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# Automobile Theft Prevention Program

2019 Report to Governor Tim Walz and the Minnesota Legislature

Submitted by Minnesota Department of Commerce Fraud Bureau

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## Program Mission

To develop, sponsor, and coordinate the implementation of statewide plans, programs, and strategies to combat automobile theft on a statewide basis.

To improve the administration of the automobile theft laws.

To provide a forum for identification of critical problems for those persons dealing with automobile theft.

To audit the plans and programs funded in whole or in part by the Auto Theft Prevention Program and evaluate the effectiveness of such programs.

To assess the scope of auto theft, analyze various method of combating auto theft, and develop a plan to combat auto theft; including estimates of funds required and distributing money.

Minn. Stat. §65B.85 Subd. 1

## Program Background

The Automobile Theft Prevention Program was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1996. The program was authorized under Minnesota Statute, section 65B.84.

The program is funded by a surcharge collected from automobile insurance carriers that provide comprehensive insurance coverage issued in the State of Minnesota. The amount of the surcharge collected for the Auto Theft Prevention Program is \$.50 per vehicle having comprehensive coverage for every six months of coverage.

The program utilizes this funding for a competitive grant process for activities that address automobile theft in the State of Minnesota.

Automobile theft includes the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle, which is defined as a self-propelled vehicle that runs on land surface and not on rails, such as, sport utility vehicles, automobiles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters, all-terrain vehicles, and snowmobiles. This category does not include farm equipment, bulldozers, airplanes, construction equipment, or watercraft (motorboats, sailboats, houseboats, or jet skis). The automobile theft statistics excludes incidents in which the alleged offender had lawful access to the vehicle as in a family situation, or the unauthorized use by others having lawful access to the vehicle such as chauffeur, employee, etc.

In July of 2004, the Automobile Theft Prevention Program was statutorily transferred to the Minnesota Department of Commerce. The Department's Commerce Fraud Bureau has managed the program since 2009.

## Extent of Automobile Theft in Minnesota

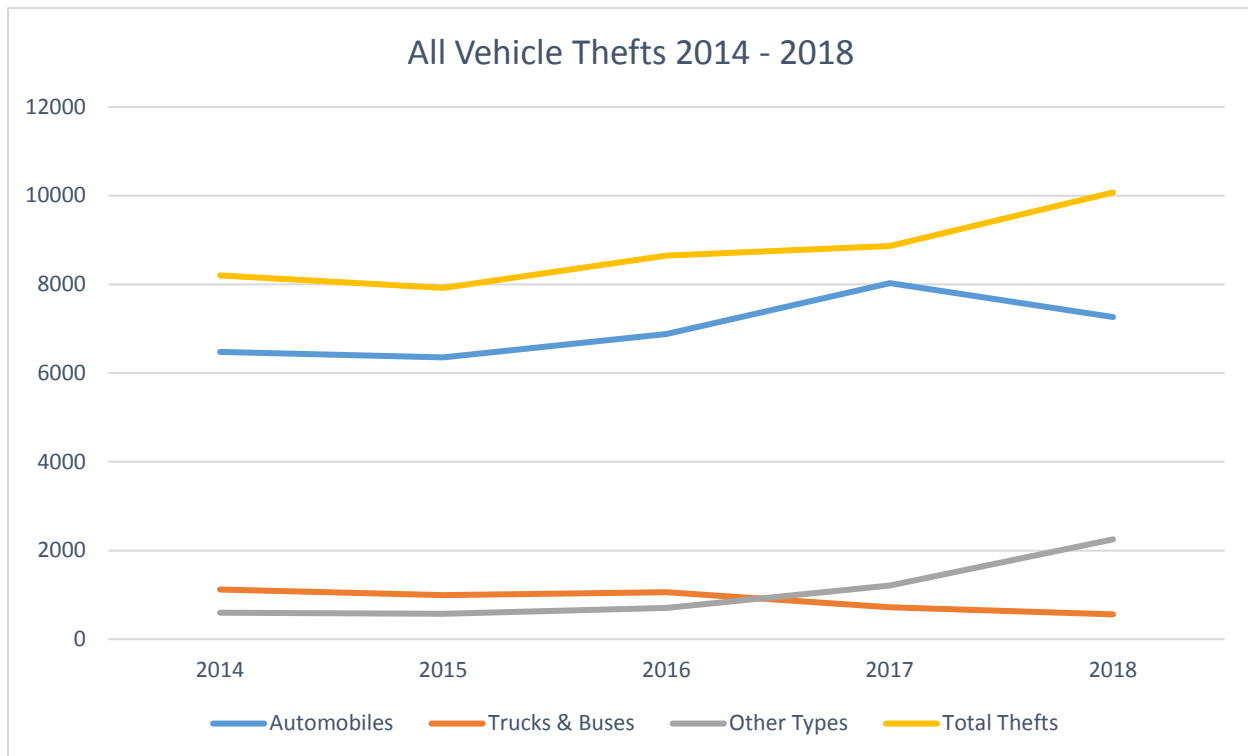
10,073 vehicles were stolen in Minnesota in 2018. The average value of a stolen vehicle is \$7,708. Minnesota’s stolen vehicle recovery rate for 2018 was 50.7 percent. The economic impact of those vehicles where they were stolen and never recovered is approximately \$39 million. This figure does not take into account that many of the vehicles, which are recovered, have significant damage.

On average 27.6 vehicles every day were stolen in Minnesota during 2018. Motor vehicle thefts represented 9 percent of the total property crimes reported in the state and represents the single largest category of items stolen by value.

## Minnesota Motor Vehicle Thefts 2014 – 2018

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is charged with collecting call for service data from each law enforcement agency in the state, excluding state level law enforcement agencies. These agencies must following strict reporting guidelines established by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The following chart depicts the number and type of all motor vehicle thefts reported in the State of Minnesota from 2014 until 2018 (latest available) from the Uniform Crime Report published by the BCA. The 2018 report indicates that all types of motor vehicle thefts have been increasing during this time period, with an overall increase of 9 percent between 2017 and 2018.



If you examine the data on an individual basis by reviewing the information for each category of vehicle stolen, you will note that between 2014 and 2018, reports of automobile theft saw an overall increase of 11percent. However, the data did indicate a one-year decrease of 10percent in the last two reporting years (2017 and 2018) in automobile thefts.

