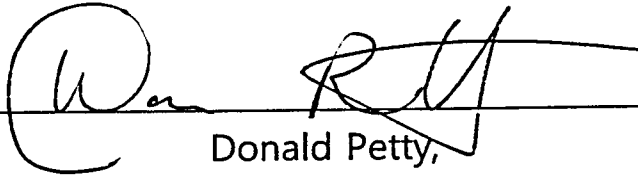



FINAL REPORT OF THE
2024-2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY



Donald Petty,
Foreperson



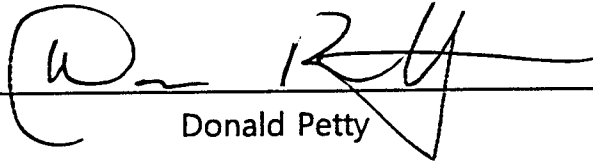
Honorable David I. Ashby,
Presiding Judge

REPORT OF THE 2024-2025

SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY

Donald Petty – Foreperson

Sukhwinder Bajwa	Cole Hartfiel
Kyle Bumgarner	Tammy McHaney
Claudia Chandler	Ellen O'Neil
Samantha Chan	Laura York
Shawna Culp	Shellie Petty
Michael Dockrey	John Simpson
Lisa Flower	Lisa Wilhelmi
Ralph Hainsworth	Lory Williams
Craig Hall – Pro Tem	Jon Whiteman



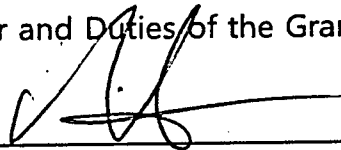
Donald Petty

2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury Foreperson

6-10-25

Date

Pursuant to California Penal Code Section 933(a), the Presiding Judge makes the findings that the foregoing report is in compliance with Title 4, Chapter 3 of the California Penal Code ("Power and Duties of the Grand Jury").



Honorable David I. Ashby

Superior Court of California, County of Sutter

6/11/25

Date

Roles and Responsibilities of a Grand Jury

Grand juries serve as an essential component of the judicial system, tasked with ensuring accountability and transparency within county government operations. Their responsibilities encompass investigative, reporting, and advisory functions aimed at maintaining public trust and adherence to legal standards.

INVESTIGATIVE FUNCTIONS

The grand jury's primary role is to investigate matters related to county government, including the administration, operations, and conduct of public officials, agencies, and departments. This often involves examining allegations of inefficiency, misconduct, or corruption, as well as assessing compliance with laws and regulations that impact public governance.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Under California Penal Code Section 933(a), grand juries are required to submit a final report to the presiding judge of the Superior Court. This report includes comprehensive findings and recommendations that address key issues uncovered during their investigations. These findings often aim to improve government practices, rectify inefficiencies, and promote ethical conduct within county operations.

MANDATORY RESPONSES

Government bodies and department officials are obligated to respond to the grand jury's findings and recommendations within 90 days of the report's release. These responses ensure accountability by detailing actions taken or planned to address the

identified concerns, providing transparency to the public and a framework for ongoing improvement.

ADVISORY ROLE

In addition to its investigative duties, the grand jury serves an advisory role, suggesting reforms and improvements to enhance governance. This may include proposals to streamline operations, uphold ethical standards, or implement policies that better serve the county's residents.

In summary, grand juries are vital for fostering accountability, integrity, and efficiency within county government matters. Through their investigations, reporting, and advisory functions, they uphold the principles of justice and public service, ensuring that government entities operate within the bounds of the law and in the best interest of the community.

SUBMITTING A COMPLAINT

To submit a citizen complaint to the Sutter County Grand Jury, please visit:

<https://www.sutter.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury>

JOINING THE GRAND JURY

To find more information on the Sutter County Grand Jury, the qualifications to serve, and how to join the Sutter County Grand Jury, please visit:

<https://www.sutter.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury>

5-30-25

The Honorable Judge - David I Ashby
Sutter County Superior Court
1175 Civic Center Blvd.
Yuba City, California 95993

I would like to thank all who participated in the 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury. You put in many hours of diligent work to put together this year's report and it paid off well. We worked together through every challenge and learned many lessons along the way. I'm convinced this year's report will be among the best to be published.

I would also like to thank the entire staff of Sutter County who took part in assisting in all the efforts involved in putting together this year's reports. I'm truly grateful for all your expertise and your willingness to share that knowledge and experience to assist in our efforts.

In closing, I would like to express my humble gratitude to everyone involved and to say what an honor and a privilege it has been to serve our community in such a civic manner as the 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Petty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Don Petty

Foreperson

2024-2025 SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY



Donald Petty – Foreperson

Sukhwinder Bajwa	Cole Hartfiel
Kyle Bumgarner	Tammy McHaney
Claudia Chandler	Ellen O'Neil
Samantha Chan	Laura York
Shawna Culp	Shellie Petty
Michael Dockrey	John Simpson
Lisa Flower	Lisa Wilhelmi
Ralph Hainsworth	Lory Williams
Craig Hall – Pro Tem	Jon Whiteman

Grand Jury Approval

California Penal Code Section 933(a) states:

“Each grand jury shall submit to the presiding judge of the superior court a final report of its findings and recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year...”

In conformance with the Penal Code requirement, the 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury approves and respectfully submits this report to the Honorable Judge (name 1), Presiding Judge, Superior Court of California, County of Sutter.

Donald Petty – Foreperson

Sukhwinder Bajwa	Cole Hartfiel
Kyle Bumgarner	Tammy McHaney
Claudia Chandler	Ellen O’Neil
Samantha Chan	Laura York
Shawna Culp	Shellie Petty
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BRIDGING THE GAP THE CONTINUITY REPORT



MAY 30, 2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY

Summary

The 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury (SCGJ) reviewed the responses to the investigative reports issued by the 2023-2024 Grand Jury to assess compliance to the California Penal Code. The complete text of these reports can be found on the following website:

<https://www.sutter.courts.ca.gov/general-information/grand-jury/grand-jury/grand-jury-reports>

This website also provides a link to the responses given by the various county officials and other agencies to the ***Findings and Recommendations*** contained in the reports.

Background

California Penal Code Section 933(a) requires the Grand Jury to “submit to the presiding judge of the Superior Court a final report of its Findings and Recommendations that pertain to county government matters during the fiscal or calendar year.” Government bodies of department officials are required to respond to the Findings and Recommendations directed to them within 90 days of the release of a Grand Jury’s report. Elected

Officials are required to respond within 60 days. (PC933(c)). This Compliance and Continuity Report focuses only on the requirement for responding to the Recommendations.

Penal Code Section 933.05 states that the governing body or department official is required to select one of four possible responses to the Recommendations (PC933.05(b)).

The recommendation has been implemented with a summary regarding the implemented action.

The recommendation has not been implemented but will be implemented in the future with a time frame for implementation.

The recommendation requires further analysis with an explanation and the scope and parameters of analysis or study and a time frame (which shall not exceed 6 months from date of report publication) to be prepared for discussion.

The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or not reasonable with an explanation provided.

This Continuity and Compliance Report focuses on the responses to the Recommendations made by the 2023-2024 Grand Jury in five reports:

1. Grand Jury Accessibility and Danger in the Dark
2. Voter Integrity
3. Board of Supervisor Salaries: 20 years without a raise
4. Sentence Served at the Sutter County Jail
5. Tri-County Rehabilitation Facility and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center.

Grand Jury Room Accessibility and Danger in the Dark

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors is required to respond to this report.

Below is the response from the Board of Supervisors, in Concert with the County Administrator's Office.

FINDINGS

Grand Jury Finding #1:

- F1. The Grand Jury Room remains non-compliant with the ADA because those with mobility issues do not have equal access to the building without assistance from other members.

Grand Jury Finding 2

- F2. The lack of light in the Grand Jury room when entering or exiting causes a high risk for trip injuries.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

- F1. The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.
- F2. The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grand Jury Recommendation #1:

- R1. If this room is going to continue to be used by the Grand Jury or anyone else, it needs to be made compliant with the California Disabled Persons Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). General Services should construct an ADA compliant ramp to the internal entrance door to the Grand Jury Room. This should be completed before Daylight Savings changes on November 3, 2024.

Grand Jury Recommendation #2

- R2. General Services and Development Services shall install motion-activated light controls in the Grand Jury room to reduce the risk of injury that is inherent while traversing in the dark when entering or leaving. This should be completed before Daylight Savings changes on November 3, 2024.

Response from Board of Supervisors:

- R1. This recommendation has not yet been implemented. However, County staff are already pursuing a quote on a ramp for access to the outside entrance to the current Grand Jury meeting room. Construction is expected to be completed by January 31, 2025.
- R2. This recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be implemented by November 3, 2024

2024-2025 Grand Jury Response

- R1. There is still no ramp at the outside entrance to the Grand Jury room. However, there is a ramp to access the building at another door relatively close to the room. However, Grand Jurors were not given key cards to allow them into the Grand Jury room from inside the building. General Services plans to install such a system before May 15, 2025.
- R2. There are still no motion-activated light controls in the Grand Jury Room. A switch was installed at the entrance door that turns on a light near the door. This somewhat alleviates the risk of injury while traversing in the dark when entering or leaving.

Voter Integrity: Yay or Nay

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors is not required and was not invited to respond to this report.

The Sutter County Clerk-Recorder was invited to respond to this report. Her response is attached.

FINDINGS

Grand Jury Finding #1:

- F1. Identify Verification Process: Rigorous confirmation of voter identity through the statewide voter system, including checks with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), ensures that only legitimate voters cast their ballots. Mail-in ballots were canceled upon in-person voting to prevent duplicate voting.

Grand Jury Finding #2:

- F2. Voter Registration System: The utilization of the State VoteCal System for voter registration ensures accuracy, while the 8D2 survey card verified the registered address. Measures were in place to flag ineligible addresses, such as mailbox location or post office boxes.

Grand Jury Finding #3:

- F3. Ballot Harvesting Clarification: Contrary to media claims, Sutter County does not practice "ballot harvesting," and there was no evidence to suggest mass collection of ballots from nursing homes or other facilities.

Grand Jury Finding #4:

- F4. Signature Verification: Stringent signature verification processes were conducted to detect and prevent fraudulent voting. This contributed to overall efforts to maintain the integrity of the electoral process.

Grand Jury Finding #5:

F5. Voter Rolls: An analysis of the Sutter County voter rolls data revealed some irregularities. From a random sample, it was observed that approximately 3% of individuals listed on the voter rolls were deceased, another 3% have relocated outside of the state, and an additional 3% moved to different addresses within the County. **There was no evidence that any of these irregularities were found to suggest an unlawful vote was cast.** We also investigated any addresses that had more than eight registered voters. There was no evidence that there were any illegal voters at those addresses.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors is not required and was not invited to respond to Findings 1 through 5.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grand Jury Recommendation #1:

R1. Conduct a thorough analysis of voter roll data to confirm the accuracy of the voter roll by removing all ineligible voters.

Grand Jury Recommendation #2:

R2. Establish collaboration between county agencies to enhance the accuracy of voter rolls."

