



# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Elizabeth Lake  
Acting City Administrator

**FROM:** James P. Beere  
Interim Chief of Police

**SUBJECT:** OPD RSI Helicopter Maintenance  
Contract

**DATE:** June 26, 2026

City Administrator Approval

  
Betsy Lake (Jul 2, 2026 10:10:34 PDT)

Date: Jul 2, 2026

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That City Council Adopt A Resolution:**

**(1) Authorizing The City Administrator To Enter Into A Professional Services Agreement With Rotorcraft Support, Inc. (RSI) To Provide Helicopter Maintenance Services To The Oakland Police Department (OPD), For The Period Of July 1, 2026, To June 30, 2028, In An Amount Not To Exceed One Million Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,700,000), With An Option To Extend The Agreement For Two Additional Years To June 30, 2030, For A Total Contract Not To Exceed Three Million, Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$3,400,000); And**

**(2) Waiving The Local And Small Business (LBE/SLBE) Enterprise Program Requirements**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Oakland Police Department (OPD) uses helicopters as backup for vehicle-based police patrols during pursuits, arrests, and for directing the deployment of officers at crime scenes. OPD has two patrol helicopters; both of which are over 30 years old, in addition to a newer training helicopter. These air vehicles are used every day and require increasing levels of on-call mechanical support to maintain safe operational functionality. OPD conducted a Request for Quote (RFQ) and Rotorcraft Support, Inc. (RSI) was the sole vendor to respond so OPD will retain their services. OPD seeks a contract with RSI for up to \$850,000 per year for two years, for a contract of \$1,700,000 with an option to extend the contract for two additional years to June 30, 2030, At the same rate of \$850,000 per year for two years, for a four-year total contract not to exceed \$3,400,000.

The current OPD-RSI contract which expires June 30, 2026, specifies an hourly rate for helicopter maintenance of \$140 per hour to \$210 per hour depending on the type of mechanical support, plus a cost structure for vehicle parts – a new contract would maintain a similar hourly rate and cost structure (\$160 and \$240). OPD has spent approximately \$850,000 total per year on maintenance (labor and parts) but must budget for a higher level of annual maintenance costs as the OPD helicopter fleet continues to age while also seeing a greater

frequency of use. The proposed contract will provide for a continuity of maintenance service for OPD's helicopter fleet.

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

OPD uses helicopters to support vehicle-based police patrols during pursuits, arrests, and the coordination of officer deployment at crime scenes.. Helicopters are used most days, if not every day, for operational support – averaging approximately 1,000 flight hours per year or 83 hours per month. Helicopters play a critical role in policing because they can respond very quickly throughout the city. OPD air patrol can respond in approximately 30 seconds to a crime pursuit or investigation, when called for support – whereas motor vehicles may take much more time to respond in situations where every minute counts.

Air patrol has provided coverage for incidents in 2025, connected to approximately 317 felony arrests. These cases include homicide, robbery, stolen cars, and residential burglaries. This support also includes over 147 vehicle pursuits and over 104 foot pursuits - air patrol vehicle pursuits are much safer than pursuits via road-based police vehicles due to the inherent danger of the latter type of pursuit for the public, as well as for the suspect and patrol officer. Helicopters also offer unique situational awareness support during sideshows, where hundreds, if not thousands, of people in vehicles gather to engage in highly dangerous and illegal vehicular activity.

### ***Need for Helicopter Maintenance***

OPD has two patrol helicopters and one training helicopter. The two patrol helicopters are MD500E model helicopters of which one was built in 1990 (36 years old) and the other was built in 1993 (33 years old). The training helicopter is a Schweizer 300 CBI built in 2005. These helicopters are used consistently and require more expensive parts and mechanical support to maintain safe operational functionality.

The cost for new helicopters exceeds OPD's current budget capacity – new similar aircraft would cost approximately \$6 million each – and then require an additional one to one and a half million for new law enforcement equipment (e.g., radios, lights, cameras, special electrical wiring). A total refurbishment of current helicopters would cost approximately \$3.5 million each plus additional costs for law enforcement equipment; these options would still require a maintenance contract as well, although the maintenance would be less expensive on newer vehicles.

The following history outlines recent maintenance contracts and related spending authority:

- RSI (July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023) through a published RFQ
- RSI (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024) through a published RFQ
- RSI (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2026) through a published RFQ

The Oakland City Council approved the last helicopter maintenance contract previously at the June 18, 2024 meeting by [resolution C.M.S. 90318](#) for a total contract not to exceed one million,

seven hundred thousand dollars (1,700,000) and waived the local and small business (LBE/SLBE) enterprise program requirements.

