consolidate their past due fine payments, particularly if other jurisdictions take advantage of the boilerplate language that was developed.

Cooperative Efforts to Study and Improve the Criminal Justice System and County Operations

- District Court has been an active participant in the County's paradigm shift toward a more unified and cooperative criminal justice system. The Court has contributed to numerous county-wide, state-wide and regional committees and work groups such as:

Trial Court Coordination Council
Regional Law Safety and Justice Committee
Criminal Justice (CJ) Council

¹³ Under a full cost recovery model, the County does not subsidize cities and receives a contribution to facility operation and security.

¹⁴ The reconciliation process compares actual revenues and actual expenditures for each year.

Criminal Justice Initiatives
Strategic Advisory Council for IT
Court Funding Task Force
Jail Operations and Administrative Workgroups
Adult Justice Operational Master Planning Efforts –Phases I and II
County Performance Measurement Study
Municipal and District Court Voluntary Warrant Quashing Program
Regional Jail Planning Workgroup
Unincorporated Area Council Meetings regarding Annexations/
Incorporations

Dispute Resolution Center

- The court, for several years, has taken advantage of King County’s Dispute Resolution Center for mediation services in small claims and anti harassment cases, affording the court more time to focus on the cases that are unable to come to resolution short of trial.

Facility Changes

- Regional Justice Center Opened in 1997: In March of 1997 the Regional Justice Center was opened in Kent. The District Court was allocated one jail courtroom for in custody hearings and one court commissioner courtroom (which has no jury box or jury deliberation room) for the domestic violence problem solving court calendar. The District Court was also allocated a small clerical space in the basement of the Regional Justice Center that can only be accessed by the public by going through a door that must be kept closed by order of the Fire Marshall. Any jury trials that the District Court wishes to hold at the Regional Justice Center must be scheduled through the Superior Court administration and are dependent upon that court having a courtroom available. This is an inefficient method for holding District Court jury trials at the Regional Justice Center that leads to delays and confusion for the public, attorneys and jurors.
- Issaquah Opened in 1998: In 1998, as an outcome of the 1997 addendum to the 1995 OMP, a new court facility with two courtrooms was built in Issaquah. The cost of this facility was not a capital cost. Rather it was crafted as a lease from the builder and will require an additional \$500,000 in the District Court’s budget every year until 2019.¹⁵
- Renton and Federal Way Closed at end of 2002: In order to meet its budget cut for 2003 and not reduce its staff any further, the court closed the Renton and Federal Way facilities on December 31, 2002. This reduced the access to justice for the public and state agencies’ filing with the district court in the Renton and Federal Way communities and left the South Division with more judges than courtrooms and offices, requiring caseload to be artificially

¹⁵ The County will not have an option to purchase the property until after December 1, 2008.

transferred outside of the South Division and requiring South Division judges to work outside of their elected division.

- Part of Aukeen Facility Leased to Kent beginning in 1998: In 1998, King County leased two jury courtrooms and clerical space at the Aukeen facility to the City of Kent. The remaining courtrooms for King County include one jury courtroom and one non-jury courtroom. The lack of multiple jury courtrooms at the Aukeen Facility have reduced the functionality of this facility for the District Court.
- King County Courthouse Retrofit from 2002-2005: Between 2002 and 2005, the King County Courthouse was seismically retrofitted. While this work was being completed, two judges from the West Division occupied two courtrooms at the Municipal Court building owned by the City of Seattle.
- Mercer Island Lease Not Renewed at end of 2004: The County did not renew its lease of the Mercer Island Facility because the City of Mercer Island chose not to renew its contract for court services at the end of 2004. Cases filed by Mercer Island before January 1, 2005 are heard at the Bellevue courthouse.
- Bellevue Facility Transferred to Bellevue in 2005: At the end of 2004, the County agreed to turn over ownership of the Bellevue (Surry Downs) facility to the City of Bellevue as a part of an unrelated lawsuit settlement. The District Court will be able to continue to occupy the facility through the end of 2006 rent free, however, it is expected that only the main portion of that facility will be occupied by the Court and Department 3 (an annex) will be vacated in April of 2005. Discussions will need to occur between the City of Bellevue and King County, regarding an alternate court facility within the City of Bellevue.
- Yesler Building Space Occupied in 2005: In an effort to mitigate the effect upon District Court operations due the lawsuit settlement that involved the Bellevue facility, the Court was provided space at the Yesler building in Seattle. This allowed the court to relocate its call center, IT staff, and ECR contract employees to the Yesler space (from Bellevue and the King County Courthouse in Seattle) and create a centralized payment center in the King County Courthouse for payments submitted electronically or by mail. (Note, customers may make payments at any court facility (except Yesler) in person.)
- Vashon Island Facility 5-year Lease signed in 2005: In 2004-05, King County negotiated a rent-free 5-year lease of the Vashon Island facility. This lease is a culmination of a project to turn the court facility into a multi-use community facility for the residents and visitors to Vashon Island as well as a courtroom, creating a model for other community-based courts.

- Public Service Counter at the Regional Justice Center in 2005: In 2004, an agreement was reached to construct a public service counter for the District Court on the first floor of the Regional Justice Center in Kent. It is anticipated that this will be completed in 2005 and may improve public access to the District Court at that location.¹⁶

Information Technology (IT) Improvements

In the mid-1990's King County District Court had a handful of desktop computers and a large number of mainframe terminals connected to the AOC strictly for exchanging data with DISCIS, the state case management system. Funding from the county intended to connect county departments to the emerging Wide Area Network allowed the court begin to implement improvements.

Following is a list of technology improvements made since 1995:

- ◇ Local Area Network installation brought email and personal computers to every desk and network printers in each location.
- ◇ Computers in the courtrooms for the judges.
- ◇ High-speed printers were installed throughout the court. These printers have the ability to scan, email and fax. The introduction of these machines into the courtrooms allows the Court to more quickly serve the litigants and reduce the need for the public to wait in the front counter lines after court proceedings.
- ◇ Reminder Calls. The court out sources automated reminder calls through the "Call2Court" program. The court prepares a list of pending cases and the data is transmitted to Appriss (an outside company) where calls are initiated to remind customers of upcoming court dates (<http://www.appriss.com/Call2Court.html>). This program has proven to significantly reduce failures to appear thereby lowering costs, the number of suspended licenses, warrants issued and jail usage.
- ◇ The court is in the process of implementing "HR Office", a human resources management tool to improve the quality and efficiency of the District Court's HR processing.
- ◇ Positive Pay Banking Software allows the court to validate all checks written effectively eliminating forged checks being written against court accounts.
- ◇ The court has had a robust Internet site since the summer of 1998. The court responds to thousands of inquiries to the main site at: www.metrokc.gov/kcdc Since 2000, the Court Calendars have been posted on the web site.
- ◇ Each location has an e-mail box where citizens can communicate directly with the court location. Also, due to having to end the contract for legal

¹⁶ Currently the public service counter for the District Court is in the basement of the Regional Justice Center behind a door that must remain closed pursuant to an order from the Fire Marshall.

messenger service as a cost saving measure, the court is now vigorously using email to transmit documents that have been scanned to other court locations.