Grand Jury Recommendation #3:

R3. Advocate for ongoing public education efforts to dispel misinformation surrounding the electoral process, promoting trust and confidence in the integrity of elections.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors is not required and was not invited to respond to Recommendations 1 through 3.



COUNTY OF SUTTER... established 1850

Donna M Johnston

County Clerk-Recorder-Registrar of Voters – Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

July 31, 2024

TO: Tim McGee, Foreperson and Susan Green, Presiding Judge

RE: Response to 2023-24 Grand Jury Report

Recommendations

1. Conduct a thorough analysis of voter roll data to confirm the accuracy of the voter roll by removing all ineligible voters.
2. Establish collaboration between county agencies to enhance the accuracy of voter rolls.
3. Advocate for ongoing public education efforts to dispel misinformation surrounding the electoral process, promoting trust and confidence in the integrity of elections.

Response:

We appreciate the recognition by the Grand Jury of staff's hard work and dedication to the electoral process. Responses to the recommendations are as follows:

1. We will continue to analyze voter roll data. We have adopted higher standards than state-required standards to ensure voter rolls are as up to date as possible. Recent law changes have resulted in keeping voters on rolls in an active state until multiple verifications have been accomplished.
2. We will look for additional collaboration efforts between county agencies beyond the agencies we currently collaborate with.
3. We will continue to strive to dispel misinformation and disinformation around the electoral process as a trusted messenger.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Johnston
Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters

Clerk-Recorder
433 Second Street
Yuba City, CA 95991
Tel: (530) 822-7134
Fax: (530) 822-7214

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
1100 Civic Center Blvd.
Yuba City, CA 95993
Tel: (530) 822-7106
Fax: (530) 822-7103

Registrar of Voters
1435 Veteran Memorial Circle
Yuba City, CA 95993
Tel: (530) 822-7122
Fax: (530) 822-7587

Board of Supervisor Salaries: 20 Years Without a Raise

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors was invited to respond to this report.

FINDINGS

Grand Jury Finding #1:

F1. The Sutter County Grand Jury conducted various analyses based on employee numbers, total budgets, and counties with similar populations. The findings indicate the Sutter County Board of Supervisor (SCBOS) whose current salaries are underpaid by \$20,000 annually. This potentially limits the pool of individuals who can afford to serve as Sutter County Board of Supervisor (SCBOS) to retirees, those with other employment or the wealthy. The Sutter County Grand Jury also found during the investigation that being a Sutter County Supervisor is a time-consuming position. Each supervisor is responsible for the Sutter County Budget, responsible for implementing California State and Federal law when starting new projects, maintaining the county's physical resources and properties. There are close to 1,000 county employees for which they are indirectly responsible for. All five of our supervisors attend many meetings. All five of our supervisors are on special committees of various districts within the county and represent the county of those meetings. Each of our five supervisors are on 16 to 25 committees and are required to be at those meetings to represent Sutter County.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

F1. The Board of Supervisors agrees with the findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grand Jury Recommendation #1:

R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County Board of Supervisors (SCBOS) consider a compensation raise in line with the local economy. The specific amount and method are left to their discretion since they are responsible for the voting on their own compensation. The current take-home pay, after the health insurance package and Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) contribution, is deemed insufficient for the time and effort invested in this role. Fair compensation is essential for the Sutter County Board of Supervisors (SCBOS), reflecting the value of their service to the community. Actions shall be taken before October 31, 2024.

Response from Board of Supervisors:

R1. This recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be by December 31, 2024

Grand Jury Update: On February 24, 2025, the Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to indefinitely table the ordinance that would increase their salaries.

Sutter County Sheriff's Office: Sentence Served at the Sutter County Jail

STAFF RETENTION

FINDINGS

Grand Jury Finding #1

- F1. Difficulty in hiring and retaining staff due to noncompetitive compensation, sourced from Management Partners. Increased costs caused by forced inmate retention, as well as increased housing costs due to retention of IST inmates.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

- F1. The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with this finding in that the compensation levels have been increased after the Management Partners study was completed. Additionally, the County is currently in negotiations with the Sutter County Deputy Sheriff's Association (SCDSA) that includes most jail staff.

Response from Sheriff's Office:

- F1. The sheriff's office acknowledges that recruitment can be challenging at times, although we have seen an increase in the number of applicants, specifically for corrections and dispatch positions. A fair number of applicants have been disqualified due to not passing the testing process or not having a personal background suitable for public service.

Costs associated with the care and custody of incarcerated persons have increased, primarily due to pressures put on counties by the state, as prisons continue to close and medical and mental health services are being pushed to local levels without reasonable compensation for state responsibilities.

FACILITY CONDITIONS

FINDINGS

Grand Jury Finding #2:

F2. Potential contraband drop-off location at Southwest exterior door of the jail.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

F2. The Board of Supervisors agrees with the finding.

Response from Sheriff's Office:

F2. The sheriff's office agrees this is an area of concern and brought this issue to the attention of the Grand Jury. Steps are being taken to correct the issue and we continue to look for ways to reduce contraband coming into the facility.

Grand Jury Finding #3

F3. Structural damage within the facility has led to pooling of water into corridor areas posing a risk of slip and fall incidents as well as further structural deterioration.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

F3. The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with this finding as staff have been unable to locate the pooling water found by the Grand Jury. However, there are needed facilities improvements in the jail.

Response from Sheriff's Office:

F3. Additional clarification may be needed to address the specific "structural damage" issue noted in the report. The sheriff's office is aware of occasional weather-related pooling during times of excessive rain. There are some leaks in the jail roof that need to be addressed.

Grand Jury Finding #4

F4. Ineffective cooling system causing potential health risk (e.g., heat-related medical issues). We have since received information at a recent Board of Supervisors' meeting that the cooling system is being put out for bid to be replaced.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

F4. The Board of Supervisors partially disagrees with the finding in that staff have provided multiple additional portable cooling units within the jail to maintain reasonable temperatures. However, the best solution is a new overall HVAC system for the jail.

Response from Sheriff's Office:

F4. The sheriff's office agrees with this finding, and we have been working with development services, general services, and the county administrator's office for solutions to this issue.

Tri County Rehabilitation Facility and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors is required to respond to this report.

Below is the response from the Board of Supervisors, in concert with the County Administrator's Office

FINDINGS

Grand Jury Finding #1:

F1. Inspection of the new facility is taking too much time to complete.

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

F1. The board of supervisors agrees with the finding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grand Jury Recommendation #1:

R1. Local county government to investigate and resolve the new facility inspections

Response from the Board of Supervisors:

R1. This Recommendation has been implemented. As of the time of this writing, the inspection has been completed due in part to the diligence of Yuba County staff overseeing the project.

FEDERAL FUNDING FLIES ELSEWHERE



MAY 30, 2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY

Summary

General aviation airports such as the Sutter County Airport are vital assets to communities providing emergency services, aerial firefighting, business opportunities, and more. Unfortunately, the Sutter County Airport has been underutilized and underdeveloped for more than 10 years while the County ignores significant federal funding opportunities to grow the Airport at no cost to local taxpayers. The Sutter County Grand Jury researched why there have been no improvements made since 2012 and why the County has made little progress in solving roadblocks to the Airport's development.

Glossary

- O52 Sutter County Airport Identifier
- ALP Airport Layout Plan
- FAA Federal Aviation Administration
- NPIAS National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems
- AIP Airport Improvement Program
- ACIP Airport Capital Improvement Program (FAA)
- CIP Capital Improvement Program (Sutter County)
- SBRAA Sutter Buttes Regional Aviation Association
- Entitlements Apportionment dollars for airports

Background

Sutter County Airport, airport code O52, is a general aviation airport located in Yuba City along the Garden Highway. According to the 2013 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved Airport Layout plan (ALP), Airport property encompasses 175.07 acres, and there is a single runway measuring 3,045 feet in length and 75 feet in width. There are approximately 63 aircraft stored in hangars or on pavement at the Airport.

GENERAL AVIATION AIRPORTS

A general aviation airport is, typically, an airport that does not have scheduled passenger service. These airports support important community needs including emergency medical services, aerial firefighting, agricultural functions, flight training, time-sensitive cargo services, and business travel.

NATIONAL PLAN OF INTEGRATED AIRPORT SYSTEMS (NPIAS)

The FAA is required to develop and maintain the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS) per the requirements of Title 49 United States Code section 47103. The plan is updated every two years.

This plan identifies existing and proposed airports considered significant to national air transportation for civil aviation, national defense, and the United States Postal Service.

Airports included in the NPIAS are eligible to receive FAA assistance in their development. The NPIAS catalogs the unfunded needs of the airports in the plan including the type and estimated cost of development necessary to ensure a safe, efficient, and integrated system of airports.

Sutter County Airport is included in the NPIAS and is considered a Local Airport defined as an airport providing access to local and regional markets. These local and regional markets account for 36 percent of all NPIAS airports and typically average 31 based aircraft, or aircraft stored at an airport with an airworthiness certificate, which certifies the aircraft is allowed to fly.

AIRPORT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (AIP) AND AIRPORTS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (ACIP)

Another plan FAA uses is the Airports Capital Improvement Plan (ACIP), a subset of the NPIAS. This plan guides where development funding in the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) should be issued.

Each airport in the NPIAS develops its own Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which is a listing of projects required to maintain or enhance the airport. This plan is reviewed by the FAA and eligible projects are then included in the ACIP. A list of eligible projects may be found in the AIP handbook. Examples of eligible projects include airport master plans; aircraft parking aprons, taxiways, runway maintenance; drainage studies; obstruction surveys; and updating the Airport Layout Plan (ALP).

An Airport's ACIP is developed for a rolling 3-year period. It serves as the basis for distribution of AIP funds.

APPORTIONMENT (ENTITLEMENTS)

United States Code Title 49 Section 47114 defines apportionment money, which is also known as entitlements. These are protected funds for airports included and defined in the NPIAS. For general aviation airports, like the Sutter County Airport, this amount is \$150,000 annually. If not used, this money expires after three fiscal years and is returned for use by other airports. General aviation airports may hold

up to a maximum of \$600,000 in entitlement money before the oldest entitlement apportionment expires and is transferred to the discretionary fund and distributed to other airports.

Entitlement dollars are not given to airports but instead reside with the FAA until the airports apply to use these funds. There are certain restrictions on the usage of these funds documented in the AIP handbook.

AIP GRANTS

In addition to entitlements, the AIP provides grant funding known as discretionary grant funding. This funding is distributed at the discretion of the FAA, and a competitive scoring process is used to determine which projects are the most suitable for discretionary funds.

For general aviation airports, these grants may cover 90 percent of eligible project costs, based on statutory requirements. The airport may choose to use entitlement funding to cover the remaining 10 percent of the project cost, thereby needing no local funding.

SPONSOR ASSURANCES

Also known as Grant Assurances, Sponsor Assurances are a set of 39 compliance rules incorporated into the grant upon acceptance by the airport sponsor to protect the investment of the Federal Government. If the FAA gives the airport any entitlement or competitive discretionary funding for eligible projects, the airport sponsor must agree to the terms laid out in the Sponsor Assurances document.

The 39 assurances must be adhered to for the useful life of the project, but in any event are not to exceed 20 years from the date of acceptance of the federal funds. This does not excuse an airport from adhering to the Exclusive Rights (Assurance 23)

and Airport Revenue (Assurance 25) assurances if the airport is still being operated as an airport.

