

# MUNICIPAL COURT OF ATLANTA

## IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE



FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MAY 2019



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## Municipal Court of Atlanta

150 Garnett Street  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

May 21, 2019

Dear Reader,

A year ago, the Municipal Court of Atlanta Improvement Task Force was established to further serve the twin aims of justice and judicial economy. The Municipal Court of Atlanta is unique in terms of capacity handling over 250,000 citations each year. The Court handles cases from over twenty (20) different law enforcement agencies. The Municipal Court is one of the busiest courts in the southeastern region.

The Task Force's mission essentially was to make meaningful recommendations to improve the Municipal Court's internal and external operations, procedures, and customer experience. To this end, we enlisted the help and service of community advocates and thought leaders to participate in the Task Force. The members included representatives of City Council, the Mayor's Office, the prosecutorial community, defense attorneys and members of indigent defense, court specialists, leaders in the business community and respected members of the legal community.

The members welcomed the challenge to participate in a pivotal and innovative project which would make recommendations for changes to the Court. They invested a significant portion of their time, participated in lively dialogue, shadowed departments, reviewed processes and carefully considered the Court's operations. Their commitment to actively participating in this process has been instrumental. We are extremely grateful for their service and time to the City of Atlanta and to the Court.

This report contains an overview of the findings and recommendations of the Municipal Court of Atlanta Improvement Task Force including a summary and explanation of recommendations. We hope that you review the recommendations and join in the continuing effort to advance public safety, ensure access to justice and improve efficiencies.

Sincerely,

Hon. Christopher T. Portis, Chief Judge

Hon. Christopher E. Ward, Deputy Chief Judge

## **Introduction**

Dear Chief Judge Portis:

The Municipal Court of Atlanta Improvement Task Force (Task Force) is pleased to present the following report and recommendations concerning processes, policies and procedures. In your charge, you requested that the Task Force:

- 1) Identify strengths and weaknesses of current court functions;
- 2) Examine innovative procedures and programs used in other courts, and from these procedures and programs, identify those that hold the most promise for the citizens of Atlanta and the public at large; and
- 3) Propose just, efficient, and consistent procedures and policies for the Municipal Court and its users.

To accomplish these tasks, the Court Leadership assembled an outstanding team of Atlanta business experts, community advocates and law professionals. Specifically, Task Force members include judges, lawyers, business specialists, judicial and executive branch employees. The Task Force also sought guidance from experts in municipal law across the nation, including members of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Task Force is grateful for their assistance.

After a year of study, the Task Force concluded that the Municipal Court should consider these recommendations when addressing matters concerning the citizens of Atlanta. Some recommendations include the need for greater uniformity and streamlined processes. While others focus on access to justice, transparency and fairness.

The Task Force is grateful to be a part of the first full evaluation of the Municipal Court. The Court's willingness to embark on this project bodes well for the citizens of Atlanta and for the judicial branch. The recommendations outlined in this report provide fertile ground for improving the Court user experience and access to information. Acting upon these recommendations will increase efficiency in the judicial branch's operation and promote public confidence in the judiciary. The Task Force hopes such important work will continue.

With sincere appreciation,



George O. Lawson, Jr., Co-Chair



Steven K. Weiner, Co-Chair

## **Executive Summary**

In May of 2018, the Municipal Court of Atlanta Improvement Task Force (Task Force) created a forum to make recommendations to improve the Court. The Task Force's primary goal was to anticipate demands on the judicial system and recommend how best to prepare for those demands with respect to court organization, function and operations. The Task Force was divided into four Working Groups: Intergovernmental; Intragovernmental; Internal Operations & Communications and External Operations & Communications. These Working Groups focused on identifying issues specific to the call of the group.

The Task Force identified three (3) major categories for court improvement.

- I. Court Experience – identify interactions with the public and focus on ways to create a more positive experience.
- II. Court Outreach – ensure certain individuals gain access to resources to help reduce recidivism.
- III. Court Procedure – update and streamline various court processes and procedures for more efficiency.

The Task Force should serve as a foundation for the court to eliminate redundancies and strategize improvements. The recommendations on the following pages will help the Court's consideration for improvement.

## **Statement of Need and Task Force Overview**

The Chief Judge of the Municipal Court of Atlanta formed the Task Force to further serve the twin aims of justice and judicial economy by convening internal and external stakeholders to ensure that litigants receive prompt and fair hearings, that cases are processed accurately and disposed of expediently, and that the court's resources are utilized to maximize efficiency.

To execute this commitment, the Task Force's members formed four (4) working groups in which members focused on targeted issues specific to the call of the group. Details on the Task Force members and working groups are provided below:

### **Task Force Organization**

Task Force members appointed by Chief Judge Christopher T. Portis include:

- Hon. Andrea L. Boone, Atlanta City Council, District 10
- Mr. Raines F. Carter, City Solicitor, City of Atlanta
- Ms. Lauren Clayton, Associate, Wilson, Brock & Irby, LLC
- Ms. Rashida A. Davis, Court Administrator/ Chief Clerk, Municipal Court of Atlanta
- Mr. Kenneth Days, III, Public Defender, City of Atlanta
- Hon. Andre Dickens, Atlanta City Council, Post 3 At Large
- Ms. Kyra D. Dixon, Deputy Chief Clerk, Municipal Court of Atlanta
- Mr. Keith E. Gammage, Solicitor General, Fulton County
- Ms. Shani T. Godwin, President/ CEO, Communique-USA, Inc.
- Hon. Dustin Hillis, Atlanta City Council, District 9
- Ms. Rachel Kaufman, Attorney, Kaufman Law Firm LLC
- Chief Patrick L. Labat, City of Atlanta Department of Corrections
- Mr. George O. Lawson, Jr., Attorney, Lawson & Thornton PC
- Mr. Michael N. Miller, Attorney, Law Office of Michael N. Miller PC
- Hon. Christopher T. Portis, Chief Judge, Municipal Court of Atlanta
- Mr. James Rodatus, Policy Analyst, Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts
- Hon. Christopher E. Ward, Deputy Chief Judge, Municipal Court of Atlanta
- Mr. Steve K. Weiner, Attorney, The Weiner Law Firm LLC

## **Working Groups**

Intergovernmental: Carter, Days, Gammage, and Miller.