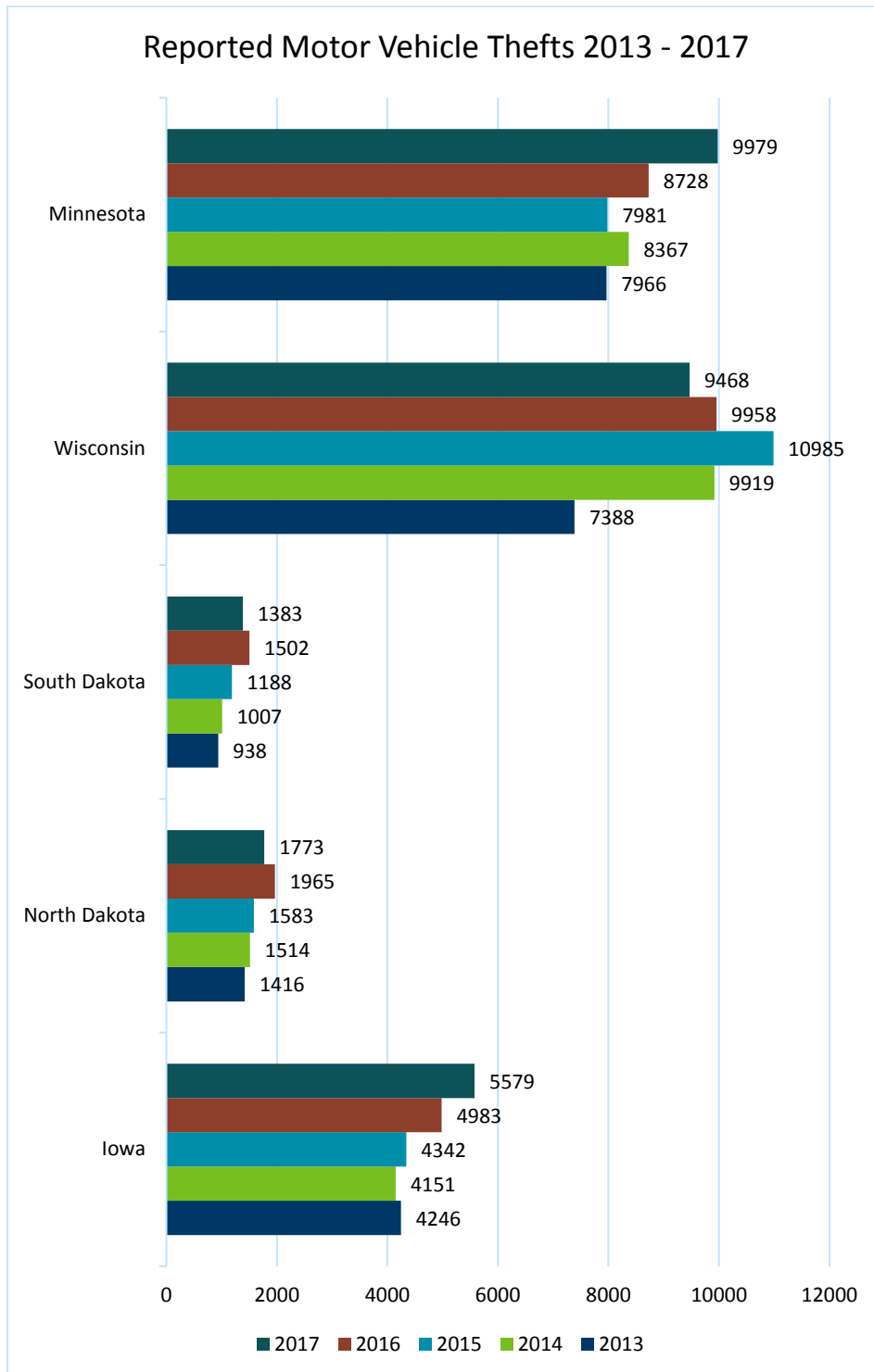
Reports of stolen buses and trucks during the previous 5 years has decreased 7percent with a decrease of 22percent in the last year. Reports of stolen motorcycles, snowmobiles, mopeds, etc. (other vehicle reports) showed an overall increase of 101 percent during this 5 year period, with an 86 percent increase occurring between 2017 and 2018.

Looking back ten years to 2008, Minnesota had 9948 actual motor vehicle thefts reported. Of the 9948 vehicles reported stolen, 7869 were automobiles, 876 were trucks/buses and 1203 were vehicles such as snowmobiles, motorcycles, etc.

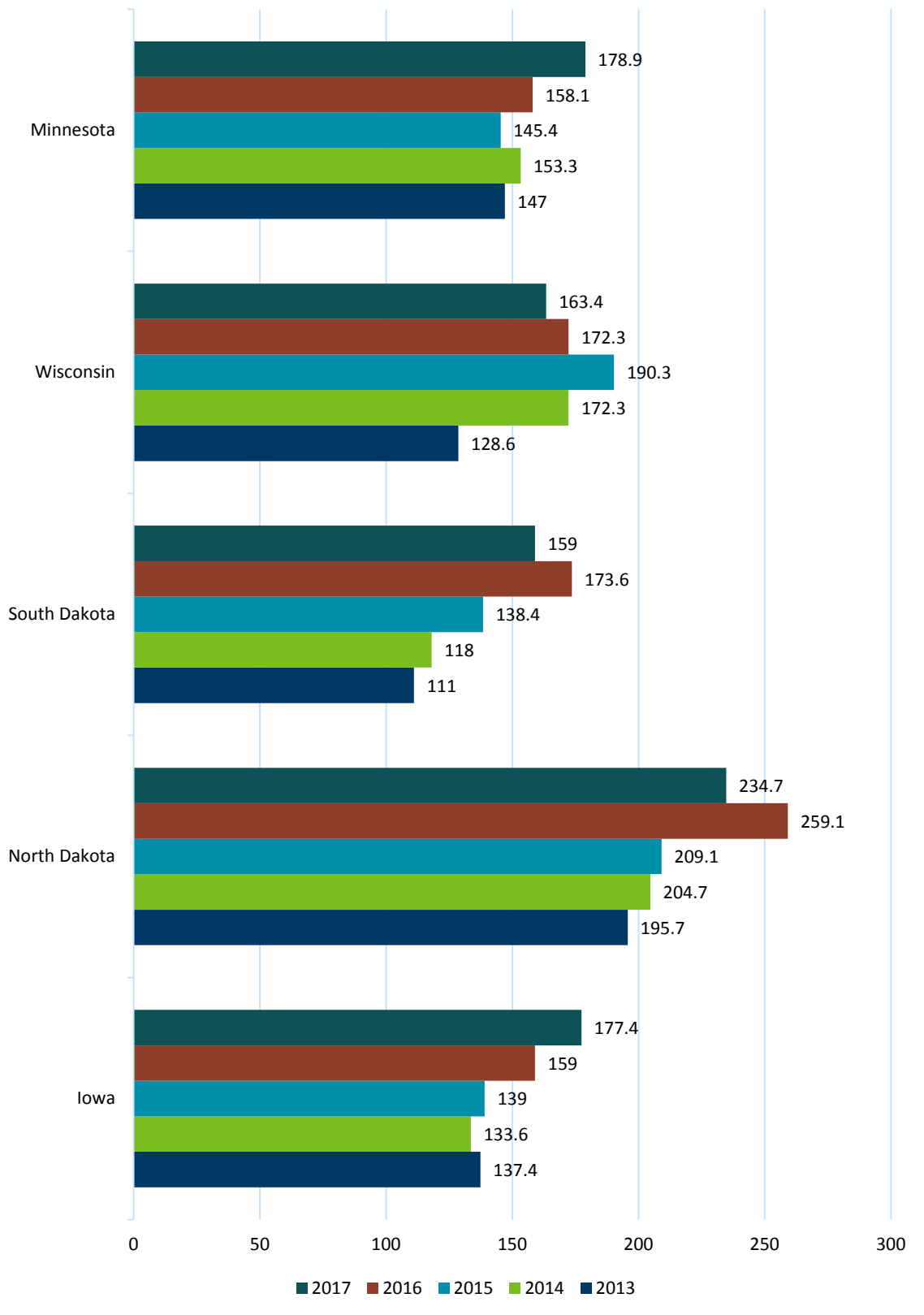
In comparing those statistics to 2018, motor vehicle theft has experienced a slight increase (1 percent) from 9948 vehicles to 10073 vehicles. The statistics further indicate that automobile theft is actually down 8 percent in the previous 10 years from 7869 to 7262. The largest change is the dramatic increase in the theft of snowmobiles, motorcycles, etc., which increased 87 percent from 1203 to 2251 during this 10 year period.