The Grant Assurances document (Page 1) states: "There is no limit to the duration of the terms, conditions, and assurances with respect to real property acquired with federal funds."

If an airport does not comply with the Grant Assurances, they are at risk of penalty including withholding of future funding, fines, or civil penalty.

NO FUNDS FOR SUTTER COUNTY AIRPORT

Grant history for airports is published by FAA on their website

https://www.faa.gov/airports/aip/grant_histories. Sutter County Airport has not received entitlement funding since 2014. Airport maintenance or improvements that could have been funded entirely by the FAA seem to be unavailable. No entitlement funding could be a result of either the FAA withholding the further entitlement dollars or the maximum entitlement reached because the County has not applied to allocate entitlement money to a project. This led the Sutter County Grand Jury to investigate why Sutter County Airport is not applying for any entitlement funds or why they are not eligible to receive AIP grants at this time.

Methodology

The following resources were accessed, interviews performed, and documents received to develop this report:

- Websites
 - FAA.gov
 - 2025-2029 NPIAS Report
 - AIP Handbook
 - Sponsor Assurances
 - Grant history information for airports, including O52
 - General Aviation Airports Reports
 - Asset 1
 - Asset 2
 - UScode.house.gov
 - Title 49
 - Section 47103
 - Section 47114
 - Sutterbuttesaviation.org
- Interviews
 - Staff of Sutter County Development Services Department
 - Staff of Sutter County District Attorney's Office
 - Staff of Sutter Buttes Regional Aviation Association
- Documents
 - Sutter County FY 2024-2025 Recommended Budget (B-9)
 - Facilities Agreement between the County of Sutter and Sutter Buttes Regional Aviation Association for the Sutter County Airport

- Airport Layout Plan 04-29-2005
- Sutter County Airport ALP 9-4-2013
- Sutter County Assessor's Office property records
 - Assessor's Map Bk. 20-pg. 16 year 1991
- Memorandum provided to Sutter County Grand Jury from the District Attorney Office
- Previous Grand Jury Reports
 - 2011-2012
- Articles
 - The Appeal Democrat (Online Articles)
 - Will nonprofit pilot Sutter County Airport? (March 10, 2012)
 - Sutter County Grand Jury: Clip the Airport (July 3, 2012)
 - New flight plan for Sutter County Airport? (November 20, 2012)
- Video/Film
 - Video footage of inauguration of Sutter County Airport (1947)

Discussion

SUTTER COUNTY AND SBRAA AGREEMENT

On April 22, 2014, Sutter County and Sutter Buttes Regional Aviation Association (SBRAA) entered into a Facilities Management Agreement transferring the day-to-day operation and control of Sutter County Airport within the perimeter fencing to SBRAA. This agreement was renewed as of June 25, 2024, for a second 10-year term.

According to SBRAA's website, SBRAA is a local association of pilots, aviation advocates, Yuba-Sutter business supporters, friends, and families committed to fully assuming the ongoing operation, maintenance, improvement, and growth of the Sutter County Airport.

Since the agreement has been in place, SBRAA has worked to ensure the Sutter County Airport operates entirely under its own funding without requiring any funding from the County. It is stated in the Sutter County FY 2024-2025 Recommended Budget (B-9) the "Sutter County Airport does not receive any money from the General Fund."

Sutter County maintains its role as Airport Sponsor. An airport sponsor is defined in Title 49, Section 47102(26) of the United States Code as, "a public agency that submits to the Secretary under this subchapter an application for financial assistance."

Development Services oversees Sutter County Airport for Sutter County. In the agreement with SBRAA, the County is obligated to assign a County employee to act as the Airport Manager and will provide 20 hours of time per year to fulfill the obligations. This time is dedicated to meeting with SBRAA. SBRAA will inform the

Airport Manager of their concerns and needs, who then reports this information to FAA. SBRAA does not interact with FAA regarding airport improvements.

SUTTER COUNTY AIRPORT FEDERAL FUNDING

Federal grants were issued to Sutter County Airport in 1967, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2010, and 2012. These grants were issued prior to the SBRAA agreement. A grant was applied for in 2016 but was not successful.

Sutter County Airport currently has a maximum of \$600,000 of entitlement funding available to it from the FAA. To apply for a FAA discretionary grant, this entitlement money may be used to pay the Sponsor's portion of the project cost, which for Sutter County Airport would have been 10 percent of the total projects cost.

For example, if Sutter County Airport required extensive repairs to the runway, the \$600,000 of entitlement funding could be used as the 10 percent local share. The total available project cost would then be \$6,000,000 with 10 percent of the local share covered by entitlement funding (\$600,000), and the remaining 90 percent (\$5,400,000) distributed to Sutter County Airport through the competitively allocated FAA discretionary funding. All money for the \$6,000,000 project would come from entitlement dollars and competitive discretionary funding with no money required from Sutter County.

If no major projects are required, these entitlement funding dollars can be used to pay for certain studies including a Master Plan. A Master Plan reviews the existing facilities, projects future aeronautical demand for the facilities, and a list of projects to accommodate that demand. The list of projects in the Master Plan will then influence the CIP and ACIP.

Currently, there is no Master Plan, CIP, or ACIP for Sutter County Airport. Typically, the CIP will be developed to identify future capital improvement projects. Sutter County Development Services staff meets with FAA annually to discuss any upcoming needs. The lack of both the CIP and ACIP, and the lack of an overall plan for Sutter County Airport mean FAA is not provided with information to give guidance or issue any entitlement or discretionary funds to Sutter County Airport.

SBRAA reports on the needs of the Airport at their monthly meeting with County staff. These needs are based on operation, such as maintenance of the facilities, and improvements to the airfield, but those needs are not being addressed and reported to FAA by Sutter County given the lack of a current CIP and ACIP.

Both Sutter County Development Services and SBRAA staff noted it would be too costly to close the Airport today. This is because Sutter County is obligated by the grant assurances to remain an airport or pay back the funding provided to it within the previous 20 years. The 20 years continue from the most recent grant acceptance date of 2012, therefore ending Sponsor Assurance requirements in 2032. However, there is no term limit with respect to real property acquired with federal funds, including land deeded to Sutter County from a federal agency if the Sutter County Airport functions as an airport.

LAND USE

A memorandum provided to the Sutter County Grand Jury from the District Attorney's Office explained County Counsel believes they are unable to attest, with a high level of certainty, there are no non-conforming land uses on airport property.

County Counsel is concerned with two leases issued on airport property. The leases are for the Twin Cities Gun Club and the Sutter Animal Services Authority (SASA). It was stated the gun club is an example of a non-compliant use. However, they were

less sure about the animal shelter belonging to SASA, and indicate it is likely a non-conforming use. This implies no clarification has been issued to Sutter County on whether the lease is a non-conforming use.

Neither of the leases are within the perimeter fence of Sutter County Airport, the area devoted to public airport purposes. The area within the perimeter fence would be considered required for aeronautical purposes. Aeronautical use is defined as any activity that involves, makes possible, is required for the safety of, or is otherwise directly related to, the operation of aircraft. The land on which aeronautical activity takes place is by its nature aeronautical use.

Title 49 section 47107(c)(1) of the United States Code says "land is needed for an airport purpose when the land may be needed for an aeronautical purpose and revenue from an interim use of the land contributes to the financial self-sufficiency of the airport."

Any land not required for aeronautical purposes may undergo a land use change. This change is in the "interim" until the land is required for aeronautical use. The land use change requires FAA approval.

The land use change only applies to individual leases for a specified term. If the same land is to be issued a new lease, the land use change process must be started again for the new lease. This will require FAA's approval for the land use change. The FAA does not approve leases.

County Counsel noted all proper procedures were followed in providing leases to SASA and the Twin Cities Gun Club, however if this were true, there would be no concerns about non-conforming land uses.

GRANT ASSURANCE CONCERNS

A highlighted version of the Grant Assurances document was provided to the Sutter County Grand Jury from the District Attorney Office. The highlights are from County Counsel and imply Grant Assurances 21, 29, and 31 are the assurances describing non-conforming land uses.

Grant Assurance 21. Compatible Land Use states, "It will take action, to the extent reasonable, including the adoption of zoning laws, to restrict the use of land adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of the airport to activities and purposes compatible with normal airport operations, including landing and takeoff of aircraft."

The two incompatible land uses on Sutter County Airport were both identified as being outside of the perimeter fence of the Airport's operations area. This area is the land leased to SBRAA for operation of the Airport. This implies these two uses are outside the area required for normal operation of the Airport.

A land use change from aeronautical use to non-aeronautical interim land use will nullify the concern with Grant Assurance 21.

Grant Assurance 29. Airport Layout Plan says no changes may be made on the Airport that are not on the ALP. Changes made to the Airport that are not on the ALP are an issue if those changes adversely affect the safety, utility, and efficiency of any federally owned, leased, or funded property. The Sponsor must, if requested by the Secretary, eliminate the adverse effect, or bear all costs of relocating such property (or replacement thereof) to a site acceptable to the Secretary.

Neither of the two land uses negatively affect the safety, utility, or efficiency of the federal investments made at Sutter County Airport. The leases were executed without the proper procedures to change the land use designation on the ALP. This is a violation of grant assurances.

Grant Assurance 31 Disposal of Land part C. describes the sale of parcels. No parcels were sold from airport property. There is no violation of Grant Assurance 31.

There are two more grant assurances County Counsel did not highlight as a concern but need to be discussed.

The leases provided to the two entities do not adhere to Grant Assurance 5. Preserving Rights and Powers, subsection b. which states, "Subject to 49 U.S.C. 47107(a)(16) and (x), it will not sell, lease, encumber, or otherwise transfer or dispose of any part of its title or other interests in property shown on Exhibit A to this application...for the duration of the terms, conditions, and assurances in this Grant Agreement without approval by the Secretary."

Like Grant Assurance 29, the land use change process was to be followed and approved by the Secretary before issuing the leases. Because they weren't, the leases violated Grant Assurance 5.

Grant Assurance 25. Airport Revenues is another concern, as it states, "All revenues generated by the airport...will be expended by it for the capital or operating costs of the airport; the local airport system; or other local facilities which are owned or operated by the owner or operator of the airport and which are directly and substantially related to the actual air transportation of passengers or property..." The leases and revenue from the leases are to be paid into the Airport fund and those revenues are only allowed to be expended for the Airport, and not for any other fund of the County.

If the revenue from the leases is not deposited into the Airport fund, civil penalties may be imposed if corrective action is not implemented.

RESULT

Because County Counsel believes they cannot attest Sutter County can comply with grant assurances, it has prevented Sutter County staff from accepting or applying for grants since 2016.

Staff of Development Services and SBRAA indicated their knowledge of County Counsel's concerns with the grant assurances. However, no staff could explain what the concerns were, nor could they explain why the grant funding was not allowed to be applied for or accepted.

The memorandum indicated Sutter County had made attempts to work with FAA regarding encumbrances and incompatible land uses from 2019 to 2024. It is unclear what efforts have been made or why five years have passed without a solution.