Intragovernmental: Boone, Hillis, Kaufman, Labat, and Portis.

Internal Operations & Communications: Clayton, Davis, Dixon, Lawson, and Rodatus.

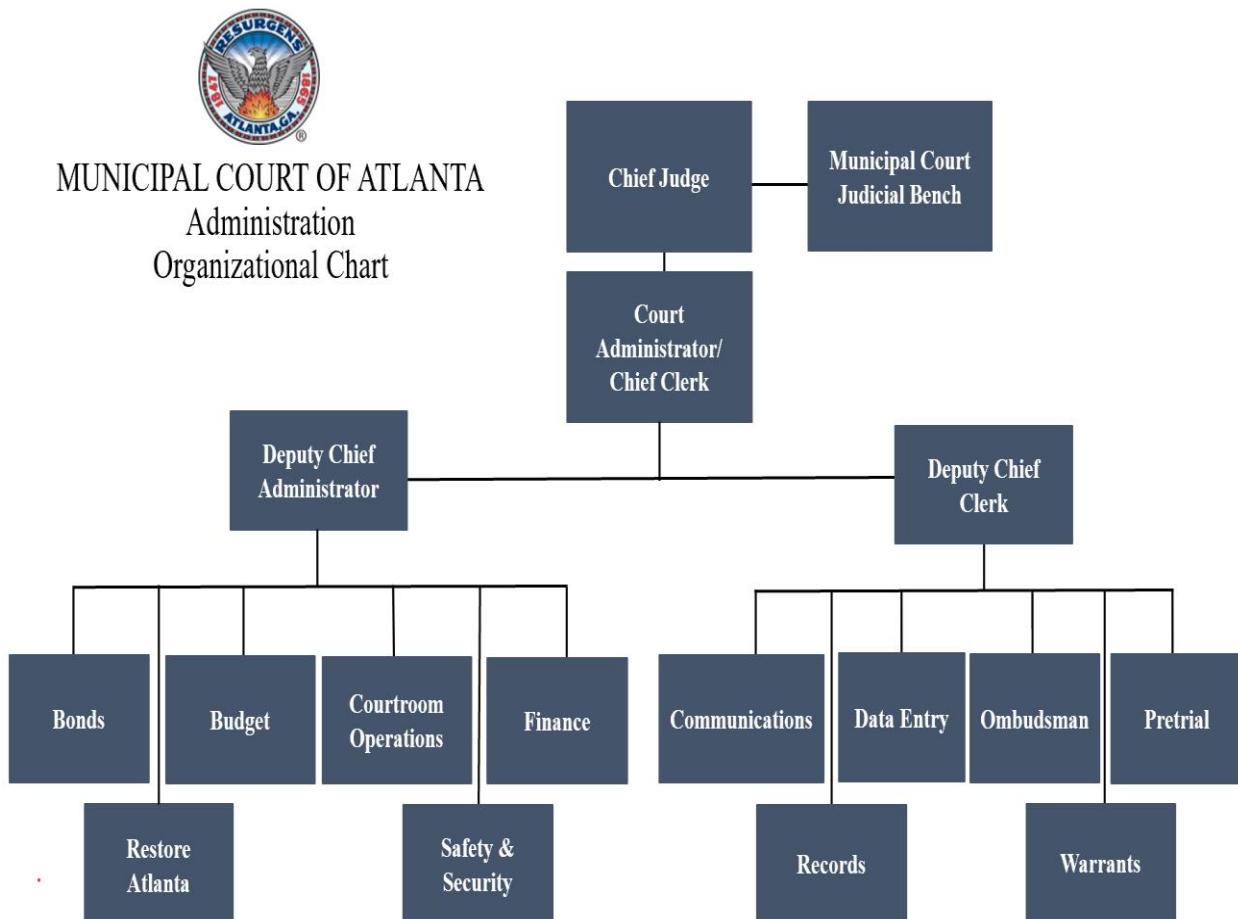
External Operations & Communications: Dickens, Godwin, and Weiner

## Jurisdiction and Organization

Pursuant to Georgia law, the City of Atlanta created the Municipal Court which shall have jurisdiction over ordinance violations and such other jurisdiction as provided by law such as traffic violations and certain misdemeanor state offenses. O.C.G.A. § 36-32-1(a) states:

“Each municipal corporation of this state shall, unless otherwise provided in the local law relating to a particular municipal corporation, be authorized to establish and maintain a municipal court having jurisdiction over the violation of municipal ordinances and over such other matters as are by general law made subject to the jurisdiction of municipal courts. Any such court shall be styled as a municipal court.”

The Municipal Court of Atlanta is organized as follows:



## **Municipal Court Divisions**

### **Traffic Division**

The Traffic Division handles all Title 40 offenses related to traffic infractions. These cases include speeding, suspended driver's license, failure to maintain lane, no insurance, HOV violations, failure to obey traffic signals, expired tags, expired registration and accident cases.

### **Criminal Division**

The Criminal Division handles all misdemeanor criminal cases and ordinance violations. These cases include possession of marijuana (less than an ounce), theft by shoplifting, disorderly conduct and public intoxication.

### **Civil Division**

The Civil Division handles all civil cases processed through the Municipal Court. This includes parking violations, school bus violations and false alarm cases.

### **Housing and Code Enforcement**

The Code and Ordinance Division is responsible for all matters relating to the enforcement of residential and commercial properties that are alleged to be in violation of the Atlanta Housing Code, the Commercial Maintenance Industrial Code and the Zoning Ordinance. This division also handles all violations of the Hartsfield-Jackson's Airport Ordinance Violations. This includes ordinances that regulate the operation of rideshare vehicles at the airport such as Uber and Lyft as well as taxicabs and limousines. The Housing and Code Enforcement Division handles matters regarding the following types of cases: Housing Code; Vehicles for Hire; Business Licenses and Permits; Watershed (Theft & Erosion); Fire Code; Public Works (Dumping & Trash); Zoning & Buildings and Judicial in Rem Proceedings.

