

# MYTH FACT

**SEPARATING FACT FROM MYTH** | PENNSYLVANIA AUTO THEFT PREVENTION AUTHORITY 2010 ANNUAL REPORT



# SEPARATING FACT FROM MYTH

Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority  
2010 Annual Report

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To the Honorable Governor Thomas E. Corbett and Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly:

It is my pleasure to share with you the continued success of the Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA). Since the organization’s inception in 1995, auto theft rates have dropped by more than 68%.

I am honored to work with dedicated professionals who make it their mission to reduce auto theft—a crime which impacts everyone in the Commonwealth. We are able to celebrate another year of declining auto theft rates. In 2010, there were 16,560 vehicles stolen in Pennsylvania.\* The Authority’s law enforcement partners made and assisted in the arrests of 1,249 individuals leading to 450 convictions. Their efforts also led to the recovery of \$25.6 million worth of stolen vehicles and parts.

We have seen success, but at the same time, thieves are evolving. They continue to find new ways to thwart law enforcement—by outsmarting new technology and often forming highly organized crime rings. A cooperative effort between our partners and funded grantees is key in addressing the increasingly complex and sophisticated crime of auto theft. Having a network of highly skilled, well-trained, comprehensive investigators is paramount.

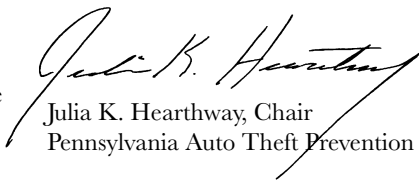
To keep auto theft investigators experts in their field, the Authority provides and supports training throughout the year. We also offer comprehensive training to all law enforcement agencies in the state,

with courses ranging from basic vehicle identification to specialized instruction on tractor-trailer, motorcycle and heavy equipment theft.

Investigating the crime of auto theft is only one side of the solution. Prevention is just as important. Even sophisticated anti-theft technology systems are rendered useless if the key is left in the ignition. The driving public needs to help protect themselves and impact auto theft rates. The Authority continues to educate drivers through public outreach campaigns throughout the year.

Fighting auto theft continues to be a challenge; but, with our coordinated efforts with law enforcement and public education, we are keeping auto thieves at bay. As each year passes, we continue our mission to efficiently and effectively reduce and prevent auto theft in the Commonwealth. Thank you for your support.

Respectfully,



Julia K. Hearthway, Chair  
Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority

\*Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Definition: Motor vehicle theft is the illegal taking of a motor vehicle, or driving the vehicle without the owner’s consent. Attempted motor vehicle thefts are included. Includes theft of motor-driven vehicles, such as autos, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters and snowmobiles. Data finalized for publication on 02/28/11. UCR numbers are subject to continual edit and not complete until the UCR Annual Report is compiled. The 2010 UCR Annual Report is expected October 2011.

**\$7.37** FOR EVERY DOLLAR  
ASSESSED TO THE  
INSURANCE INDUSTRY  
SINCE INCEPTION, THERE  
IS A \$7.37 RETURN ON  
THAT INVESTMENT.\*

\*i.e., reduced auto theft rates each year  
and recovered stolen vehicles and parts



**MYTH:**

Auto theft is a crime  
of opportunity committed  
only by junkies.

Victims usually share one thing in common, they never thought it would happen to them. Auto theft is not a new crime, but it is ever-changing; and it has more consequences than commonly realized. Thieves steal cars for transportation, to strip and sell in-demand parts, to sell or exchange for drugs, and to commit other serious and violent crimes. The Authority works to stay one step ahead.

As thieves become smarter, more organized and more aggressive, we continue to build our strong working relationships with law enforcement and community partners to reduce auto theft. Our organization and our partners know when cars are stolen, insurance rates go up and we all pay the price. The Authority uses no tax dollars. We are funded through an assessment of nearly 400 insurance companies doing business in Pennsylvania.

