

Cost Analysis of Savings from PAD Diversions and Missed Opportunities

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PURPOSE

This memo answers two questions about the impact of the Policing Alternatives & Diversion Initiative (PAD) on the jail population in Fulton County in 2022:

1. How much Fulton County saved because of diversions to PAD of people who would have otherwise been booked at Fulton County jail
2. How much Fulton County spent by detaining people at the Fulton County jail who could have been diverted to PAD

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

120 people were diverted to PAD by law enforcement this year (through Oct. 31) who would otherwise have been incarcerated at Fulton County Jail.

- **These diversions saved Fulton County an estimated \$524,160 that would otherwise have been spent on jail stays.**

During this same period, at least **658 people** (an average of 65 people every month or two people every day) who were potentially eligible for diversion to PAD were arrested and taken to Fulton County Jail during PAD's operating hours.

- **Incarcerating these people cost Fulton County an estimated \$2,871,144, or around \$280,000 per month.**

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Arrest data is provided to PAD by the Atlanta Police Department (APD) and covers all arrests and charges filed by APD officers from January 1, 2022 to October 31, 2022. This data was combined with diversion data tracked by PAD for the same period.

We used APD arrest data to identify those charges that were booked at Fulton County jail (versus another jail or detention center) the majority of the time. We combined that information with PAD's data, which records the charge that each diverted individual would have received had they not been diverted. This allows us to determine whether a diversion to PAD would have otherwise resulted in booking at Fulton County jail. PAD maintains a list of charges that are targeted for diversion, which represent charges that are likely associated with behavioral health needs or extreme poverty. Combining

this list of charges with the APD arrest data enables us to identify how many people were booked at Fulton County Jail who could have been diverted to PAD.

The cost of a detention varies depending on how many days a person is detained. Based on the average length of detention at Fulton County jail and the estimated average daily cost per person detained, the average detention at Fulton County jail costs \$4,368.¹

FINDINGS

120 people diverted to PAD who otherwise would have been booked at Fulton County jail saved the County over \$500,000 this year.

Between January 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022, 120 people were diverted to PAD who would otherwise have been arrested and booked at Fulton County jail. Since each person detained costs an estimated \$4,368 per detention, **diversions to PAD saved the County \$524,160 over this 10-month period, an average savings of just over \$52,000 every month.**

Table 1: Diversions to PAD Away from Fulton County Jail by Officer-Reported Charge, January 1 – October 31, 2022

Charge*	Number of diversions
Criminal Trespass	102
Possession of Drug Related Articles	10
Damage to Property	3
Larceny	1
Possession of Heroin	1
Smoking Marijuana in Public	1
Theft	1
Theft from Auto	1
Total	120

*Denotes charge the officer reported the person would face if not diverted.

¹ According to the Fulton County Jail Population Review, the average length of detention in Fulton County jail is 56 days. Multiplying this number by the average cost per day provides the average cost per day. The average cost per person per day is estimated to be \$78. This figure comes from dividing the annual budget of the jail facilities by the average daily population. Fulton County has not published a full budget book for FY22 online. Therefore, the County's FY21 Adopted Budget was used. Within the Sheriff's Department, the Jail Detention Officer Program, Jail Operations, and Law Enforcement-Transfer programs are centrally jail-related and, therefore, their full costs are included in this analysis. Based on the program description provided in the budget, the Law Enforcement-Operations program does not directly involve the jail, and, therefore, its costs are excluded. The following programs involve both jail- and non-jail-related functions: Court Services, Sheriff Administration-Warehouse/Fleet, Sheriff Administration-Training, Sheriff Administration-Executive, and Sheriff Administration overall. Based on the program descriptions provided, this analysis estimates that approximately 20% of Court Services costs are jail-related, 50% of warehouse/fleet costs, and 67% of other sheriff administration costs and, thus, includes those percentages in the analysis.

Fulton County spent over \$2.8 million jailing people who were potentially eligible for diversion but were arrested and booked by APD during PAD operating hours.

Using arrest data provided by APD, we can identify how many people were booked at Fulton County Jail this year who could have been diverted to PAD. Since only APD data are shared with PAD, only arrests by APD are included here. As a result, this **underestimates** possible savings to the county since it does not include possible diversions from other law enforcement agencies beyond APD. We identify the following:

- All arrests that resulted in an arrest on scene where the arrested person was taken to Fulton County jail
- That occurred between January 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022 during PAD’s operating hours (7am - 7pm Monday-Friday)
- Were for individuals for whom *every* charge they received at the time of arrest was a PAD target charge²

This year, there have been **at least 658 people who could have been diverted to PAD who were instead booked at Fulton County jail** – people who were only charged with PAD target charges and were arrested during the time PAD was operating. This is an average of **65 “missed opportunity” diversions per month**. At a cost of \$4,368 per average incarceration, these failures to divert individuals to PAD cost Fulton County \$2,871,144 so far this year (around \$280,000 per month).

Table 2: Bookings from APD during PAD operating hours that were for PAD target charges only³

Facility	People	Charges
City Jail	869	1,088
Fulton County Jail	658	946
Dekalb County Jail	28	35
Youth Detention Center	22	27

² Often an individual is arrested with multiple charges listed for the same incident. We want to avoid double counting since we are focused on how many *individuals* could be diverted from the Fulton County jail, not how many *charges* are diverted. However, an individual could be charged with offenses that are not appropriate for PAD as well as those that are. To keep things simple, we only count *individuals* who have exclusively PAD target charges. Therefore, the estimated number of individuals who could be diverted is an undercount because many divertible arrest charges occur together with arrests for traffic violations, which are not commonly diverted to PAD but could be.