- ◇ The court established a call center using “UCD telephony”.
- ◇ Network tools such as Microsoft SMS have been installed to decrease the number of trips taken by IT staff to remote sites and maximize efficiency.
- ◇ The court upgraded its jury management program to provide for a more automated processing of jurors to outlying courts. (The court has also maximized its use of Superior Court jurors at the Regional Justice Center and King County Courthouse in order reduce its juror costs.)
- ◇ The 1985 probation case management system is currently being redeveloped into a network application using the latest technology Justice XML and Microsoft .Net.
- ◇ The court developed an automated interpreter program that allows specified interpreters to automatically receive jobs and allows all interpreters sign up for jobs not accepted or assigned to specified interpreters. This program has reduced staffing requirements for locating and assigning interpreters. It has also improved verification and payment of interpreter fees. This program is currently being upgraded and can be located at:
http://www.metrokc.gov/KCDC/interpreterweb/KCIW_Main.asp
- ◇ Sentencing and other court forms used by the Court and the public have been developed and are maintained on either the Internet or Intranet (internal court) site.
- ◇ The court, on a limited basis, conducts contested and mitigation hearings by e-mail.
- ◇ Installation of VIPr video technology in all locations to facilitate communications. This technology allows the court to conduct meetings, trainings and implementation of best practices without the need for employees to commute from their primary work location. VIPr has become an indispensable tool for implementing more responsive, efficient and effective practices while standardizing the work of the court.
- ◇ The court provides citizens the ability to pay their court debts using either Interactive Voice Response or the Internet. Through December 2004, this program has collected over \$3 million for the Court.
- ◇ The court is leveraging off the existing King County Superior Court Electronic Court Records (ECR) technology for managing case files in order to reduce the need to manage, store, and archive paper files. The District Court’s version of ECR was funded in the 2004 budget. The court began imaging all new filings on 1/1/2005. ECR will significantly improve access to court records throughout the court when fully implemented in mid 2005.
- ◇ Conversion to a single DISCIS database began on January 1, 2005. While the original 9 databases will remain active for many years to come for cases filed before 1-1-05, all matters filed after 1-1-05 will be entered into a single “KCD” database. This change will increase the flexibility of case

assignments, allow for more centralized and improved fiscal oversight and bookkeeping, increase flexibility of staff assignments throughout the District Court's facilities, and maximize the beneficial effect of Electronic Court Records.

- ◇ The court has installed "FTR Gold", a digital recording system in each of its courtrooms. This system improved the quality of recording of court proceedings. The recordings became more secure and easier to duplicate.

Jail Alternatives

Prior to 2002, judges had limited options for punishing offenders. Although judges have long been able to suspend or defer jail sentences in appropriate cases, to allow offenders to attend treatment or to perform community service in lieu of jail, there has not historically been any punishment other than secure detention for offenders who have failed to comply with probationary terms, or whose crimes and criminal record are deserving of, or mandate, punishment. In 2002 King County adopted the Adult Justice Operational Master Plan that included the mandate that the county develop alternatives to secure detention. The county's criminal justice agencies, including the District Court, worked together to develop a variety of new options and alternatives to confinement and made these jail alternatives available to sentencing judges. Beginning in 2002 judges have been able to sentence offenders to work/education release (a program that existed before 2002, but over which the court previously had no control,) the community work program (in which the court sets the numbers of days the offender must appear and participate on a county administered and supervised work crew,) and CCAP or Community Center for Alternative Placements (in which offenders participate in a wide variety of classes aimed at assisting the offender and reducing recidivism.) These jail alternatives allow judges to tailor a sentence to an individual's circumstances, and to reserve secure detention for the most appropriate cases. The District Court judges' use of these jail alternatives has contributed to a reduction in the average daily jail population (ADP.)

Judicial District Changes

- The Court was re-districted in 2002 from 9 divisions to 3 divisions:

The "East Division" includes the Shoreline, Redmond, Bellevue, Issaquah and Mercer Island facilities.

The "South Division" includes the Federal Way, Renton, Aukeen, Burien and Vashon Facilities, as well as space at the Regional Justice Center in Kent.

The "West Division" includes the operations in Seattle at the King County Courthouse, as well as a courtroom at King County Jail.

It is anticipated that the Districting Committee and the County Council will have to make further changes in the Districting Plan in 2005 to implement the reduction from 26 judges to 21 judges for the next election set to take place in 2006.

Judicial Need Calculation Changed and Number of Judges Reduced

- New Method for Determining Judicial Needs: At the end of 2002, the Office of the Administrator of the Courts (AOC), the administrative arm of the Washington Supreme Court, developed a revised method under RCW 3.34.020 to determine judicial need based on caseload. The County has not been able to independently verify the method used due to a lack of information regarding the method.
- Number of Judges to be Reduced to 21 by Attrition: The statutorily approved method for determining judicial need identified a judicial need in 2003 for the King County District Court of 21 judges plus a presiding judge. During the 2003 legislative session RCW 3.34.010 was amended to provide for 21 King County District Court judges and allowed for the reduction to occur by attrition until the next election in 2006.
- Actual Number of Judges Declining: The first judicial reduction occurred in April of 2003, when one of the court's judges passed away from the East Division. A second reduction occurred in 2004 when the then-presiding Judge (also from the East Division) was appointed to the King County Superior Court. The third reduction occurred this year (2005) when a South Division judge retired. Currently the District Court has 23 judges. AOC's current judicial need calculation indicates that the District Court needs 23 judges plus a presiding judge, for a total of 24 judges.¹⁷

Jurisdictional Changes

- The court has seen an increase in both Small Claims and Civil Case type jurisdictions. The limit for small claims is now up to \$4000 per case and civil jurisdiction has increased to \$50,000 per case. This, of course, translates to more complicated court proceedings.

Passport Acceptance Services Commenced

- In 1997, the court began providing passport acceptance services to the public. This has been a wonderful service for the public as well as an excellent source of revenue for the court. Other county and non-county agencies have discovered this source of revenue as well and are now competing with the court. This competition as well as the public's travel practices has caused a recent decline in the amount of passport revenue being generated by the court.

¹⁷ See KCC Section 2.68.010 that requires a presiding judge.

Probation Changes

- The court has fundamentally altered the way it provides probation services in order to reduce recidivism. The court has changed from a *probation officer managed* probation system to a *judge managed* probation system. Under this model the judge makes all discretionary decisions regarding a defendant and each probation officer handles a smaller caseload resulting in greater accountability for probationers.

Problem Solving Courts Established

- The court has established 3 successful “specialty courts” in order to improve public safety and reduce recidivism and overall costs associated with certain cases. The Mental Health Court established in 1998 is located in the King County Courthouse in Seattle. The Domestic Violence Courts established in 2000 are located at the RJC in Kent and at the Redmond courthouse¹⁸. The Relicensing Courts¹⁹ established in 2000 and restructured in 2002 are located at the Burien courthouse and at the downtown King County Courthouse.

Superior Court Judicial Assistance Changes

- The court continues to take responsibility for the expedited felony cases from Superior Court.²⁰
- In 1999, the King County District Court began to increase its regular assistance to the King County Superior Court in a variety of new areas, including ex parte, status conference calendars, dependency pretrial calendars, anti-harassment full order hearings, sentencing calendars, plea hearings, juvenile court arraignments, etc.²¹
- In 2002, Washington voters approved the portability initiative and District Court judges could more easily assist the Superior Court with its caseload. In 2002 and 2003, the district court provided 3 or more portability judges to the superior court. As the number of District Court judges has been reduced, this support had decreased to 1.2 judges in 2005, and may decline further due to lack of judicial resources.

¹⁸ The court will be moving the Redmond Domestic Violence Court to Seattle on April 1, 2005 in order to reduce jail transport costs and increase access to service providers for the parties.

¹⁹ The Department of Licensing recently ceased suspending driver’s licenses for unpaid tickets because the Washington State Supreme Court deemed the underlying statute unconstitutional. The viability of this program will depend upon whether the legislature enacts a new statute requiring suspension of driver’s licenses for unpaid fines.

²⁰ Note, the court has conducted some hearing in felony cases since the days of justice of the peace; this is not a new responsibility.

²¹ This work was in addition to hearing the Saturday Jail calendars for the Superior Court, which the District Court had already been providing for many years.

STEERING COMMITTEE INFORMATIONAL BACKGROUND

A. General Background Regarding the Steering Committee

The OMP Steering Committee (see Table 2 on page 10 for the names of the Steering Committee members, primary staff and participants) operated under a charter that set forth the following purpose, process, timeline and protocols for developing the OMP:

Purpose:

In alignment with the District Court Mission and Vision statements, evaluate and recommend methods for providing the delivery of court services (defining what services and level of services) and the costs of services (judicial, staff, and facilities).