## Regional Auto Theft Rates

The following chart compares Minnesota with its border states for the 2013 – 2017 reported incidents (latest available data from the FBI).



### Motor Vehicle Theft Rates/100,000 Population 2013 - 2017

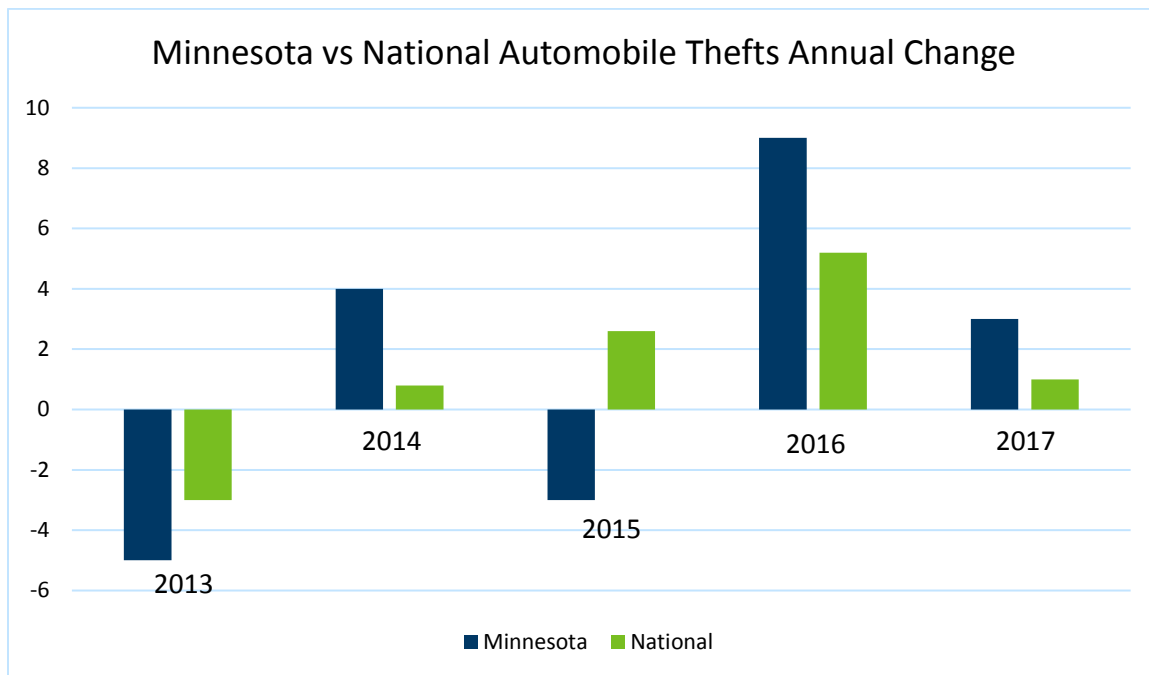


Minnesota’s rate of theft per 100,000 people was 147 in 2017. The average rate of theft per 100,000 people for our bordering states was 143.18, which places Minnesota slightly ahead of the average rate of theft for 2017. In 2018, Minnesota’s average rate of theft for motor vehicle rose to 179.5 per 100,000 people.

## National Rates

Comparing Minnesota’s experience to the national automobile theft rate each year, the rate of thefts in Minnesota is increasing faster than the national rates. The FBI statistics for 2018 have not been completed, so this chart uses the 2013 to 2017 statistics for comparison.

During this five-year period, the number of automobile theft cases reported increased from 7873 cases to 8868 cases, an increase of 13 percent. Nationally auto theft increased from 699,594 to 773,139 cases, an increase of 11 percent. Minnesota’s experience suggests that its rate of theft is increasing at a faster pace on average than nationally.



	Population	Registered Motor Vehicles
2013	5,417,838	5,219,490
2014	5,453,218	5,223,189
2015	5,485,238	5,281,269
2016	5,528,630	5,358,317
2017	5,577,487	5,682,653
2018	5,629,416	Not Available

According to statistics compiled by the Minnesota Department of Administration and the United States Department of Transportation, between 2013 and 2017, the population of Minnesota increased 4 percent and the number of registered vehicles increased 9 percent.

The total number of motor vehicle theft cases in Minnesota is increasing at a faster rate than the rate of population and the increase in the number of registered vehicles.

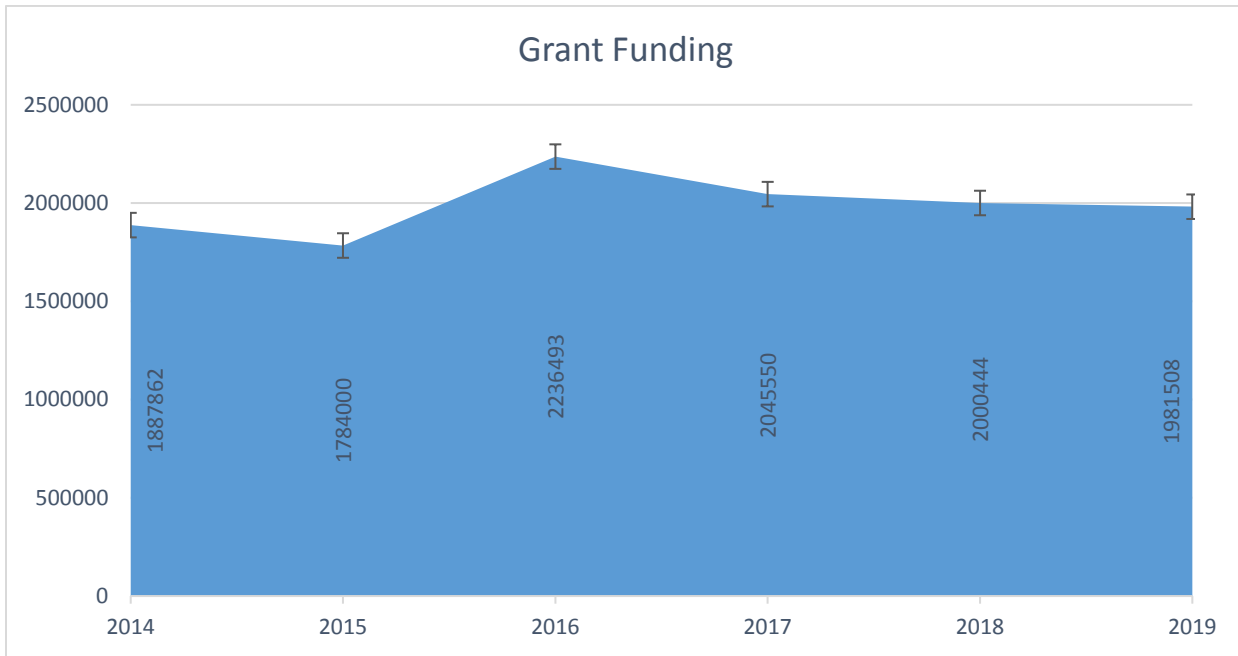
## Auto Theft Prevention Program

The following types of projects are eligible to receive funding through the Auto Theft Prevention Program:

- Training (criminal justice, citizens, business, etc.)
- Public education (public meetings, literature, public service announcements, neighborhood and business watch promotions, etc.)
- Programs designed to improve or expand the resources of existing auto theft prevention, investigation, apprehension, or prosecution activities.
- Multi-jurisdictional projects combining the resources of various agencies in the task force approach to combat auto theft.
- Long-term specialized training to further the expertise of auto theft investigators or prosecutors.
- Piloting new equipment and techniques proposed by grant recipients.



The following chart depicts the total amount of grant funding provided under this program from fiscal year 2014 to present.



## Auto Theft Prevention Initiatives Funded in fiscal year 2019

As part of the competitive grant process, the Auto Theft Prevention Program solicits applications from county attorney offices, law enforcement agencies, neighborhood and community organizations, and business organizations.

Priority in the competitive grant process is given to project proposals that included one or more of the following criteria:

- 1) established or enhanced a collaborative effort between two or more agencies;
- 2) included counties or regions with the greatest rates of automobile theft;
- 3) employed proven or promising strategies that reduced the incidence of automobile theft; and
- 4) addressed automobile theft that is perpetrated as part of a criminal enterprise.

During the state fiscal year 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019), the Auto Theft Prevention Program provided grant funds totaling approximately \$1,981,507.00 to eighteen entities in Minnesota: twelve state or local law enforcement agencies; four county attorney offices; and two neighborhood, community, or business organizations.

The following table contains a list of the law enforcement agencies that received awards from the grant program for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019. The chart also includes the total number of years they have participated in the program since 2014.

<b>Grant Recipient</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2019</b>	<b>Years Funded</b>
Albert Lea Police Department	\$20,406.00	2
Anoka – Washington County Attorneys	\$75,900.00	5
Anoka County JLEC	\$95,062.00	5
Bemidji Police Department	\$108,390.00	5
Bloomington Police Department	\$79,682.00	5
Brooklyn Center Police Department	\$125,923.00	5
District 2 & 5 Community Council	\$16,040.00	5
Hennepin County Attorney	\$327,458.00	5
Hennepin County Sheriff’s Office	\$20,700.00	5
Maplewood Police Department	\$19,962.00	1
Minneapolis Police Department	\$200,359.00	5
Minnesota State Patrol	\$50,474.00	5
West St. Paul & South St. Paul	\$44,950.00	4
Ramsey County Attorney	\$327,080.00	5
Rosemount Police Department	\$15,000.00	1

Roseville Police Department	\$18,291.00	5
Saint Paul Police Department	\$281,900.00	5
<b>Total Awards</b>	<b>\$1,981,507.00</b>	

The following table details the total Auto Theft Prevention Grant Funds awarded to each law enforcement agency currently receiving grant funding for the previous five-year period (FY 2015 – FY 2019).

<b>Grant Recipient</b>	<b>Total Funding FY 2015 – 2019</b>
Albert Lea Police Department	\$20,406.00
Anoka – Washington County Attorneys	\$377,300.00
Anoka County JLEC	\$418,724.58
Bemidji Police Department	\$428,208.24
Bloomington Police Department	\$258,548.00
Brooklyn Center Police Department	\$572,371.00
District 2 & 5 Community Council	\$115,892.00
Hennepin County Attorney	\$1,516,930.00
Hennepin County Sheriff's Office	\$160,480.50
Maplewood Police Department	\$19,962.00
Mille Lacs County Sheriff's Office	\$634,965.35
Minneapolis Police Department	\$918,725.00
Minnesota State Patrol	\$652,474.00
Northern Dakota County	\$56,946.66
Ramsey County Attorney	\$1,548,037.00
Rosemount Police Department	\$15,000.00

Roseville Police Department	\$58,148.00
Saint Paul Police Department	\$1,221,657.87
<b>Total Awards</b>	<b>\$8,994,776.20</b>

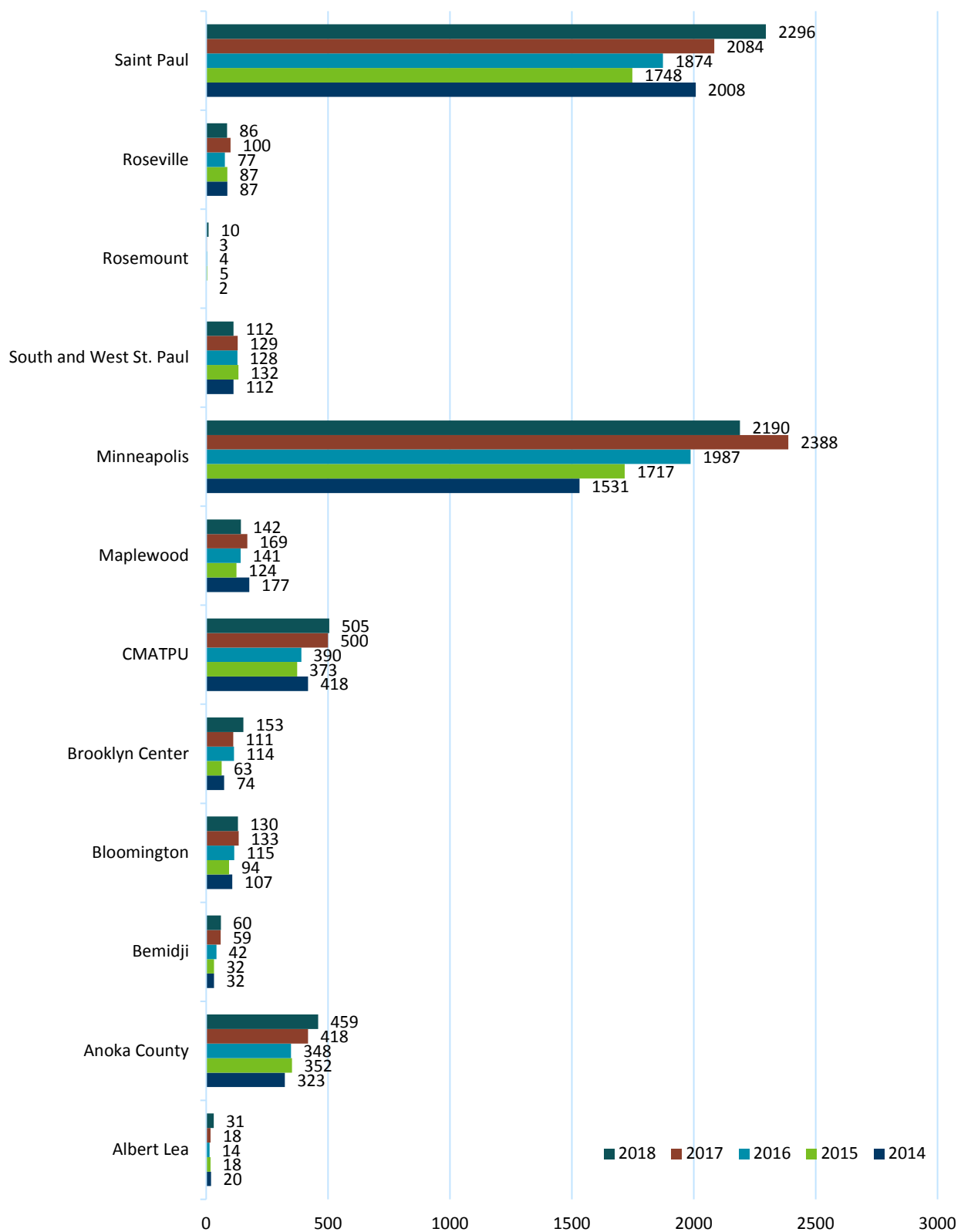
During the last five years, these law enforcement agencies received a total of \$5,436,617.20 in funding or 61 percent of the total funding. Prosecutors received a total of \$3,442,267.00 in funding or 38 percent of the total funding. Community groups received \$115,892.00 or 1 percent of the funding awarded.

