

Seattle Municipal Court

The Honorable Anita Crawford-Willis, Presiding Judge

(206) 684-5600

www.seattle.gov/courts

Department Overview

As the judicial branch of Seattle City government, the Seattle Municipal Court (SMC or court) provides a forum to resolve alleged violations of the law in a respectful, independent, and impartial manner. SMC adjudicates misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, infractions (e.g., traffic/parking, traffic camera tickets, and other violations), and certain civil violations related to building and zoning offenses. The court has seven elected judges and six appointed magistrates.

This is a transformational time with several initiatives underway that will advance SMC as the people's court, providing fair, equitable and innovative delivery of justice. Each change initiative aligns with the court's values of service, fairness, equity and inclusion, innovation, excellence, integrity and our strategic priorities:

- system stabilization and optimize efficiencies
- employee well-being, engagement and growth
- organizational resilience with planning and practice
- operational excellence, accountability and innovation
- integrity through equitable leadership
- judicial independence
- fairness with proactive compliance

SMC is organized into four service areas: Operations, Administrative Services, Court Technology, and Strategy. This structure supports realizing SMC's strategic priorities by making the best use of court resources, eliminating siloed operations and functions, and ensuring court services are easy to navigate. Leveraging a sustainable governance structure, the court continues to improve transparency and ensure effective communication throughout the court.

Ensuring access to justice for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind (D/HH/DV) individuals remains a priority for the court. SMC has provided Interpreter Services in 149 languages since 2005, including American Sign Language. The court provides free interpreter services for criminal and civil matters, including court hearings, trials, attorney-client interviews, probation appointments, prosecution witnesses, mental health evaluations, customer service, and translation of court forms and letters.

In 2026, SMC collaborated with the Seattle City Attorney's Office and the King County Department of Public Defense on a collaborative diversion pathway called Connection Court. By connecting participants charged with lower-level crimes to services in the Community Resource Center (CRC) and the broader community, the goal is to address the underlying causes of the behaviors that bring people into the legal system. A core feature of the program is same day engagement: when a participant opts in, SMC Pretrial Services connects them immediately with service providers either at the CRC or in the community. This program was launched in Fall 2026.

As Seattle has progressively grown its Automated Traffic Safety Camera (ATSC) program, the court has experienced a significant increase in workload. Five of the court's operational units contribute to processing and adjudicating tickets. The court is preparing for additional filings as the city implements new full-time speed cameras in 2027 and 2028. SMC is participating in the ATSC interdepartmental team (IDT) with representatives from SDOT, SPD, CAO and CBO to discuss program data, trends, needs, and departmental recommendations.

SMC continues to engage community through its judicial officers, Community Resource events, and annual Law Day programming. Bringing court services and resources to Seattle neighborhoods offers community members the opportunity to receive assistance with resolving SMC warrants, options for addressing tickets, help with reinstating their driver's license, and access supportive services through the Community Resource Center in their neighborhood.

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Our annual Law Day program welcomes high school students from across Seattle to the courthouse to learn about local government, court careers, and participate in mock trials.

Budget Snapshot

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Department Support				
General Fund Support	45,688,106	48,350,472	46,410,603	47,134,158
Other Funding - Operating	335,602	393,738	3,710,675	4,625,591
Total Operations	46,023,708	48,744,210	50,121,278	51,759,750
Total Appropriations	46,023,708	48,744,210	50,121,278	51,759,750
Full-Time Equivalents Total*	200.85	199.85	205.35	210.35

* FTE totals are provided for informational purposes only. Changes in FTEs resulting from City Council or Human Resources Director actions outside of the budget process may not be detailed here.

Budget Overview

The City's 2027-2028 Proposed Budget maintains core services for the Seattle Municipal Court. The department will continue to invest in programs to adjudicate misdemeanors, gross misdemeanors, infractions (e.g., traffic and parking tickets, traffic camera violations, and other violations), and civil violations related to building and zoning offenses.

