

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: February 3, 2025

TITLE: REFERRAL TO THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF PURCHASING A MOBILE POLICE SUBSTATION TO ENHANCE LAW ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES, INCIDENT REPORTING, HIGH VISIBILITY AND CRIME DETERRENCE THROUGHOUT MIAMI BEACH.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

After consideration of all the potential options for a police substation, the Administration recommends further exploring the acquisition of a Mobile Police Substation (MPS) through which to satisfy the requirements for law enforcement resources, incident reporting, high visibility and crime deterrence equally throughout the various Miami Beach neighborhoods.

### **BACKGROUND/HISTORY**

At the May 15, 2024 City Commission meeting, at the request of Commissioner Alex Fernandez, the Mayor and City Commission approved a referral (C7 AK) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee ("PSNQLC") to report the findings and proposals related to the viability of creating police substations.

The item was heard at the July 10, 2024 meeting and slated to return to the September 18, 2024 PSNQLC meeting to provide an update with possible plan phased out in fiscal years and including the possibility of substations in the City owned property in Altos del Mar, and partnering with Miami Dade County Schools.

This item was heard at the September 18th PSNQLC meeting, and the item is slated to return to the October PSNQLC meeting. The Police Department was asked to return with three (3) possibilities with cost and resources needed to be included for the following locations: 1. City Hall 2. Collins Park Area 3. A Mobile Station.

The item was subsequently heard at the November 13, 2024 PSNQLC meeting where the item was moved to the City Commission with a favorable recommendation to refer the item to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee (FERC) to explore the possibility of purchasing a mobile station.

### **ANALYSIS**

The Miami Beach Police Department (MBPD) currently has one police substation in North Beach that provides limited in-person services for walk-in reporting during business hours. The remainder of the facility serves as a police briefing facility for North Beach police roll calls and houses offices for the Area Captain, Neighborhood Resource Officer (NRO), Beat Officers and the PD's Boston Whaler Marine Patrol Vessel.

With the exception of the units assigned to North Beach, all MBPD personnel are deployed from the main HQ building located at 1100 Washington Ave. This location is staffed 24 hours a day to

provide full-service, in-person reporting capabilities. Deploying personnel are briefed during shift roll calls throughout the 24-hour shift cycle and full investigative services are available at the MBPD headquarters as well.

MBPD additionally has the capability and routinely takes reports from residents and visitors via telephone and through an online reporting system called *Desk Officer Reporting System (DORS)*. The DORS system allows the public to create police reports for certain enumerated minor crimes and be issued a MBPD case number.

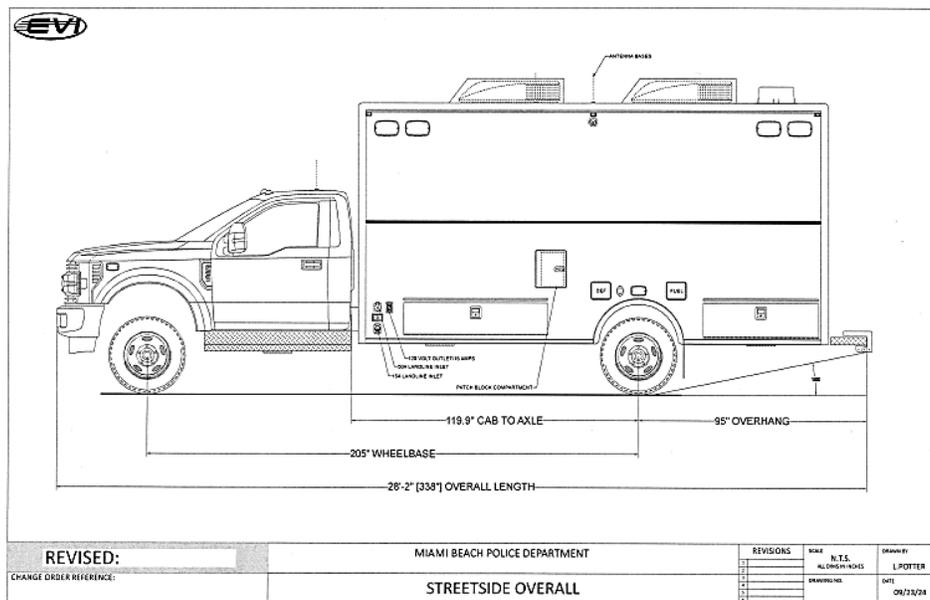
MBPD prides itself on its Community Policing and engagement activities, spearheaded by the efforts of the Department's Community Affairs Unit, Area Captains, and NROs. In addition to the traditional brick-and-mortar customer service approach, the Department is open to expanding its technological capabilities to interface with the community and improve service delivery through cutting edge technology. This would allow officers to interface with residents/complainants on certain calls using video conferencing features present in most smart devices. This technological expansion would not require the department to identify, purchase/lease physical facilities and could be achievable utilizing much of the hardware and equipment the department already possesses.