As a result of not accepting or applying for AIP grants, Sutter County Airport has not received any further entitlement dollars since 2014 when the Airport reached the maximum \$600,000 entitlement balance. Sutter County has forfeited 10 years of entitlement dollars in that timeframe due to expiring entitlement funds. The expiring funds are then transferred to FAA for use by other airports.

The total expired funds add up to \$1,500,000 (\$150,000 per year for 10 years). It also means Sutter County forfeited the ability to leverage up to \$13,500,000 in federal discretionary grant funds for airport improvements. The total loss of potential federal funding, at no cost to Sutter County, is \$15,000,000.

Findings

- F1. SBRAA is operating and maintaining the Sutter County Airport cost effectively and efficiently resulting in no funding requirements from the General Fund to support the Airport.
- F2. Omitting SBRAA from the annual meetings between FAA and Sutter County has resulted in no airport planning or identified eligible improvements to the Sutter County Airport since 2016.
- F3. The lack of a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Airport Capital Improvement Program (ACIP) plans results in Sutter County Airport being unable to perform expensive capital improvements needed by the Airport in the next three years.
- F4. Not drawing on or using the allowable FAA entitlement funds account has led to \$1,500,000 of entitlements funds expiring over 10 years and losing the opportunity to leverage up to \$15,000,000 in airport improvements.
- F5. The assumption by County Counsel the grant assurances cannot be met due to non-conforming land uses, without getting clarification from FAA, has led County Counsel to prevent Sutter County staff from accepting or applying for grant funding since 2016.
- F6. Improper procedures on land use changes for the two non-aeronautical leases have led to the violation of grant assurances.
- F7. The lack of transparency between County Counsel, Development Services Department, SBRAA, and the FAA has prohibited the development of a plan to comply with Grant Assurances resulting in no grant-funded improvements to the Airport for more than 10 years.

Recommendations

- R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Development Services to develop a CIP and ACIP for Sutter County Airport by January 31, 2026.
- R2. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors amend the Facilities Management Agreement between Sutter County and SBRAA to allow SBRAA to be partners in developing plans, CIP, and ACIP documentation for Sutter County Airport, including being present for discussions with FAA regarding these documents by March 13, 2026.
- R3. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Development Services to present the CIP and ACIP for the Sutter County Airport to FAA by the next annual ACIP meeting with FAA in April 2026.
- R4. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors direct the Director of Development Services to work with County Counsel and the District Attorney to develop a corrective action plan to allow Sutter County Airport to become compliant with grant assurances and eligible to apply for Federal grant funding by December 31, 2026.

Required Responses

Pursuant to California Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, the Sutter County Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS OF RECEIPT:

Sutter County Board of Supervisors: Findings F1, F2, F3, F4, and F5; and recommendations R1, R2, R3, and R4.

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES ARE REQUESTED:

Director of Development Services: Findings F1, F2, F3, F4, and F5; Recommendations R1, R2, R3, and R4.

County Counsel: Findings F2, F3, F4, and F5; Recommendations R1, R2, R3, and R4.

District Attorney: Findings F2, F3, F4, and F5; Recommendations R1, R2, R3, and R4.

AUDIT RESULTS HALT FUTURE PROGRAM FUNDING



MAY 30, 2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY

SUMMARY

For three years in a row, an independent auditor identified significant issues with loans in Sutter County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Sutter County, like many areas, utilizes the CDBG program to fund projects benefiting low-income residents, including low-income home loan programs. Beginning with the 2021 Audit Report, very little progress has been made in addressing the issues and concerns raised in the annual audit reports.

Over \$900,000 in current loan funding is in jeopardy and Sutter County has been suspended from applying for future CDBG state and federal funding.

In 2024, the State of California's Department of Housing and Community Development halted future funding for Sutter County's CDBG Program until the county addresses issues raised in the audits of the existing loan program and until the issues are satisfactorily resolved.

GLOSSARY

- HCD California Department of Housing and Community Development
- CDBG Community Development Block Grant
- DSD Development Services Department
- LSL Lance, Soll & Lunghard CPAs & Advisors
- RHA Sutter, Yuba, Colusa and Nevada Counties Regional Housing Authority

BACKGROUND

The 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury investigation focused on the County's Single Audit Reports for fiscal year ending June 2023 and fiscal year ending June 2022. Lance, Stoll and Lunghard (LSL), an independent auditing firm located in Sacramento, California, prepared the Single Audit Reports. The Single Audit Reports can be found on the Sutter County Auditor-Controller's web site:

[<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/auditor-controller>].

The Sutter County Sutter Grand Jury focused on the findings prepared by LSL regarding the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) loans under the authority of the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). As required by federal and state laws, LSL conducted annual fiscal year audits of Sutter County's CDBG program funding for the 28 existing CDBG loans administered by Development Services Department (DSD).

In 2021, DSD assumed administrative responsibility for these 28 loans in the CDBG program from the Sutter, Yuba, Colusa and Nevada Counties Regional Housing Authority (RHA). All 28 loans were authorized and approved through RHA's administration of the CDBG program.

The Sutter County Grand Jury met via Zoom with LSL to determine if a formal investigation around the issues raised in the LSL Single Audit Reports was appropriate. In the meeting, LSL told the Sutter County Grand Jury that DSD staff will be addressing these deficiencies prior to the completion of the Single Year Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2024. LSL told the Sutter County Grand Jury that if Sutter County did not address the issues raised in the audits, it would be the fourth year that these issues have been raised as a material weakness and/or a significant deficiency.

The Sutter County Grand Jury met with the Sutter County Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office to better understand this office's role and responsibilities. This office is responsible for pursuing payments of delinquent debts owed to Sutter County. However, before the Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office can act, the outstanding debt must be referred to this office by county department staff.

METHODOLOGY

- The Sutter County Grand Jury researched Sutter County's Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) by examining the following Single Audit Reports that were found on the Sutter County Auditor-Controller's website.
 - LSL Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2020
 - LSL Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2021
 - LSL Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2022
 - LSL Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2023
 - [<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/auditor-controller>]
- The Sutter County Grand Jury met via zoom with LSL to determine whether to begin a formal investigation. Information provided by LSL regarding the CDBG Single Audit Report(s) over the previous three years, resulted in the Sutter County Grand Jury proceeding with a formal investigation.
- As a part of the investigation, the Sutter County Grand Jury interviewed staff of the Auditor-Controller's Office.
- As a part of the investigation, the Sutter County Grand Jury interviewed staff of the Development Services Department.

- As a part of the investigation, the Sutter County Grand Jury received written documentation regarding the current status of the CDBG program.
- As a part of the investigation, the Sutter County Grand Jury interviewed staff of the Treasurers-Tax Collector's Office.

DISCUSSION

The Sutter County **LSL Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2023**

(Audit Report 2023) stated:

- a. There were material weaknesses identified under financial statements.
- b. There were material weaknesses identified under federal awards, as well as significant deficiencies identified. (Audit Report 2023, page 9.)

The Audit Report 2023 noted out of a sample size of 19 loans, 13 loans lacked the required information regarding loan documentation and proof of insurance. The LSL audit identified areas of concern related to loan compliance requirements including: maintaining loan documentation; confirming proof of insurance; and verifying addresses associated with the loans and the recipients. (Audit Report 2023, page 11.)

The Sutter County **LSL Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2022**

(Audit Report 2022) under **Condition**, noted of the 19 loan balances sampled, the County was unable to provide supporting documentation relating to proof of insurance for 13 loans. The Audit Report 2022 under the heading **Repeat Finding** states: "This is a repeat finding for year ended June 30, 2022. See prior year finding 2021-002." [sic]. (Audit Report 2022, page 11.)

The Sutter County **LSL Single Audit Report for Fiscal Year Ending June 2020**

(Audit Report 2020), identified significant deficiencies in the CDBG program during the time that the program was under RHA administration.

As of December 2024, there are 28 loans totaling \$1,682,306 in the Sutter County CDBG program.

In December 2024, information provided by DSD on the 28 CDBG loans indicated that the loans were allocated into the following categories:

- A. Eleven properties are in compliance for FY2024-2025
 - a. \$653,520.12 Principal Loan Balance
 - b. \$127,433.61 Interest Balance
 - c. \$780,953.73 Total
- B. Six properties were sold and not responding to DSD correspondence
 - a. \$98,551.30 Principal Loan Balance
 - b. \$34,425.08 Interest
 - c. \$132,976.38 Total
- C. Eleven properties were not responding to DSD correspondence.
 - a. \$567,572.91 Principal Loan Balance
 - b. \$200,802.49 Interest Balance
 - c. \$768,375.40 Total

Of the 28 loans in the CDBG program, there were a total of 17 loan recipients that did not respond to DSD correspondence. The correspondence requested information to address the issues raised in the Single Audit Reports. These 17 loans represent \$900,000 in jeopardy of which \$665,000 is allocated to loan principal and \$235,000 is allocated to unpaid interest payments. (See B and C above)

DSD is working with HCD to address and resolve the issues identified by LSL regarding the loan deficiencies. DSD indicated a designated staff person has been assigned to address and resolve deficiency issues for each of the 17 loans noted above.

Written communication dated June 2023 from HCD staff stated to DSD that the county is currently ineligible to use CDBG funding due to "outstanding findings in

the 2022 Single Audits.” In February 2024 written communication from HCD staff to DSD stated that “the county will be ineligible to apply for additional CDBG funding or utilize CDBG program income.”

According to the Sutter County Treasurer-Tax Collector’s Office, it has the legal authority to collect debts owed to the County using various methods upon request by another county department. This information is documented on their website.

FINDINGS

- F1. Sutter County's failure to resolve the problems and deficiencies with its CDBG loans has led to HCD suspending all future federal and state funding application opportunities for CDBG grants that terminates important state and federal funding opportunities for Sutter County.
- F2. Sutter County taxpayers are at risk for not recovering over \$900,000 in loan repayments from 17 loan recipients. The \$900,000 can be broken down into \$665,000 in loan principal and \$235,000 in unpaid interest payments.
- F3. The Sutter County Treasurer-Tax Collector’s Office has multiple legal collection options to secure payment of any outstanding monies owed to Sutter County as stated on their website, however, the Development Services Department staff has not consulted with the Office on possible legal loan recovery options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County BOS directs the DSD Director to engage the Sutter County Treasurer-Tax Collector to determine the feasibility of collecting these outstanding CDBG funds by September 30, 2025.

Regarding the legally collectable funds, county staff shall start implementing the multiple options available to the Sutter County Treasurer-Tax Collector, as noted in Findings #3, to collect the outstanding CDBG monies owed to Sutter County by December 30, 2025.

If the DSD' CDBG funds are deemed not collectable by the Sutter County Treasurer-Tax Collector, on or before March 30, 2026, the BOS should declare the outstanding funds uncollectable and direct staff to terminate efforts to collect funds and remove outstanding balances from Sutter County's budget by June 30, 2026.

- R2. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors direct the Sutter County Development Services Department Director to prepare a CDBG Annual Report to the Sutter County Grand Jury and the Board of Supervisors that documents actions being taken to ensure that the 28 loans in the CDBG program are in legal compliance. This request shall be completed by October 1, 2025.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

Pursuant to California Penal Codes sections 933 and 933.05, the Sutter County Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS OF RECEIPT:

The Sutter County Board of Supervisors shall respond to R1 and R2.