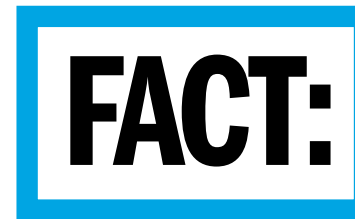
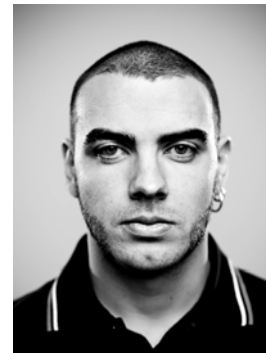
The Authority, created under Act 171 of 1994, has supplied funding to law enforcement/investigative units since 1995. To date, these agencies have been awarded more than \$81 million to help local and state auto theft units investigate and prosecute auto theft through additional personnel, modernized equipment, automobiles, special training seminars and public outreach measures.

These efforts are working. The Uniform Crime Report (UCR), compiled each year by the Pennsylvania State Police, is the most complete and reliable indicator of criminal activity available. The 2010 UCR data shows that motor vehicle theft declined again in 2010, and since the ATPA's inception in 1995, annual auto theft rates have declined by more than 68 percent. Without the funded units in place, the numbers would tell a much different story.

Since its inception, the ATPA funded law enforcement units have recovered stolen vehicles and parts worth \$429 million. Clearly, the grantees are having an impact on auto theft and vehicle recovery in Pennsylvania.

Since the Authority's inception through 2009\*, theft rates in Pennsylvania dropped by more than 66%. During that same time frame, national theft rates fell 48%. It is clear that the coordinated effort in PA is making an impact.

\*National theft rate from the FBI was only available through 2009 at the time this report was published.



There are many types of auto theft involving many types of criminals—highly skilled organized crime rings, international theft operations, drug addicts looking for a quick buck, teenagers interested in a thrill-ride, or criminals using stolen cars to commit other crimes.

**3,105** NUMBER OF STOLEN  
VEHICLES RECOVERED  
BY GRANTEES IN 2010

The Authority funds nine law enforcement/investigative units, including the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), which distributes grant funds to three regional task forces (comprised of state and local law enforcement agencies). Grant funds are used for salaries, overtime, and equipment-related expenses for nearly 100 investigators, prosecutors and support staff statewide.

83% OF THE 908 INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED IN 2010, 83% WERE ADULTS. THE REMAINING 17% WERE JUVENILES.

**Allegheny County District Attorney's Office**

The Allegheny County District Attorney's Office joined the Authority in September 1998. The unit, which consists of an assistant district attorney and a paralegal, is operating under a two-year grant renewal totaling \$320,897 through June 2012.

**Delaware County District Attorney's Office**

The Delaware County District Attorney's Office received its first grant to establish an auto theft unit in 1996. The unit is operating under a one-year grant for \$259,921 through June 2011. An assistant district attorney, a detective and an analyst support the unit. Grant funds are also used to pay overtime expenses for police officers from local departments that assist with auto theft investigations throughout the County.

**Harrisburg Bureau of Police**

The Harrisburg Bureau of Police has had an auto theft unit since it received its first grant in 1997, which included funding for three investigators. Reductions were made in subsequent years to their investigator compliment, with only one investigator being funded in the last two year grant renewal of \$207,684 through June 2010. Funding to Harrisburg City ended in June 2010.

**Lancaster City Police**

The Lancaster City Police joined the list of grantee organizations in July 2002. The unit, which consisted of two investigators and a part-time assistant district attorney, was reduced to one investigator in July 2010 under their current two-year grant extension totaling \$389,946 through June 2012.

**Lehigh County District Attorney's Office**

The Lehigh County District Attorney's Office received an initial grant in 1996. Currently, it is operating its auto theft task

force under a two-year grant totaling \$1,245,000 through June 2012. The unit, which also has investigative powers in neighboring Northampton County, has a prosecutor, secretary and four full-time investigators from local police departments.

**Northeastern PA Task Force**

The Northeastern PA Task Force is a unique, multi-jurisdictional program administered by the Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office. First funded in 1996, the unit is operating on a two-year grant of \$539,149 through June 2012. Supported by an assistant district attorney, an administrator, two full-time and four part-time detectives and a secretary, this far-reaching investigative unit coordinates efforts in 11 counties, including Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike, Susquehanna, Bradford, Monroe, Wayne, Wyoming, Sullivan, Columbia and Carbon.



