



RATIONALE

The Need for and Purchase of Vehicles for an Eanes ISD Police Department

Summary

In response to 2023 legislative requirements ([House Bill 3](#)) to have an armed officer present on every campus, Eanes ISD took action to form a school district police department earlier this year, as doing so was determined to be the best way to meet the needs and desires of our community. Patrol vehicles and associated equipment for a police department commissioned by the [Texas Commission on Law Enforcement](#) (TCOLE) are included as minimum standards in the [Texas Occupations Code Chapter 1701.163\(1\)\(F\)](#), and are also a necessity for officers to respond to emergencies at any one of multiple school facilities across 32-square miles that comprise Eanes ISD.

Eanes ISD strictly followed the [legal procurement process](#) for police vehicles and formally invited more than 90 registered vendors to bid in July and August 2023; two qualified vendors responded. Austin-based Tesla, Inc. offered the best value of the responsive bids received by Eanes ISD, and therefore prevailed in the procurement process.

At the Oct. 3 Eanes ISD Board of Trustees meeting, district administrators will recommend awarding a Request for Proposals (RFP) to Tesla, Inc. for the purchase of nine police vehicles. The proposed automobile for police officers manufactured by Tesla, Inc. is not a luxury vehicle, but rather a basic version equipped for police response and communication that provides the best value to district taxpayers. Tesla vehicles would be available for delivery in 60 days.

Why is Eanes ISD Starting a Police Department?

- After considerable community input, the Eanes ISD Board of Trustees approved formation of a police department in June 2023, following passage of [House Bill 3](#) by the 88th Texas Legislature.
- House Bill 3 requires the presence of an armed officer on every campus, but only provides \$15,000 per campus to comply with this new mandate.
- Eanes ISD has worked to efficiently and cost-effectively use budgeted capital funds earmarked for vehicles that meet equipment and safety needs of the school district.

Why Does a School District Police Department Need Vehicles?

- As a fully commissioned police department (i.e., an actual law enforcement agency), Eanes ISD's jurisdiction spans multiple school facilities across 32-square miles.
- As with any law enforcement agency, an equipped police vehicle is necessary for incident response, transportation and rapid deployment to any campus in times of need given the geographic range of Eanes ISD's law enforcement jurisdiction.
- Regardless of the location or school to which an officer is assigned, he or she must be fully equipped to promptly execute his or her responsibilities and to uphold the safety of students and staff on any campus - individually or when responding en masse.
- To expect none or only some of our officers would have access to an authorized emergency vehicle is arbitrary. All officers must have the capability to respond immediately.
- Personal vehicles would not provide dependability, nor would they meet the specifications for an authorized emergency vehicle during a rapid law enforcement response.
- The [Texas Occupations Code Chapter 1701.163\(1\)\(F\)](#) includes the minimum standard of patrol vehicles and associated equipment for law enforcement when establishing a police department.
- Eanes ISD clarified with the [Texas Commission on Law Enforcement](#) (TCOLE) the required equipment for commissioned officers as well as other standards the agency sets for confirming a new police department. TCOLE agrees equipment proposed in the budget for the Eanes ISD police department is reasonable and appropriate.
- Uses for police vehicles include, but are not limited to:
 - Deterring intruders or intent. Vehicles parked outside campuses may provide a visual deterrent to criminal activity.
 - Controlling and enforcing traffic. Commissioned police officers are permitted to control traffic on public roadways or around campuses, but must be in an authorized emergency vehicle equipped with audio and visual signals to do so ([Texas Transportation Code Chapter 546.003](#)).
 - Responding to emergencies. Upon TCOLE approval, all emergency calls pertaining to district properties or people received by Travis County 911 will dispatch an Eanes ISD police officer. If an officer is not present on that campus at that time, another Eanes ISD officer will be dispatched. In a critical incident, all Eanes ISD officers must be first responders in an authorized emergency vehicle.

