

**Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office**  
**Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2019-2020 Report**  
**“Detention Facilities in Santa Barbara County”**

**Report 1.1 Santa Barbara County Main Jail**

**Finding 1**

*The Main Jail is outdated and in need of seismic and ADA compliance.*

**SBSO Response:**

Agree.

**Finding 2**

*The Main Jail is overcrowded. This overcrowding situation may be partially alleviated by the opening of the Northern Branch Jail.*

**SBSO Response:**

Agree.

**Finding 4**

*There are no body scanners to detect dangerous contraband.*

**SBSO Response:**

Agree.

**Recommendation 4**

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff's Department purchase and install a body scanning system immediately to intercept contraband at the Main Jail.*

**SBSO Response:**

Will be implemented. A Side X-ray Body Scanner has been purchased and has been installed at the Main Jail. The use of the scanner has not yet begun as we are waiting for training from the manufacturer on its use.

**Finding 5**

*Surveillance camera positions do not provide complete coverage of inmate cell activity.*

**SBSO Response:**

Agree.

**Recommendation 5**

*That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department review camera coverage to make sure that each camera is providing the custody deputies full views of the cells.*

**SBSO Response:**

Will be implemented. The Sheriff's Office, in conjunction with County General Services, has contracted with Vanir Construction Management, Inc to develop a renovation plan for the Main Jail. Part of that plan is a total update to the facility's security system, including CCTV surveillance cameras and recording. The plan, which has a completion timetable of 34 months, is awaiting finalization and approval by the Board of Supervisors.

## **Finding 6**

*The inmate transportation fleet is old and unreliable.*

### **SBSO Response:**

Disagree partially. Seven (7) of the Eight (8) transportation vans are 1-4 years old and one specialty van is over ten years old, but has less than 100,00 miles on it. The four MCI buses are still within their expected life span. All vehicles are serviced regularly by Santa Barbara County General Services.

## **Recommendation 6**

*That the Board of Supervisors and Sheriff consider funding for upgrade and replacement of the inmate transportation fleet within two years.*

### **SBSO Response:**

Will be implemented. A replacement schedule for the entire inmate transportation fleet had been implemented previously. The vans are 1-4 years old and all MCI buses are on a current replacement schedule identified by Santa Barbara County General Services. The Carpenter bus does need to be replaced, however, it is currently only used as a back-up bus in the event that the other busses are down for service. It will be retired when it is no longer serviceable.

## **Report 1.2 Northern Branch Jail**

## **Finding 2**

*Family visitations will occur only with video screens from booths.*

### **SBSO Response:**

Agree.

## **Recommendation 2**

*That the Sheriff consider making space available for face-to-face personal visits at the Northern Branch Jail.*

### **SBSO Response:**

Will not be implemented. The costs and delays associated with designing and constructing suitable space for such face-to-face visitation would be prohibitive and unnecessary. At the time of construction, there were no standards that would require such visitation, and the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) approved the design and building plans without them. We do however have a family re-unification room that is designed for face-to-face family visits in exceptional circumstances.

## **Recommendation 3**

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff's Department purchase a second body scanner system to provide additional screening coverage for inmates returning from outside appointments and court visits.*

### **SBSO Response:**

Will not be implemented. The use of body scanners is subject to a higher standard of probable cause due to the invasive nature of the scan. This standard will reduce the number of actual scans performed. In addition, the cost of such equipment is prohibitive and would be better spent in other endeavors.

**Finding 4**

*The facility has very small outside exercise areas for inmates.*

**SBSO Response:**

Agree.

**Recommendation 4**

*That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department consider additional outside exercise space to complement the limited yard space planned.*

**SBSO Response:**

Will not be implemented. The design of the facility, as mentioned by the Grand Jury, is that of Direct Supervision. One of the hallmarks of Direct Supervision is its incorporation of large common areas, designated as "day space" for inmates to congregate and recreate. The Northern Branch Jail has these day space areas available in all of its housing areas. Outdoor recreation areas are not required to be as spacious, simply because there is ample room for inmates to move freely about, adjacent to and outside of their cell space.

**Recommendation 5**

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and the Sheriff's Department obtain contractor bids to install a solar system to lower power costs.*

**SBSO Response:**

Will not be implemented. During the application phase of the project, the cost of a photovoltaic power system was determined to be cost prohibitive. In order to install the system, we would have had to eliminate necessary building elements our application was being judged on. However, additional conduits for this power option have been installed in the new facility for consideration if funding becomes available.

**Finding 6**

*There is no transportation available for newly released inmates to take them to Santa Maria.*

**SBSO Response:**

Agree.

**Recommendation 6**

*That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department develop a solution for transportation service to Santa Maria.*

**SBSO Response:**

Will be implemented. The Sheriff's Office is currently working with faith-based groups, local taxi services, and Santa Maria Area Transit (SMAT) to provide transportation for releases. A solution is anticipated prior to occupation of the new facility, currently scheduled for early August 2020.



## **Report 2.2 New Cuyama Sheriff Substation**

### **Finding 1**

*The building lacks an external security camera system.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff's Office agrees with this finding. At present, there is no external security camera system at the Cuyama Sheriff's Substation.