MYTH:

Auto theft crime only involves stolen cars.



**Pennsylvania State Police  
Eastern, Central and Western  
Regional Task Forces**

The Pennsylvania State Police Eastern, Central and Western Regional Task Forces oversee statewide auto theft efforts. Initially granted funds in 1996, the units received a two-year extension totaling more than \$4.6 million through June 2011. The regional task forces concentrate on high-theft areas around Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and central and northeastern Pennsylvania. The grant funds cover salaries of 14 county/local police department detectives, as well as overtime costs for four state police supervisors and 17 troopers. The funds also cover equipment, maintenance, vehicles and other expenses.

**Philadelphia Police Department**

The Philadelphia Police Department was initially funded in 1996 and operates its Major Crimes Auto Theft Unit with a two-year grant extension totaling more than \$3.3 million through June 2012. One arm of the unit concentrates on chop shop and salvage yard investigations, while another investigates all other auto theft cases. Funding from the Authority added eight police officers and four detectives, doubling the resources available prior to the Authority’s grant funding.

**Pittsburgh Police Department**

The Pittsburgh Police Department received its first grant in 1996. Currently, it is using a \$610,400 grant extension through June 2012. The funding increased its auto theft squad by three detectives (for a total of six detectives), modernized equipment and paid for office space and automobiles.

**Good Shepherd Mediation Program**

The Good Shepherd Mediation Program received its first grant in 2004. Currently, it is funded through June 2011 with a grant of \$96,928. After solidifying a partnership with the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Juvenile Court Division, the program has successfully developed and implemented a diversion program for first-time juvenile offenders involved in vehicle theft. In 2010, it worked intensively with 82 first-time juvenile offenders in order to reduce the likelihood that they would commit future delinquent acts. Of the juvenile offenders who completed the program in 2010, 4% were re-arrested, whereas 23% who did not complete recidivated. Through the program, Good Shepherd has issued more than 460 hours of community service. Additionally the organization continually facilitates an in-school theft prevention seminar targeted toward at-risk youth in Philadelphia. In 2010, Good Shepherd worked with 608 middle school youths in an effort to reduce the chances of vehicle theft behavior among young people in Philadelphia.

**Philadelphia  
District Attorney’s Office**

The Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office received funding for their juvenile offender initiative in 2003. The unit is funded through June 2012 with a grant of \$777,280. The funds support one detective, one prosecutor, two trial assistants and two law clerks. The juvenile offender initiative utilizes two diversion programs in order to target first-time auto theft offenders—Youth Aid Panel and Reporting Consent Decrees. Under either program, conditions of supervision are designed to hold the juvenile accountable and restore the victim. Offenders must also complete the Impact of Auto Theft Initiative Workshop through the Good Shepherd Mediation Program. In 2010, 219 juveniles were arrested for auto theft related crimes, with 44% of these offenders diverted: 53 offenders participated in the Youth Aid Panel Program, and an additional 44 offenders accepted a Reporting Consent Decree. Of the remaining cases, a deferred adjudication or an adjudication of delinquency was achieved in 60 cases. In 2010, \$22,492 in restitution was ordered, and over 295 hours of community service was performed.

The Authority funds two agencies that specifically address juvenile auto theft offenders and prevention. There are an additional 10 people supported by these two initiatives.