Identify system efficiencies and develop recommendations for service delivery while continuing to meet mandated requirements in a fiscal climate of declining resources being cognizant that District Court is part of a larger system of justice.

Analyze services and service delivery in the context of the larger criminal justice system, including identifying mandated vs. non-mandated services and the impact to the District Court and larger criminal justice system of providing, not providing, or changing these services.

Process:

- Utilize the expertise of an independent consultant.
- Identify data and information needed for analysis by the consultant and others.
- Provide a forum for the open discussion by District Court stakeholders and review of analysis.
- Communicate and disseminate information from the process to stakeholders and others, as appropriate.
- Make recommendations, as appropriate, to other entities (e.g. government bodies or agencies).

Timeline:

- Completion of OMP and FMP by December 2004.
- The Steering Committee will meet regularly through December 2004.

Protocols:

- Open, constructive participation (no surprises).
- Clarify differences; understand them, but save debate until after analyses have been completed.
- Attend regularly (designee when not available) and meet deadlines for preparing meeting materials (advance distribution and review).
- Timely provision of requested information and feedback if unable to attend.
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information (no surprises).

- Members at table for discussion on decision/advisory items (attendance by others as invited).
- Practice effective communication.
- Consensus is the preferred approach to resolving conflicts.

The committee members, staff and participants met and exceeded the expectations of the charter—particularly in the areas of participation, open and productive discussions based upon a high level of knowledge and understanding (some of it pre-existing and some of it learned along the way), and, most importantly, in reaching consensus at every step. The recommendations that were developed are the result of their dedication to a common goal to do what is in the best interests of the citizens of King County with limited resources.

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) was selected by the Steering Committee and engaged as a consultant by the King County Office of Management and Budget to provide independent expertise to the Steering Committee. The Office of Management and Budget and the District Court worked collaboratively with the NCSC. NCSC is a non-profit corporation that specializes in providing information, technical assistance, and consulting services to state and local governments to all areas of court management and administration. The Consultant began work in June of 2004 and completed its contract on February 15, 2005.

B. Baseline Caseload and Forecast of Caseload

As a starting point for the Steering Committee's recommendations, the Committee needed to know what was the Court's current caseload and what projections could be made for its future caseload. The Consultant prepared a Baseline Caseload study that concluded:

1. The caseload is projected to remain relatively stable with only 2.7% decrease in filings through 2013.
2. The makeup of the caseload mix, based on current contracting cities and jurisdiction, is anticipated to shift in that same time period. The contracting city caseload is expected to grow by 7.9% as result of increases in infraction and parking citations and a decrease in Driving Under the Influence (DUI) filings. The County's unincorporated and exclusive caseload is expected to decline by 7.7% overall but experiencing an increase of 5.8% in DUI filings.²² It is important to note that currently, contract city case filings account for approximately 32% of the District Court filings and less than 20% of the staff needs, because the majority of city cases are parking and infractions, which are less staff intensive. The projected makeup of caseload mix would increase the percentage of city case filings to 35%.

These conclusions were based upon a profile developed by the Consultant for the Court's caseload between 1994 and 2003 and between 2003 and 2013. These conclusions assume the following:

- (1) there are no changes to the contract cities (.i.e. the current contract cities continue to contract for court services and no new cities contract for court services,
- (2) jurisdictions are successful in meeting the County's adopted schedule for annexations, shifting population, and workload from unincorporated King County,
- (3) the Washington State Legislature makes no changes to subject matter jurisdiction or responsibility for courts of limited jurisdiction, and
- (4) the Washington State Legislature will enact a RCW change to allow Driving While License Suspended (DWLS) filings to occur at similar levels to 2003.

Changes in these areas will impact the conclusions of the forecast.²³

²² While the caseload is expected to decline, the complexity of the cases and time consuming jury trials are expected to continue to increase.

²³ Four cities ceased contracting with the County at the end of 2004: Mercer Island, Newcastle, Normandy Park, and Issaquah. These cities made up a relatively small fraction of the Court's overall caseload. In addition, the timing and type of annexations (.i.e. whether the unincorporated area joins a particular city or forms its own city) will probably necessitate some adjustments of the forecasts. It is also expected that the legislature will increase the court's civil jurisdiction to \$75,000 this year.

The caseload profile for the time period between 1993 and 2003 was adjusted by the Consultant to reflect the structure and jurisdiction of District Court in 2003 (Table 7). The Consultant removed historical caseload for the following cities that had created their own separate municipal courts prior to 2003: Federal Way, Clyde Hill, Hunts Point, Medina, Yarrow Point in order to establish historical trends for the on-going jurisdiction of the court. Therefore, the actual historical filings for the District Court were higher than shown in Table 7 below.

In addition to projecting the total caseload for the District Court, the Consultant separated its projections into two groups: (1) caseload generated by cities that contracted for Court services in 2004 (Table 8) and (2) caseload generated from unincorporated King County and the exclusive jurisdiction for the King County District Court (Table 9).²⁴

²⁴ Caseload Forecast Notes:

1. Contract Cities include Beaux Arts, Bellevue, Burien, Redmond, Woodinville, Skykomish, Sammamish, Snoqualmie, Shoreline, Kenmore, North Bend, Covington, Carnation, and Duvall. Contract City caseload does not include District Court exclusive jurisdiction of civil caseload (Orders for Protection, and Civil/Small Claims) or felony reductions/"expedited" calendars.
 - 1.1. Projections based on the actual cases filed through September 2004 indicate that the 2004 year-end actual contract city infraction filings may not meet the projections for 2004. The cases filed in 2004 are low primarily due to vacant traffic officer positions in the City of Bellevue. The caseload should return to historical levels by the 2nd quarter of 2005 as those vacant positions are anticipated to be filled by the end of first quarter 2005. Therefore, the forecast assumes that infraction filings will continue at the historical levels.
2. Total Unincorporated Infractions, DUI, Parking and Criminal includes cases from unincorporated King County, and cases from the Washington State Patrol, King County Sheriff, Port of Seattle, University of Washington, Liquor Control Board, and the Marine Patrol. District Court Jurisdiction Cases include Civil Orders for Protection/Anti Harassment, Civil/Small Claims, and Felony Reductions/"Expedited" Calendars.
 - 2.1. The criminal non-contract case filings are showing a decline (based on actual case filings to date) and will probably not meet the forecast for 2004. The reduction in criminal filings appears to be the result of the Washington Supreme Court Decision on the unconstitutionality of the DWLS proceedings. Historically, DWLS cases account for approximately 1,000 criminal filings a year (and another 4,000 DWLS re-licensing cases a year). If legislative action is not taken to correct the statutory language, the court will see a permanent decline in such cases. The forecast assumes that DWLS filings will continue at historical levels in 2005.
 - 2.2. The PAO has made several changes to its filing practices effective January 2005 that will result in changes to the workload in King County District Court for Felony reductions. The forecast takes into account the anticipated impact of those filings for 2005 and beyond.

**Table 7
TOTAL DISTRICT COURT FILINGS, 1994-2003, ADJUSTED TO REFLECT
THE STRUCTURE AND JURISDICTION OF DISTRICT COURT IN 2003**

Year	Infractions	DUI	Criminal	Orders for Protection/ Anti-Harassment	Civil and Small Claims	Felony	Parking	Total
1994	119,904	5,811	34,486	5,529	40,932	1,209	10,713	218,584
1995	113,458	5,340	34,562	5,346	39,580	904	10,516	209,706
1996	109,295	5,712	32,709	5,456	39,565	1,522	7,807	202,066
1997	117,182	5,578	27,464	4,718	36,954	853	14,502	207,251
1998	117,850	4,967	25,276	4,087	34,796	883	18,688	206,547
1999	127,597	4,949	22,041	3,566	33,252	743	21,264	213,412
2000	139,768	5,711	23,929	3,560	30,892	790	23,872	228,522
2001	122,671	5,126	21,305	2,951	32,059	1,582	20,965	206,659
2002	139,085	5,392	22,176	2,715	32,504	1,276	17,363	220,511
2003	142,464	5,707	21,144	2,185	27,839	1,171	18,608	219,118
%Change 1994-2003	18.8%	-1.8%	-38.7%	-60.5%	-32.0%	-3.1%	73.7%	0.2%

After establishing the baseline, the Consultant forecasted the total anticipated caseload for the time period between 2003 and 2013, taking into consideration past trends in caseload, changes in population, and the impact of annexations based on the County’s anticipated timeline and expectations (Table 10).