### **Recommendation 1**

*That the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department add an external security camera monitoring system.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

This recommendation will not be implemented at the current facility. The current Cuyama substation is antiquated and is scheduled to be decommissioned as a station. A new combined Cuyama Public Safety facility (Sheriff/ Fire) project is underway and will replace the current station. It would be unwise to invest funding into the existing facility. We will share and support the Grand Jury's recommendation with the SBC General Services project manager who is leading the combined public safety facility project.

### **Finding 2**

*The communication system used by the deputies is deficient and does not allow coverage in many parts of their jurisdiction.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff's Office agrees with this finding. Although the mobile and portable radios issued by the Sheriff's Office are not deficient, the Public Safety Radio infrastructure maintained by SBC General Services is severely outdated and incapable of providing appropriate levels of radio frequency coverage for use by the mobile and portable radios used by Sheriff's Office personnel.

### **Recommendation 2**

*That the Sheriff's Office upgrade the communication system provided to the deputies.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff's Office disagrees partially with this recommendation. Although we agree with the need to update and improve the public safety radio infrastructure, it is not owned, operated or managed by the Sheriff's Office. SBC General Services operates and manages the radio infrastructure and is leading a project to modernize and improve upon the infrastructure. The Sheriff's Office is actively participating in the GS radio project to ensure the needs of our personnel and our agency are accounted for within the project. The County has already put out to bid, a complete upgrade / replacement to the public safety radio network. The bids are currently being scored. While a completely new and modern system is warranted, General Services and the Sheriff's Office have identified some additional infrastructure that will aid the current system in providing better coverage. One of these is the Valley Peak repeater which was installed on Santa Cruz Island, improving radio coverage to the coast.

## **Report 4.2 Santa Barbara County Superior Court Holding Facility**

### **Finding 1**

*The Santa Barbara Court Holding Facility does not meet safety standards.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

Disagree wholly.

### **Finding 2**

*The Santa Barbara Court Holding Facility is often overcrowded and uses “cages” that are inhumane.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff's Office disagrees partially with an explanation. We also disagree with the characterization of individual holding cells as “cages.” All court holding facilities are part of the court complex which is owned by the State of California. The State has no plans to do any construction modifications to any of the court holding facilities that would add additional holding cells. We are limited to the availability of the cells and at the mercy of the courts as to scheduling of inmates. Inmates are transported to the court holding facility based on the court calendar. Inmates do not always appear in court as scheduled and some are required to stay at the court compound for an extended period of time. It is fortunate that the Santa Barbara Court Holding Facility is relatively close to the Southern Branch Jail and inmates can be transferred back to the facility once they have completed their appearance. This helps to relieve the overcrowding that temporarily exists in the court holding facility. Additionally, there are some inmates who choose to act out negatively or who are unable to be placed with other inmates due to safety concerns and those inmates need to be held separately. Due to the lack of holding cells, the temporary metal enclosures are used to house those inmates temporarily.

### **Finding 3**

*Inmates are walked across a public street between the holding facility on Figueroa Street and the historic Courthouse.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff's Office agrees with this finding

### **Recommendation 3**

*That the Santa Barbara County Sheriffs' Department transfer inmates in vehicles to the historic Courthouse for greater safety.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff's Office will not be implementing this recommendation because it is not realistically feasible. We fully support the safe and secure movement of inmates to and from the holding facility and the historic courthouse and want to do so while minimizing the potential for embarrassment to the inmates. However, current staffing levels and vehicle resources preclude us from doing so with vehicles. Using vehicles would require additional personnel, as it would be significantly less efficient for moving inmates. It is our hope that this issue will be resolved with the construction of the new court complex under consideration. The proposed new courthouse design would eliminate the need to move inmates outside the facility and would substantially improve safety and security for the inmates, officers and the public. Ideally, a tunnel would be constructed to move inmates back and forth, however, the Courthouse is state property. The impacts on existing infrastructure such as water, sewer and power are unknown.



## **Report 4.3 Lompoc Courthouse Holding Facility**

### **Finding 2**

*Overcrowding often forces use of holding “cages.”*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff’s Office agrees with this finding

### **Recommendation 2**

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and Sheriff’s Department explore other options for holding the overflow inmates and remove the “cages.”*

#### **SBSO Response:**

Will not be implemented. All court holding facilities are part of the court complex which is owned by the State of California. As far as we know, the State has no plans or funding to do any construction modifications to any of the court holding facilities that would add additional holding cells. We are limited to the availability of the cells and are subject and limited to the court’s scheduling of inmates for court appearances. Our main correctional facility is in Santa Barbara and it is not economically responsible to conduct multiple transports to get inmates to the Lompoc Court Holding Facility as needed. We transport all inmates scheduled for appearance in the morning and they remain there until all inmates are complete with their appearances. These cells are only used occasionally for inmates whose behavior is incompatible with their being held with other inmates in multi-person cells. Again, the Sheriff’s Office disagrees with the characterization of individual holding cells as “cages.”

### **Finding 3**

*The camera video surveillance system does not record and the images are of poor quality.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

The Sheriff’s Office partially disagrees. We acknowledge that there is no recording equipment for the video surveillance system. All court holding facilities are part of the court complex which is owned by the State of California.

### **Recommendation 3**

*That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors and Sheriff’s Department upgrade the cameras for recording capability and high definition imagery.*

#### **SBSO Response:**

Will not be implemented. This recommendation is not within the Sheriff’s Office purview. All court holding facilities are part of the court complex which is owned by the State of California. Installation of any equipment within their facilities must be first approved by the State of California.