The budget makes department wide reductions of 3.5 vacant FTE but maintains programs and services. A significant change is to swap General Funds with Automated Traffic Safety Camera (ATSC) Funds. Further, additional positions and funding are added to process and adjudicate the substantial increase in traffic camera tickets. The proposed budget continues legislated changes in 2026: adding positions and funding to staff up for the traffic camera tickets beginning in 2026 and funding for a reclassification of 41 positions to one position title which allows the Court to streamline processes, and support consistency and flexibility across operations.

The budget is also adjusted for minor Citywide and departmental technical changes.

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Incremental Budget Changes

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	Dollars	FTE
2026 Adopted Budget	48,744,210	199.85
Baseline		
Increase appropriation for Annual Grant and Align with State Funding Schedule	165,000	-
Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget for Local 77	77,000	-
Increase Funding for Court Information System Inflation	64,467	-
Increase Funding for Mental Health Court Inflation	43,000	-
Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes	(310,509)	-
Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate	(342,541)	-
Proposed Operating		
Transfer General Fund Costs to Automated Traffic Safety Camera (ATSC) Fund	-	-
Increase Staffing to Process Traffic Camera Citations	1,554,583	8.00
Reduce Staffing to Align with Current Workload Needs Department-wide	(630,105)	(3.50)
Proposed Technical		
Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation	756,173	3.00
Technical Position Clean-up	-	(2.00)
Total Incremental Changes	\$1,377,068	5.50
Total 2027 Proposed Budget	\$50,121,278	205.35

Description of Incremental Budget Changes

Baseline

Increase appropriation for Annual Grant and Align with State Funding Schedule

Expenditures	\$165,000
Revenues	\$165,000

This revenue-backed technical change aligns appropriations for the annual Therapeutic Court Grant through the Washington State Administrative Office of the Court. This grant supplements client support for those who appear before the court with substance use disorders or other behavioral health needs and engage individuals with community-based therapeutic interventions. This baseline change does not impact the current level of service the court provides with this grant.

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Bargained Annual Wage Adjustment to Base Budget for Local 77

Expenditures \$77,000

This is a technical change that adjusts base budget appropriations to reflect the proper Annual Wage Increase (AWI) increment for 2027 and ongoing, as outlined in the agreements between the City and Local 77 for personnel costs.

Increase Funding for Court Information System Inflation

Expenditures \$64,467

This item is an increase to pay the ongoing 5% inflationary cost to the base contract, along with the required on-going C-Track Enterprise maintenance costs. The C-Track system is used by the Courts as the court information system for case management. This will also pay for new customizations that the C-Track case management system needs after the first year of implementation. The contract was originally negotiated in 2019 and renegotiated in 2025 to address new customization needs to support the functionality of C-Track.

Increase Funding for Mental Health Court Inflation

Expenditures \$43,000

This item increases appropriation authority which is needed to pay the inflationary increase to the Mental Health Court (MHC) program in SMC. MHC is a criminal court for misdemeanor offenses in the City of Seattle. It is a voluntary, therapeutic, court-monitored program that addresses the intersection of mental health, substance use and justice involvement for individuals with mental health diagnoses. This baseline item will align the budget with the anticipated expenditure on the contract in 2027 of \$305,000.

Citywide Adjustments for Standard Cost Changes

Expenditures \$(310,509)

Citywide technical adjustments made in the baseline phase reflect changes to internal services costs, including rates from the Department of Finance & Administrative Services, Seattle Information Technology Department, Seattle Department of Human Resources, and for healthcare and other central cost factors. These adjustments reflect initial assumptions about these costs and inflators early in the budget process.

Reduce SCERS Retirement Contribution Rate

Expenditures \$(342,541)

Revenues \$(3,143)

The City's employee retirement system, the Seattle City Employees Retirement System (SCERS) is a defined benefit pension program funded by a combination of salary-based employer (i.e., the City) and employee contributions, and investment earnings. Based on the updated actuarial valuation for 2026, this item reduces the employer contribution rate from the endorsed rate of 15.06% to the SCERS minimum actuarial required rate of 13.48% for 2027 and 13.52% for 2028.