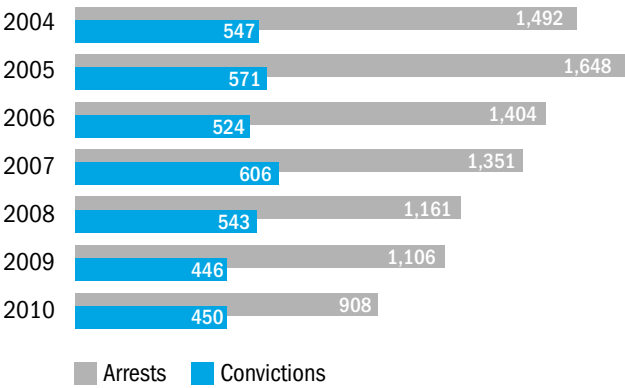


**FACT:**

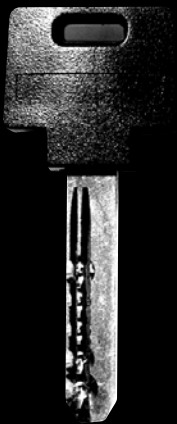
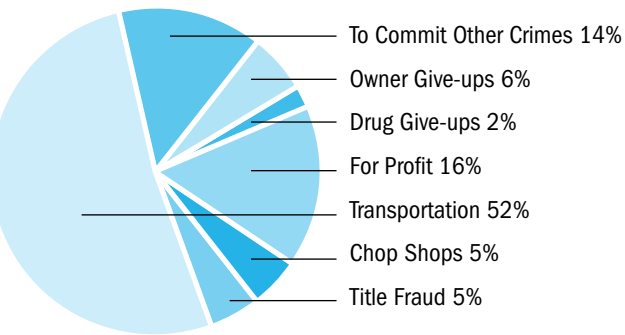
ATPA investigators handle cases involving stolen cars, trucks, motorcycles, ATVs, tractor-trailers, and heavy equipment.

INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED & CONVICTED

by funded positions only



TYPES OF ARRESTS



MYTH:

New cars are impossible to steal.  
Old cars are not worth stealing.

IMPACT OF GRANTEES’ COMBINED EFFORTS

Grants Awarded vs. Estimated Value of Recovered Vehicles, Parts and Restitution. Total grants awarded from 2005–2010: \$34.6 million. Total grants awarded since inception through December 2010: \$81 million.

Value of Recovered	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	Inception
Vehicles	\$32.2 M	\$37.8 M	\$42.2 M	\$32.5 M	\$27.7 M	\$25.2 M	\$197.6 M	\$409.4 M
Parts	\$1.4 M	\$1.3 M	\$1.3 M	\$1.0 M	\$.6 M	\$.4 M	\$6.0 M	\$19.6 M

Total value of recovered vehicles/parts 2005–2010: \$203.6 million. Total since inception: \$429 million

Sentences	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total	Inception
Restitution	\$1.4 M	\$1.4 M	\$.95 M	\$4.5 M	\$1.1 M	\$2.2 M	\$11.5 M	\$21 M



Remove or hide valuables (GPS units, cell phones and other personal items), as they attract thieves.



VINgraving is the process of chemically etching a vehicle's VIN number onto all windows of the vehicle. VINgraving deters thieves who want to steal your vehicle and change its identity to resell it or to dismantle it and sell the parts.



Using multiple anti-theft devices such as steering wheel and gearshift locks in combination with vehicle locking significantly decreases theft odds.



An electronic tracking system is hidden in a vehicle which emits a signal when a vehicle is stolen. The signal allows the police or monitoring station to locate, track and recover the stolen vehicle.



Make sure when using a key fob to lock your vehicle that you hear the horn chirp or the lights blink to ensure the vehicle is locked and the anti-theft system engaged. Thieves can block the transmission code sent from your key fob to your vehicle to gain entry to it after you walk away.



If you have a garage, use it. Make sure garage door is closed and locked as well as vehicle inside. If you park on the street, turn your wheels toward the curb to reduce risk of your vehicle being stolen using a tow truck.



50% of PA's stolen cars were left UN-locked. Lock your car, take your keys.