SAFER STREETS – SAFER KIDS

SUTTER COUNTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS' SAFETY: TRAFFIC CONGESTION DURING DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PERIODS



MAY 30, 2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY

SUMMARY

In a diligent effort to ensure the safety of elementary school students, the 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury has conducted a thorough investigation into the traffic congestion affecting three local elementary schools during drop-off and pick-up periods.

The investigation focused on Tierra Buena, Bridge Street, and Franklin Elementary Schools. The Sutter County Grand Jury's investigation found that significant population growth and a dramatic increase in both local and through-traffic have heightened safety risks for students at schools situated along growth corridors.

The Sutter County Grand Jury has identified several mitigating actions that could be implemented to reduce these potential threats during peak drop-off and pick-up times ensuring a safer environment for the children of Sutter County.

GLOSSARY

<u>Blue Zone Project.</u>	The Blue Zone Project receives funding through State sources and focuses on making healthy choices the easy choices by improving the environment, policies, and social networks within a community. Yuba-Sutter counties are Blue Zone project recipients.
<u>CPR</u>	Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation
<u>CSPTA</u>	California State Parent/Teachers Association
<u>LAFCO</u>	Local Agency Formation Commission
<u>MUTCD</u>	The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (2014 Edition; Part 7; Revised January 11, 2024)

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a Congressionally authorized and funded program to create safe, convenient and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to and from schools.

Title I

Title I is a federal program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, providing supplemental funding to school districts and schools with high percentages of low-income students to improve academic achievement and close achievement gaps.

BACKGROUND

At the request of parents and expressions of concern from local residents of the targeted schools' communities, the 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury initiated an investigation into traffic-related safety issues directly impacting elementary school students attending Tierra Buena, Bridge Street, and Franklin Elementary Schools. Traffic congestion related to elementary school student drop-off and pick-up times during the day have contributed to heightened risks to students and through-traffic drivers during these high-use periods. The situation has become increasingly critical as school enrollments increase, urban sprawl has reached out to once-rural schools without necessary road and related infrastructural improvements, and school busing options, where available, are being largely rebuffed by parents in favor of personal vehicle use. According to the California State Parent/Teachers Association (<https://capta.org/focus-areas/community-concerns/safe-routes-to-school/>) in 1969, approximately 50 percent of children walked or bicycled to school, with approximately 87 percent of children living within one mile of school walking or bicycling. Further, the CSPTA states that today, fewer than 15 percent of

schoolchildren walk or bicycle to school. As much as 20 percent to 30 percent of morning traffic can be generated by parents driving their children to schools, and traffic-related crashes are the top cause of death and major injury for children ages 1 to 17 in the U.S.

METHODOLOGY

To better understand the issue of traffic flows and how it relates to student safety during drop-off/pick-up periods at Sutter County schools, the members of the 2024-2025 Sutter County Grand Jury scheduled and held a series of meetings/interviews during the Fall and Winter of 2024 with senior school staff at three representative schools within Sutter County -- Tierra Buena Elementary School, Franklin Elementary School, and Bridge Street Elementary School. Interviews were held with staff of the following entities:

- Tierra Buena Elementary School
- Franklin Elementary School
- Bridge Street Elementary School
- Yuba City Public Works
- Yuba City Police Department

The following entities were contacted for information related to our investigation:

- Sutter County Development Services
- Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
- Sutter County Superintendent of Schools office

Student attendance profiles, law enforcement traffic reports, and traffic studies were provided to the Grand Jury, or found through on-line research, including extensive reference to the California State Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Part 7; Traffic Controls for School Areas). In addition, the following reports and data were

provided by Sutter County and Yuba City senior staff. Those included, but are not limited to:

- Safe Routes to Schools grant applications (2020-2024)
- Blue Zone Project grant applications (2022-2024)
- Yuba City Police Calls related to Tierra Buena Elementary Schools (2023-2024)
- Local Agency Formation Commission's (LAFCO) Report on the Proposed Tierra Buena Annexation (2003)
- Letter to LAFCO from Sheriff-Coroner Jim Denny (2003)
- Vehicular and Pedestrian Study Conducted for the Township Road/Franklin Road Corridor (December 2022)

Photos were taken by Sutter County Grand Jury members of functional and non-functional school signage at the schools' sites and are included in this report. Inconsistencies in designated Traffic Safety personnel training were noted by the Sutter County Grand Jury, with some personnel being given traffic safety and CPR training annually at one school, and others being provided with minimal traffic safety training and no CPR training at all. At a third school visited by the Sutter County Grand Jury, no traffic safety personnel were hired. School profiles are presented below.

Tierra Buena Elementary School

DISCUSSION

Tierra Buena Elementary School has a full-time K-8th grades student enrollment of 627 students, with 70 full-time instructional and auxiliary staff. 68% of its students fall under Title I eligibility. It has an established 24-member Safety Committee, comprised of both school instructional staff and parents, vetted by the school's Site Council. Tierra Buena Elementary School has one (1) operational bus that carries 35-36 students to the morning drop-off at school, and 36-37 students ride the bus home after the pick-up period. As estimated by the school's senior management who deal with student drop-offs and pick-up daily, 10% of all students walk to school (estimated at 63 students). The remaining students, or approximately 524 students, are dropped off and picked up from the school site on a twice-daily basis.

There are three crossing guards assigned to the perimeter roads that border Tierra Buena Elementary School on the east (Villa Avenue), west (Hooper Road), and north (Butte House Road). There are no "School Ahead" flashing warning signs on any of these perimeter roads around Tierra Buena Elementary School to warn through and local traffic of the school's presence and possible street/road crossings by students. There is one flashing (solar powered) stop sign on the northeast corner of Butte House and Hooper Roads. It did not function during the early months of our investigation but was operable after mid-February 2025 when the trees shading the solar panel were pruned (see picture).

Neighbors living in rental properties on the north side of Butte House Road, across the street from Tierra Buena Elementary School have had their driveways and access to Butte House Road often blocked by student pick-up/drop-off vehicles, according to both residents and school administration. According to the school's senior staff,

student drop-off/pick-up congestion has led to a minor accident between the school's bus and a private vehicle but was not formally reported to the Yuba City Police Department by Tierra Buena School officials as it occurred within the school's parking lot. A second school-related traffic incident, unrelated to the Tierra Buena Elementary School's on-campus traffic incident, was documented by the Yuba City Police Department. In several cases, reported by senior Tierra Buena School administration personnel, the school's Principal, untrained in traffic mitigation, has had to intervene with parents in autos who are awaiting their students' pick-up who have blocked driveways of residents along Butte House Road, across the road to the north of the school's property. East-west through traffic along Butte House Road is forced to divert into the center lane to avoid the lines of parked drop-off and pick-up vehicles. Currently, Tierra Buena Elementary School's crossing guards, hired on a part-time basis, receive no formal training or certification from the Yuba City Police Department.

Potential traffic and public safety concerns, related to the 2004 Tierra Buena annexation, were reported to LAFCO by the Sutter County Sheriff's Office in their letter to LAFCO and included in the 2004 annexation documents. In a 2004 letter to the LAFCO committee, former Sutter County Sheriff Jim Denny identified "gaps" in patrol responsibilities within the Yuba City/Sutter County interfaces that surround Tierra Buena Elementary School due to the Tierra Buena's proposed annexation plan as being inconsistent and uneven. The urban growth issue was identified by nearly all of our interviewees and was described as creating "urban problems" among once-rural schools. They complained that traffic, and other safety concerns, were not adequately addressed during residential construction in the 1970's and 1980's. Road maintenance, widening, complementary sidewalk construction, lighting, signage, etc. have all remained largely "rural" along the Butte House Road corridor

north of Tierra Buena School, while those areas within the LAFCO-approved Tierra Buena annexation subject to new residential construction have more improved infrastructure (sidewalks, wider streets, better drainage, etc.) consistent with Yuba City's recently developed "urban" areas.

FINDINGS

- F-TB1. A minor accident within school boundaries was not reported to the Yuba City Police Department.
- F-TB2. Congestion due to pick-up and drop-off causes road blockages requiring untrained professionals to mitigate the conflict between residents and school traffic.
- F-TB3. The existing solar-powered stop sign w/ flasher at Butte House and Hooper Roads has become seasonally inoperable due to tree shade on powering solar panels.
- F-TB4. Vehicle backups for drop off and pick up at Tierra Buena lead to the unsafe use of the center lane to bypass the congestion.
- F-TB5. Crossing guards at Tierra Buena Elementary School would benefit from formal training and certification from the Yuba City Police Department, or a public safety program delivered by Yuba City Unified School District.
- F-TB6. Yuba City's haphazard annexation process over the past 30 years has created leapfrog urbanization that assumed once-rural schools into its urban boundaries, without provision of sufficient investment in road and pedestrian infrastructure.

Bridge Street Elementary School

DISCUSSION

Bridge Street Elementary School is a long-standing K-5th grade school, located within the central urban complex of Yuba City, at the crossing of two major thoroughfares – Plumas and Bridge Streets. Bridge Street Elementary currently has an enrollment of 480 students, of which 100% are Title I eligible. Its Site Council, comprised of both credentialed instructional staff and parents, oversees the school's Safety Plan. The school has contracted a private company, ICS4 Schools, to manage its student safety issues, and develop its school emergency response plan.

Yuba City Unified School District guidelines on busing do not require Bridge Street Elementary to provide these services to its students. The absence of a busing option requires all students to walk or use private vehicles to and from the school, increasing the number of vehicles around the school during weekday pick-up and drop-off periods and increasing risk to conflicts with students and drivers. School staff estimate that 30% of enrolled students walk to school, leaving approximately 336 students dependent on daily drop-off and pick-up transportation at the beginning and end of each school day. Students living in residences north of Bridge Street must cross one of Yuba City's busiest intersections (according to a Yuba City Public Works traffic study conducted in April 2019) twice a day to get to school. While Bridge Street Elementary School was initially included in a 2023 "Blue Zone" grant application process, initiated by Yuba City Public Works, no follow-up to the grant submission or application status was reported back to Bridge Street Elementary School's administration. The Blue Zone Project is a health-focused initiative that aims to improve community health by making permanent changes to

streets, schools, and other public spaces. The project includes efforts to make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists, and to encourage active living.

During daily student drop-off and pick-up times, traffic can stretch to the west far down Bridge Street, overflowing the small parking lot in front of the school's office, with no immediate traffic supervision of this twice-daily traffic load. This creates an immediate traffic hazard potentially impacting upon students. There are few or no other parking options for the school, though an informal parking allowance for staff has been worked out with the adjoining Hmong Church.

School traffic signage along both Bridge Street and Plumas Street is minimal and not consistent with other Sutter County school signage, as directed by the Department of Transportation's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (*MUTCD, Section 7A.01, "Need for Standards"*). As a model, signage for all Sutter County schools should emulate those used at Nuestro Elementary School (along Broadway and Nuestro roads proximate to school) or those recently installed along Clark Avenue in Yuba City (for the St. Isidore Elementary School crossing and the Morton/Marcia and Clark Avenue Street crossing), which is compliant with MUTCD's guidelines for preferred school signage.