Proposed Operating

Transfer General Fund Costs to Automated Traffic Safety Camera (ATSC) Fund

Expenditures -

This budget neutral item decreases General Fund appropriation authority by \$1,255,410 in SMC, by transferring the appropriation authority to the Automated Traffic Safety Camera (ATSC) Fund Budget. Based on updated analysis, the court's average cost per traffic camera ticket for processing and adjudication is \$11.35. This analysis is based on the

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2025 traffic camera citation data and costs to process citations at SMC. The ATSC fund is paying for a fully loaded cost of 1.0 FTE Magistrate, 1.0 FTE Administrative Support Supervisor, and 7.0 FTE Court Cashiers.

Increase Staffing to Process Traffic Camera Citations

Expenditures	\$1,554,583
Position Allocation	8.00

This item increases appropriation authority by \$1.6 million and 8.0 FTE in 2027 and \$2.4 million and 5.0 FTE in 2028 in SMC, in the Automated Traffic Safety Camera (ATSC) fund. In 2028 2.0 of the 5.0 FTE will start mid-year and will be annualized in the 2029 budget. The projected traffic camera ticket volume projections align resources with expected ATSC related work. Based on updated analysis, the court's average cost per traffic camera ticket for processing and adjudication is \$11.35. This analysis is based on the 2025 traffic camera citation data and costs to process citations at SMC. See the Seattle Department of Transportation budget pages for more detailed discussion of the increased traffic cameras.

Reduce Staffing to Align with Current Workload Needs Department-wide

Expenditures	\$(630,105)
Position Allocation	(3.50)

This item reduces appropriation and four vacant positions in Court Operations (Manager 1 and Court Cashier Supervisor), Court Technology (IT Professional A) and Human Resources (0.5 FTE Personnel Specialist, Assistant). It does not eliminate programs and services but makes administrative right-sizing reductions across the department of vacant positions.

Proposed Technical

Ongoing Changes from Current Year Legislation

Expenditures	\$756,173
Position Allocation	3.00

This change includes ongoing or position changes resulting from current year legislation passed by City Council in 2026. In the 2026 Mid-Year Supplemental Ordinance (1127496) the following positions were added:

- This ongoing increase provides budget authority (\$250,000) to cover an increase in personnel compensation due to a comprehensive position reclassification of three titles and 41 positions, to create a single classification for Court Cashiers and Administrative Specialist I, II, III called the Court Operations Specialist. This effort began in 2023 through negotiations with Local 763 with assistance from Seattle Department of Human Resources.
- In the 2026 Adopted Budget, Council included \$695,000 in Finance General subject to a proviso lift for automated traffic camera-related work in SMC and the Law Department. The Mid-Year Supplemental Ordinance lifted the proviso and transferred from Finance General partial-year support for three new employees (3.0 FTE) and postage costs. The ongoing cost of this request (\$506,173) is appropriated through the 2027-2028 budget.

Technical Position Clean-up

Position Allocation	(2.00)
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SMC underwent an organizational restructuring and consolidated several part-time positions into single positions. In the 2025 Adopted Budget, SMC combined the vacant half-time positions to create full-time positions and needed to eliminate four vacant half-time positions that were combined. These four half-time positions were not eliminated due to a technical error and have no budget or personnel impacts.

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Expenditure Overview

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Appropriations				
SMC - BO-MC-2000 - Court Operations				
00100 - General Fund	23,187,396	23,970,394	22,617,159	22,838,811
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	280,602	363,738	3,040,996	3,845,580
Total for BSL: BO-MC-2000	23,467,998	24,334,131	25,658,155	26,684,390
SMC - BO-MC-3000 - Administration				
00100 - General Fund	22,500,710	24,380,078	23,793,443	24,295,347
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	55,000	30,000	669,679	780,012
Total for BSL: BO-MC-3000	22,555,710	24,410,078	24,463,122	25,075,359
SMC - BO-MC-4000 - Court Compliance				
00100 - General Fund	-	1	1	1
Total for BSL: BO-MC-4000	-	1	1	1
Department Total	46,023,708	48,744,210	50,121,278	51,759,750
Department Full-Time Equivalents Total*	200.85	199.85	205.35	210.35