### **Restore Atlanta Division (Community Court)**

The Restore Atlanta Division (Community Court) is the alternative sentencing division. It handles cases involving mental health and or substance abuse challenges and quality of life crimes.

### **In-Custody Division (First Appearance)**

The In-Custody Division handles first appearance hearings. The purpose of the first appearance hearing is to notify arrested persons of the charges brought against them and to determine and set bond.

### **DUI Division**

The DUI Division handles cases that involve drivers under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants within the City of Atlanta.

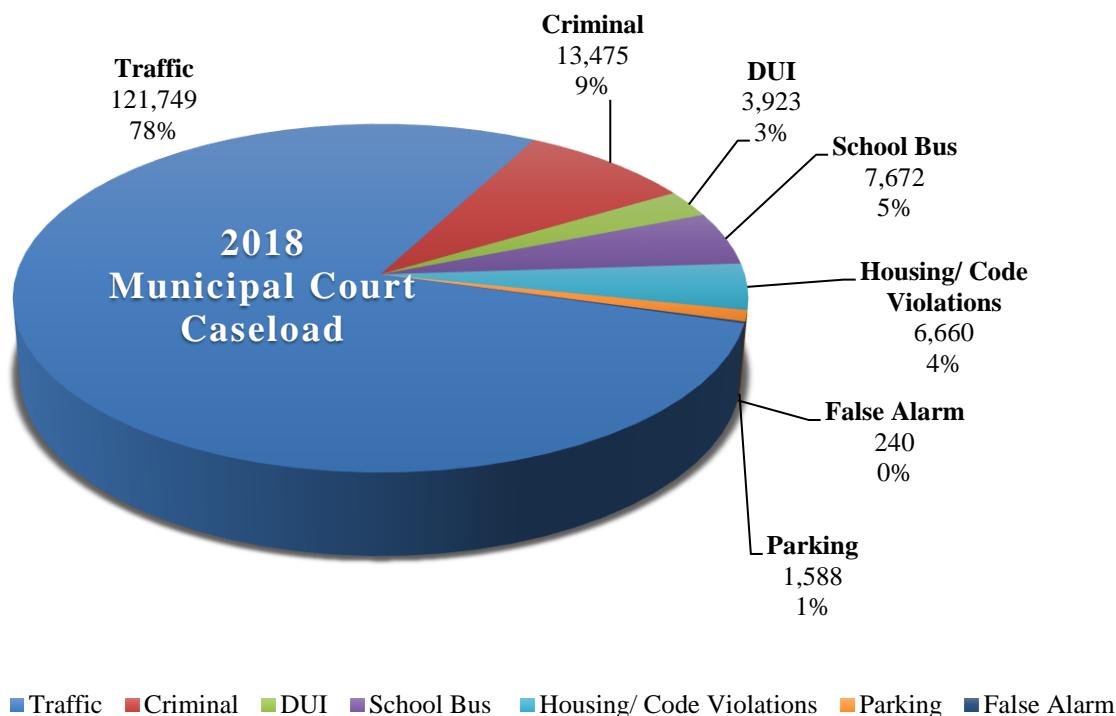
### **Failure to Appear Division**

The Failure to Appear Division allows defendants with active warrants, or those who have missed their court dates, an opportunity to resolve their pending matter.

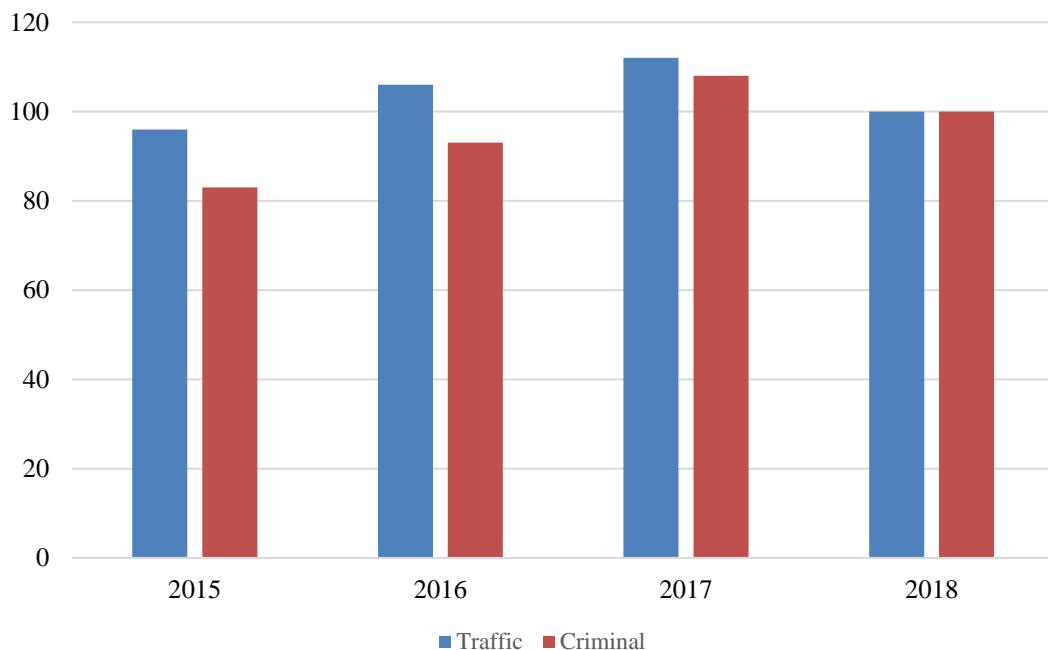
## Caseload Inventory

The Municipal Court of Atlanta is a high-volume court receiving over 250,000 citations on an annual basis. Most cases involve misdemeanor traffic offenses or ordinance violations. The Municipal Court receives more than 15,000 citations per month from more than twenty (20) law enforcement agencies. Most citations are issued by the Atlanta Police Department.

The Municipal Court tracks clearance rates to efficiently monitor case data and “keep up” with its incoming caseload. The clearance rate is calculated by dividing the number of filed cases by the number of closed cases. This measure is a universal metric used to compare each case type on a monthly or yearly basis.



