



*City of Baltimore*

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# **UPDATE TO AUTO THEFT STRATEGY**

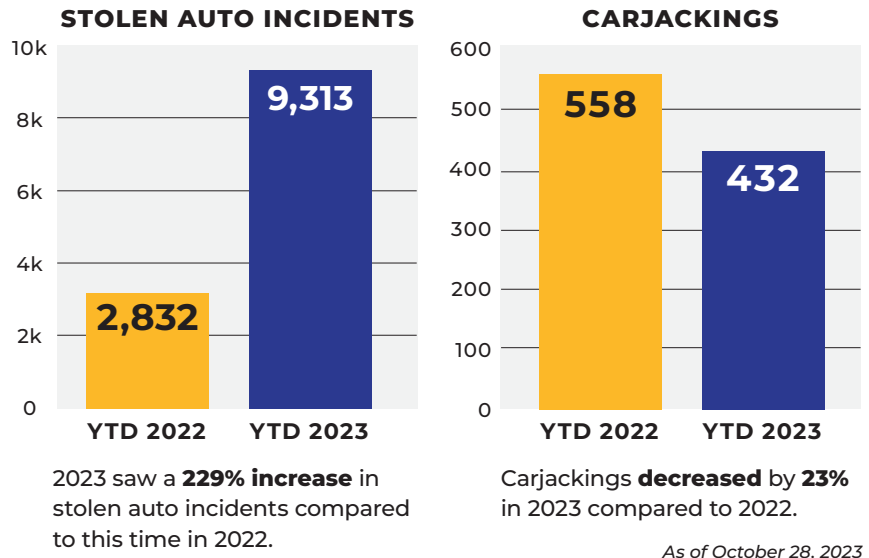
**NOVEMBER 6, 2023**

# Update to Auto Theft Strategy

While Baltimore has seen significant reductions in violent crime, including an approximately 20% reduction in homicides, and a 23% decrease in carjacking incidents – there has been a 229% increase in stolen auto incidents through October 28, 2023. This trend is part of a nationwide increase in car thefts largely driven by the theft of certain Kia and Hyundai models and the proliferation of online videos demonstrating how to steal these vehicles. In response to the increase in auto theft incidents, the Scott Administration has

been continuously updating its multi-pronged strategy that combines prevention, deterrence, and enforcement efforts with legal action against negligent manufacturers and increased cross-government collaboration.

This updated strategy includes new and ongoing efforts to address this issue in line with national best practices and insight from other cities grappling with this broader trend.



## Distributing Anti-Theft Devices to Car Owners

As a way to prevent and deter vehicle theft, the Scott Administration has been and will continue to distribute steering wheel locks to residents free of charge. At Mayor Brandon M. Scott's direction, upcoming distribution events are scheduled for **Saturday, November 11, and Wednesday, November 15.**

### Saturday, November 11th

11am – 2pm

Northwood Elementary School

5201 Loch Raven Boulevard

Baltimore, MD 21239

### Wednesday, November 15th

4pm – 7pm

Hollinswood Shopping Center

2157 W. Patapsco Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21230

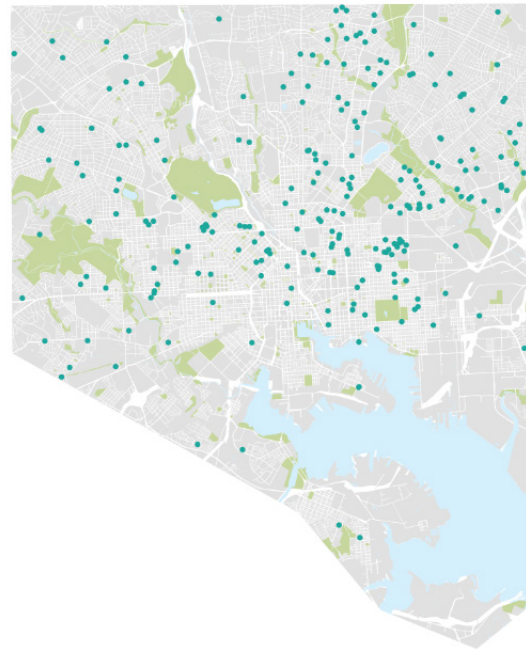
Following these two events, residents will be able to pick up wheel locks at one of the nine police district stations.



To date, the City of Baltimore has distributed over 3,000 wheel lock devices in 2023 through a public distribution event and localized distribution at BPD Districts. The map below shows the geographic distribution of the 253 residents who received devices at the public distribution event on August 29, 2023 alone.