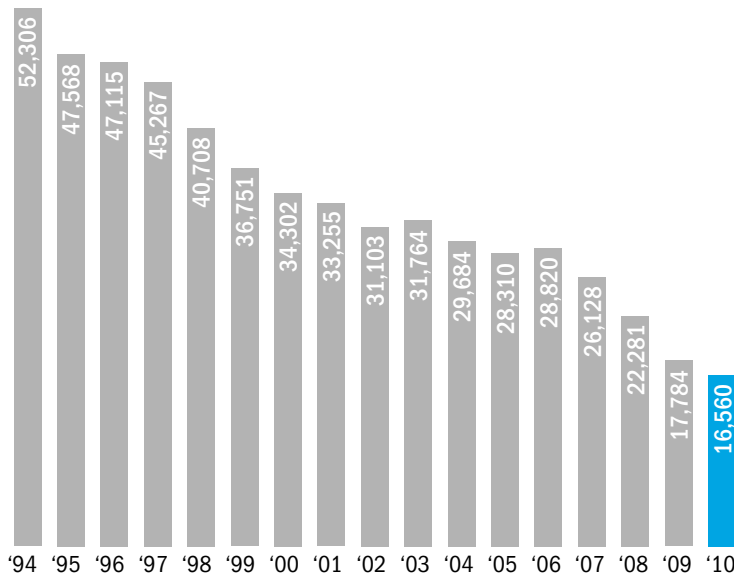
FACT:

Thieves learn to defeat anti-theft systems on new cars; and old cars are in high demand for parts. Theft prevention requires a multi-layered approach: alarm systems, VIN-graving, anti-theft devices, common sense tactics, and public education.



66% SINCE ATPA'S INCEPTION, AUTO THEFT RATES IN PA DROPPED BY MORE THAN 66% COMPARED TO 48% NATIONALLY.\*

\*National theft rate from the FBI was only available through 2009 at the time this report was published.



MOTOR VEHICLE THEFTS IN PENNSYLVANIA\*

\*Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Definition: Motor vehicle theft is the illegal taking of a motor vehicle, or driving the vehicle without the owner's consent. Attempted motor vehicle thefts are included. Includes theft of motor-driven vehicles, such as autos, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters and snowmobiles. Data finalized for publication on 02/28/11. UCR numbers are subject to continual edit and not complete until the UCR Annual Report is compiled. The 2010 UCR Annual Report is expected October 2011.

\$1,500

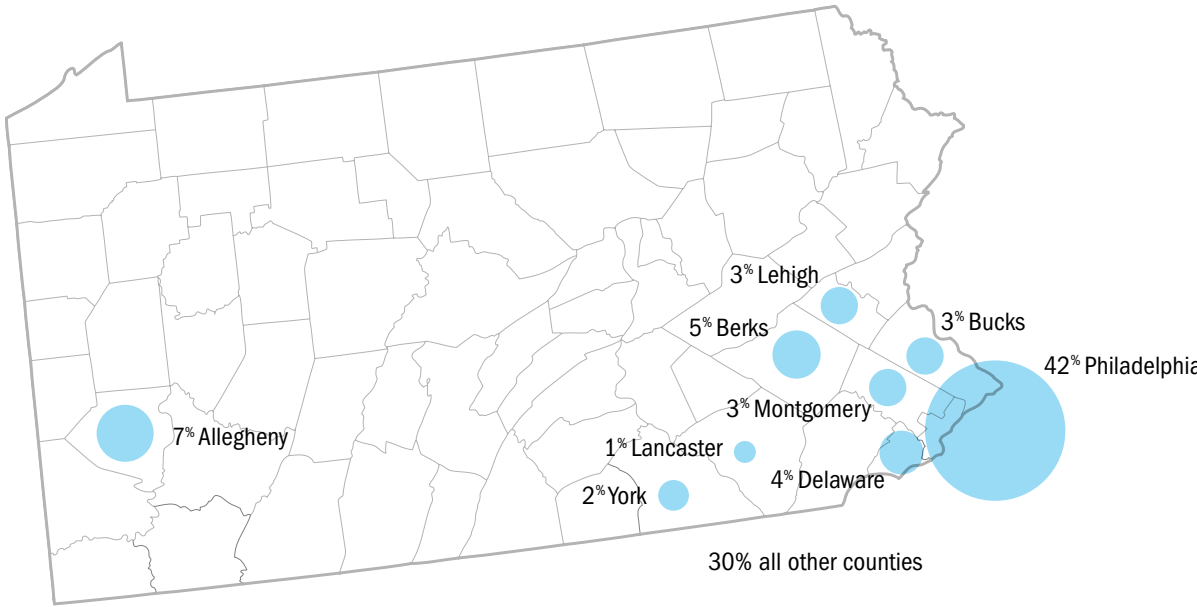
STOLEN 1996 HATCHBACK



MYTH:

Stolen cars are sold quickly at a fraction of their value.