### **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

OPD's helicopters are used for obtaining visual information. The department uses the helicopter as a rapid response patrol unit. The Air Unit can respond to in-progress shootings and violent crimes rapidly and frequently find the situation abruptly ending upon the arrival of the helicopter. During violent incidents in-progress, the Air Unit can expedite the Patrol officer's response by directing the officer to injured victims and fleeing subjects. The Air Unit is assigned citywide and responds anywhere in the City that OPD dispatch sends it. The Air Unit will occasionally assist outside agencies as requested. These requests frequently have a direct nexus to Oakland. The Air Unit assists Ceasefire and other specialized teams when requested. These requests usually include maintaining a visual on a subject and advising when the safest opportunity arises for arrest (exited vehicle or house).

The Air Unit assists with crowd control by advising the ground units of the size and activity of the crowd. The Air Unit also assists with giving public announcements when needed. One example is the Air Unit directing officers to intersections for traffic control to safely facilitate mobile protests. Many protests do not supply OPD with march routes which prevents the department from safely protecting the crowd from vehicle traffic. The public health use is spotting fires (from smoke) and assisting Oakland Fire Department in safely evacuating areas. The Air Unit also assists Oakland Fire with identifying safe ingress and egress points to battle the fires. Lastly, the Air Unit can locate and direct Oakland Fire Department to hot spots that pose additional risks. The daily public health impact is commonly locating missing persons at risk and rapid intervention of violent crimes.

OPD advertised a Request for Quote (RFQ) for helicopter maintenance services, on March 6, 2026, which closed on April 6, 2026. RSI can provide all the labor, personnel, material, tools, and supplies necessary to maintain OPD's helicopter fleet on an on-call, as-needed basis. RSI has a valid Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) repair station certificate and can offer a full staff of FAA certified airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanics with factory training and recurrent training on the relevant OPD equipment.

The OPD-RSI contract for the period of July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2028, with a two-year extension, would allow for a spending authority not to exceed \$850,000 per year. Rather, OPD is requesting a contract with this spending maximum based on expectations that the aging helicopter fleet may need additional parts that will become scarce over time and based on the historical increase in maintenance cost.

#### ***Recent Uses of OPD Helicopters***

- On April 15, 2025, the OPD helicopter assisted the Ceasefire section following a 211 (robbery) vehicle after marked ground units attempted to stop the suspect vehicle it fled into the San Leandro tunnel. Inside the tunnel the suspects switched to a different vehicle. ARGUS was able to follow the second vehicle until it stopped, and suspects were taken into custody.

- On April 21, 2025, the OPD helicopter assisted the Ceasefire section following an 187 (murder) vehicle. ARGUS followed the vehicle until it stopped. ARGUS directed ground units to the vehicle. Arrest teams conducted a takedown and arrested the warrant suspect and a firearm was recovered.
- On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the OPD helicopter assisted with a 207 (Kidnapping) ARGUS searched the city for the suspect vehicle, located the vehicle, and directed ground units to it. Suspect arrested and victim was located.
- On August 25, 2025, the OPD helicopter assisted with a 215 (carjacking) ARGUS searched the city and located the suspect vehicle, followed the vehicle until it stopped, and then directed ground units to the parked vehicle in the City of Alameda. Suspect in custody.
- On October 6, 2025, the OPD helicopter assisted with a shooting vehicle. A shooting had just occurred. With the help of FLOCK ground units were able to locate the suspect vehicle. They attempted to stop the vehicle, and it fled from Officers. A pursuit was initiated. When ARGUS arrived overhead the pursuit all ground units stopped pursuing and parallel. When the vehicle parked ARGUS directed ground units to the vehicle. Suspect in custody.
- On November 25, 2025, the OPD helicopter assisted with a 215 (carjacking) ARGUS located the suspect vehicle and directed ground units to the vehicle. Officers attempted to stop the vehicle, and it fled. Officers were able to spike strip the vehicle and the suspect vehicle stopped a few blocks away. The suspect got out and fled on foot onto the 580 freeway. Suspect in custody and firearm recovered.