- Transporting individuals. In the rare situation of an apprehension on a campus, the detainee must be transported in a police vehicle. Occasionally, the need to safely transport a student to a mental health facility may also arise.
 - Pursuing individuals. While also unlikely but possible, the need to pursue an individual involved in an incident at one of our campuses could require use of an authorized emergency vehicle. Examples are an abduction, assault or a runaway.
 - Assisting outside agencies. As commissioned police officers, if capable of doing so, Eanes ISD's department will have an obligation to assist surrounding agencies in need. For example, if West Lake Hills Police requests emergency assistance near a school and one of our officers is able, he or she should respond.
- Purchasing police vehicles utilizing budgeted funds for capital expenses and submitting the application to TCOLE, is the next step to fulfill the Board of Trustees' approval to create a formal police department for Eanes ISD.
 - The proposed purchase would provide a vehicle for each officer as part of his or her issued equipment, once formally commissioned by TCOLE.

Why are Tesla (or Electric) Vehicles Proposed for this Purchase?

- At the Oct. 3 Eanes ISD Board of Trustees meeting, district administrators will propose awarding a Request for Proposals (RFP) to Austin-based Tesla, Inc. for the purchase of nine police vehicles - one for each officer.
- Eanes ISD followed the [legal procurement process](#) for police vehicles and will make its recommendation for the bid that provides the best value to taxpayers, based on affordability, availability and sustainability.
- More than 90 registered vendors were formally invited to bid in July and August 2023; two qualified vendors responded.
- The vehicle offered in the second bid did not meet evaluated criteria as a long-term option for the Eanes ISD police department, and therefore was not deemed a fiscally responsible value for the budget or for taxpayers.
- The proposed automobile for police officers manufactured by Tesla, Inc. is not a luxury vehicle. The vehicle will be equipped with basic Tesla features including technology, performance and sustainability to comply with law enforcement specifications.
- Many municipal police departments in the U.S. have begun introducing Tesla's electric vehicles to their fleet, including Dallas, New York City, Westport, Conn., Boulder, Colo., Spokane, Wash., Fremont, Calif., and Eden Prairie, Minn., among others.

- Tesla vehicles would be available to Eanes ISD police officers within 60 days of purchase.
- Traditional fuel-powered police vehicles (e.g., a Chevrolet Tahoe or a Ford Expedition) are either much more costly or would be back-ordered for more than 12 months. This may be the reason so few dealers responded to the RFP or could not meet the specifications.
- Irrespective of the make and model of police vehicles, Eanes ISD is steadfast in its commitment to safeguarding students and staff, fulfilling state-mandated obligations and establishing a high-quality, well-equipped commissioned police department that is financially responsible to taxpayers.

From Where Do Funds Come for Purchasing Police Vehicles?

- When the Board of Trustees approved the process to create a police department, Eanes ISD planned for and carefully budgeted equipment purchases - including police vehicles - for the officers.
- Budgeted funds to purchase the vehicles and install charging stations come from community-supported bonds that provide for capital improvements.
- These bond monies are legally designated specifically for capital equipment expenditures, which DO NOT come from or impact the same operating (M&O) budget used to fund teacher and staff salaries.
- By law, bond funds (I&S) for equipment purchases and operating funds for staff salaries (M&O) are not interchangeable.
- No donated funds of any kind or amount from the Eanes Education Foundation will be used to purchase or offset the cost of the police vehicles.
- Charging stations, most vehicle maintenance (likely less for an electric car) and other costs for non-consumable aspects of the cars are funded by budgeted monies.
- Electricity use from charging would be an M&O expense, but preliminary estimates are affordable within utility costs for each campus.
- If fuel-powered vehicles were purchased instead, gas and oil would also be an M&O expense, which - over the eight- to 10-year life of a vehicle - could be considerably more than the estimated \$3,000 one-time expense of installing each charging station and yearly utility costs to operate electric vehicles.

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