**Geographic Distribution of Residents Receiving Wheel Locks August 29, 2023**



## Using Data to Inform Proactive Deployment of Law Enforcement Resources

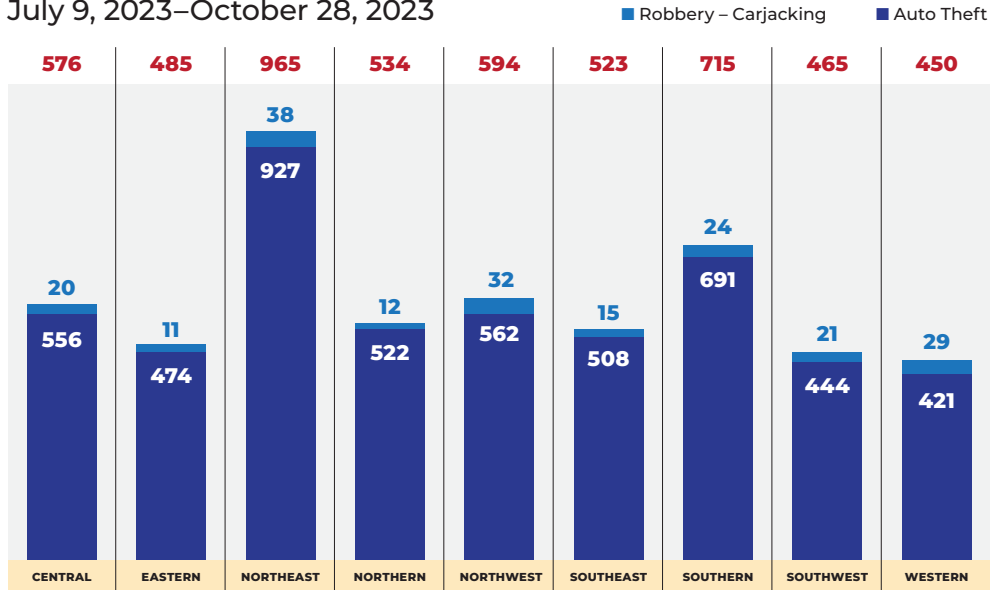
The Northeastern and Southern BPD Districts have experienced the largest share of carjacking and auto theft incidents. In order to conduct proactive community policing and deter property crime across the entire city, the police department is making necessary adjustments to manpower and resources. These efforts include:

- Deploying highly-visible mobile traffic enforcement to ensure BPD presence in hot-spot locations. These units will be equipped with LPR technology to identify stolen vehicles and hold individuals participating in auto theft accountable.
- Increasing deployment in areas experiencing the most incidents;
- Expanding the use of data and analytics in overall deployment decisions;
- Increasing use of existing technology and tools – like “Foxtrot” (the BPD helicopter), License Plate Readers, our Baltimore Community Intelligence Centers, and Citiwatch;
- The creation of updated Stolen Auto and Carjacking Response Protocols for officers throughout the department;

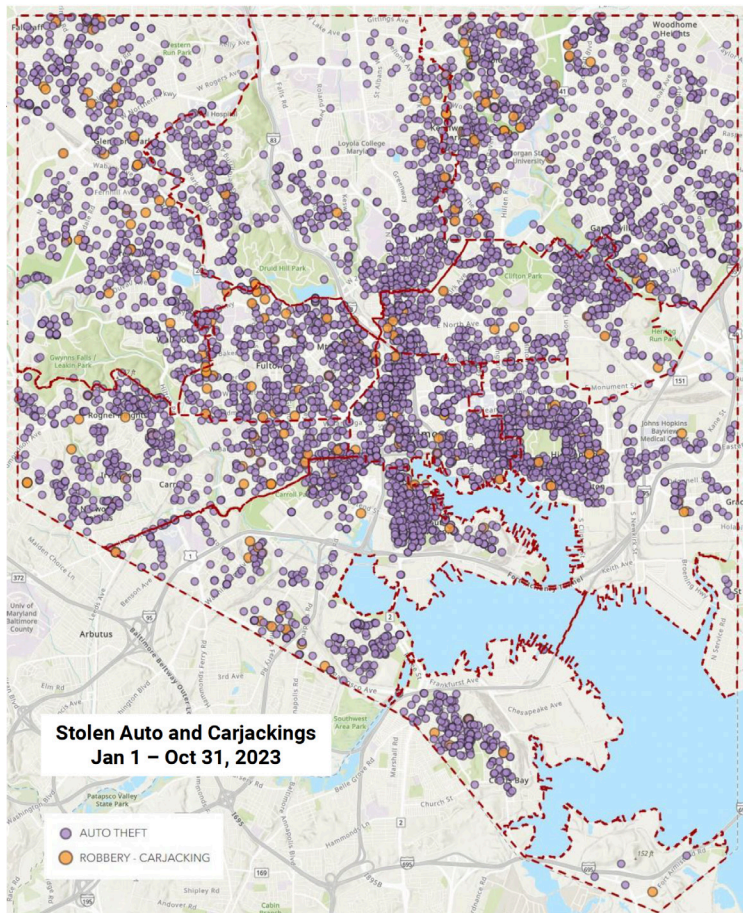
- Expanding collaboration with DOT and Tow Trucks to ensure a quick response when recovering stolen vehicles;
- Improving investigatory efforts and detailed reporting to assist in identifying patterns and trends.