### **Case Clearance Rate FY15 - FY18**



## Budget

Approximately 85% of the combined budget expenses for Court Administration and the Judiciary cover the salaries and benefits of personnel. The remaining budget covers operating costs, such as court reporting, interpreters, indigent defense, court technology, supplies and equipment.



### FY19 OPERATING BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS Judicial Agencies General Fund

FY16 ACTUAL EXPENDITURE	FY17 ACTUAL EXPENDITURE	FY18 ADOPTED	EXPENDITURES AND APPROPRIATIONS	FY19 BUDGET	VARIANCE FY19-FY18
\$7,259,335	\$7,660,989	\$8,260,326	PERSONNEL		
\$358	\$9,122	-	Salaries, Regular	\$8,262,406	\$2,080
-	-	-	Salaries, Perm Part-Time	-	-
-	-	-	Salaries, Sworn	-	-
\$153,872	\$274,695	\$41,507	Salaries, Extra Help	\$41,507	-
-	-	-	Salaries, Extra Help-Sworn	-	-
\$86,680	\$45,535	\$24,479	Overtime	\$24,479	-
-	-	-	Pen Cont Fire Pen Fd	-	-
-	-	-	Pen Cont Police Pen Fd	-	-
\$1,613,406	\$1,550,836	\$1,459,677	Pen Cont Gen Emp Pen Fd	\$1,459,677	-
\$230,610	\$258,084	\$182,021	Defined Contribution	\$182,021	-
\$4,976	\$124,848	\$22,300	Workers' Compensation	\$36,199	\$13,900
\$1,036,786	\$1,083,171	\$1,364,698	Other Personnel Costs	\$1,424,609	\$59,911
\$10,386,022	\$11,007,280	\$11,355,008	TOTAL PERSONNEL	\$11,430,899	\$75,891
			OTHER EXPENSES		
\$2,211,237	\$1,957,188	\$2,077,476	Purchased / Contracted Services	\$1,878,334	(-\$199,143)
\$291,018	\$378,937	\$164,782	Supplies	\$164,782	-
-	\$29,238	-	Capital Outlays	-	-
\$6,007	\$54,303	\$6,137	Interfund / Interdepartmental Charges	\$6,137	-
\$343,605	\$9,617	\$15,835	Other Costs	\$15,835	-
-	-	-	Debt Service	-	-
-	-	-	Conversion / Summary	-	-
-	-	-	Other Financing Uses	\$11,752	\$11,752
\$2,851,866	\$2,429,282	\$2,264,231	TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES	\$2,076,840	(-\$187,391)
<b>\$13,237,889</b>	<b>\$13,436,562</b>	<b>\$13,619,239</b>	<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL AND OTHER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$13,507,739</b>	<b>(-\$111,500)</b>

FY16 ACTUAL EXPENDITURE	FY17 ACTUAL EXPENDITURE	FY18 ADOPTED FUND	FY19 BUDGET	VARIANCE FY19-FY18
\$13,237,889	\$13,436,562	\$13,619,239 General Fund	\$13,507,739	(-\$111,500)
<b>\$13,237,889</b>	<b>\$13,436,562</b>	<b>\$13,619,239 TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$13,507,739</b>	<b>(-\$111,500)</b>

FY16	FY17	FY18	AUTHORIZED POSITION COUNT	FY19	VARIANCE FY19-FY18
162.00	163.00	184.00	Full Time Equivalent	187.00	3.00



## FY19 OPERATING BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

### Judicial Agencies

#### General Fund

EXPENDITURES AND APPROPRIATIONS	VARIANCE (19-18)	EXPLANATION
<b>PERSONNEL</b>		
Salaries, Regular	\$2,080	Increase due to \$14 per hour living wage increase offset by vacant positions funded at 50%.
Salaries, Perm Part-Time	-	
Salaries, Sworn	-	
Salaries, Extra Help	-	
Salaries, Extra Help-Sworn	-	
Overtime	-	
Pen Cont Fire Pen Fd	-	
Pen Cont Police Pen Fd	-	
Pen Cont Gen Emp Pen Fd	-	
Defined Contribution	-	
Workers' Compensation	\$13,900	Increase due to Workers' Comp more than anticipated.
Other Personnel Costs	\$59,911	Increase due to a proposed \$500 Compensation Bonus.
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL</b>	<b>\$75,891</b>	
<b>OTHER EXPENSES</b>		
Purchased / Contracted Services	(\$199,143)	Decrease due to retired police officer conversion from Contracted Services to Salaries, Regular.
Supplies	-	This line includes general office supplies.
Capital Outlays	-	
Interfund / Interdepartmental Charges	-	This line includes motor/fuel and repair/maintenance expenses.
Other Costs	-	This line includes costs associated with customer refunds.
Debt Service	-	
Conversion / Summary	-	
Other Financing Uses	\$11,752	Increase due to costs associated with GMA lease payments.
<b>TOTAL OTHER EXPENSES</b>	<b>(\$187,391)</b>	
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL AND OTHER EXPENSES</b>	<b>(\$111,500)</b>	

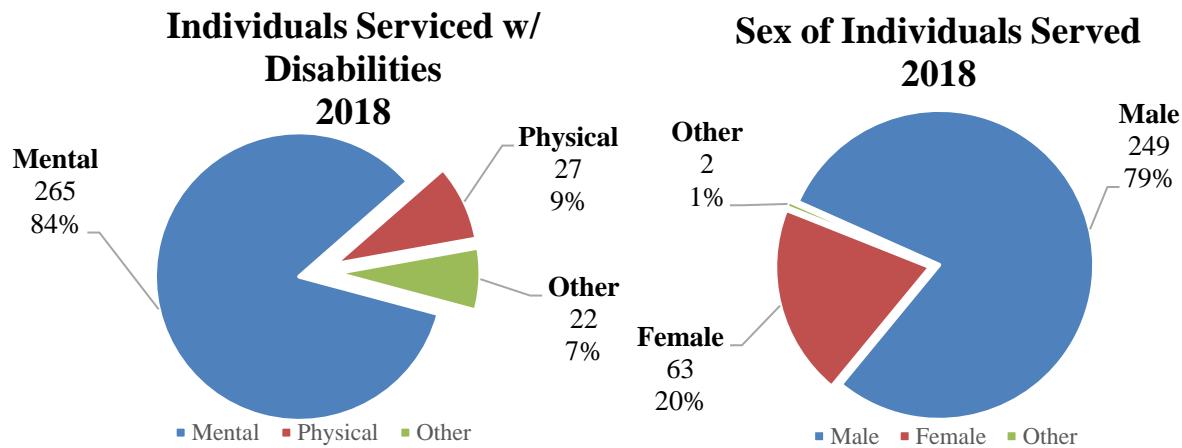
FUND	VARIANCE (19-18)	EXPLANATION
General Fund	(\$111,500)	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>(\$111,500)</b>	

