

Policy Briefing Summary

City Council



Regarding:	Resolution to Appropriate Virginia State Police FY 27 HEAT Equipment Reimbursement Funding - \$10,000 (1 of 2 readings)
Staff Contact(s):	Holly Bittle, Management Analyst III, Taylor Harvey-Ryan, Grants Program Manager
Presenter:	Michael Kochis, Police Chief
Date of Proposed Action:	August 17, 2026

Issue

The Virginia Department of State Police's Help Eliminate Auto Theft ("HEAT") Program reimburses Virginia law enforcement agencies for equipment, training, software, or recurring costs to combat the theft of vehicles and vehicle parts in their respective jurisdictions. The Charlottesville Police Department ("CPD") was awarded \$10,000.00 for FY 2027 through the HEAT program to reimburse the City of Charlottesville for its annual subscription fees for the BERLA system, the purchase of a SyncLair software license, and funds for new user training and continuing education for the BERLA system.

The BERLA system combined with the SyncLair software in addition to other interventions, is expected to continue to help CPD to reduce the number of vehicle thefts in calendar years 2026 and 2027.

Background / Rule

The Charlottesville Police Department (CPD) is a current subscriber to BERLA Toolkit software, which gives CPD the ability to perform forensic downloads from stolen vehicle computer systems to collect detailed evidence to more effectively prosecute stolen vehicle cases. The addition of the SyncLair software will allow detectives to upload BERLA downloads and cell phone records to map where vehicles have traveled after being stolen. This will provide more insight into who is stealing vehicles and where they take them.

In an effort to reduce regional vehicle thefts, CPD has been able to give access to its BERLA system to other Virginia Law Enforcement agencies to help neighboring jurisdictions investigate their local vehicle theft cases.

Over the past three years, CPD has seen an overall decrease in motor vehicle thefts. Years 2023, 2024, and 2025 saw vehicle theft numbers of 172, 125, and 142 respectively. This grant is expected to help CPD continue to see the number of vehicle thefts stabilize or decrease after seeing a slight increase last year.

Analysis

Appropriation of these funds is expected to help CPD continue to reduce the number of vehicle thefts by providing funding for its annual subscription fees for the BERLA system, the purchase of SyncLair software, and funds for new user training and continuing education for the BERLA system outside of its annual FY 2027 appropriated General Fund operating budget.

Financial Impact

This will not impact the General Fund. No matching funds are required.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval and appropriation of this funding.

Recommended Motion (if Applicable)**Attachments**

1. Resolution - FY 27 HEAT Grant Appropriation