FINDINGS

- F-BS1. The lack of "School Ahead" and only one "Students Walking" signage posted on either Plumas or Bridge Streets near the school site is inconsistent with other nearby Yuba City Unified School's signage.
- F-BS2. In 2023 the school's senior staff worked with Yuba City Unified School District, Yuba City Public Works, and Yuba City Police Department as collaborators on a "Safe Routes to School" grant application but it wasn't submitted.
- F-BS3. While the crossing guards at Bridge Street Elementary School work under its senior staff's supervision they do receive some traffic safety training from Yuba City Unified School District's Office of Student Services. Improvements to crossing guards' training may be realized through a collaboration between Yuba City Unified School District's student safety programs and Yuba City Police Department.
- F-BS4. As a result of limited hours and low compensation, there has been a high turnover in trained crossing guards leading to the use of untrained classroom staff or other untrained crossing guards.
- F-BS5. While some schools within the Yuba City Unified School District have traffic signage compliant with the higher standards set by the State's Department of Transportation's MUTCD, Bridge Street Elementary school, does not.
- F-BS6. A cursory examination of which YCUSD schools have adequate traffic signage and which do not would suggest that those schools with high Title I enrollment could benefit from additional signage and crossing guard training.

Franklin Elementary School

DISCUSSION

Franklin Elementary School is one of Sutter County's independent school districts, managed directly by its own elected Board of Directors. Located at the intersection of Township and Franklin roads, Franklin Elementary School is an example of Sutter County's elementary schools serving largely rural populations. As a Sutter County rural school, it falls under the patrol area of the Sutter County Sheriff's Office. There are 503 K-8 students enrolled at Franklin, with 35-38% Title I eligible. Half of the students are enrolled as inter-district transfers. Unlike Bridge Street Elementary and Tierra Buena Elementary schools, Franklin Elementary School has a long waiting list for new enrollments through inter-district transfers.

Approximately 90 students ride Franklin's one bus each day. There are an estimated 425+ students who rely on vehicle drop-off and pick-up. School staff supervise all student drop-off and pick-up during the scheduled morning and after-school times. Unlike Bridge Street School, there is adequate parking space for staff, with more designated parking being included in new construction that will house the school's administrative staff, to be completed by the start of the Fall 2025 semester. This reduces the need for on-street parking by parents dropping off and picking up their attending children. There are no street crossing guards assigned to the Franklin/Township crossroads on which the school is sited. All instructional staff have completed mandated CPR and safety training provided by a private contractor (Keenan & Associates) but none receive traffic safety training from the Sutter County Sheriff's Office.

There are two solar powered "School Ahead" flashing warning signs located north of the school (on Township Road) and west of the school (on Franklin Road). While

the one solar powered sign on Township Road was operable during our visits, the sign located on Franklin Road was inoperable due to the shade from trees and shrubs growing next to it.



Functioning Sign



Inoperable Sign

Following a fatal accident, in 2019, involving a student walking to Franklin Elementary School, a pedestrian and vehicular traffic study was conducted for the Township and Franklin roads corridors that impact upon Franklin Elementary School. It was provided to the school's senior staff by Sutter County's Development Services and indicates higher use of the Township Road north-south corridor during harvest season. It also showed that most vehicles, including heavy farm transport vehicles, travel at greater-than-posted speeds, especially along Township Road's north-south route near the school site.

FINDINGS

- F-FE1. A lack of roadside maintenance led to foliage overgrowing the solar arrays for the "School Ahead" flashing signs and the signs not functioning as intended.
- F-FE2. An inconsistency with the MUTCD guidelines results in no school-ahead warning signals south of the school's site along Township Road, or east of the school along Franklin Road.
- F-FE3. The lack of sidewalks that stretch beyond the immediate boundaries of the school's parking lots discourages student pedestrian use of the roadways along Township and Franklin Roads leading to increased vehicle use at Franklin Elementary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, the Yuba City Unified School District's Governing Board, and the Franklin School District Board of Directors, adopt a formal and automated traffic incident reporting procedure with reporting automatically sent to and included in Yuba City Police Department's and Sutter County Sheriff's Office's annual traffic incident reports by the start of the 2026-2027 school year.
- R2. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Yuba City Council instruct the Yuba City Police Chief to increase enforcement of traffic and off-street parking violations along Butte House Road and Villa Avenue, bordering Tierra Buena Elementary School to the north and east respectively, that occur during the school's drop-off and pick-up times. A warning may be first issued to parents of the school's students, but traffic and parking violation enforcement should begin by the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

- R3. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools, the Yuba City Unified School District's Governing Board, and Franklin Elementary School District's Board of Directors adopt a policy requiring all crossing guard employees, or volunteer crossing guards, undergo and maintain certified training for road crossings, including use of proper high-visibility vests and hand-signage, by the start of the 2025-2026 school year.
- R4. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Sutter County Board of Supervisors and Yuba City Council adhere to and update relevant local traffic codes to include standardized traffic signage for all schools, including upgrading low-visibility signs to solar powered flashing warning signs placed for oncoming traffic by January 1, 2026.
- R5. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends the Board of Supervisors and the Yuba City Council to direct the Sutter County Development Services and Yuba City Public Works respectively, to update maintenance procedures for solar powered school traffic signs to include regular foliage trimming which blocks solar panels used for solar powered signs by January 1, 2026.
- R6. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Sutter County Superintendent of Schools and Yuba City Unified School District's Governing Board apply for "Safe Routes to Schools" grant funds to promote student walking and biking commute to their respective schools.
- R7. The Sutter County Grand Jury recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors, and the Yuba City Council direct the Sutter County Development Services and Yuba City Public Works' Director respectively, to conduct and complete "Blue Zone" studies for Yuba City Unified and Sutter County schools to improve community health surrounding those schools by January 2027.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933 and 933.05 the Sutter County Grand Jury requests responses from the following:

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 60 DAYS OF RECEIPT:

Sutter County Superintendent of Schools: Respond to Recommendations R1, R3, and R6.

Yuba City Unified School District's Governing Board: Respond to Recommendations R1, R3, and R6.

Franklin Elementary School's Board of Directors: Respond to Recommendations R1 and R3.

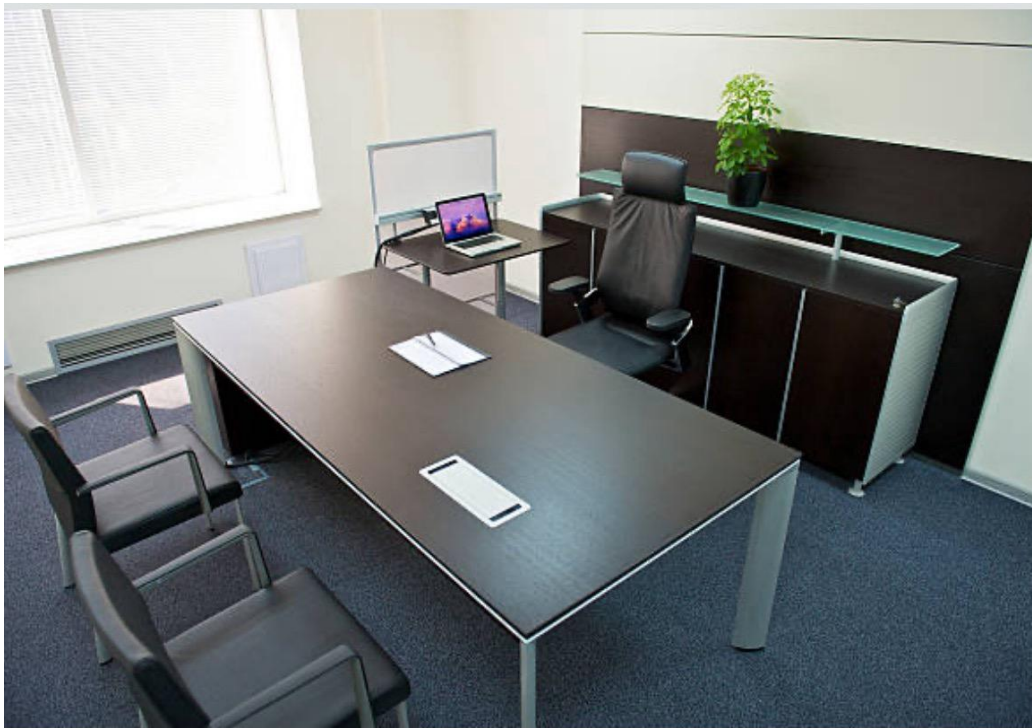
THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS OF RECEIPT:

Sutter County Board of Supervisors: Respond to Recommendations R4, R5, and R7.

Yuba City – City Council: Respond to Recommendations R2, R4, R5, and R7.

BETTER COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS = BETTER COMMUNITY HEALTH

**SUTTER COUNTY'S HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES:
REPORT ON INVESTIGATION OF ISSUES RELATED TO CLIENT AND
COMMUNITY ACCESS, DATA MANAGEMENT, PUBLIC
ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ALCOHOL & DRUG PROGRAM FUNDS
ALLOCATIONS**



MAY 30, 2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY

SUMMARY

The 2024 – 2025 Sutter County Grand Jury (SCGJ) investigated three issues directly related to Sutter County’s Health and Human Services (SCHHS) programs and management:

- 1) Community and client access to services
- 2) Accountability for staff/client time and measures of program impacts
- 3) Allocation of State Health Care Services/Substance Use Disorder (SUD) block grant funds mandated to community-based prevention services

After interviews with several senior SCHHS and First 5 program managers, review of SCHHS documents, budgets, and web sites, field visits to SCHHS offices (both active and closed), and outreach to relevant local and State officials, the Sutter County Grand Jury has concluded that improvements need to be made in client and public inquiry response systems, staff-time accountability measures and reporting, long-term program impacts reporting that is easily accessible by Sutter County residents, and an immediate increase in funds and SCHHS staff skills dedicated to community-based alcohol and drug prevention programming, including those that are youth focused.

GLOSSARY

First 5 California's First 5 program, established through Proposition 10, is a statewide initiative focused on improving the lives of children from prenatal to age five and their families, emphasizing early childhood development, health, and education through a network of local county commissions. First 5 programs are funded through an additional State tax imposed on tobacco product sales.

FNL Friday Night Live. FNL is a youth-focused, alcohol and drug prevention program funded by the California State Department of Health Care Services' Substance Use Disorder Services.

SAMSHA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services. A federal program funded under the Department of Health and Human Services. Funds are allocated to the applicant states via a block grant mechanism. (<https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/block-grants/subg>)

SAS SAS is a statistical software suite developed by SAS Institute, used for data management, advanced analytics, and business intelligence.

SB184 Among other actions, California's SB184 expands Medi-Cal eligibility to individuals aged 26-49 who do not have satisfactory immigration status, allowing them to receive the full scope of Medi-Cal benefits if they otherwise qualify. This means individuals in that age range, regardless of immigration status, can access the same Medi-Cal benefits as other California residents. (<https://www.fhcsd.org/california-expands-medi-cal-what-you-need-to-know?lang=es>)

SCGJ Sutter County Grand Jury.

SCHHS Sutter County Health and Human Services.