AUTHORIZED POSITION COUNT	VARIANCE (19-18)	EXPLANATION
Full Time Equivalent	3.00	Increase due to Assistant Court Administrator, Pretrial Release Officer and Business Systems Analyst positions.

## Grants

The Municipal Court receives funding from the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) in the amount of \$126,980. This annual award funds two (2) full time staff positions: licensed clinician and social worker. These individuals assist defendants dealing with mental health and substance abuse challenges through the Restore Atlanta (Community Court) program. This grant funds clinical services for defendants, which include clinical assessments and evaluations, the facilitation of clinical groups, personalized resource coordination for physical and mental health, employment and housing. These services aid individuals in overcoming risks associated with lack of treatment and reoffending.

The Municipal Court also receives a grant in the amount of \$50,000 from the Transition Ex Offender Fund. This grant provides housing beds for individuals transitioning back into the community after incarceration at the City of Atlanta's Detention Center. The grant also funds competency evaluations. Competency evaluations determine whether the defendant's competent to stand trial. These comprehensive services aim to provide defendants with mental health and substance abuse treatment, HIV/AIDS medical care, temporary housing, case management and other supportive services to reduce recidivism rates.



## **Recommendations**

After a year of information gathering and discussion, the Task Force developed draft recommendations that circulated through each working group. The stakeholders reviewed recommendations at the meetings and provided excellent suggestions that contributed to the final recommendation.

The final recommendations are divided into three (3) key areas:

- I. Court Experience – identify interactions with the public and focus on ways to create a more positive experience.
- II. Court Outreach – ensure certain individuals gain access to resources to help reduce recidivism.
- III. Court Procedure – update and streamline various court processes and procedures for more efficiency.

The full set of recommendations can be found on pages 18-19 of this report.

## **Implementing the Recommendations**

Each recommendation aims to improve functions at the Municipal Court. While many barriers to justice may be addressed by new streamlined procedures, additional resources will be required to fully implement all recommendations for improvement. Improving the Municipal Court of Atlanta will help to maintain public trust and confidence in the Court.

## **Overview of Recommendations**

### ***Court Experience***

#### **1. Customer Service Merger with ATL311**

The Municipal Court's customer service team will merge with ATL311 to streamline information to citizens and provide one source for city services.

#### **2. Customer Service**

Create an improved court user experience from entrance to exit.

#### **3. Capital Improvements**

Make court-wide improvements that enhance court appearance, organization and advance energy efficiency.

#### **4. Online Resources – General Information and Case Information**

Improve online resources accessible to the public. Ensure that defendants can find information about upcoming cases online as well as access forms and materials they might need to submit to the Municipal Court.

#### **5. Streamlining Municipal Court Forms**

Review and redesign of standardized forms to simplify the process for regular form users.

### ***Court Outreach***

#### **6. Alcohol & Drug Initiative**

Develop the Municipal Court's access to alternative sentencing programs and social resources to better serve the community and reduce recidivism rates among offenders who may experience drug and alcohol challenges.

**7. Homelessness Task Force**

Expand Restore Atlanta's alternative sentencing programs to establish a diversion program specifically designed to rehabilitate offenders who are experiencing homelessness to reduce recidivism.

**8. Public Education and Outreach**

Assist citizens with resolution of outstanding failure to appear cases and warrants.

***Court Procedure***

**9. Open Records Process**

Streamline the Open Records Request Process so there is a clear point of contact and method for delivery of requested documents.

**10. Initial Appearance Process**

Update the Initial Appearance Process.

**11. Bind-over Process**

Streamline the transfer of case records to State and Superior Courts.

**12. Electronic Citation Integration**

Expand the electronic citation platform for uniformity in the charging document, accuracy of information and ability to access citations quickly in the case management system.

**13. Records Management**

Update the file management process to ensure the Municipal Court remains operable in the event of an interruption to electronic court records.

**14. Failure to Appear Process**

Update the process for defendants who missed their court appearance date to address their open case.

# Court Experience

## Customer Service Merger with Atlanta 311

<b>The Municipal Court's customer service team will merge with ATL311 to streamline information to citizens and provide one source for city services.</b>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Responding efficiently to the high volume of calls received by the Municipal Court.	Merging with ATL311 to utilize their infrastructure and efficiently handle the large volume of calls that are presented for the Municipal Court.

## Background

Prior to the development and implementation of ATL311, citizens of Atlanta had to contact each city department for information about various services. In 2014, the city launched ATL311, however, the Municipal Court continued to field its own calls through multiple internal departments and received over 20,000 calls monthly. Some of the calls involved simple logistical questions: such as the court's location and hours of operation. The Task Force recommended a merger with ATL311 to streamline services as well as increase efficiency in court administration by reducing the amount of calls the Municipal Court answers.

