

Computer-carrying cops target car thefts

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Oakland County may see a dramatic increase in stolen car recoveries once police agencies begin using a new in-car computer terminal system.

"It's a great system," said County Executive Daniel F. Murphy. "I'm for anything that the local units want to participate in."

"We try to support the local communities, particularly when they initiate the program," said Commissioner Robert Page, R-Birmingham, as the finance committee last week approved the county's end of the deal.

In other states, police equipped with in-car terminals can check li-

censes of suspicious cars against statewide records in a matter of seconds, increasing the arrest-recovery rate 30 percent or more. Small communities would benefit most.

OAKLAND'S cooperative venture would work like this:

- County government would pay for the "base network" — a tower, network technician's salary, telephone lines, message processor and computer software. Cost would be \$133,000 annually.
- In the sheriff's department, 65 cars would be equipped with terminals at an annual lease cost of \$68,000.
- Participating communities would lease a total of 200 terminals at a total cost of \$200,000 a year.

The system has a capacity of 500 terminals, according to Stan Topiwala, manager of the county's computer services.

TAKING PART when the system begins later this year will be the police departments of Beverly Hills, Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Orchard Lake, Southfield, Troy, West Bloomfield Township and 16 others.

The committee of police chiefs which advanced the program told city and township officials:

"This direct 'in-car' access is perhaps of greatest value to the smaller agencies which frequently have only a single patrol unit in service without extensive backup or communication support."

The chiefs see the system as drastically cutting the time it takes an officer to call a dispatcher to check a license number.

Besides increasing the arrest rate, the system improves officer safety and reduces the dispatcher's workload.

"The Phoenix police department reported a 34.9 percent increase in warrant arrests over a three-year period resulting from the implementation of an in-car terminal network," the chiefs report said.

Phoenix also reported a 39 percent increase in recovery of stolen vehicles, the report said.

THE PLAN goes next to the full county board after two years of police chiefs and board committee work.

"It's the wave of the future," said William Lucas, former sheriff and executive of Wayne County, Lucas was in Oakland County last week for Republican political appearances.

"The technology was there, but it has been expensive. You need to make a financial commitment. The whole thrust of law enforcement should be regional," said Lucas, who is familiar with Detroit's and Livonia's systems.

A warning was sounded by Commissioner Richard Kuhn, R-Waterford, a member of the finance committee.

"You don't have to convince me of the merits of the program. But we're

spending \$1.7 million for a new jail. We have to look at priorities. One of these days, the well's going to run dry."

IN OTHER business, the finance committee approved:

- 48 new posts for the expanded jail, due to open after this year at a cost of \$238,000. Two posts were added June 1 and 44 will be added Nov. 1.
- Approved payment of \$2,020 to a jail compliance inspector appointed by the U.S. District Court. Frank Donely, a former state Corrections Department official, will be paid \$85 an hour. The county is expanding the jail to comply with a court finding that previous conditions were crowded and inadequate.

Governor continues criticism of 'baloney' quote

Gov. James Blanchard Monday said he strongly praised a speech by Jesse Jackson at the Democratic National Convention and that an Observer & Eccentric story that attributed to him critical remarks of the speech was "inaccurate."

Tim Richard, the O&E reporter who quoted Blanchard, stood by his story, saying Blanchard's remarks were the type that "sear in your memory." He also produced a copy of the hand-written notes that he said were written within a minute after talking with Blanchard in Atlanta the day after Jackson's speech.

In a July 21 story that appeared in all 12 O&E newspapers, Blanchard was quoted as saying Jackson's stand on issues was "left-wing baloney" and "warmed-over George McGovern."

"He was best talking about his

own constituency and their aspirations," the governor was quoted as saying. "When he was talking about all the issues, it was the same old left-wing baloney, warmed-over George McGovern but not as good."

BLANCHARD SAID Monday that he has never read the O&E article but that he was referring to a July 23 Detroit Free Press article that repeated the quotes as well as reactions from various Democrats at the convention.

Told by an O&E reporter that the Free Press accurately reported the quotes attributed to Blanchard, the governor said that the article was inaccurate.

"The whole thing is inaccurate," he said.

Blanchard made his remarks Monday afternoon following a press conference in Redford Township to pub-

lize the Michigan Education Trust, a pre-paid college tuition plan that is accepting applications this week.

BLANCHARD, WHO Thursday had told a Detroit television reporter that the O&E story was "bad journalism," said he had made it clear to reporters in Atlanta that he had thought highly of Jackson's speech. But he also said he understood how Richard, an O&E editor for 21 years, could have constructed the quote. He declined to elaborate further on that remark.

As the interview ended, Blanchard said that Richard "wasn't at the con-

vention."

A Blanchard aide later said the governor meant that Richard was not at the convention Tuesday night when Jackson made his speech.

RICHARD, WHO has distributed copies of his hand-written notes, said he talked with Blanchard Wednesday, the day after Jackson's speech, at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Atlanta during a reception for the Michigan delegation.

"The notes were made within a minute of the time Blanchard spoke," Richard said. "They're the kind of remarks that sear in your

memory, so I'm certain my recollection was correct."

Richard said he was on the convention floor Tuesday during debate on the platform and for Blanchard's speech about the platform. He returned to his hotel room that night to write a story and to watch Jackson's speech on television.

Wednesday afternoon Richard said he went to the reception for the Michigan delegation to get quotes about Richard's speech from delegates who live in the O&E circulation area. It was at that reception, shortly after Blanchard had praised

Jackson's speech to a crowd of reporters, that Richard said he asked for Blanchard's thoughts on the speech.

Both Blanchard and Richard, who covers legislative matters for the O&E, said they have had a fine working relationship since Blanchard became governor nearly six years ago.

The day after the O&E story appeared, the governor's press secretary, Tom Scott, said that Blanchard's remarks were "a passing comment" and that the governor was referring to white, liberal foreign-policy makers.

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