Agencies participating in the grant are required to submit quarterly reports providing statistics and identifying successes and challenges.

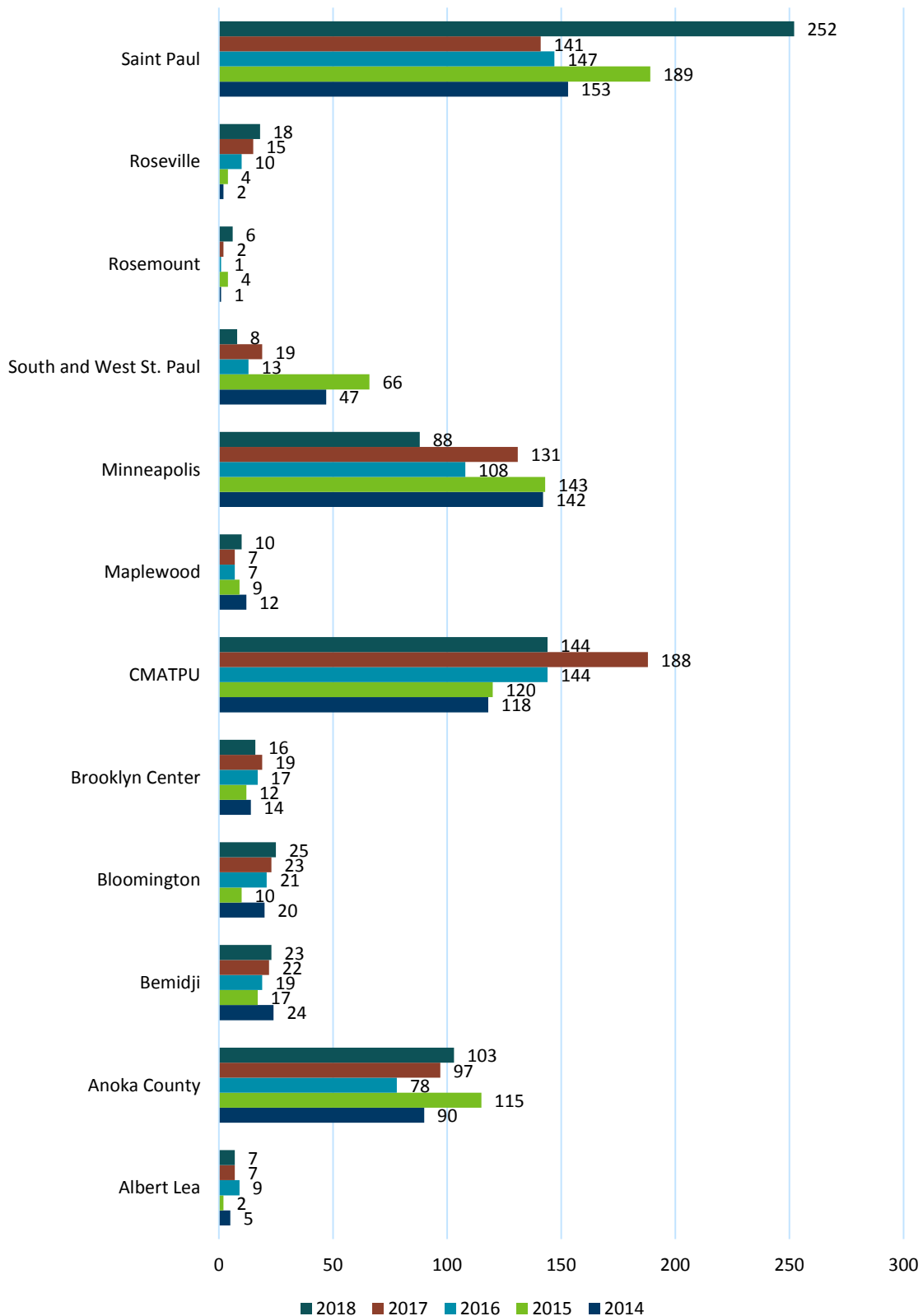
## **Auto Theft Prevention Program Impact – Law Enforcement Agencies**

The following charts represent the five-year experience data for the law enforcement agencies that received funding in FY 2019.

