



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT



October 3, 2023

ITEM TITLE

Agreement: Approve an Agreement with AutoReturn US, LLC to Provide a Towing and Impound Management Software Solution

Report Number: 23-0262

Location: No specific geographic location

Department: Police

Environmental Notice: The activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required.

Recommended Action

Adopt a resolution waiving the competitive formal bid requirement and approving a service agreement with AutoReturn US, LLC to provide towing and impound management software solution for the Police Department.

SUMMARY

The Police Department is recommending approval of a service agreement with AutoReturn US, LLC ("AutoReturn") to provide a towing and impound software solution. Using AutoReturn's software solution will streamline tow operations within the department and provide a better experience for citizens who have their motor vehicles towed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it will not result in a physical change in the environment; therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Thus, no environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Not applicable.

DISCUSSION

In order to enhance operational efficiency, Police Department staff researched options to improve tow and impound processes. As a result of the research, the Police Department is requesting approval for a single source procurement with AutoReturn for their proprietary AutoReturn Integrated Enterprise System (ARIES), which will modernize and streamline tow operations within the department and provide a better experience for citizens who have their motor vehicles towed.

The Police Department currently contracts with seven tow companies for towing services of motor vehicles that are abandoned, illegally parked, disabled, damaged by collision, subject to impound, and other scenarios. The current process is not efficient and contains additional steps and coordination between officers, dispatchers, Police records staff, and towing companies. ARIES is built for law enforcement agencies to help improve operations and tow response times by streamlining dispatch operations with requests processed through the ARIES software, as well as enhancing officer safety by reducing the amount of time officers are waiting on the side of the road. Staff is not aware of other comparable solutions on the market. San Diego Police Department has been using AutoReturn since 2010, and in August 2023, San Diego County Sheriff's Department also entered into an agreement to use AutoReturn's software solution. AutoReturn's ARIES software will streamline and optimize the Police Department's impound process as follows:

There are two types of tow and impound requests that involve the Police Department:

- 1) Private Party Impounds: Repossessions; Vehicles parked on private party without authorization
- 2) Police-Initiated Impounds: Stolen vehicle recoveries; License/registration issues; Illegally parked/stored on a public street; Driver arrested or cited for specific violations; Incapacitated driver

Private Party Impounds

From 2019 through 2022, the Police Department handled an average of 7,872 private impounds per year. The current process for private party impounds is that the tow company first calls the Police Department's Dispatch Center to report the impound. Vehicle owners then call the Police Department to report a missing or stolen vehicle. When Dispatch would notify the vehicle owner of the impound, citizens would often be angry or be frustrated with Dispatch personnel.

AutoReturn's services will improve the process by assisting in decreasing the volume of emergency calls related to towing incidents. Specifically, with AutoReturn, tow companies enter impound data directly in the web-based software solution. Vehicle owners then have the capability to check the impound website prior to reporting a stolen/missing vehicle, which would eliminate a call to the Police Dispatch Center.

ARIES PPI (Private Property Impound)

- Streamlines process for coordinating impound process on behalf of cities and private property owners.
- AutoReturn maintains accurate documentation and reporting for every Private Property Impound (PPI) case, providing detailed reports to property owners, towing companies and relevant authorities.
- Improve citizen experience when locating their impounded vehicle while reducing PPI call volume for dispatch/records.

Police-Initiated Impounds

From 2019 through 2022, the Police Department handled an average of 2,424 police impounds per year. The current process for police impounds is that an officer must call first Dispatch to request an impound. The Dispatcher then must call the tow company to request a tow. The tow company then dispatches a tow truck to the scene.

With AutoReturn, the Dispatch Center would no longer be involved in requesting a tow call, resulting in decreased incoming and outgoing radio/call volumes. From the web-based software solution, officers can directly request the tow truck and can see real-time when the tow truck is arriving (similar to an Uber or Lyft request). For citizens, a website will be available for vehicle owners to locate vehicles, which reduces calls to the City on vehicle tow inquiries.

ARIES Dispatch

- Proprietary cloud-based or hosted solution designed for use on any computer
- Serves as stand-alone tool for municipal dispatchers or can be integrated seamlessly with Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems or Mobile Data Computer (MDC)
- Capable of optimized tow assignments using GPS technology such as “closest- to” algorithms, zone-based, or rotational assignment depending on agency requirements
- Reduce tow related calls for Dispatch Center
- Reduce citizen visits to Police Department front lobby to pay Negligent Vehicle Impound Fees
- Built in reporting/analytics to hold tow operators accountable to their agreement with CVPD