**Table 8
TOTAL DISTRICT COURT PROJECTED FILINGS, 2003-2013**

Year	Infractions	DUI	Criminal	Orders for Protection/ Anti-Harassment	Civil and Small Claims	Felony	Parking	Total
2003	142,464	5,707	21,144	2,185	27,839	1,171	18,608	219,118
2004	139,064	5,947	22,477	2,356	31,878	1,188	21,058	223,968
2005	138,217	5,941	21,117	2,067	34,860	437	21,298	223,936
2006	137,843	5,954	20,808	1,744	33,740	440	21,732	222,261
2007	137,409	5,890	20,638	2,038	32,567	427	21,991	220,960
2008	137,088	5,848	20,435	1,775	31,320	419	21,982	218,867
2009	137,056	5,836	20,185	1,775	29,969	417	22,266	217,504
2010	137,084	5,791	19,999	1,775	28,531	408	22,287	215,875
2011	137,602	5,816	19,696	1,775	26,945	413	22,349	214,595
2012	138,533	5,841	19,398	1,775	25,199	418	22,705	213,868
2013	139,831	5,866	19,105	1,775	23,277	422	22,892	213,167
%Change 2003-2013	-1.8%	2.8%	-9.6%	-18.8%	-16.4%	-64.0%	23.0%	-2.7%

Table 9
TOTAL CONTRACT CITY PROJECTED FILINGS, 2003-2013

CONTRACT CITY CASELOAD								
Year	Infractions	DUI	Criminal	Orders for Protection/Anti-Harassment	Civil and Small Claims	Felony	Parking	Total
2003	48,293	1,197	8,254	NA	NA	NA	12,837	70,581
2004	50,059	1,275	8,269	NA	NA	NA	15,370	74,973
2005	49,723	1,109	7,222	NA	NA	NA	15,614	73,668
2006	49,589	1,112	7,252	NA	NA	NA	16,037	73,989
2007	49,432	1,100	7,276	NA	NA	NA	16,355	74,163
2008	49,317	1,092	7,302	NA	NA	NA	16,385	74,095
2009	49,305	1,090	7,330	NA	NA	NA	16,681	74,405
2010	49,316	1,081	7,354	NA	NA	NA	16,745	74,496
2011	49,502	1,086	7,385	NA	NA	NA	16,783	74,755
2012	49,837	1,090	7,415	NA	NA	NA	17,115	75,458
2013	50,304	1,095	7,445	NA	NA	NA	17,280	76,124
% Change 2003-2013	4.2%	-8.5%	-9.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	34.6%	7.9%

Table 10
TOTAL EXCLUSIVE AND UNINCORPORATED KING COUNTY PROJECTED FILINGS, 2003-2013

EXCLUSIVE AND COUNTY JURISDICTION CASELOAD								
Year	Infractions	DUI	Criminal	Orders for Protection/Anti-Harassment	Civil and Small Claims	Felony	Parking	Total
2003	94,171	4,510	12,890	2,185	27,839	1,171	5,771	148,537
2004	89,005	4,672	14,208	2,356	31,878	1,188	5,688	148,995
2005	88,494	4,832	13,895	2,067	34,860	437	5,683	150,268
2006	88,255	4,842	13,555	1,744	33,740	440	5,695	148,271
2007	87,976	4,790	13,362	2,038	32,567	427	5,636	146,796
2008	87,771	4,756	13,134	1,775	31,320	419	5,597	144,772
2009	87,750	4,747	12,855	1,775	29,969	417	5,585	143,099
2010	87,769	4,710	12,645	1,775	28,531	408	5,542	141,379
2011	88,100	4,730	12,312	1,775	26,945	413	5,566	139,840
2012	88,696	4,750	11,983	1,775	25,199	418	5,590	138,410
2013	89,527	4,770	11,659	1,775	23,277	422	5,612	137,042
% Change 2003-2013	-4.9%	5.8%	-9.5%	-18.8%	-16.4%	-64.0%	-2.8%	-7.7%

In conclusion, it is anticipated that the overall caseload will not change significantly in the next 8 years, although the mix between City and County caseload is expected to change somewhat.

C. Other Areas Analyzed by the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee analyzed several areas in addition to the Court's caseload. In particular, it analyzed the following areas:

- Facility Needs (in general terms)
- Judicial Needs
- Staffing Needs
- Technology Needs
- How Well the Court Currently Delivers Services,
- Consolidation and Cooperation with other Courts and/or Criminal Justice Agencies
- Mandated and Non-Mandated Services, Including Whether the County Should Continue to Contract with Cities and, If Yes, Then How Those Contracts Should be developed²⁵

In all but two of the above areas the Steering Committee made specific recommendations, which are included in the next section of this report. In these other areas considered by the Steering Committee recommendations were developed by consensus and founded on principles that promote efficiencies and improvements not only in District Court, but also the criminal justice system. These recommendations will be discussed in the next section of this report.

The two areas without specific recommendations are Judicial Needs and Staffing Needs.

Judicial Needs

The Committee made no recommendations regarding the number of judges needed by the District Court (judicial needs). The Administrator of the Courts (AOC) calculates judicial needs and the number of judges are set by the State legislature. AOC's calculation is set out in Tables 11 and 12. The calculations are based on the forecasted caseload provided by the consultant and include all case types forecasted (infractions, dui, criminal, orders for protection/anti harassment, civil and small claims, felony reductions, and parking). Table 11 calculates a total judicial need assuming that the District Court will continue to have a presiding judge as required by

²⁵ The mandated services of the court are those core services mandated by state law and composed of regional and state cases. The core jurisdictional areas are: county-state criminal cases, county-state infractions, civil cases and small claims, and jail/felony expedited cases. County probation, though not mandated, is integral to the criminal function. The non-mandated or non-core services accounted for 36% of District Court expenditures in 2003 and are those services that exist under county ordinance, county executive order, Supreme Court rule that permits certain actions, or internal administrative decisions of the court. These services are: municipal cases (including city probation), specialty courts (Relicensing Court, Mental Health Court/Mental Health Probation, Domestic Violence Court/Domestic Violation Probation), and miscellaneous services (Superior Court assistance, passport acceptance, and death inquests). Small claims conciliation and use of collection contractors are non-core functions that are self-supporting and do not present a budget issue.

County Ordinance²⁶ and that the District Court will continue to provide judicial assistance at the current level to Superior Court²⁷. Table 12 separates the judicial needs for contract city work from King County’s other caseload.

Table 11
District Court Judicial Need Projections²⁸

Year	Total Filings	Projected Judge (FTE) ²⁹	Judicial (FTE) Assistance to Superior Court	Presiding Judge (FTE)	Total Judge Need (FTE)
2003	219,118	21.3	1.4	1.0	23.7
2004	223,968	22.3	1.2	1.0	24.5
2005	223,936	21.9	1.2	1.0	24.1
2006	222,261	21.6	1.2	1.0	23.8
2007	220,960	21.3	1.2	1.0	23.5
2008	218,867	20.9	1.2	1.0	23.1
2009	217,504	20.6	1.2	1.0	22.8
2010	215,875	20.3	1.2	1.0	22.5
2011	214,595	20.0	1.2	1.0	22.2
2012	213,868	19.7	1.2	1.0	21.9
2013	213,167	19.4	1.2	1.0	21.6

²⁶ See KCC Section 2.68.010.

²⁷ As the number of judges in the District Court declines below the total judicial need, judicial assistance to Superior Court will have to be eliminated unless the legislature increases the number of judges or the County adds the necessary number of court commissioners to meet the need.