### **Mobile Police Substation (MPS)**

During discussions on this item, the idea of purchasing a specialized vehicle to serve as a Mobile Police Substation (MPS) was introduced. The Administration contacted a vendor to inquire about the associated costs. Several advantages of this MPS option were identified, particularly when compared to leasing or purchasing a fixed brick-and-mortar facility:

- **Lower Cost:** The cost of purchasing and maintaining a mobile unit is significantly lower than the expenses associated with acquiring, leasing, or maintaining a permanent, physical structure. The MPS eliminates the need for long-term property leases, construction, renovation costs, and utility expenses tied to a fixed location, offering a more budget-friendly solution.
- **Citywide Flexibility and Visibility:** Unlike a stationary location, the MPS offers the unique ability to be deployed across various neighborhoods, increasing police presence and visibility throughout the entire city. This versatility allows the MPS to act as a proactive deterrent in high-crime areas, provide a temporary police presence at community events, or assist in ongoing investigations by positioning close to active incidents or concerns.
- **Rapid Relocation and Targeted Deployment:** The MPS can be relocated at any time, enabling law enforcement to respond to emerging issues dynamically. Whether addressing sudden spikes in crime, traffic concerns, or community needs, the MPS provides an agile response that a brick-and-mortar facility cannot match. This mobility ensures resources are placed where they are needed most, at any given moment.
- **Backup Mobile Command Center for Emergencies:** In the event of a natural disaster, large-scale incident, or other emergencies, the MPS can serve as a secondary or supplemental Mobile Command Vehicle. This dual functionality enhances operational readiness and provides the department with additional flexibility to coordinate response efforts in critical situations, ensuring continuous operations even if primary facilities are compromised.
- **Operational Efficiency with Minimal Staffing:** Unlike maintaining multiple fixed substations, the MPS requires fewer staff to operate effectively. This means that essential personnel can remain focused on patrols, investigations, or other duties without being tied to a single location. The MPS can deliver the same or enhanced police presence without the overhead of staffing multiple physical locations across the city.

- **Minimal Footprint:** The MPS requires minimal space for deployment, allowing for quick setup in various urban environments without causing significant disruptions to the surrounding area.
- **Public Engagement:** The vehicle can be designed to allow for public entry and direct engagement with police staff. This feature enhances community relations by providing an approachable, mobile space for interaction with officers.
- **Dedicated Staff Space:** The MPS will include a separate enclosed area specifically for police staff. This section would offer privacy and the ability to handle administrative tasks, meetings, or sensitive conversations away from public view.
- **Customizable Floorplan:** The layout of the MPS is entirely customizable, allowing the department to design a configuration that meets its specific operational needs. Whether the focus is on community interaction, field operations, or emergency response, the floorplan can be tailored accordingly.
- **Startup Costs:** The initial costs associated with designing and purchasing an MPS would be approximately \$450,000. The vehicle will be serviced and maintained by the City Fleet, and it will come with a warranty from both the vehicle manufacturer and the vendor responsible for the upfit to meet the city's design specifications.



The Administration inquired with City Facilities as to the availability of other potentially viable, city-owned facilities and is unaware of any at this time.

Additionally, the Administration was asked to explore the possibility of co-locating a police substation within Miami-Dade County Public School Facilities in the City's jurisdiction to enhance school safety. It should be noted, that MBPD is one of the few law enforcement agencies in Miami-Dade County that continues to have municipal officers assigned as School Liaison Officers at local schools that are staffed by Miami-Dade County School Police Officers. Making schools within Miami Beach among the safest and well-staffed in the County.