### Reported Motor Vehicle Thefts 2014 - 2018

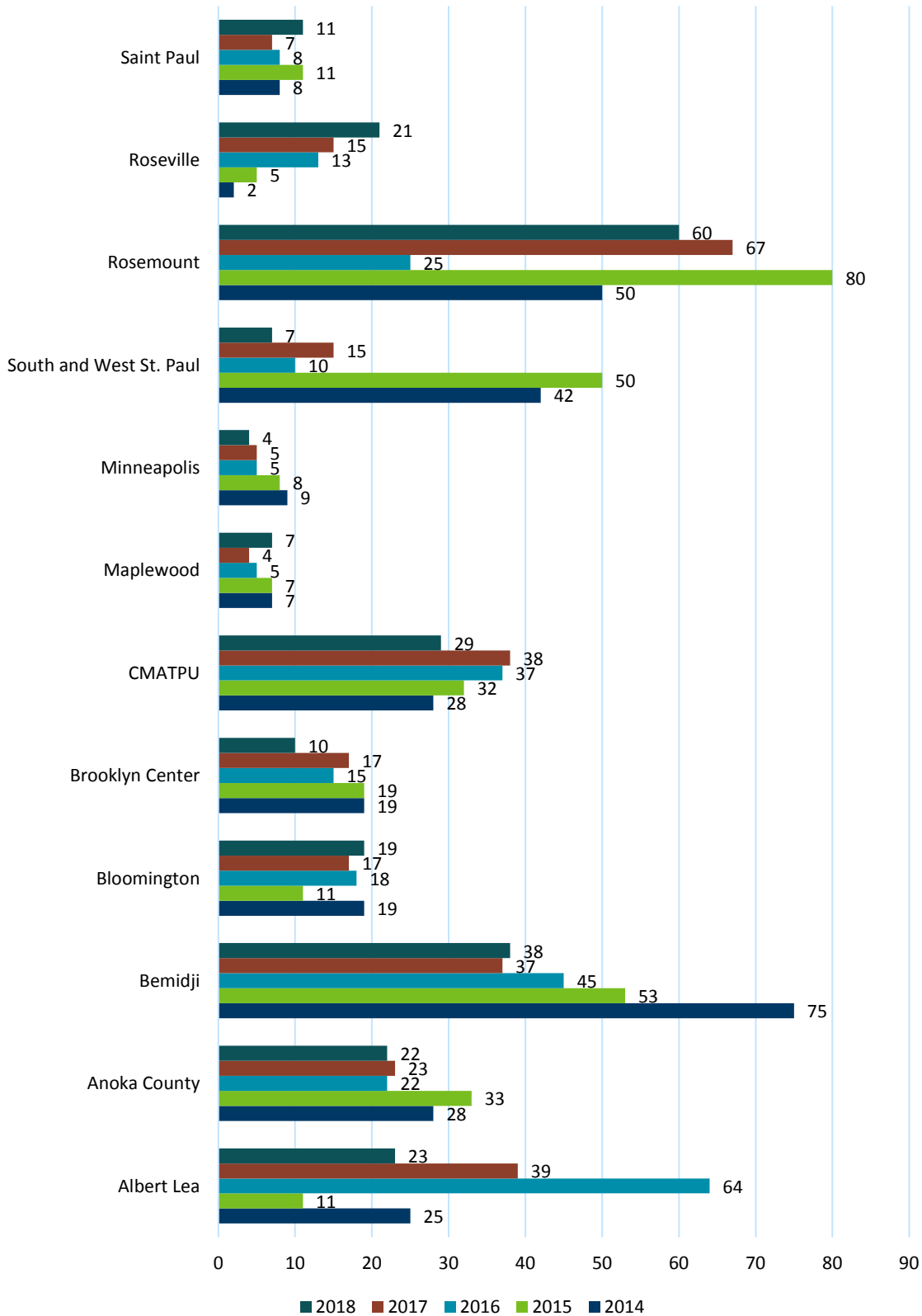


## Number of Motor Vehicle Theft Cases Cleared 2014 - 2018





### Motor Vehicle Theft Clearance Rate 2014 - 2018



The average statewide clearance rate for motor vehicle theft in 2018 was 17 percent.

Examining metro vs. non-metro motor vehicle theft cases and clearance rates for 2018 uncovers the following:

	Incidents	Cleared	% Cleared
Metro	8869	1270	14
Non-Metro	1204	436	36

Five law enforcement agencies receiving grant funds are not meeting the average clearance rate for their comparable regions.

## Auto Theft Prevention Program Methods Analysis

Funds awarded to law enforcement agencies consisted primarily of purchases of equipment and funding to support personnel costs.

### Automated License Plate Readers

For the 2017-2019 grant cycle, funds were awarded to seven grant recipients for the purchase and/or support of ALPR programs. During the first 21 months of the program, the 22 mobile ALPR units supported by the program recovered approximately 300 stolen vehicles. In addition, stationary ALPR units at the MOA recovered 130 stolen vehicles during this same time. The most effective use of agencies ALPR units recovered approximately 63 stolen vehicles per unit during this time, whereas the least effective agency recovered 1 per unit.

A review of the data provided by agencies using the ALPR showed the use of the equipment was most effective when:

- The grantee is already familiar with the use and installation of an ALPR. Some agencies struggled to start or did not use the funds provided, often due to unfamiliarity with technological issues related to the equipment. It is recommended prior to starting an ALPR program an agency consult with an agency that is actively using one. In addition, it is recommended that the agency consult their IT provider prior to purchase and set up.
- Agencies that assigned the use of patrol cars using an ALPR to squads used multiple shifts a day were significantly more effective in recovering stolen vehicles. Outfitting an ALPR system to be vehicle to used by one officer is not recommended.
- Strategic use of the ALPR to patrol “hot spots” was significantly more effective than random patrol.

## Bait Car Programs

For the 2017-2019 grant cycle, funds were awarded to six agencies to support bait car programs for a total of approximately 18 bait cars. During the first 21 months of the program, the bait cars were activated 86 times resulting in 60 arrests.

A review of the data provided shows the use of the equipment was most effective when:

- The bait car(s) is deployed in an area likely to be stolen and left unattended, but monitored by dispatch. When used most effectively the bait car was activated approximately 1 out of 6 days deployed. The least effective use of the bait car was an activation only 1 out of every 184 days deployed.
- Bait car programs require technical expertise to set up and may have unanticipated costs such as storage of the vehicles while charging and vandalism. Agencies that have a dedicated person assigned to the bait car were more effective.

## Personnel

For the 2017-2019 grant cycle, seven agencies received funds for personnel support. Five agencies received funds for a full-time investigator dedicated to auto theft. Two agencies received funds for analyst support. Several received funds for training of personnel and overtime for auto theft investigations.

- The positions funded for the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul largely spent the majority of their time working with the ALPR and Bait Car programs, leaving little time for more complex investigations.
- Given the high economic impact of auto theft, law enforcement agencies would benefit having a small number of investigators trained and assigned to auto theft investigations.
- Given the number of vehicles stolen, it is questionable if suburban and outstate law enforcement agencies have a sufficient caseload to justify a full-time auto theft investigator.
- Agencies that received funding to support an analyst and overtime for investigations appear to have used the funds most effectively; however, more funds were requested than needed and not often used.
- Almost all of the investigations focused on temporary auto theft, rather than organized auto theft rings. In those cases where the investigation involved a more organized ring, it involved a larger geographic area with vehicles being stolen from multiple jurisdictions. An ad-hoc task force was formed; however, investigators had difficulty coordinating due to other responsibilities, geographic and jurisdictional concerns, and the lack of all agencies dedicating an investigator to auto theft. A review of other states auto theft programs suggests dedicated auto task forces having a large jurisdictional range (a large region or statewide) may be more effective.
- Investigators reported more successful investigations when collaborating with investigators from other agencies and having a designated prosecutor.

