



Another question asked by Mr. Brooke is: “Did the study count re-arrests of SIP’s overall & make comparisons to the Study Area vis-à-vis overall County/study area population to consider balance/imbalance.”

In our analysis reported today, we counted re-arrests in the study area (Hilltop and other nearby locations) of people who had previously been SIP’d. The re-arrest rate was 6.1% in 2006, 6.6% in 2007, and 3.1% in 2008 through May 31. Less than 1% of all SIPs for those years combined came from outside Tacoma and were later rearrested in the study area. (See tables 1 – 5 in the July 21 memo.)

If the task force wants a broader look, we could look into how many SIPs are later rearrested anywhere in the county. However, that approach would result in a loss of focus about the impact of the jail and its SIP policy on the Hilltop and other nearby areas.

The research question addressed in our analysis is the impact of SIPs on public safety in the Hilltop and the other nearby areas. That question was based on previous task force discussions, especially on March 26 and June 21, and on Hilltop Action Coalition (HAC) material presented at the Evergreen State College, Tacoma, on March 20.

The meeting was well attended (including several members of the task force) and included a large number of HAC handouts based on information from the Pierce County Sheriff and other sources. At the meeting, Jeanie Peterson reviewed a handout called “Overview of our Jail Problem.” With regard to persons who are SIP’d, the handout said:

“They are given a phone call, but if they can’t find a way home, they are a Hilltop/Tacoma problem. If they want to buy drugs they’ll buy them here, if they don’t have any money, they’ll commit another crime to raise the money, which will be committed here.”

(See Attachment 1 for the full handout, with added yellow highlighting.) Thus it was claimed that the jail’s SIP policy brings to the jail a large number of arrestees from outside Tacoma, who are then released and commit crimes on the Hilltop. The claim is not supported by objective analysis of the arrest data for the Hilltop and other areas in downtown and central Tacoma.

Mr. Brooke’s memo refers to “Catch and Release criminals.” This reference suggests incorrectly that people who are SIP’d are accused of serious crimes rather than the mostly minor charges that are evident in the data. (See Appendix B of the June 19 memo reissued on July 21).

Mr. Brooke suggests a need to “repatriate” arrestees to other parts of the county. We disagree because the data are clear that very few persons who were brought from outside Tacoma and then SIP’d were later re-arrested in the study area.

The data suggest that homelessness and transiency, rather than SIPs and compliance releases, have a great impact on the Hilltop and nearby areas. It is our hope that objective analysis of the arrest data will lead to reconsideration of the “dumping” issue:

1. The arrest data do not support notions that the jail’s SIP policy has the result of “dumping” non-resident criminals on the Hilltop and other nearby parts of central Tacoma.
2. The arrest data do suggest the City of Tacoma is, in effect, “dumping” its homeless and transient people by arresting and re-arresting them, and using the jail as a kind of makeshift social service agency.

The Pierce County jail provides custodial services, with medical and dental care. But does the jail provide enough treatment or other social services to help chronic reoffenders break the non-productive cycle?

At the public forum on March 20 at the Evergreen State College, Tacoma Chief of Police Donald Ramsdell said in his opening statement: “Arresting people and putting them in jail is not the solution.” Later in the meeting, Chief Ramsdell said again: “Just throwing people in jail does not work.” We agree!

We hope the Criminal Justice Task Force will agree that SIPs are a relatively minor issue and that it would be appropriate to turn our attention to issues that have a much greater impact on public safety and quality of life. The arrest data from the Hilltop, downtown, and other parts of central Tacoma indicate that a large number of homeless or transient people are being arrested and frequently re-arrested for mostly low-level crimes. The problems are of long standing and have no easy solution. It is an open question whether incarceration and re-incarceration are doing much to solve the problems.

Attachments

Overview of our jail problem...

Early releases, or no jail time spent (at all) because of overcrowding:

1. 1360 people released in 2006
2. 3990 people released in 2007

- As of Dec. 31, 2007 the jail had **85.5% felons** [County jails are designed to hold criminals with sentences of less than one year & those waiting for trial]
- Some inmates have been in the PC Jail for **2-3 years on PRE-TRIAL motions**, etc. due to court backlog.
- On 12.31.07 the jail had an **inmate population of 1,363**. 53.19% were pre-trial, 34.19% were sentenced, and 12.62% were both.
- **The Jail capacity is 1465**, they reduce the number of people at the jail through two methods:
  - **Compliance releases** [where they realize they are over the limit and release the least violent offenders and those who have already served their time]
    - **In 2006 they released 560 inmates**
    - **In 2007 they released 818 inmates**
    - 196 of the 818 cases were Tacoma releases (on Tacoma cases) (24%)
      - Which means that **622 people who are from other areas** of the County were released on the Hilltop, if they couldn't get someone to pick them up, they were just let out here
  - **Special Identification Process (SIP) releases** [where they identify the arrestee and then immediately release them. They are given a phone call, but if they can't find a way home, they are a Hilltop/Tacoma problem. If they want to buy drugs they'll buy them here, if they don't have any money, they'll commit another crime to raise the money, which will be committed here]
    - **In 2006 they SIP'd 800 people**
    - **In 2007 they SIP'd 3172 people**
    - 1607 of those people had been arrested by TPD (50.6%)
      - Which means that **1565 people who are from other areas** of the County were released on the Hilltop (i.e. even though they were arrested in Gig Harbor, Puyallup, etc. they are released here)
      - It also means that the City was charged for those releases, which means in 2007 **the city paid \$192,840** (\$120/person times 1607 Tacoma SIP's) to have the people that TPD arrested released almost immediately (this charge will be \$132 in 2008)
  - This also means that a total of **2187 offenders who were not arrested in Tacoma were released here in 2007** (1565 SIPs and 622 compliance releases)
  - As of Sept. 1, 2007, the number of **unresolved cases stood at 2,460**. Of those, 14 percent were older than nine months. The current goal is to reduce the number of pending cases to about 1,500.