²⁸ Projected Judge FTE need includes 1.0 FTE for felony probable cause hearings per year in addition to the level of judge need indicated by caseload. Data recently became available on the number of cases filed through July 2004 in the District Court. From this information, it appears that infractions, DUI and criminal cases are being filing at a substantially lower annual rate than in previous years. Projecting the number of likely total filings by the end of the calendar year appears to indicate a substantial decline in cases filed. This decline seems to result from a change in policy rather a long-term trend based upon other independent variables, such as population or economic conditions.

²⁹ “Projected Judge FTE” for 2003 is from the 2002 Annual Caseload Report, and that for 2004 is from the 2003 Annual Caseload Report. The projected judge need for all other years is based on the application of the Washington State AOC input-output model to the projections developed by NCSC.

Table 12
**DISTRICT COURT JUDICIAL NEED PROJECTIONS – ALLOCATION TO
 CONTRACT CITIES AS OPPOSED TO UNINCORPORATED AREAS AND
 KING COUNTY EXCLUSIVE JURISDICTION**

Year	Total Filings	Contract City Judge (FTE)	Unincorporated Areas and Exclusive Jurisdiction (FTE)	Total Judge Need (FTE)**
2005	223,936	3.5	18.5	21.9
2006	222,261	3.5	18.1	21.6
2007	220,960	3.5	17.8	21.3
2008	218,867	3.5	17.5	20.9
2009	217,504	3.5	17.2	20.6
2010	215,875	3.5	16.8	20.3
2011	214,595	3.5	16.5	20.0
2012	213,868	3.5	16.2	19.7
2013	213,167	3.5	15.9	19.4

* Includes 1.0 Judge FTE for felony preliminary hearings
 ** Because of rounding, the numbers shown in the "Total Judge Need (FTE)" column may not equal the total of the other two FTE columns

Staffing Needs

The second area without a specific recommendation is staffing. The Consultant developed two forecasts based on two different models. Both models were based on existing methodologies and both had limitations. The first, based on present staffing levels, assumed that the court current staffing is appropriate. The second, done by the court in 1998, was based in outdated case processing practices. The two models provide a framework to address staffing levels, but specific conclusions were not able to be established due to the limitations of the models.

The first model was based on present staffing levels (i.e. it assumed no improvement in service levels). Under this model the court was anticipated to need 138.74 clerk FTE's in 2005 (it currently has 138 clerk FTE's) with a gradual decline to 125.12 clerk FTE's in 2013.

The second model used a weighted caseload analysis completed by the court in 1998. Under the second model, the court's need for 2005 was determined to be 180.53 clerk FTE's with a gradual decline to 157 clerk FTE's. (Table 13). The Consultant concluded that the court's clerical staff needs were in between the current staffing estimates and the weighted caseload estimates. It was the conclusion of the steering committee that the District Court may need additional staff but that a time and motion

study or equivalent should be conducted in order to reach more specific conclusions in this area.

Table 13
Clerical Need Projections

Year	Current Actual Staff	Projected Need under Current Staffing Model	Projected Need Under 1998 Weighted Caseload Model using actual and current predictions of caseloads
2005	138	138.74	180.53
2006		136.93	177.58
2007		135.43	175.34
2008		133.56	172.24
2009		131.88	169.47
2010		130.14	166.56
2011		128.43	163.57
2012		126.79	160.53
2013		125.12	157.30

**OMP RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE
NEXT 5-10 YEARS**

The following strategic recommendations are based on the expertise of the members and participants of the Steering Committee, the input provided by other stakeholders, the initiatives already underway in District Court and upon the work of Consultant. In addition to the strategic recommendations, where appropriate short-term, mid-term and long-term operational recommendations are included, short-term recommendations should be considered immediately; mid-term recommendations should be considered within the next 12 to 24 months; and long-term recommendations should be considered no later than within the next 5 years.

These recommendations should be considered as a whole. The order of these recommendations has no significance as to their relative importance. Implementation of some recommendations may be prerequisites to implementation of others.

The King County District Court Steering Committee Recommendations and Initial Report dated March 29, 2005, is included as Appendix 1.

Keynote Statement

The County will strive to provide District Court services in accordance with the Court's Mission and Vision and County policy.

A reaffirmation of the Court's mission and vision and the importance of the Court operating in accordance with county policy is appropriate.

Recommendation No. 1—Court of Choice

Retain for the long term the aspiration to be the court of choice for limited jurisdiction in the County, focusing energy and resources on improving operations and services, balancing the needs of citizens, the Court, the County and the cities.

The Court's Vision at the time of last OMP (1995-1997) to become "the court of choice for limited jurisdiction in King County" was created in an environment that is significantly different from the one that exists today. Today, there are many more cities in King County (39) and many more courts of limited jurisdiction (26). Resources, particularly within King County, are much more scarce. The District Court is clearly no longer the only show in town. Citizens, and the cities that they reside in, have options with regard to where they choose to obtain their court services. Consequently, if the District Court is to be the court of choice in King County, it must improve its operations, services and performance to become the "model" or "benchmark" court in the County.

Short-Term Operational Recommendations

- *The Court should strive to have regular meetings with agencies (such as police, prosecutor, defenders, and jails) and customer organizations (such as bar associations and social service agencies that interact with the court).*

These meetings are to a large degree already taking place. The current contract with the cities requires monthly meetings at each facility, as well as periodic meetings to address broader issues associated with the contract and court services. The court routinely attends or holds meeting with its stakeholders. It is essential for the viability of the court and public access to constantly strive to improve communication. Stakeholders must understand the operations and procedures of the court and the court must be aware of and respond to the needs of its stakeholders.

- *A time and motion or equivalent study should be carried out to more accurately determine the Court's support staff needs.*

The County and the Court are making technological and procedural improvements to mitigate the need for additional staff. Consequently, the Court is currently implementing such programs as Electronic Court Records (ECR), One DISCIS database (from nine previous databases), and case-type consolidation. Each of these programs will improve how the Court processes cases; however, until fully implemented the Court will be expected to do more work due to the duplicate systems. It is expected to take approximately twelve months (from January 2005) to fully implement ECR and significantly reduce the need for duplicate paper files. Consolidation from nine databases into one database could take as long as 10 years.

It would be preferable to wait until these improvements (ECR and one DISCIS database) have been fully implemented in order to undertake the time and motion study or equivalent, however, the District Court's staffing needs must be addressed before their completion in order to insure their success.

Consequently, the recommendation is for the Court to complete a time and motion study, or other similar workflow analysis, taking into consideration implementation of ECR, one DISCIS database, best practices, and task consolidation and case-type consolidation.

The cost of a time and motion study depends on the level of detail that is desired. If a time and motion study determines that the District Court needs additional staff, each new employee would cost about \$45,875 for salary and fringe benefits and each new manager would cost about \$72,300 for salary and fringe benefits under current pay schedules.

- *The Court should continue to implement uniform administrative and procedural best practices throughout all locations of the court.*

Greater uniformity in court rules and in their application will be needed if the Court is to reduce its case processing delays.

Uniformity in clerical procedures carries with it significant cost savings once staff has been adequately trained. Without uniformity, the court would be able to make only limited use of legal forms (different forms would have to be created for each specific location or judge, rather than having a single type of form apply court-wide), staff would not be able to move from location to location without obtaining training in unique procedures in each location, and economies of scale and productivity improvements associated with using upgraded technology and software would be reduced or lost.

Greater uniformity would also enhance the opportunities for the District Court and Superior Court to coordinate or share staff functions and tasks.

- *The Court should continue to upgrade the operation and technology of the Call Center in an effort to achieve its potential of enhanced public service.*

A centralized Call Center with complete and easy access to case information is the most efficient use of staff resources. In addition, the need exists to create frequent and regular data collection and reporting on the workload and performance of the call center including but not limited to: time on hold, number of calls, number of requests handled vs. number of requests requiring staff follow-up.