After analyzing this suggestion further, it would not be recommended to establish this type of public facing police facility within a school based on the services police substations provide to the general public. For student and faculty safety, Miami Beach schools are limited-access facilities open only to students, faculty, staff and parents or visitors on official business and only with authorization. Placing a public substation within a school would expand that access to the general public needing police services, which could have unintended adverse effects. For example, out

of state registered sex offenders are required to register/report to the nearest local police facility when they are staying temporarily in that jurisdiction to meet registration requirements. A substation within a school would potentially create an unintended situation where one of these individuals would have a legitimate reason to enter an occupied school facility for this legitimate legal purpose.

### **Staffing Considerations**

The MBPD is currently budgeted for a total of 437 sworn officer positions of which 405 positions are filled. This filled position number includes all police officer trainees (still completed the police academy), police officers, detectives, sergeants, lieutenants and Command Staff personnel in the Department. In order to staff multiple substations, MBPD would be obligated to assign appropriate personnel to these facilities to provide initial contact and public safety services for multiple shifts throughout the workday and week. This would require a minimum of four (4) to six (6) officers/Public Safety Specialists at each facility to provide coverage from early morning and into the late evening and allow for breaks and days off. When those staffing requirements are expanded to multiple facilities as suggested during committee discussions, the MBPD may need up to 16-24 additional police officers or PSSs to successfully carryout this initiative and provide the level of services our community has grown to expect.

The MBPD does not currently have unassigned available sworn or professional staff to assign to work in substations throughout the city. If the decision is made to move forward with this project, MBPD would need to reassign existing staff from their current assignments or scale back commitments to expand specialized police services in other areas, to make staff available for this purpose. It is important to consider that removing police officers from the field to place them within substations would have an adverse impact on police visibility.

To better gauge and decide upon the explored options, the Administration would benefit from a clear definition of the goals and desired outcomes for the police substation expansion project. This collaboration would enable input from all stakeholders, allowing the exploration of alternative strategies that can achieve similar outcomes without negatively affecting MBPD's current staffing capabilities or disrupting other high-priority initiatives already identified by residents, elected officials, and MBPD leadership.

By adopting a collaborative approach, innovative strategies can be developed to meet these goals, potentially through public-private partnerships, minimizing the financial burden on taxpayers while expanding MBPD's presence across the city. Rather than opening multiple permanent substations, the City could simultaneously explore alternatives such as establishing Neighborhood Engagement Offices or Police Field Workstations, which offer enhanced community engagement with reduced operational impact.

### **FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The costs associated with the MPS concept are primarily the startup costs of acquiring the specialized vehicle. The rough estimated cost from the one vendor contacted is \$450,000.00. If this concept is selected and subsequently funded, the Department will initiate the procurement process as soon as possible. The estimated time from order to delivery is currently 12-14 months.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Administration recommends active collaboration between the City Commission and the Administration to clearly define the desired outcomes and goals for the police substation expansion project.

As part of this strategy, the Administration recommends the procurement of a Mobile Police Substation (MPS). The MPS option offers maximum flexibility, allowing the Department to

increase visibility and presence throughout the city, while minimizing the strain on police staffing and resources. The advantages over a traditional brick-and-mortar substation include:

- **Lower initial cost** compared to leasing or purchasing physical locations.
- **Enhanced flexibility**, allowing relocation to any neighborhood in the city based on real-time needs.
- **Increased citywide visibility** by enabling MBPD to deploy the substation wherever needed.
- **Reduced staffing requirements**, as it can operate with fewer personnel than multiple fixed facilities.
- **Versatility in emergencies**, as the MPS can double as a backup Mobile Command Vehicle when required.
- **Minimal deployment footprint**, making it easy to position in different areas without disruption.
- **Public accessibility**, providing a space for community engagement while maintaining a separate, secure area for police operations.
- **Customizable floorplans**, allowing the vehicle to be tailored to meet the specific needs of MBPD.

This approach would maximize the department's visibility and presence across the city while minimizing the impact on staffing and resources, offering a highly effective, cost-efficient solution for enhancing public safety and community engagement.

**Applicable Area**

Citywide

**Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?**

No

**Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?**

No

**Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying?** No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

**Department**

Police

**Sponsor(s)**

Commissioner Alex Fernandez

**Co-sponsor(s)**

**Condensed Title**

Ref: FERC - Purchase a Mobile Police Substation. (Fernandez) PD

**Previous Action (For City Clerk Use Only)**