## Implementation

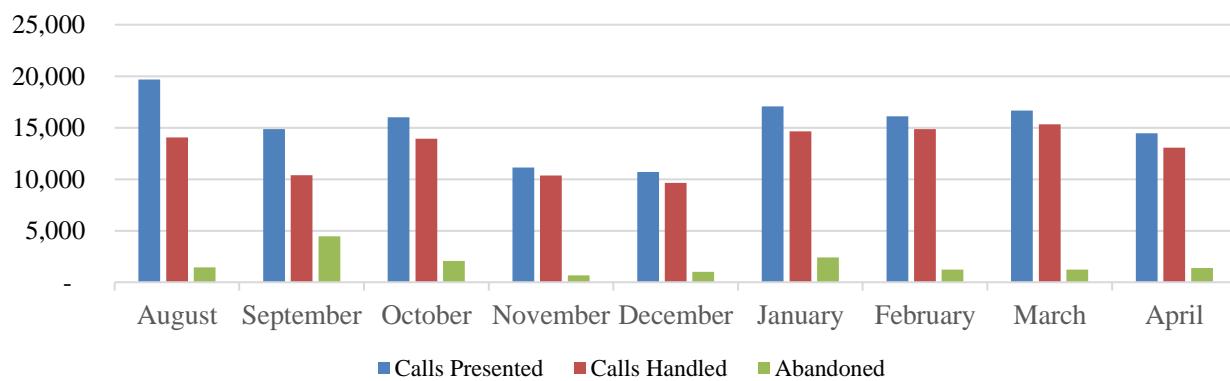
As part of the City of Atlanta's mission to provide "One Source for City Services," the Municipal Court's customer service team merged with ATL311 in August of 2018. Representatives with ATL 311 are equipped to respond to all Municipal Court inquires. ATL311 provides an additional avenue for defendants to request information about their cases or have a live agent address simple logistical questions.

ATL311 uses Oracle's Customer Relationship Management System, Siebel, as an end-to-end business and technology solution. Siebel also serves as a tool that tracks requests submitted by customers and collects customer contact information. The Call Center Customer Service Representatives (CSR) and city supervisors internally utilize this technological solution to help citizens and monitor quality assurance. CSRs answer incoming calls to provide general information, referrals, or create and assign new Service Requests to specific departments. A Service Request is a record created in Siebel initiated by a customer contacting ATL311. The information captured in the Service Request allows department personnel to view details associated with the request and track related work orders to ensure proper handling.

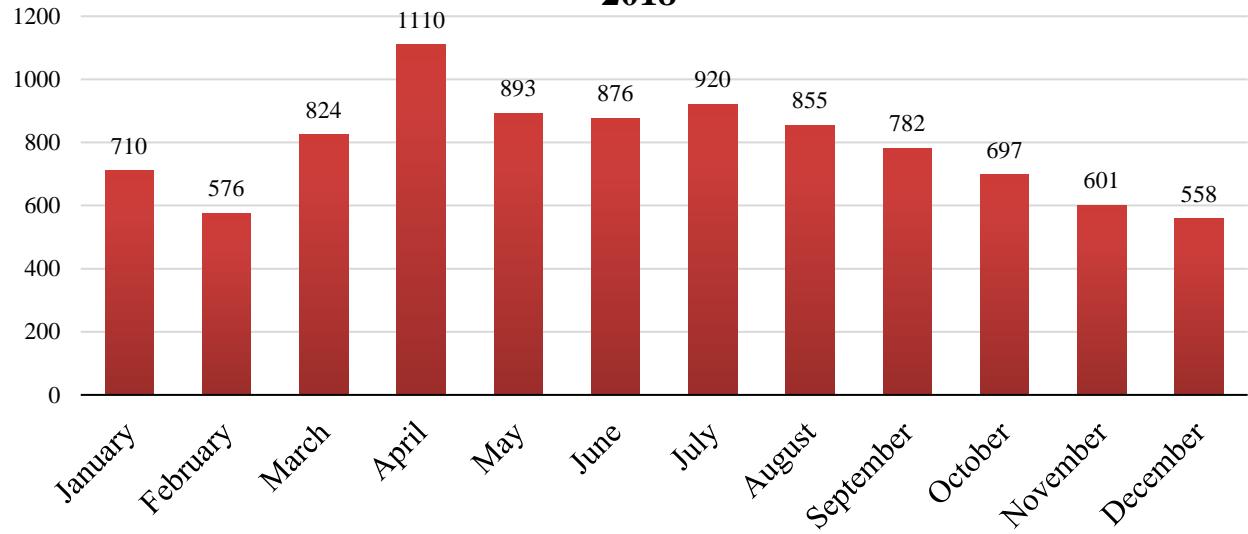
Cisco Finesse is a web-based application that answers calls and manages the status of Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) and Supervisors. Their call status can include: ready, not ready, conference, transfer and hold (amongst others). Supervisors can also view data for performance management. They can categorize each call by entering a wrap code for a respective department which aids in data tracking.

The Municipal Court's partnership with ATL311 will lead to greater efficiency and improved customer experience. As a result, callers receive shorter wait times and are provided with consistent and clear information. If a call cannot be handled by the ATL311 representative, that information is shared directly with the Municipal Court to resolve the escalation.

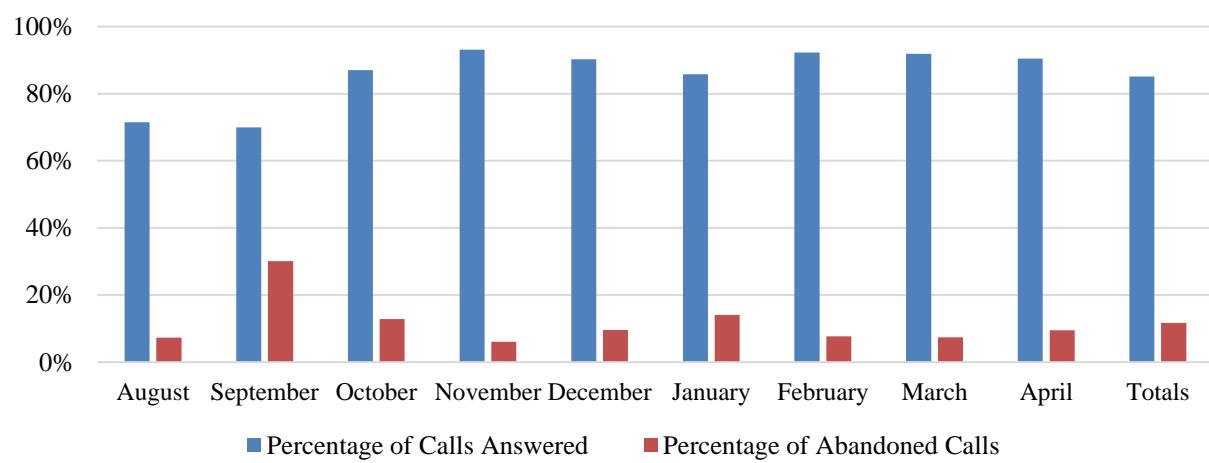
**Total Calls by Month**  
**August 2018- April 2019**