If staff can identify a caller's desired call location and answer the phone directly on behalf of that Court, it would give a caller a greater sense of "connection" and

reinforce the image of a "community court," yet retain the economies of scale possible with the Call Center. This improvement would be at some expense but is technologically feasible.

Assuring the availability of substantive work for staff beyond answering telephone calls will create a more meaningful and challenging work environment and should reduce absenteeism and turnover, thus improving the Call Center.

Improving the Call Center operations would be a tangible demonstration of the Court's commitment to improved service.

- *The Court should expand, if possible, the Learning Disabilities Program currently offered at the Redmond location to all court locations.*

The CHOICES program is located in the Redmond facility and is delivered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Washington (LDA, a local social service provider). It provides testing and a 14- week instructional class geared specifically to those whose test results show a probability of a learning disability or illiteracy. This program has shown a 40% reduction of recidivism. The Court and the County should have a dialog with LDA, to understand the potential to expand this program to all Court locations. In 2004, the cost of the Choices program was \$24,447. Expanding the CHOICES program to all defendants and other locations would require a renegotiation of the existing contract or a new contract with LDA. The current cost of these services to defendants identified in the Redmond facility is approximately \$500 to \$1,000 per defendant.

Mid-Term and Long Term Operational Recommendations

- *The court should review current Best Practices and revise them if needed following the implementation of ECR, State Case Consolidation, and any other projects.*

New areas where uniformity is desirable and needed will surface as a result of implementation of ECR and the single DISCIS database; these should be pursued and not ignored.

Recommendation No. 2—Quality Service Standards

Develop and apply quality service standards and measures for District Court operations, including but not limited to (a) access to justice; (b) case flow management; (c) customer service; (d) jury management; (e) court productivity and (f) collections.

The Court would benefit from greater use of and reliance on data to inform and guide management decisions. Quality serviced standards can provide benchmarks against which the Court can monitor and assess its own performance and which can help set management and budget priorities.

Short-Term and Mid-Term Operational Recommendations

- *The Court should monitor backlogs and time to resolution. The Court should develop and implement a plan to monitor and reduce time to resolution where needed and take necessary steps to prevent backlogs.*
- *The Court should develop case flow management rules for all cases.*
- *The Court should develop citizen comment cards.*
- *The Court should revise and use juror exit questionnaires.*
- *The Court should evaluate and implement mechanisms to measure understanding of court proceedings.*

The Court is currently implementing significant improvements to address backlogs and time to resolution. For example, see the casetype consolidation effort described on page 25 above and the information technology improvements described on page 30 above. The one DISCIS database and electronic court records projects are necessitating casflow management rules and implementation of best practices.

Further input from the public and court users is fundamental to improving the Court's service levels.

Recommendation No. 3—Problem Solving Courts

Continue to support Problem Solving Courts, improving access to Problem Solving Courts, and incorporating Problem Solving Courts in the Court's planning process.

Problem Solving Courts offer a new paradigm for courts. These courts are called "Problem Solving" because they address serious social/criminal/health issues through a court's marshaling of resources from a variety of public and private sources to deal more effectively with the underlying cause of criminal behavior.

Problem Solving Courts are labor-intensive and thus more expensive than "regular" case processing. Judges spend much more time per case than they spend in the typical adversarial-based case and often cannot process as large a caseload as they would with a "regular" calendar. Attorneys also often spend more time because there are so many more court appearances per case, although once a defendant is admitted to the program, attorney preparation time and time per appearance is less than it might be for a typical adversarial hearing. Probation officers must have much smaller caseloads in order to devote substantially more time to monitoring their clients' progress. The judges' support staff often is expanded to include someone to serve as a liaison between the judge and the social agencies, public and private, that work with defendants on their addictions, social problems, health issues, and even educational issues in some cases.

In terms of the Court's budget alone, Problem Solving courts are very expensive. However, evaluations in King County and across the nation demonstrate that total savings for the criminal justice system for society from Problem Solving courts far exceed court and other agencies' costs, both in dollar terms and in human terms.³⁰ Problem solving courts increase accountability of defendants. They lower the incidents of substance abuse, untreated mental illness, and criminal activity, while participants are in the programs and reduce re-arrest rates during and after program participation. These programs foster hope and pride in a job well done. The necessary collaboration with other entities develops good will and institutional relationships that results in a mutual benefit over time. Finally, these programs improve public trust and confidence in courts.

Expansion of access to the Problem Solving and Quasi-problem Solving courts for cities and, in the case of Mental Health Court, to felony cases should be an important next step for the Court and the County to consider and plan. The County could gain city contributions to the existing infrastructure costs of Problem Solving courts by expanding them to city defendants. Cities, on the other hand, would gain the added

³⁰ It is recognized that cost advantages with problem-solving courts mainly accrue to other government agencies (such as the police and jail) and social service agencies and not to the Court.

expertise, judicial supervision, and access to community based services that are the hallmark of the District Court's Problem Solving courts.

Short-Term, Mid-Term and Long-Term Operational Recommendation

- *Retain and continue to support Mental Health Court and Domestic Violence Court*

There are two types of traditional Problem Solving courts in King County: Mental Health Court³¹ and Domestic Violence Court.³² Mental Health Court focuses on linking mentally ill misdemeanants to community based case management, treatment, and housing. Its annual caseload is approximately 400 cases. Domestic Violence Court intervenes in domestic violence criminal misdemeanor matters by connecting defendants to appropriate treatment programs and by providing continuity whereby repeat offenders appear before the same judge. There are two Domestic Violence Courts in King County, one at the Regional Justice Center and one at the King County Courthouse. The Domestic Violence Courts heard 2,185 cases in 2003. Both of these two programs have proven themselves to be highly effective and should be continued.

Mid-Term Operational Recommendation

- *Evaluate the need for a Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Problem Solving Court post implementation of the State Case Consolidation program*

Many of the benefits of a DUI Problem Solving court may be achieved through the state caseload consolidation program currently being implemented by the prosecutor, public defender and the court. The court's energies should be focused on a smooth and effective implementation of the state caseload consolidation during the next 12 months. Thereafter, the Court and the County should carefully evaluate the need for a DUI Problem Solving court. If a DUI court is deemed valuable at that time, one should be considered.

³¹ King County's Mental Health Court was the second court of its kind in the Country and has been the model for other courts that followed.

³² There is also one quasi-problem solving court: the Relicensing Court offered at Seattle and Burien facilities. This program is very successful in addressing unpaid traffic fines that had resulted in the suspension of an individual's driver's license. The Department of Licensing recently ceased suspending driver's licenses because of unpaid tickets because the Washington State Supreme Court deemed the underlying statute providing for such suspensions unconstitutional. The viability of this program will depend upon whether the legislature enacts a new statute requiring suspension of driver's licenses for unpaid fines this year. If there is a new statute, this program has proven to pay for itself in increased revenues from unpaid fines and decreases of arrests and associated jail costs.

Recommendation No. 4—Unification and Centralization

Continue and make explicit the strategy of improving efficiency through unification of governance, administration and planning, centralizing workload where appropriate.

The Court has already embarked on a path of unification for governance, administration, and planning, as well as centralizing its workload. Through the 1995 Operational Master Plan, King County District Court adopted a unification strategy to create one court where nine once existed. The Court has implemented a single, more streamlined governance and administrative structure. Employing a unification and consolidation strategy throughout District Court provides opportunities for more flexible utilization of resources, economies of scale, more efficient operations, and cost avoidance. In addition to the unification efforts noted above, the Court has undertaken the following efforts:

1. Centralization of information technology staff in one downtown location, close in proximity to the Presiding Judge's Office.
2. Implementation of one central database for the Court, gradually eliminating reliance on nine standalone databases.
3. Creation of a central payment center for payments submitted electronically or by mail. (Note: customers may make payments at any court facility except Yesler, in person).
4. Centralization of civil caseloads in each division in order to improve service.
5. Consolidation of the state and county criminal caseload into one location within each division and consolidation of state infraction caseloads into another location within each division. The Court, in conjunction with the King County Prosecutor and the King County Public Defender, will achieve greater efficiency and improved service quality as a result of this change. In particular, the prosecutors and public defenders will participate earlier in the process than before (i.e. at arraignment), thereby reducing the total number of hearings held per case and improving access to public defenders, discovery and settlement proposals, where appropriate.