BACKGROUND

Other than the Sutter County's public education system, Sutter County's Health and Human Services (SCHHS) is the largest publicly funded services provider in Sutter County. In this 2024-2025 program year, it has a budget in excess of \$184.0 million annually with more than 570 full-time employees. According to its senior management, SCHHS currently provides direct services to 44,000 clients in Sutter County, a little more than 44% of Sutter County's population (according to the most recent 2022 US Census data for Sutter County). Its current staff vacancy rate is 15%. As confirmed by both budget reviews and testimony by its senior staff, 95% of its annual budget originates from federal or State sources that come to SCHHS through block grants and other titled funding mechanisms. Less than 4% of SCHHS's annual budget comes from Sutter County's General Fund. Historically, SCHHS's annual budget has been closer to \$161.0 million but last year's allocations from both federal and State sources supplemented its budget threshold, largely to accommodate California's newly enacted Senate Bill (SB) 184. SB184 completed the age eligibility of "Covered California" MediCal coverage for nearly all adults over the age of 26 residing in California. Effective January 1, 2024, SB184 expanded eligibility criteria for all California residents' access to MediCal services, regardless of immigration status. SB184 does not guarantee funds to support MediCal's increased client eligibility and services demand.

SCHHS's Mission Statement declares: "The Sutter County Health and Human Services Department promotes health, safety, economic stability, and quality of life for our community." In October 2024, SCHHS published its "Sutter County Health and Human Services Strategic Plan," which was submitted to the Sutter County Board of Supervisors for its review, comment, approval, and adoption. It is available on-line at

SCHHS's web site (<https://www.suttercounty.org/government/county-departments/health-and-human-services>).

SCHHS is a mix of several health, emergency response, psychiatric, and employment services, consolidated within six (6) branches. They are:

- Acute Psychiatric Services Branch
- Administrative and Fiscal Branch
- Adult Services Branch
- Children's Services Branch
- Employment and Eligibility Services Branch
- Public Health Branch

Additional services and programs are directly managed, or accountable to, SCHHS.

They are:

- Children and Families Commission (oversees Sutter County's "First 5" program)
- In-Home Supportive Services
- Substance Use Services
- Sutter-Yuba Behavioral Health

METHODOLOGY

The Sutter County Grand Jury (SCGJ) hosted and conducted structured direct interviews with SCHHS's senior staff. It also requested and reviewed SCHHS's 2024 - 2025 budgets, organizational charts, program documents, annual planning documents, and other supporting documents and publications either found on-line or requested from, and provided by, senior SCHHS staff. Site visits were conducted by SCGJ members to SCHHS's offices, though most were not open during normal working hours, nor were SCHHS reception staff present when we conducted unannounced drop-in visits.

Conversations were also conducted with community members, informal discussions with SCHHS staff, and reports to SCGJ members from current clients were all used to inform this report. SCGJ members also questioned California State Department of Health Care Services senior staff and consultants to confirm the California State Health Care Services' Substance Use Disorder (SUD) program's block grant allocation mandate to community-based prevention programming.

Measures for Staff Accountability to Clients and Community Access to SCHHS Staff

DISCUSSION

SCHHS/SUD uses the Credible Electronic Health Record platform by Qualifax to track client/provider file management. SCHHS staff provide care and services to Sutter County clients outside of the County office. Despite repeated questioning of SCHHS senior management staff, it remains unclear whether there is a comprehensive electronic client reporting system that measures SCHHS's provider/client time. All SCHHS staff are issued a mobile phone, provided by their

respective supervisors, but their individual GPS systems are not used to confirm staff's service times, nor are they used for personnel safety applications.

Documentation and tracking would ensure accountability and safety of both staff and clients.

Other than the Acute Psychiatric Services offices (Live Oak Blvd), no other SCHHS offices have a hardline phone system or receptionist's window to meet/greet the public. SCHHS staff were non-responsive to repeated direct calls (mailboxes were consistently full). Some SCHHS offices were closed when SCGJ members attempted to visit during normal weekday working hours. All senior SCHHS staff that were interviewed complained about a lack of office space, though in at least two instances, when SCGJ members visited their offices, they were found locked and empty. Post-covid (since 2023), most SCHHS's staff continue to work remotely at least one day/week including the Director who "works from home" 50% of the time. Many SCHHS staff work 9/80's or 4/10's, leaving both office space available and offices unattended (especially on Fridays). Due to the repeated grievance from SCHHS's senior staff of "not enough office space," all SCHHS staff interviews were conducted at the SCGJ's meeting room.

One SCHHS senior staff member interviewed by the SCGJ was unable to provide their Job Description, nor could they identify their direct supervisor – they suggested that the SCGJ "look on-line" to see if one exists.

The State SUD's senior staff and consultants confirmed that the rate of county-level investment in community-based prevention programming is set at 20% of total SUD funding. According to senior SCHHS staff, and SCGJ's review of the SUD budget, the total expenditure by SCHHS staff on community-based alcohol and drug prevention services and programs is less than 5% of total SUD block grant funds received by SCHHS from the State.

FINDINGS

- F1. As confirmed by SCGJ members' site visits, no reception staff are available to the public at SCHHS offices, except for SCHHS's Acute Psychiatric Services.
- F2. No Personnel Directory of SCHHS staff is available to the public (including their web sites) though this has been available to the public in the past.
- F3. Staff scheduling issues are leaving Sutter County residents without appropriate and timely HHS services.

Need for a “Dashboard” that Provides Progress on Standardized Indicators Measuring Community Health Improvements

DISCUSSION

A Community Health Assessment is conducted annually but is not reported on a publicly accessible forum. While two senior SCHHS staff interviewed by the SCGJ reported that many population-based “health indicators” (e.g., reported cases of diabetes, heart disease, cancers, obesity, etc.) seemed to be “getting worse,” in fact, neither could refer to collected data on these health indicators that would be available to the residents of Sutter County. Creation and use of a community-accessible performance and health standards “dashboard” has been “under development” by SCHHS for more than twenty years. Senior SCHHS management reported that a data system that would drive a community-accessible dashboard was projected to be completed in 1.5 years. There were no plans, however, to make that data available to the public. Senior SCHHS management stated that there were “no analysts” on staff that could create a public health measures dashboard. However, a

review of SCHHS' annual budget and organizational chart identifies five (5) "Analyst" positions.

FINDINGS

- F4. A \$80,000 contract to develop a standardized data analysis system was requested in the 2023-2024 budget, however there was no set date provided to the SCGJ for when action would be taken.
- F5. There are at least five (5) "data analysts" positions identified on SCHHS's organizational charts (with two more currently unfilled) but none of those positions are currently being employed to produce annual reports on health indicators performance that could be accessible to the public for review.

Underfunded State-mandated Community-based Alcohol and Drug Prevention Programming

DISCUSSION

The State Health Care Services/SUD requires 20% of all SUD block grant funds allocated to counties to be used for community-based prevention services. SCHHS reports it receives approximately \$2.20 million from the State's Health Care Services/SUD block grant funds – 20% would equal \$550,000.00. Outside the \$6,000 FNL allocation, SCHHS senior managers could not identify additional Sutter County programs to comply with this state mandate. SCGJ contacted the State Health Care Services/Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Division. A senior consultant of the State SUD program confirmed the required 20% mandate.

Several SCHHS staff positions are listed under "Prevention Services". In an interview with a SCHHS senior manager, the SCGJ inquired "What community-based alcohol and drug prevention services does your unit provide?" the SCHHS senior manager

responded with, "That's a good question." and concluded that there were none that s/he knew of.

When interviewed, the SCHHS senior managers were unaware of how to build the community's involvement in the FNL program. Additionally, they were unable to provide the SCGJ with information on how the community could apply for and/or access the FNL program.

FINDINGS

- F6. SCHHS is grossly underspending its 20% mandated funds for community-based alcohol and drug prevention, as only \$6,000 is budgeted for FNL programming.
- F7. All SCHHS staff listed in its organizational chart, and who are described by their respective supervisor and are designated as "prevention services" staff, are in fact providing direct therapeutic services to individual clients, in violation of State Health Care Services/SUD mandates.
- F8. Friday Night Live is currently being implemented only in two school districts (East Nicolaus and Live Oak) but the application process by other school districts for FNL programs could not be identified by senior SCHHS staff most responsible for "community-based prevention" services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Measures for Staff Accountability to Clients and Community Access to SCHHS Staff

- R1. The Sutter County Grand Jury (SCGJ) recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors direct the Sutter County's Health and Human Services (SCHHS) to begin installation and adoption of a hardline or mobile telephone

system for all managerial staff that incorporates Mailbox and Callback capabilities by January 2026.

- R2. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to publish an on-line Personnel Directory with accessible phone numbers and office addresses of all senior management staff to facilitate public access to programs and their respective managers by January 2026.
- R3. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to explore the use of GPS tracking systems for its staff that are serving clients outside the office and are community-based, as both a personnel security measure and to provide collaboration to their staff's reported direct client service time allocations by January 2026. This is particularly important as many SCHHS staff have not returned to full-time office status in the post-covid working environment.
- R4. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisor's acknowledge the successful First 5 program and, with the consent of the Sutter County Children's and Families Commission, instruct the Zero-to-Five program to move back into a community-accessible brick-and-mortar office space by June 2026.

Need for a “Dashboard” that Provides Progress on Standardized Indicators Measuring Community Health Improvements

- R5. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to create a community health report in “dashboard” format that uses annual standardized reporting metrics on health and well-being indicators that is easily accessible to Sutter County residents by June 2026.

Underfunded State-mandated Community-based Alcohol and Drug Prevention Programming

- R6. Friday Night Live has proven to be a youth-energizing and community-inclusive program that should be expanded to other Sutter County Schools. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to dedicate more staffing time and program resources to expand this program beyond the two rural schools currently hosting it by the start of the 2025 -2026 school year.
- R7. SCHHS is underspending on its State Health Care Services/Substance Abuse Disorder Division's block grant allocation for community-based alcohol and drug prevention services. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct SCHHS to increase its budget to underwrite more Friday Night Live programs and verified community-based alcohol and drug prevention programs by October 2026.
- R8. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of SCHHS to review its community-based alcohol and drug prevention services budget to ensure it is adhering to State Substance Use Disorder Division's budget allocation requirements.
- R9. The SCGJ recommends that the Sutter County Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of SCHHS to identify additional staff, currently used in direct client treatment services, that can be trained in community-based prevention services, planning and delivery by January 2026. At present, no SCHHS staff appear to have any competency in this area of community-based alcohol and drug prevention services planning and delivery.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Pursuant to California's Penal Code 933 and 933.05, the Sutter County Grand Jury requires responses from the following county officials within 90 days:

Sutter County Board of Supervisors. R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9.

TOURED AND RELEASED JAIL REPORT



MAY 30, 2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY

Summary

This report presents information gathered during the annual Sutter County Grand Jury (SCGJ) tour of the Sutter County Jail.