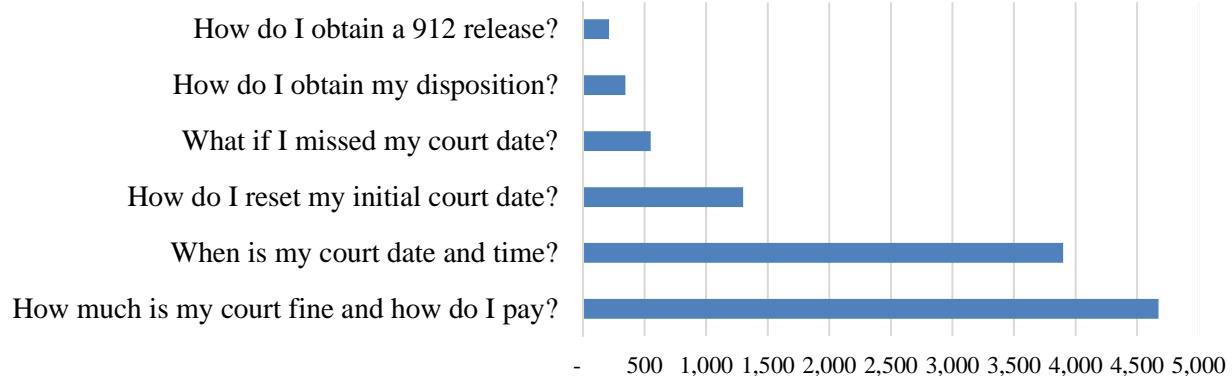
## Average Daily Call Volume 2018



## Calls Answered v. Abandoned 2018-2019



## **ATL-311-Municipal Court- Frequently Asked Questions**



## **Customer Service**

Create an improved court user experience from entrance to exit.	
Challenge to the Court	Recommendation from Task Force
Creating a user-friendly and professional customer service experience.	Establish quarterly customer service trainings for all customer-facing members of the staff.

## **Background**

The Municipal Court is one of the most visited buildings in the City of Atlanta. The Municipal Court receives thousands of visitors each day including: defendants, attorneys, law enforcement officers, witnesses, and citizens. There are many opportunities for the Municipal Court staff to interact with visitors beginning with the security team, finance department, help desk attendants, courtroom personnel and department personnel.

High quality customer service is critical to ensure a pleasant experience and foster confidence in the Municipal Court. The Task Force recommends engaging in quarterly trainings to enhance customer service, provide consistent information and create a user-friendly experience.

## **Implementation**

The Municipal Court initiated customer focused trainings with each department. The Task Force recommended the appointment of a Constituent Services Manager who can provide quality control guidance for those interfacing with the Municipal Court. The manager would implement a training schedule and generate a syllabus of training areas for the year.

The training schedule should include the importance of creating positive impressions through friendliness, helpfulness, professionalism and overall demeanor. The trainings should include empathy training to handle disputes and de-escalation techniques. The Municipal Court

should conduct enhanced trainings for staff on court basics and information that should be consistently provided to visitors.

Courtroom officers should use uniform scripts at the beginning of each arraignment and trial to explain courtroom proceedings. This allows consistent messaging for all attendees and eliminates confusion.

The Municipal Court should engage in regularly scheduled safety and security trainings to ensure that the courthouse continues to be a safe environment for employees and court users. The Municipal Court has held several trainings on safety and security: including active shooter training, first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and self-defense trainings. The trainings equip staff with the techniques to respond in cases of an emergency.

Additionally, the Municipal Court should facilitate discussions, mentorships, site visits and other activities to help court staff and court officers learn more about how to positively interact with court users.

## **Capital Improvements**

<b>Make court-wide improvements that enhance court appearance, organization and advance energy efficiency.</b>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Refresh the common areas of the court for visual improvement, organization, and efficiency.	Update court infrastructure.

## **Background**

The building infrastructure is an important component of the user experience with the Municipal Court. The location and layout of essential departments can assist users with resolving court business. It is important to regularly update high volume areas including main hallways and corridors. The Task Force recommends the Municipal Court refresh heavily traffic areas to improve the use of space and organization.

## **Implementation**

The Municipal Court has begun to make court-wide capital improvements. Energy efficient lighting has been installed in all main hallways, courtrooms and corridors. The Municipal Court will add signage with Braille translations throughout the court. The directional signage will assist with all citizens appearing before the Court, which encourages efficiency and reduces confusion.

### Renovation of Public Areas in the Municipal Court - Scope of Work Summary:

- Updated HVAC system for improved air quality
- Replaced or Matched all Doors, Frames and Hardware
- Demolition and New Finishes
- Flooring and Tile Upgrades

- Painting and Coating
- Furnish and install HDPE Toilet Partitions
- Millwork – all new crown molding, base, chair-rail, and door casing
- Improvement to Air Devices
- Electrical – replacement of light fixtures, lamps and wall sconces
- Energy Efficient Upgrades

Additionally, the Task Force recommends designating a law library or space in the courthouse for public use. The aim is to create a space where defendants and other members of the community can research their cases and access other legal information. The library could include legal books, access to a legal database, forms, computers, internet access and printing services for a nominal fee.

## Online Resources – General Information and Case Information

<p>Improve online resources accessible to the public. Ensure that defendants can find information about upcoming cases online as well as access forms and materials they might need to submit to the Municipal Court.</p>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Providing information to defendants that allows them to access information efficiently.	Update the online resources of the Court so they can access information on pending cases as well as forms and resources.

### Background

With advancements in technology, customers expect to engage with businesses online. Courts have an opportunity to provide citizens with increased access to the judicial process by introducing more web-based public facing technology. The internet can be used to grant access to court records and information. By investing in increased technological platforms, the court can reduce the costs and improve customer relations.