The court should continue to find ways for further efficiencies through unification.

Short-Term, Mid-Term and Long-Term Operational Recommendations

- *The Court should continue its administrative and governance centralization efforts as new opportunities arise.*
- *Focus efforts on career and employee development due to anticipated retirements of many experienced and knowledgeable management staff.*

As noted in the background section, appropriate administrative and governance centralization has already been achieved by the District Court. It is anticipated that the changes in this area will not be drastic, but rather smaller improvements that can be made as a result of technology enhancements.

Significant changes in management staff are anticipated due to retirements. The court must focus efforts and resources on employee development to minimize the impact of these anticipated changes.

Recommendation No. 5—Technological Improvements

Continue to develop and implement technological improvements, such as “paperless” case processing and E-filings that support District Court operations and increase access to court services and information.

This OMP encourages the court to creatively increase efficiency and access to court services and information through investments in technology in accordance with existing County policies and procedures. The Court’s implementation of ECR and the consolidation of nine stand alone databases into one DISCIS database are examples of technological initiatives that provide opportunities for continued Best Practice implementation and improvements for case processing throughout the Court.

Short-Term, Mid-Term and Long-Term Operational Recommendation

- *Continue to implement the technology initiative involving:*
 - (a) *Continued support under ECR for E-filing and electronic case processing rather than paper-based case processing;*
 - (b) *Best Practices based on functionality provided by ECR;*
 - (c) *Integration of revenue accounting at a central location with one depository;*
 - (d) *Centralized receipt of mail payments; and*
 - (e) *Development of a court-wide case management system, making use of the single database.*

These technological initiatives are already underway. They are good business practices that will improve the service levels of the District Court in a number of significant areas: accounting, access to information throughout the court and by court users, and uniformity, making it easier for the public and other staff to understand and comply with court procedures. The court-wide case management system is an essential piece of both ECR and the use of a single DISCIS database. Ongoing development will continue to require additional resources. However, the court is already seeing a somewhat surprising benefit: the clerical needs at a particular

courthouse are no longer tied directly to the caseload that is heard in the courtrooms at that courthouse. Consequently, the County has much greater flexibility for the uses of its Court facilities and staff.³³

- *Continue to upgrade the technology of the Call Center*

See Strategic Recommendation No. 1, at page 50.

³³ The State Case Consolidation at the Redmond location will be the first example of this improvement. The Court will be able to support a caseload at the Redmond location that exceeds the staff that will be located there. This has resulted in a reduction of the cost to remodel the Redmond location by about \$70,000.

Recommendation No. 6—City Contracts

Continue to support the Court's function to serve cities through contracts.

There are benefits associated with contracting for district court services for the County, contracting cities and, most importantly, the taxpayers and general public. The benefits include:

- 1) Economies of scale to reduce costs for the court, police, jails, other governmental agencies, court users, and taxpayers;
- 2) Access to a broader array and higher level of services (including Problem Solving courts, jail alternatives, judge-managed probation and sophisticated technology such as ECR, E-filing, VIPr video conferencing, etc.);
- 3) The ability to spread the cost of court services while increasing the use of those services (particularly the specialized services for which there otherwise might not be an adequate need to support their existence);
- 4) Focusing resources, rather than spreading them too thin or duplicating them at an increased cost;
- 5) Improved access to justice and efficiency by linking information together as one court so that the user can pay a ticket, clear a warrant, find out about their case, file legal papers, or find out about their case at any location;
- 6) Less confusion by the public about which court they should be dealing with and what the rules pertain to their case;
- 7) Reduced delays, numbers of hearings, jail costs, and inmate transports when a defendant's multiple cases can be addressed by one court at the same time rather than separately, at different times and at different courts;
- 8) Easier consolidation of fines owed by defendants if they are all owed to one court.

The Court requires a countywide infrastructure that will exist even if there were no court services provided to contracting municipalities. The municipalities that contract for court services are now helping to pay for a county overhead burden. If more cities contract with the county, there will be additional contributors to the court's infrastructure.³⁴

The County will continue its policy to have stable, long-term, full cost recovery contracts with cities, where both the cities and the county benefit from the savings that can be achieved through the economies of scale and having multiple points of access to the court system. However, this recommendation also recognizes that different communities have different criminal justice and court needs. Flexibility and options are essential to meeting those needs regardless of whether the community is within the boundary of a city or a part of unincorporated King County such as Vashon

³⁴ "Overhead burden" in this context means facility costs, security, telephones, utility costs, and other fixed costs.

Island. New and creative methods and locations for providing court services, particularly in light of the technological advances within the court, should be explored.

***Short-Term, Mid-Term and Long-Term Operational
Recommendation***

- *Begin outreach to other cities and communities of court services offered by King County.*

Further development of District Court services for cities and communities that are considering annexation or incorporation will lead to implementation of Strategic Recommendation No. 6.

Recommendation No. 7—Service and Facility Flexibility

Support flexibility in providing services and facilities for District Court customers.

This recommendation recognizes that one size may not fit all. It is important to balance the sometimes conflicting goals of stability and predictability with the ability to be flexible enough to meet local needs and to incorporate new and better ways of providing court services as they develop. Local needs are not identical throughout the County and certain communities may have greater or lesser needs for particular court services such as Mental Health Court or the Call Center. In addition, new technology is making it much easier to hold court in less traditional locations, which has already improved access to justice and cut facility costs.³⁵

³⁵ The no-cost Vashon lease is a prime example of this outcome.

Recommendation No. 8 – Facilities

Continue to support a unified, Countywide District Court, utilizing existing facilities, to provide for a more equitable and cost effective system of justice for the citizens of King County.

- A: Ensure Court facilities promote system efficiencies, quality services and access to justice.**
- B: Consolidate District Court facilities that exist in the same city.**
- C: Reconsider facilities if there are changes with contracting cities or changes in leases.**
- D: Work with cities to develop a facility master plan as it relates to the District Court.**

King County is nearly twice as large as the average county in the United States (covering more than 2,200 square miles) and ranks as the 12th most populous county in the nation. King County is responsible for providing district court services to more than 1.7 million people. King County's bus and train transit system, while relatively effective for those who live in the population centers in King County and who want to travel during the peak morning and evening commute times to downtown Seattle, is currently no substitute for locating courthouses in local communities.

The District Court's existing locations provide the necessary access to the court for its users (particularly victims of domestic violence or harassment). District Court is the "people's court", where ease of access and local identity are essential to effective justice and the appearance of fairness. Access to justice is fundamental to maintaining our democratic representative government.

This recommendation recognizes that existing court facilities should be maintained and that having courts in local communities is an important consideration for contracting cities and the citizens of King County. In addition, this recommendation emphasizes that whenever possible, efficient, quality services and access to justice should control facility decisions rather than facilities controlling efficiencies, quality of services and access to justice.

This recommendation also recognizes that having fragmented District Court facilities in a single community does not improve access to justice and leads to increases in costs and public confusion³⁶.

³⁶ For example, the District Court's two facilities in the City of Kent should be consolidated at one of the two locations, preferably at the Regional Justice Center in order to leverage off the existing County infrastructure.

Near-Term Actions

Several initiatives currently underway will have short and long term facility impacts.

- (1) State Case Consolidation: The King County Prosecutor, The Public Defender, Law Enforcement, King County Facilities and the King County District Court have agreed and developed a plan to consolidate all of the State and County exclusive jurisdiction (primarily Washington State Patrol and King County Sheriff) criminal caseload into three locations: Redmond, Seattle (at the King County Courthouse), and Burien. In addition, this same group has agreed and developed a plan to consolidate all of the State and County exclusive jurisdiction infraction caseload into three other locations: Aukeen, Issaquah and Shoreline.