AUTO THEFTS BY COUNTY



**FACT:**

Stolen cars are chopped and the in-demand parts sold at a premium.

Each year, the Authority encourages Pennsylvania drivers to protect their vehicles. Our prevention and public outreach programs are designed to educate vehicle owners about how to reduce their risk. One of the most important messages we can provide is to always “Lock your car and take your keys.” Though the message is common sense, ATPA investigators tell us more than half of Pennsylvania’s stolen cars were left unlocked. Simply locking your car can significantly reduce your risk of theft.



In 2010, the Authority delivered creative prevention messaging through three cost-effective partnerships across the state. The goal was maximum exposure to diverse, captive audiences during peak theft months.

#### Phillies

In 2010, the National League Champion Philadelphia Phillies set a franchise record with 123 consecutive sellouts and an average home attendance of 45,028. This fan base and electric atmosphere helped set the scene for ATPA’s impactful public education campaign with the Phillies. The campaign featured ATPA messaging on signage throughout the stadium during all 81 home games. The goal was to remind car owners that locking their car is their first line of defense against theft. Fans also participated in a text-to-win contest with exposure on the stadium big screen at Citizens Bank Park. Contest participation totaled 46,608 entries, with an average of more than 550 participants per home game. Fans listening to all 2010 regular season games on the radio heard our message as well. ATPA had rotating radio spots and a special post-game feature called the “PA Auto Theft Prevention Authority’s Lock of the Game.” The Phillies’ radio announcer highlighted the key player of the game and reminded listeners to lock their vehicles and prevent auto theft. We also had a print ad appearing in all 8 editions of the Phillies magazine,

with a circulation of 60,000. ATPA also sponsored a Phillies’ rally towel with special messaging as the team approached the post season. The towel was distributed to more than 44,000 fans.

#### Live Nation

Our second partnership for 2010 was with Live Nation, the largest live entertainment company in the world, with venues at First Niagra Pavilion in Pittsburgh, Hershey Park Stadium, Toyota Pavilion at Montage Mountain, and Festival Pier at Penn’s Landing in Philadelphia. The “Lock, Rock & Roll” promotion ran through the summer concert series from May to September, and included ATPA messages on signage throughout the venues, as well as auto theft trivia and myths/facts on big screens. Street teams within each venue engaged concert goers at a prize wheel, while educating them through trivia questions and a text-to-win contest. McDonald’s, Live Nation, and ATPA partnered to promote the text-to-win contest and anti-theft messaging, with a grand prize of a VIP trip for two to a Live Nation concert in the city of the winner’s choice. The contest was promoted on Live Nation’s website and venues, on signs placed in all seven Baierl car dealerships in Pittsburgh, as well as on trayliners at 159 McDonald’s stores in northeast and central Pennsylvania, and through Live Nation’s Facebook account.

#### Movie Theaters

Thieves often target the vehicles of busy holiday shoppers and owners who leave their cars running unattended to “warm up” in cold weather. In an effort to remind drivers to stay alert and prevent theft, ATPA partnered with National Cinemedia, operator of the largest digital in-theater advertising network in North America. During the holiday season, ATPA launched a 30-second commercial on nearly 500 screens throughout the state. In the commercial, one of Santa’s elves reminded Santa and viewers to “lock the car, take the keys, and hide valuables” during the holiday season. Moviegoers also viewed ATPA’s anti-theft message in theater lobbies on Cinemedia’s lobby entertainment network.

The campaign was designed to deliver creative, holiday-themed prevention messaging to captivate audiences of all ages to increase awareness and engage people to take action.

#### Young Driver Education Program

To further our vehicle theft prevention goal, the Authority developed a training program for teen drivers to teach auto theft prevention techniques. We believe if young drivers learn good habits at a young age, they will most likely carry those habits through to adulthood.