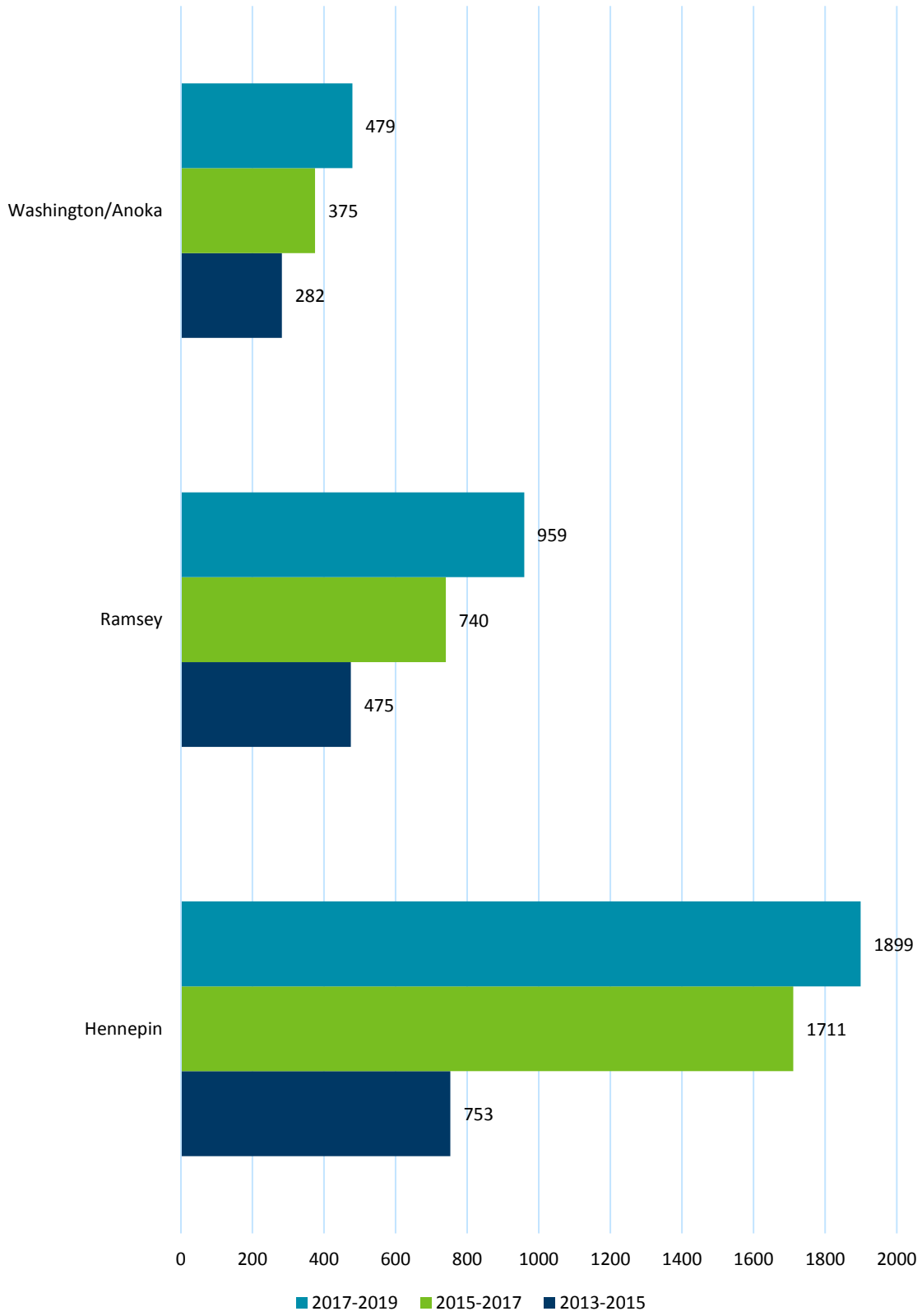
## Challenges

- It is impossible to predict what jurisdiction will need the funds and equipment for auto theft investigations and when they will need the funds.
- Different vendors and manufactures supply equipment used for ALPR and Bait Car systems. Unfortunately, several of them have sold or have gone out of business resulting in difficulties obtaining service or repair work for those systems.
- Agencies need to be prepared for all program expenses, such as ALPR audits, software upgrades, and damage to units that need additional funds to maintain.
- The Anti-Vehicle Crime Association of Minnesota, which provided networking and training for law enforcement and prosecutors, stopped functioning several years ago. Reestablishing such an organization or providing quarterly trainings and meeting would be beneficial.

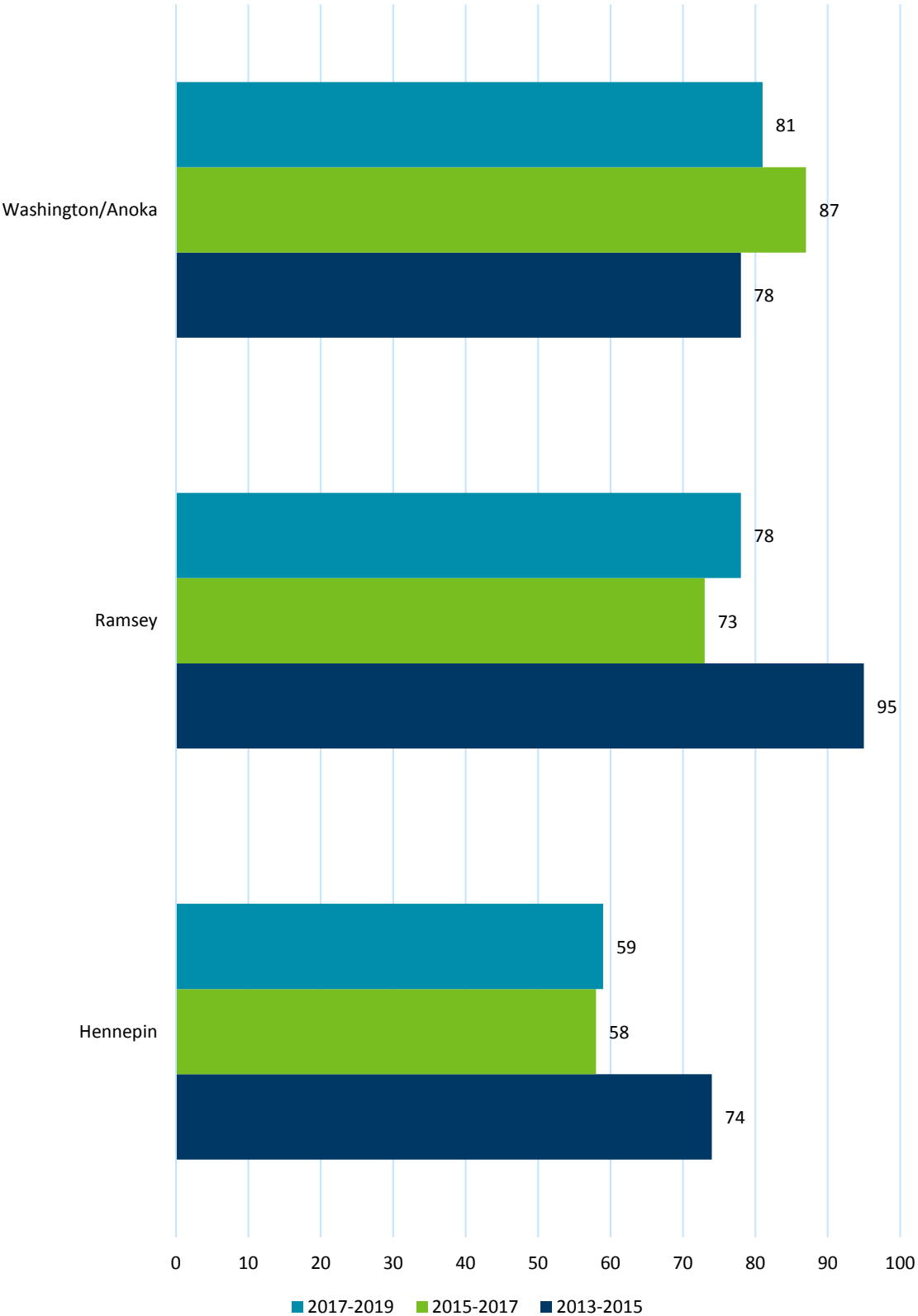
## Auto Theft Prevention Program Impact – Prosecution

Four county attorney's offices received a total of \$3,442,267.00 or approximately 38 percent of the funds awarded. Statistics representing the cases referred, charged and rate of conviction are shown below.