In addition to the recent uses cited, this is a comprehensive view of the statistics from the Air Unit over the last several years:

**2021:**

- Flight hours 1,195
- Calls for service 5,198
- Response time and percentage of time first of scene 25 seconds 91%
- 9 missing person searches, 409 felony arrests, 84 vehicle pursuits
- 26 murder arrests, 63 robbery arrests

**2022:**

- Flight hours 1,158.3
- Calls for service 4,092
- Response time and percentage of time first of scene 28 seconds 91%
- 26 missing person searches, 460 felony arrests, 58 vehicle pursuits
- 24 murder arrests, 49 robbery arrests

**2023:**

- Flight Hours 970.4
- Response time average 26 seconds and percentage of time first of scene 89%
- 7 missing person searches, 592 felony arrests, 202 vehicle pursuits

- 39 murder arrests, 112 robbery arrests

**2024:**

- Flight hours 939.9
- First on scene 1,887 out of 2,133 / 88% of the time.
- 265 vehicle pursuits mitigated, 220 stolen vehicles recovered.
- 5 missing people searches, 598 felony arrests, 153 guns recovered.
- 21 murder arrests, 107 robbery arrests, and 65 arrests for carjacking.

**2025:**

- Flight Hours 716.5
- 22 arrests for murder, 57 arrests for robbery
- 113 Guns recovered
- 147 vehicle pursuits mitigated

The Air Unit has a very focused, prioritized use as explained in the daily functions and usage. The focused priorities are preservation of life by rapidly responding to life threatening incidents.

Other uses of the Air Unit include mitigating high-risk incidents such as vehicle pursuits with deescalating from removing ground units (which usually results in subjects slowing down and abandoning their vehicle where ground units can make the arrest) as well as quickly locating missing persons at risk by covering large areas that would be time and resource consuming for ground units. The capabilities of the Air Unit are impossible to duplicate, making alternative strategies unpractical.

**WAIVER RATIONALE**

OPD issued a Request for Quote (RFQ) for helicopter maintenance services, on March 6, 2026, which closed on April 6, 2026, and RSI was the sole respondent to the RFQ for comprehensive helicopter maintenance. RSI can provide all the labor, personnel, material, tools, and supplies necessary to maintain OPD's helicopter fleet on an on-call, as-needed basis. RSI has a valid Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) repair station certificate and employs a full staff of FAA-certified airframe and powerplant (A&P) mechanics with factory and recurrent training on OPD's equipment. It is in the best interests of the City to waive the L/SLBE requirements because RSI was the only company which responded to the RFQ.

**RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS**

This agenda item is a routine item and does not relate to any Oakland strategic planning efforts.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

OPD is requesting spending authority for a contract with RSI for up to \$850,000 per year for a two-year period, with an option for a two-year extension. This contract will be funded by the following funding sources below:

1. Fund: General Purpose Fund (1010), Organization: Special Operations (107710), Project: TBD, and Program: Special Operations (PS13)
2. Fund: Department of Justice (2112), Organization: Special Operations (107710), Project: TBD, Program: TBD
3. Fund: 5th Year State COPS Grant, AB 1913, Statutes of 2000 (2158), Project: TBD, Program: TBD.

Sufficient funds are included in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Adopted Budget for the General Purpose funds and future funding will be subject to approval in subsequent budgets and contingent upon the availability of grant funds. The table below shows how the contract will be funded:

**Table 1: Funding Source for Fiscal Years 2026-2028**

<b>Fund Source</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Account</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Amount</b>
1010	107710	TBD	TBD	PS13	\$850,000
2112	107710	TBD	TBD	TBD	\$425,000
2158	106510	TBD	TBD	TBD	\$425,000

**PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

No outreach was necessary beyond the standard City legislation publication.

**COORDINATION**

The Budget Bureau and the Office of the City Attorney were consulted on the development of this report and accompanying resolution.

**RACE AND EQUITY:**

Though staff did not complete a Racial Equity Impact Analysis, OPD is also currently working with the Department of Race and Equity on a race data impact analysis. OPD is committed to and looking forward to presenting a comprehensive analysis which can provide valuable information to all residents and visitors to the City of Oakland regarding crime trends, reduction activities, and the work being done to improve public safety in the most underserved areas in the City of Oakland.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

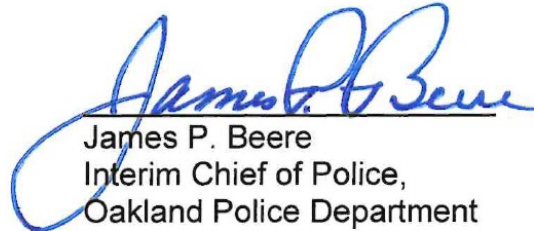
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(2) Waiving The Local And Small Business (LBE/SLBE) Enterprise Program Requirements

For questions concerning this report, please contact Sergeant Jonathan Vanerwegen, OPD, Helicopter Unit, at (510) 381-6729.

Respectfully Submitted:



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