The DVD and lesson plan for young drivers was delivered, free-of-charge, to driver education programs in schools across the state. To increase the flexibility of the program and to make sure more students receive the message, the program was converted in 2009 to a web-based lesson plan to allow driver education teachers the flexibility of assigning the lesson plan as homework ([www.watchyourwheels.org](http://www.watchyourwheels.org)). The program was designed with input from driver education teachers and students to ensure the program was received well and that it would be used by its intended audience. A formal launch of the program, in cooperation with the

Department of Education, occurred this year with an email blast to all school districts in the Commonwealth.

#### VINgraving Program

The Authority sponsored and participated in several VINgraving events across the Commonwealth in 2010—VINgraving or VINetching is a proven prevention tool where the Vehicle Identification Number or VIN is chemically-etched onto all windows of a vehicle. If a thief intends to steal a vehicle to dismantle it for parts, he or she would then have to replace all the windows. Replacing the glass on a vehicle can be very expensive and time-consuming, so a thief would most likely pass on a VINgraved vehicle. The Authority also offers free do-it-yourself VINgraving kits on its website ([www.watchyourcar.org](http://www.watchyourcar.org)).



One of the most important tools used in reducing vehicle theft is training. That is why the Authority continues with its multi-faceted training program.

**Patrol Officer Training Program**

In 2010, the Authority continued to deliver auto theft identification and investigation courses to Pennsylvania law enforcement officers statewide. The Authority’s curriculum includes a series of six training courses, which are offered free to Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies. Each program lasts two to four hours and is targeted to the professional police officer. Since the inception of the program in 2005, the Authority has provided vehicle theft training to over 3,200 police officers in the Commonwealth.

**Auto Theft 101** is designed to teach patrol officers what to look for during traffic stops and update them on laws concerning auto theft-related crime. The course also includes information about VIN numbers, titles and license plates, as well as methods of theft.

**Auto Theft 102** was developed for officers who will be participating in stolen vehicle investigations. The course addresses vehicle identification and methods used to alter VINs.

**Auto Theft 103** focuses on identifying all-terrain vehicles.

**Auto Theft 104** addresses motorcycle identification.

**Auto Theft 105** discusses heavy equipment identification.

**Auto Theft 106** teaches officers how to identify trucks, tractors and semi-trailers.

**Annual Training Conference**

The Authority hosts an annual training conference. The conference is open to all grantees and features special seminars designed to provide law enforcement with training beyond what is offered through the Authority’s standard curriculum. This year, the conference topic was cargo theft investigations, in response to an increase in cargo theft cases in Pennsylvania and across the country. Experts were brought in from NJ and U.S. Customs to offer training in cargo theft investigations and trends, trailer seals and leaking, as well as an understanding of the trucking industry. The gathering was an effective way to learn, network and discuss collaborative cases and share information.

**Owner Give-up Training**

As economic conditions continue to deteriorate, law enforcement agencies across the state and insurance companies should be on the look out for owner give-ups. An “owner give-up” is when someone falsely reports his car stolen to escape car payments. It inflates auto theft rates and wastes police time investigating a crime that never occurred. The Authority offers, DVDs free-of-charge, designed to educate law enforcement professionals and insurance company special investigative units on how to detect this type of auto-related crime.

**MYTH:**

No one is paying attention to auto theft crime in PA.



A highly skilled, well-trained network of police officers, investigators, and prosecutors is actively engaged in PA. We have the highest success rate of any ATPA in the country.

FACT:

FISCAL YEAR 2009/2010

Assessments.....	\$6,463,092.00
Interest Earned.....	\$20,608.00
Total Revenue.....	\$6,483,700.00
Balance carried over from previous year.....	\$2,118,945.00
<b>Total Funds Available.....</b>	<b>\$8,602,645.00</b>

Program Expenses:

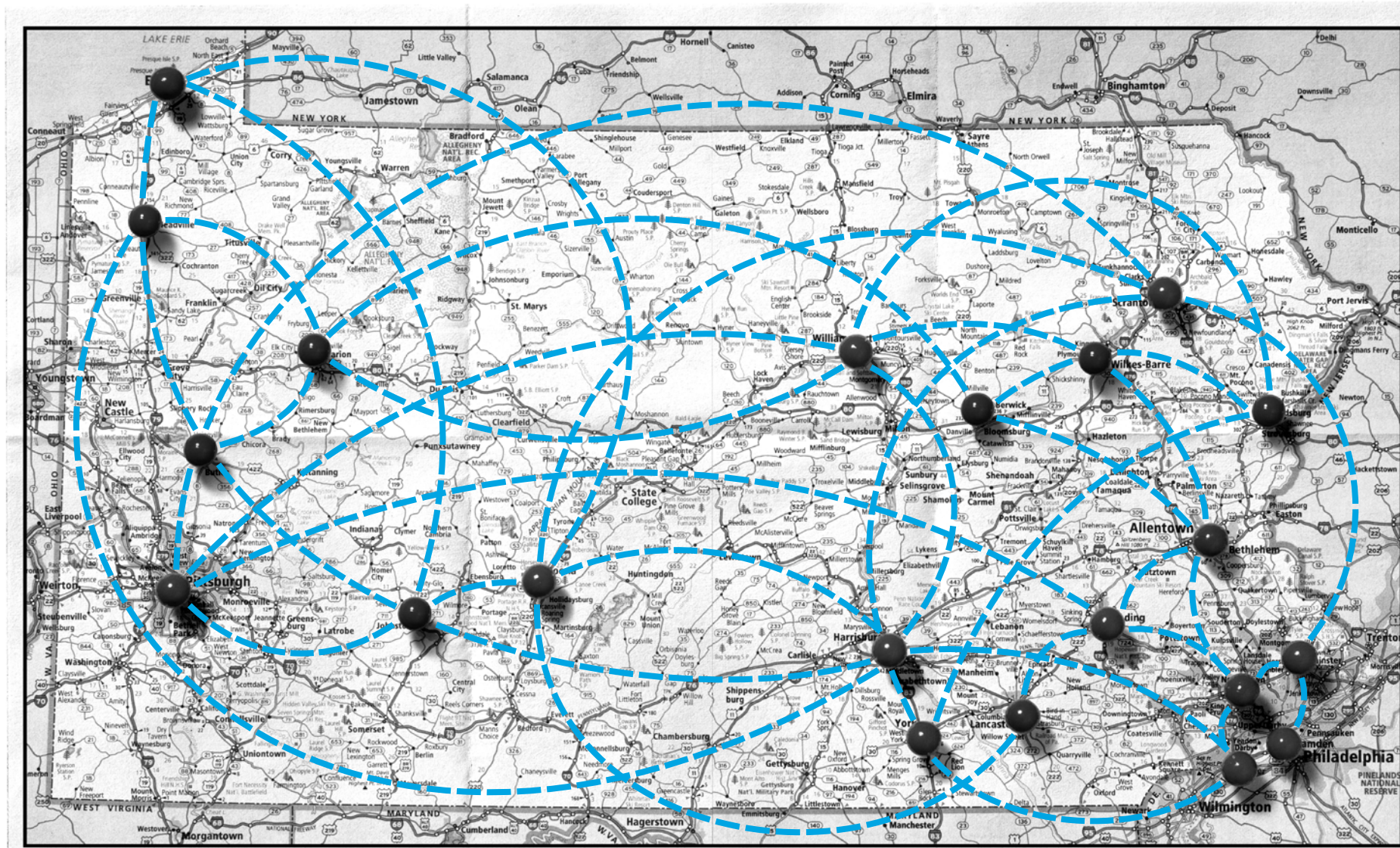
Grants Paid.....	(\$5,698,234.00)
Grant Reviews.....	(\$78,442.00)
Public Awareness.....	(\$598,706.00)
Training.....	(\$75,650.00)
<b>Total:.....</b>	<b>(\$6,451,032.00)</b>

Operating Expenses:

Personnel Expenses.....	(\$205,708.00)
Operating Expenses.....	(\$159,534.00)
Capital Asset Expenses.....	\$0.00
<b>Total:.....</b>	<b>(\$365,242.00)</b>

<b>Year-End Balance.....</b>	<b>\$1,786,371.00</b>
(to be applied to future grants and operational expenditures)	

The ATPA operated at 5% of the total assessments collected (\$365,242). This is a 2% decrease in operating costs over FY08-09.





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