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Budget Summary by Fund Seattle Municipal Court

	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
00100 - General Fund	45,688,106	48,350,472	46,410,603	47,134,158
18500 - Automated Traffic Safety Camera Fund	335,602	393,738	3,710,675	4,625,591
Budget Totals for SMC	46,023,708	48,744,210	50,121,278	51,759,750

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Revenue Overview

2027 Estimated Revenues

Account Code	Account Name	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
334010	State Grants	337,879	330,000	491,857	330,000
335060	Judicial Salary Contrib-State	148,880	150,000	149,000	149,000
341300	Administrative Fees & Charges	577	-	-	-
341900	General Government-Other Rev	94,102	-	-	-
342050	Adult Probation & Parole Svcs	287	-	-	-
350010	Traffic Infractn Penal, Non-Pa	434,733	330,000	400,000	400,000
350020	Fines/Forfeits-Non-Pkg Infract	156,717	60,000	90,000	90,000
350030	Parking Infraction Penalties	22,249,419	23,353,646	21,287,382	21,481,780
350040	Driving While Intoxicated Pena	12,416	20,000	15,000	15,000
350050	Other Criminal Traffic Penalti	25,042	30,000	25,000	25,000
350060	Time Payments	9,021	20,000	10,000	10,000
350070	Other Non-Traffic Misdemeanor	(283)	20,000	1,000	1,000
350090	City Litigation Recoveries	39,503	35,000	70,000	70,000
350180	Misc Fines & Penalties	2,114	5,000	5,000	5,000
350190	Nsf Check Fees	1,944	-	1,000	1,000
360220	Interest Earned On Deliquent A	94,887	-	-	-
360540	Cashiers Overages & Shortages	(172,261)	-	1,050	1,050
360900	Miscellaneous Revs-Other Rev	1,097	-	-	-
Total Revenues for: 00100 - General Fund		23,436,072	24,353,646	22,546,289	22,578,830
Total SMC Resources		23,436,072	24,353,646	22,546,289	22,578,830

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Appropriations by Budget Summary Level and Program

SMC - BO-MC-2000 - Court Operations

The purpose of the Court Operations Budget Summary Level is to hold hearings and address legal requirements for defendants and others, help defendants understand the Court's expectations, and assist them in successfully complying with court orders. Some proceedings are held in formal courtrooms and others in magistrate offices, with the goal of providing timely resolution of alleged violations of City ordinances and misdemeanor crimes committed within the Seattle city limits.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Court Operations	23,467,998	24,334,131	25,658,155	26,684,390
Total	23,467,998	24,334,131	25,658,155	26,684,390
Full-time Equivalents Total*	146.35	146.35	151.35	156.35

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SMC - BO-MC-3000 - Administration

The purpose of the Administration Budget Summary Level is to provide administrative controls, develop and provide strategic direction, and provide policy and program development.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	11,473,981	11,312,401	10,500,064	10,814,372
Departmental Indirect Costs	11,081,728	13,097,677	13,963,058	14,260,986
Total	22,555,710	24,410,078	24,463,122	25,075,359
Full-time Equivalents Total*	54.50	53.50	54.00	54.00

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The following information summarizes the programs in Administration Budget Summary Level:

Citywide Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Citywide Indirect Costs	11,473,981	11,312,401	10,500,064	10,814,372
Full-Time Equivalents Total	34.00	29.00	29.00	29.00

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Departmental Indirect Costs

Expenditures/FTE	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Departmental Indirect Costs	11,081,728	13,097,677	13,963,058	14,260,986
Full Time Equivalents Total	20.50	24.50	25.00	25.00

SMC - BO-MC-4000 - Court Compliance

The purpose of the Court Compliance Budget Summary Level is to help defendants understand the Court's expectations and to assist them in successfully complying with court orders.

Program Expenditures	2025 Actuals	2026 Adopted	2027 Proposed	2028 Proposed
Court Compliance	-	1	1	1
Total	-	1	1	1

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