Glossary

- SCGJ: Sutter County Grand Jury is an impaneled group of civic-minded citizens who have chosen to give back to their communities by collaborating with a diverse group of like-minded persons over a one-year period to evaluate the operations of local governmental entities and the conduct of public officials, and to develop practical innovative recommendations for improving government operations.
- BSCC: The Board of State and Community Corrections provides services to county adult and juvenile systems through inspections of county jails and juvenile detention facilities, technical assistance on local issues, promulgation of regulations, training standards for local correctional staff, and the administration of a wide range of public safety, re-entry, violence reduction, and rehabilitative grants to state and local governments and community-based organizations.
- HVAC: Heating, ventilation and air conditioning is system designed to regulate temperature, humidity, and air quality in buildings

- CCTV: Closed Circuit Television systems are commonly known as video surveillance, where video footage is transmitted to a limited number of monitors, unlike regular TV broadcasts.
- Kitchell CEM: Kitchell Construction Engineering Management is a company with more than seven decades experience in general contracting, construction management, development, facilities management, engineering and architecture and myriad other services within the built environment.
- Ligature Point: A ligature point is defined as anything which could be used to attach a cord, rope, or other material for the purpose of hanging or strangulation for self-harm or loss of life.
- Grill gates: Grill gates are jail doors, also known as detention grill doors, are security doors with a grid or bar-like structure for enhanced security in correctional facilities

Background

California Penal Code section 919(b) states: 'The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.' In accordance with Penal Code 919(b), the SCGJ conducted a tour of the Sutter County Jail on October 7, 2024.

The Sutter County Jail located at 1077 Civic Center Boulevard, Yuba City, California, 95993, serves a county population of approximately 100,000. The facility was built in 1977 and expanded in 1991. The facility has housed an average of 235 incarcerated persons per day from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025.

Methodology

TOURS:

- 1) Sutter County Sheriff's Office
- 2) Sutter County Detention Facility (Jail)
- 3) Sutter County Medium Security Facility

Research

www.suttersheriff.org/

SCGJ Past Reports

Board of Supervisors Meetings

Corrective Action Plan prepared by Sutter County Jail Staff

Follow up Progress Report from Jail Staff

California Board of State & Community Corrections Report

Discussions

FACILITY CONDITIONS.

During a tour of the jail facilities several issues were noticed and discussed with the jail staff. The issues range from:

- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems
 - The SCGJ has received information at a recent Board of Supervisors' meeting that the existing cooling system upgrade was put out for bid. Kitchell Construction Engineering Management (CEM) was contracted

to conduct a Facility Condition Assessment. Due to years of this issue not being resolved, the Sutter County Sheriff's office is working with the Sutter County Facilities and Development Services in conjunction with Kitchell CEM to split the heating and air conditioning repairs into three separate phases. This would make the project more manageable and fiscally responsible.

- Ligature Points
 - The ligature points include exposed pipes, hooks, shelves, and grill gates. These ligature points could be utilized by incarcerated persons for self-harm or loss of life. These ligature points are being addressed by installing ligature-resistant hooks and shelves. Material has been ordered and received to enclose the exposed pipes. Funding has been requested to retrofit the grill gates with polycarbonate covers.
- Roof Leaks
 - Roof leaks throughout the jail facility continue to be an issue year after year as noted in the progress report from jail staff.
- Dim lighting
 - The lighting in the hallways and other rooms is inadequate. The dim walkways and hallways present a hazard for incarcerated persons and jail staff.
- Flooring issues
 - The epoxy floor is in disrepair with patches of non-slip epoxy missing in several sections of the jail facility. The missing non-slip epoxy portions of the floor in walkways and hallways present a hazard for incarcerated persons and jail staff.
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) security system

- CCTV system has blind spots in multiple sections of the jail which make it difficult to surveil actions of incarcerated persons and jail staff in certain areas inside the jail.
- Infrastructure repair in the shower areas.
 - The shower areas were noted of having missing grout, shower tiles, and leaking fixtures.

Findings

Using notes taken from the jail tour and utilizing the Progress Report from jail staff the following findings have been or are in the process of being addressed.

- F1. Ineffective cooling system is causing potential health risk to incarcerated persons and jail staff (e.g., heat related medical issues).
- F2. There are currently several ligature points throughout the jail, particularly in the female holding cells, observation cells and the old portion of the jail which uses grill gates.
- F3. The maintenance staff and outside contractors have addressed some of the issues by resealing seams and other leak points on the roof.
- F4. The jail facility staff sought funding for new lighting. Approval was granted and the installation of new lights was scheduled to begin in March of 2025. A projected completion date of June 2025 was provided by the Sutter County Sheriff.
- F5. The Jail Flooring project is 80% complete as of February 2025. The flooring was also tinted to enhance the jail esthetically and psychologically.
- F6. The CCTV system has been updated and repairs have been made. The new CCTV system was installed January 2025 to address the issues.

F7. The antiquated showers underwent grout repair and were epoxied to enhance easy cleaning.

Recommendations

- R1. The SCGJ recommends the Sutter County Sheriff's office work with Sutter County Facilities and Development Services as well as Board of Supervisors to begin phasing in the repairs of the outdated cooling system inside the jail this fiscal year or the beginning of Fiscal Year 2026.
- R2. The SCGJ recommends the Sutter County Sheriff's office address the remaining ligature points (pipe enclosures) within the jail addressed by the BSCC. The SCGJ also recommends the Sutter County Sheriff's office seek funding for the retrofitting of the grill gates through the Board of Supervisors this fiscal year or the beginning of Fiscal Year 2026.
- R3. The SCGJ recommends the Sutter County Sheriff develop a plan to address a more permanent solution and work with the Sutter County Board of Supervisors to obtain funding to support the maintenance of the roof project. The SCGJ recommends this plan be in place by the beginning of Fiscal Year 2027.
- R4. The SCGJ recommends completing the multi-phased lighting project by the end of this Fiscal Year 2026.
- R5. The SCGJ recommends completing the Jail Flooring Project to assist in mitigating slip and fall accidents by the end of Fiscal Year 2025. If additional funding is needed to complete this project, the Grand Jury recommends requesting funds through the Board of Supervisors by the end of this Fiscal Year 2025.
- R6. No Recommendations.

R7. The Grand Jury recommends continuing routine maintenance to keep the shower areas in working order.

Required Responses

Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the SCGJ requests responses as follows:

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 60 DAYS OF RECEIPT:

Sutter County Sheriff: Findings 1 through 7 and Recommendations 1 through 7.

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS OF RECEIPT:

Sutter County Board of Supervisors: Findings 1 through 3 and Recommendations 1 through 3.

**TRI-COUNTY YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT CENTER
AND MAXINE SINGER YOUTH
GUIDANCE CENTER**



**MAY 30, 2025
SUTTER COUNTY GRAND JURY**

SUMMARY

This report presents information gathered during the annual Sutter County Grand Jury tour of the Tri-County Youth Development Center (YDC) and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center (Camp Singer).

GLOSSARY

SCGJ: Sutter County Grand Jury is an impaneled group of civic-minded citizens who have chosen to give back to their communities by collaborating with a diverse group of like-minded persons over a one-year period to evaluate the operations of local governmental entities and the conduct of public officials, and to develop practical innovative recommendations for improving government operations.

BSCC: The Board of State and Community Corrections provides services to county adult and juvenile systems through inspections of county jails and juvenile detention facilities, technical assistance on local issues, promulgation of regulations, training standards for local correctional staff, and the administration of a wide range of public safety, re-entry, violence reduction, and rehabilitative grants to state and local governments and community-based organizations.

YDC: Tri-County Youth Development Center is a 32-bed facility which was opened in August 2023. It is a 24-hour secure detention facility for youth who fall under the jurisdiction of Juvenile Court

pursuant to Section 602 of the Welfare and Institutions Code or are pending criminal charges in Adult Court. The facility design affords each youth a room with restroom facilities. Although a small number of youths are serving court ordered commitments or going through the Adult Court process, the majority of the youth detained in the facility are pending Juvenile Court proceedings.

Camp Singer: Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center is a 60-bed facility which was opened in 2001. It was developed as an alternative to out of home placements and extended stays at the Youth Development Center. Camp Singer provides a safe environment featuring open dormitory style housing. Our staff provide a safe and culturally sensitive environment where youth receive the attention and support they need to address maladaptive behaviors while achieving their goals.

Wellpath: Wellpath delivers medical and mental healthcare through a network of local and state providers in correctional facilities, inpatient and residential treatment facilities, forensic treatment facilities, and civil commitment centers.

SYBH: Sutter-Yuba Behavioral Health provides services to individuals and families who are experiencing serious or ongoing mental health and/or substance use disorders in Yuba and Sutter Counties.

BACKGROUND

California Penal Code section 919(b) states: 'The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.' In compliance with Penal Code 919(b), the SGCJ conducted a tour of the YDC and Camp Singer on December 17, 2024.

METHODOLOGY

TOURS

- Tri-County Youth Development Center
- Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center

RESEARCH

- Tri-County Youth Rehabilitation Campus Inspection Packet
- Past Sutter County Grand Jury reports
- Website at www.Yuba.gov
- Discussions with staff

DISCUSSIONS

While Yuba County is responsible for the primary administration, the cost is split between Yuba County at 44%, Sutter County at 44%, and Colusa County at 12%. Both facilities are governed by the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC).

During the SCGJ tour, we were given the opportunity to speak with staff and counselors regarding their roles, responsibilities, and personal views. The primary

role of the staff is to provide mentoring, guidance and support the youth while maintaining focus on the safety and security of the facilities. The staff provided informative answers as well as literature to better inform the SCGJ of the day-to-day operations of the facilities.

The YDC has a rated capacity of 32 youths between the ages of 14 to 20 years of age. The facility has an average daily population of 17.2 youths. On the day of the SCGJ visit, the facility had a population of 15 youths.

The Camp Singer facility has a rated capacity of 60 youths. The facility has an average daily population of 11.8 youths. On the day of the SCGJ visit, the facility had a population of 14 youths.

California Code of Regulations, Title 15, Article 8, Section 1400, outlines the Medical and Behavioral Health mandates within juvenile institutions. Medical care is contracted through Wellpath. Wellpath is a healthcare provider that delivers medical and mental healthcare services in jails and prisons, including juvenile detention centers, with a focus on improving patient care and clinical quality. Wellpath care is currently contracted to provide 24/7 on call service; a Registered Nurse 50 hours per week and seven days per week; a Licensed Vocational Nurse 2 hour per day/7 days per week; a medical Doctor 5 hours per week and a psychiatrist 5 hours per week.

In addition to Wellpath services, Sutter Yuba Behavioral Health is contracted to provide full time therapists for both YDC and Camp Singer. The mental health therapists work with youths on psychotropic medications and provide individual therapy and group therapy sessions.

The Yuba County Office of Education, Harry P. B. Carden Court School (Carden School) is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Carden School provides an alternative learning program for incarcerated students. The primary goal of the school is to help students succeed academically and to successfully return to public school upon their release. Teacher directed learning, group and individual assignments, oral recitation, health classes, computer classes and arts are infused into daily lessons. Special Education services are provided by classroom teachers under the guidance of a Resource Teacher who also works individually with students.

FINDINGS

- F1. SCGJ has no complaints to consider amongst ourselves, nor has it received any complaints from the community. The staff were very professional and attentive to the SCGJ questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. None

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Per California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the SCGJ request responses as follows:

THE FOLLOWING ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS WITHIN 60 DAYS:

Sutter County Sheriff: None

THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE IS REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS:

Sutter County Board of Supervisors: None