Continuing to move forward with this initiative is an important step and in alignment with the Strategic Recommendation No. 4– *Continue with and make explicit the strategy of improving efficiency through unification of governance, administration, centralizing workload where appropriate.*

In part due to the flexibility created by ECR and one DISCIS database, little to no improvements in space adjustments will be required at most of the facilities. However, at the Redmond facility, improvements are needed in order to accommodate the increase in caseload and the staff of the prosecutor and defense. These improvements to the Redmond facility have been estimated at \$125,000 and funding is being secured through the 2005 1st quarter omnibus.

In addition, the Burien facility is not the preferred location for the South Division criminal caseload. It is the goal of the Court, the Prosecutor, and the Public Defender to consolidate the caseload into the Regional Justice Center because of the access to Superior Court jurors (thus reducing overall jury costs), centralization of prosecutorial and public defense staff, and the access to the jail at the Regional Justice Center. At this time, there are no courtrooms available to address this need. This issue will be addressed more fully in the Criminal Justice Council and through the 2005 Space Planning effort. In the meantime, as a placeholder to allow the work to be centralized, the Burien facility will be able to accommodate, with some difficulties, the increase in caseload.

- (2) Yesler Administrative Consolidation: In another move to further the vision to continue to find efficiencies through unification of functions, the ITS previously located in the Bellevue District Court facility at Surrey Downs, has been re-located to the county-owned Yesler building and centralized with the call center (also an ITS function in the court). This functional centralization creates greater efficiency and improvements in the support structure to the Court.

(3) City Contracts: Currently, the County contracts with 14 local municipalities to deliver local court services. This contract ends December 31, 2006. The future of District Court includes full cost recovery contracts with any King County city. The outcome of contract discussions will impact and potentially drive the facility improvements as the Executive and Court work with the cities to define viable options for delivery. There are a range of options that can be evaluated in that process, including renting space, a change in the current service by providing court services in less traditional locations, such as holding court in council chambers or other meeting rooms in order to bring the court into a community, to full service delivery in a county-owned locations within a city. The range in potential scenarios is broad and will need to be implemented through contracting discussions with municipalities.

Facilities Master Plan

This recommendation calls for a Facilities Master Plan (FMP) that will include input from all stakeholders, including contract cities. The purpose of the FMP will be to identify the space, structural, architectural requirements to fulfill the OMP policy directions. The FMP will provide alternatives, with costs, advantages, and disadvantages for each policy directive.

Further discussion of the FMP is provided in Section V of this document.

Recommendation No 9—Study Court Integration

Study the integration of District Court, Superior Court and the Department of Judicial Administration assuring that the needs of District Court are met; and best practices are considered.

The King County Council, through adoption of the 2005 budget, requested a feasibility study to examine the potential for administrative consolidation of the District Court, Superior Court, and Department of Judicial Administration. The King County Council's budget proviso stated as follows:

By June 1, 2005, the office of management and budget, in collaboration with the superior court, district court and the department of judicial administration, shall submit to the council for its review and approval by motion a report containing a feasibility analysis of the potential of consolidating the county's court administrative functions and a proposed motion approving the report. The report should contain an analysis of the administrative/support functions of the superior and district courts and the department of judicial administration, evaluating the potential for the consolidation of functions, staffing and space needs. Based on the findings of the consolidation analysis, the plan should identify any potential new administrative structures. The plan and proposed motion must be filed in the form of 16 copies with the clerk of the council, who will retain the original and will forward copies to each councilmember and to the lead staff of the budget and fiscal management and the law, justice and human services committees or their successors.

While the needs of each of the Courts and the Department of Judicial Administration should be considered, this is the District Court's Operational Master Plan and particular emphasis is being placed on its needs.

Recommendation No. 10—Work with Stakeholders

Work together with stakeholders to gain state and local cooperation and assistance to meet the needs of the judicial system.

“Washington ranks 50th in the nation for state government participation in the funding of courts, indigent defense and prosecution, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.”³⁷ The recent publication, *Justice in Jeopardy* by the Board of Judicial Administration (BJA) Court Funding Task Force, outlines the grim future for courts with no additional state funding. It underscores that the state ultimately determines the workload of the court, the number of judges, the number of hearings, and salary of judges. This recommendation speaks to the need for a legislative change at the state level. The *Justice in Jeopardy* report recommends additional state funding for costs that represent a “nexus” between state action and costs incurred, the list includes, judge’s salaries, record of proceedings, and juror costs among other costs. The OMP encourages continued diligence at the state legislature.

This OMP also encourages continued cooperation with cities and other stakeholders to meet the needs of the judicial system.

³⁷ *Justice in Jeopardy, The Court Funding Crisis in Washington State*, Board of Judicial Administration Court Funding Task Force, December 2004.

Recommendation No. 11—Additional Resources

Recognize that implementation of these strategic and operational recommendations may require reallocation or commitment of additional resources.

This recommendation is self-explanatory.

NEXT STEPS—THE FACILITY MASTER PLAN

The 2004 annual budget, as adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council, provided for the development of an operational master plan (OMP) and facility master plan (FMP) for the King County District Court. The FMP will establish the facilities needs and costs, based upon the OMP and the results of negotiations with cities for District Court services.

An FMP is defined in the King County Code as follows:

A master plan for an agency that establishes the facility needs for an approved operational master plan. It should include, as a minimum, space and construction standards, spatial relationships, prototype floor plans, space requirements, initial and life cycle cost of alternative facilities and locations. It should include proposed schedules, budgets, and a plan to respond to the changing needs of the operational master plan.

The FMP for District Court will include the following elements:

- **Policy Direction from the OMP Process:** The purpose of the FMP will be to identify the space, structural, architectural requirements to fulfill the policy direction obtained through the OMP process. The FMP will provide alternatives, with costs, advantages, and disadvantages for each policy directive.
- **Optimal Use of Current Facilities:** As clearly stated in the OMP policy directives, it will be the goal of the FMP to optimize use of current facilities. Recommendations for capital improvements, such as space re-configuration, renovation, or expansion of existing facilities will be evaluated. Life cycle cost analyses will be performed on each option.
- **Interface with County Agencies:** An important component of the FMP will be to evaluate space options for other King County agencies that could impact or facilitate the FMP. This interface will be of particular importance in evaluating options for the King County Courthouse and the Regional Justice Center.

Identification of Short-Term versus Long-Term Recommendations: There will most likely be some short-term facilities recommendations that will be recommended for immediate or short-term action. An example of this type of short-term action is the capital improvement work planned for this year at the Redmond District Court facility, which will accommodate the needs of the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Public Defense, and District Court. This work is being done in advance of completion of the OMP to allow early implementation of operational improvements. All short-term actions will be evaluated via a formal process involving effected agencies, the King County Office of Management and Budget, and the King County Council.

- **City Contract Negotiations:** The FMP will be integrated with the negotiation process for city contracts. Cities will be provided with various options for facilities to meet the needs of their contract requests. The cities will be able to make informed decisions on changes in contracts based upon the facilities and associated cost impacts of their potential contracting options.

- **Schedule and Budget Plan:** The FMP will include a capital improvement program (CIP) element that will identify recommended CIP project scopes, schedules, and budgets. The schedule and budget component of the FMP will also take into consideration any recommended real estate actions, such as surplus, acquisition, sale, or lease of properties.

The FMP will be conducted by the King County Facilities Management Division (FMD) in conjunction with the District Court and with input from the King County Office of Management and Budget, other affected King County agencies, the Metropolitan King County Council, and contract cities.

CONCLUSION

Successful implementation of this plan requires King County and the District Court to continuously evaluate the District Court's general performance in light of the objectives and goals outlined in this document. It is important to incorporate the objectives and goals outlined in this report into the day-to-day operations of the court and to identify and dedicate the necessary resources. Successes and failures need to be communicated and analyzed. Most importantly, the dedicated, hardworking staff of the District Court should be acknowledged for their contributions to the improvements as they develop.