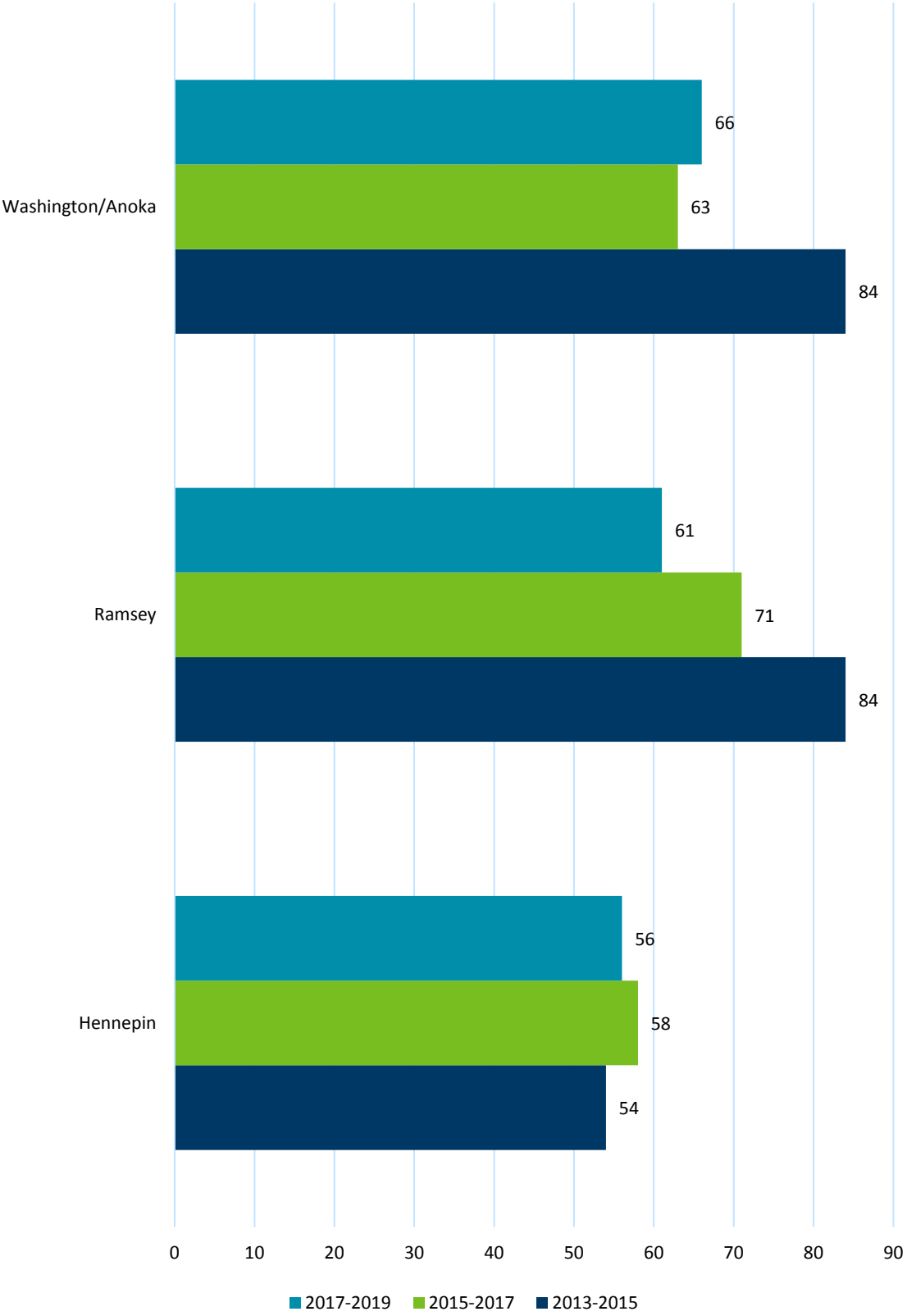
### Cases Referred for Prosecution 2013-2019



### Percentage of Cases Charged by Prosecutors 2013-2019



Conviction Rates by Prosecutor 2013-2019



## Prosecution Analysis

- Although some of the auto theft prosecutions stem from serious offenses, such as robbery or burglaries in which a vehicle is stolen, the large majority of cases prosecuted are those in which the motive is transportation, rather than the outright theft of the vehicle.
- Research and a review of data suggests more success by prosecutors using designated prosecutors and vertical prosecution for auto theft cases.
- Investigators expressed more efficient investigations and a higher rate of charging cases in those counties where there is a designated auto theft prosecutor over those without a designated prosecutor.
- Part of the expectation of the prosecution grants is that prosecutors will work closer with law enforcement agencies through the investigation process and provide training resulting in better-prepared cases and a greater percentage of cases charged and convicted. Unfortunately, the statistics do not show that objective has always been achieved.

## Conclusion

While not the epidemic of auto theft experienced in the 1990s, Minnesota's auto theft rate over the past five years has increased. In 2018, Minnesota's rate of motor vehicle theft per 100,000 in population jumped dramatically to 179.5. A one-year increase of 22%.

While the Minnesota Auto Theft Grant Program has allowed for some innovation, provided equipment to some agencies, and helped to sustain some auto theft programs, at best, statistics show it is maintaining the status quo and not reducing auto theft. The program is a highly decentralized program that provides the majority of its funding to individual agencies that do not coordinate their motor vehicle anti-theft efforts with one another. Individuals involved in motor vehicle theft do not respect geographical boundaries such as city or county limits of jurisdiction.

Very few law enforcement and prosecution agencies dedicate resources towards the investigation of auto theft, unless grant funds are provided. More resources need to be directed to educating all Minnesota law enforcement agencies and prosecutors into the best practices for investigation and prosecuting auto theft. Encouraging agencies to work together to provide a forum and training is recommended. The formation of a statewide or large regional task forces dedicated to the investigation of auto theft, particularly organized auto theft, and to provide assistance to other agencies is needed in Minnesota.

Unless anti-theft efforts are better coordinated, the program will not be effective in increasing the number of individuals deterred from committing motor vehicle theft. The financial support provided by this grant program continues to be critical in sustaining prevention and enforcement efforts for many city and county agencies in areas where the incidence of auto theft are the highest.

It is recommended that efforts be better coordinated to achieve long-term success. A centralized authority funded by the Auto Theft Prevention Program is a recommendation for the State of Minnesota that has been implemented with success in other state.



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