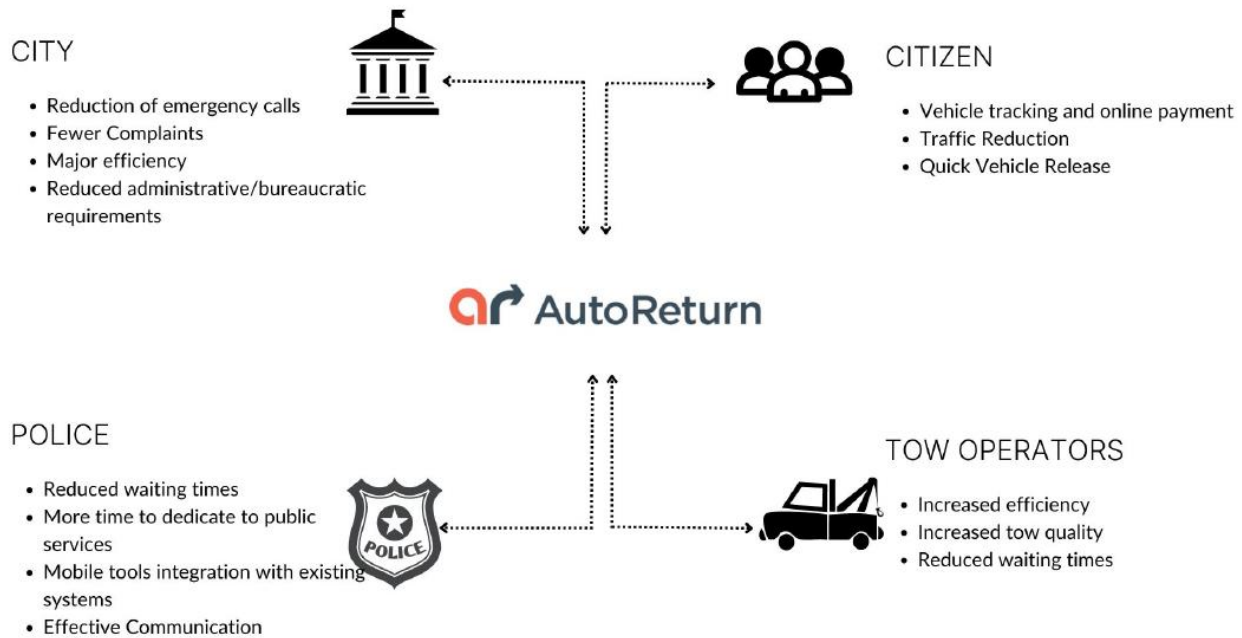
Single/Sole Source Justification

AutoReturn is the national leader in towing and impound management logistics services. Since 2002, AutoReturn has served customers across the country and internationally to address challenges in the municipal towing and impound industry. The company seeks to bring operational expertise, industry-leading technology solutions, and 24x365 service to its municipal, county, and state partners. According to AutoReturn, in 20 years of service to public-sector customers, the company has a 100% renewal rate because of the essential value it provides and its unique software solution that no other entity can provide.

The ARIES system qualifies for a single source contract to provide a complete turnkey tow management solution built specifically for law enforcement. The service agreement was negotiated on the basis of AutoReturn’s demonstrated competence and qualifications for the professional services to be provided, pursuant to Chula Vista Municipal Code Section 2.56.110(A)(1). In order to procure these services, AutoReturn was chosen based on their unique knowledge, skills, and performance capabilities not available from other sources. In accordance with Chula Vista Municipal Code Sections 2.56.110(H)(3) and 2.56.070(B)(4) single/sole source the award of this contract is not subject to competitive bidding requirements.

Procuring AutoReturn’s ARIES system will benefit the citizens of Chula Vista, particularly those individuals whose vehicles have been towed, by making the overall process less time consuming. ARIES is expected to improve the overall experience for individuals by providing them with access to modern technology to monitor and track the service status of their vehicle tow, quickly and conveniently. The information regarding the individual's towed vehicle is accessible 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. This process will

also save time for the individual by bypassing the need to speak to someone over the phone. Leveraging this advanced technology will ensure the towing process is more streamlined, proactive, and provide an overall improved experience for the individual. The diagram below outlines the benefits of the AutoReturn software solution.



The service agreement with AutoReturn covers an initial one-year term of October 3, 2023 to October 2, 2024, with the option to extend for two (2) additional one-year terms, up to October 2, 2026.

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the decision contemplated by this action and has determined that it is not site-specific and consequently, the 500-foot rule found in California Code of Regulations Title 2, section 18702.2(a)(11), is not applicable to this decision for purposes of determining a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.).

Staff is not independently aware, and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision maker conflict of interest in this matter.

CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal year 2023-2024 cost of the AutoReturn program is \$99,999. The Police Department has available appropriation in the fiscal year 2023-24 Asset Seizure Fund budget for this cost, resulting in no additional appropriations and no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT

The service agreement with AutoReturn includes two (2) one-year options to extend. The annual recurring charges will be \$118,000 per year, if the options are exercised. There are sufficient funds available in the Asset Seizure Fund for the entirety of the contract, including all optional extensions. These costs will be included in subsequent budgets as part of the annual budget adoption process.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Service Agreement with AutoReturn US, LLC (Order # ORD-202302240012)

*Staff Contact: Chief Roxana Kennedy, Police Department
Captain Dan Peak, Police Department*