### Carjacking and Stolen Auto by Police District

July 9, 2023–October 28, 2023



As of October 28, 2023



## **Holding System Upgrade Clinics for Kia and Hyundai Cars**

One of the most significant steps residents at high risk can take is to close known security gaps where they exist. The administration is working with Hyundai and Kia to schedule a system upgrade clinic for residents who may need additional guidance on how to install anti-theft software for their vehicle to prevent it from being started through the methods popularized on social media. These clinics will take place in early 2024. Residents who are able to get this upgrade on their own should not wait, and go to their local dealership to have their system upgrade completed.

## **Securing Additional License Plate Recognition Technology**

License Plate Recognition (LPR) technology is a crucial law enforcement tool in identifying and recovering stolen vehicles, including holding individuals who commit auto theft accountable. The administration will expand current LPR capacity by installing an additional 17 fixed LPR sites by the end of 2023. We will also install 21 mobile, 10-12 fixed LPRs, and upgrade existing LPR sites during 2024.

## **Using Digital Tracking Technology to Monitor Stolen Vehicles**

The Scott Administration will distribute digital tracking tags to residents to provide them with the ability to track their vehicles and assist law enforcement with recovering their vehicle in the event that it is stolen. Distribution events for these tags will be announced within the next two weeks once they arrive.

## **Making Improvements at City-owned Impound Lot**

Over the years the City's impound lot has faced unsatisfactory challenges, and is not adequately serving residents in the current climate. Currently, residents experience long wait times, a difficult payment process, and facilities in disrepair. In order to enhance residents' experience at the Pulaski Highway impound lot and assist victims of auto theft in retrieving their vehicle, the Department of Transportation will improve conditions at the City-owned impound lot. These improvements include:

- Accelerating renovations of main building;
- Reducing wait times;
- Enhancing guidance for victims of auto theft to assist in vehicle recovery;
- Improving payment options and accessibility.

In February 2022, the City of Baltimore removed recovery fees associated with stolen vehicles. Victims of auto theft are able to recover their vehicle from the City-owned lot without cost. Prior to this change, owners of stolen vehicles had to pay \$130 to \$140 to cover towing costs. Under this new policy, the City has assumed the costs of nearly \$250,000 annually that it historically assessed in towing fees for stolen vehicles

## Holding Manufacturers Accountable

This spring, the City of Baltimore joined Seattle, St. Louis, and a number of cities nationwide by filing a lawsuit against Hyundai and Kia for failing to equip their vehicles with industry-standard vehicle immobilization technology.

Without this feature, vehicles can be started without a key, a flaw that has been the subject of numerous TikTok videos demonstrating the ease with which these cars can be stolen. This has led to a rash of thefts of these vehicles not only in Baltimore City but nationwide. Through the end of October, approximately 9,300 vehicles have been stolen in Baltimore City with Kia and Hyundai models making up over 68% of these stolen vehicles.

The goal of this lawsuit is to recover damages caused by manufacturer negligence and pressure automobile companies to not cut corners on installing vehicle immobilizers.

### Stolen Autos Top Makes and Models

January 1, 2023–October 31, 2023

**Hyundai and Kia make up 68% of stolen vehicles.**

#### STOLEN AUTOS BY MAKE

Make	Count
Hyundai	2,645
Kia	1,091
Honda	567
Toyota	406
Nissan	323
Ford	312
Chevrolet	259
Acura	180
Dodge	178
Infiniti	148
Jeep	98
Lexus	75
Other	69
BMW	68
Mercedes Benz	63
Volkswagen	61
Mazda	52
Chrysler	44
Subaru	43
GMC	40

#### STOLEN AUTOS BY MODEL

Model	Count
Elantra	1,205
Sonata	902
Optima	312
Soul	278
Accord	262
Forte	179
Tuscon	150
Camry	118
Altima	114
Sportage	108
Civic	92
Accent	74
Rio	71
Corolla	70
Santa Fe	51
Malibu	50
Sentra	49
TL	45
CRV	43
Tuscon	41

## **Coordinating Responses with Government Partners, Local Stakeholders, and Cross-Jurisdictional Counterparts**

As a nationwide issue that impacts surrounding jurisdictions at similar rates, the City of Baltimore's response must work in coordination with local and regional partners. In line with Mayor Scott's commitment to community engagement and intergovernmental collaboration as outlined in Baltimore's comprehensive public safety strategy, the Scott Administration will continue to work with members of the City Council, other elected officials, law enforcement partners, community-based organizations and residents to address auto theft issues, particularly the high number of young people participating in theft.

In fact, auto theft committed by juveniles is up 166% this calendar year as of October 28, 2023. To address this trend, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success, and BPD will hold regular meetings with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services in order to develop a comprehensive strategy around youth diversion as a way to reduce juvenile-involved violence and property crimes.

BPD will continue its collaborative efforts with Baltimore County through the Regional Auto Theft Taskforce (RATT), which has been successfully targeting auto thefts for decades.

In addition, the Scott Administration is exploring local and state legislative initiatives that can help to address auto thefts, including expanding penalties for complicit parents and reforms to home detention monitoring.