The Municipal Court invested in creating an online customer portal that is integrated with the case management system. The customer portal allows citizens to research their case; pay fines online (for eligible minor traffic offenses) and avoid the need to appear in person to resolve their case. The Task Force recommends increasing the online access to include: case filings and a forms center.

## Implementation

The Municipal Court has implemented several online resources to assist the public. The Municipal Court's online portal allows users to research case information via their name, citation/case number, tag or drivers' license. This information can be used to find a court date and time, courtroom and judge. The portal helps to reduce customer questions about case information prior to a court date.

In addition to researching case information online, users can pay for their ticket prior to their court date. All eligible traffic offenses are available for online payment prior to the defendant's court date. The Municipal Court partnered with a vendor to accept payments online or via the telephone twenty-four (24) hours and seven (7) days a week. This allows defendants to resolve their case without having to physically appear in court.

The Municipal Court also reformed its website to make it more user-friendly. The website is easily adaptable to various devices including a computer, tablet or smartphone. The site provides self-help options for users including: how to request the use of a recording device; a court disposition and court clearance letter. The website allows users to request a reasonable accommodation, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), prior to his or her scheduled court date. This allows a user to equally participate in court proceedings or activities.



The website can accommodate additional form documents to include subpoenas, reset requests and other common forms. The Municipal Court is in the process of adding all customer forms to the website. The Municipal Court will have a "Forms Center" where all forms can be stored in pdf for ease of access.

## **Streamlining Municipal Court Forms**

<b>Review and redesign of standardized forms to simplify the process for regular form users.</b>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Update customer use forms for ease of accessibility and use.	Streamline and computerize forms used throughout the Court.

### **Background**

Many of the law proceedings in the Municipal Court are largely form-driven. Forms were initially developed and designed to assist attorneys and pro se litigants with his or her case. Court forms should be simple, clear, streamlined and uniformed to facilitate expeditious processing of cases with the lowest possible costs. Standard computerized forms simplify the process for regular form users to complete the information required.

An increasing number of court users must handle their legal business without attorney assistance. Equipping these court users with the basic knowledge and tools to navigate court processes allows them to access justice and ensures smooth implementation of court business. The Municipal Court should provide clearly-written and easy-to-use court forms in the courthouse, as well as, online to best serve pro se court users. The Task Force recommends re-developing and updating all court forms for ease of use and access.

### **Implementation**

The Municipal Court should utilize a dual-purpose form:

- (1) printable forms that a litigant can manually complete and file conventionally with the Municipal Court; and

(2) a fillable form that generates automatic fields that the litigant may either print and electronically submit to the court or file conventionally with the court. The Municipal Court will modify all existing forms and allow online access to each form.

## **Top 4 Requested Forms**

<b>IN THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF ATLANTA</b> <b>STATE OF GEORGIA</b>	
<u>CITY OR ATLANTA</u>  <u>Name:</u>  <u>Address:</u>	<u>CASE NO.:</u>  <u>Date:</u>
<b>NOTICE OF APPEARANCE</b>	
<p>COMEBE KNOW, the below-signd attorney at law and file this Notice of Appearance as the attorney adovcated for the defendant in the above-styled cause.</p> <p>This _____ day of _____ 20____.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">_____ _____ <b>Attorney for Defendant</b></p> <hr/> <p>Name _____ Firm _____ Address _____</p> <p>Phone Number _____ Date _____</p> <hr/>	

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

**THE MUNICIPAL COURT OF ATLANTA  
STATE OF GEORGIA**

The seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, featuring a central shield with a Native American figure holding a bow and arrow, surrounded by a circular border with the words "SIGILLUM REIPUBLICÆ MASSACHUSETTENSIS".

## REQUEST FOR RESET

DATE SUBMITTED: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CITATION #: \_\_\_\_\_

DRIVER LICENSE #: \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please include zip code)

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

### REASON FOR REQUEST

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YOUR REQUEST WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE JUDGE'S COURTROOM STAFF. THE COURTROOM STAFF WILL CONTACT YOU AND/OR RESPOND TO YOUR REQUEST DIRECTLY.

COURT DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ COURT ROOM: \_\_\_\_\_

# Court Outreach

## Alcohol and Drug Initiative

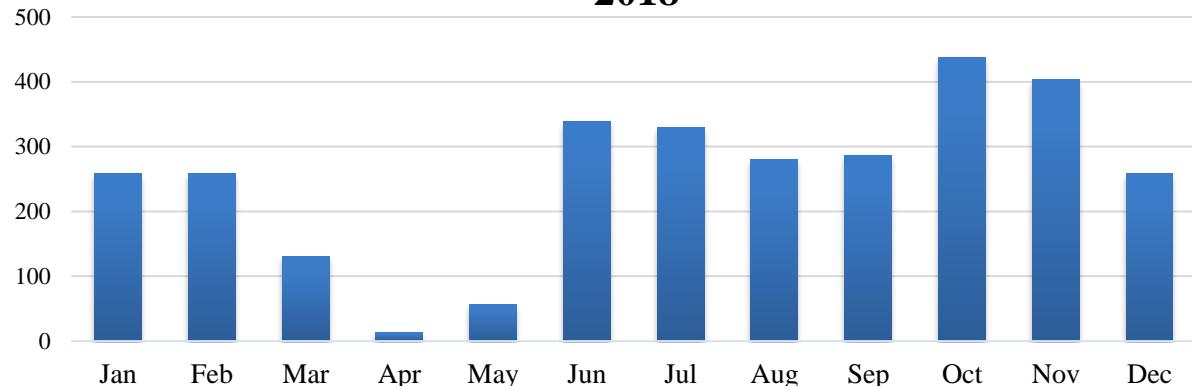
<b>Develop the Court's access to alternative sentencing programs and social resources to better serve the community and reduce recidivism rates among offenders who may experience drug and alcohol challenges.</b>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Connect offenders experiencing drug or alcohol challenges with additional resources to reduce recidivism.	Connect offenders of multiple drug and alcohol offenses with resources of an accountability court.

## Background

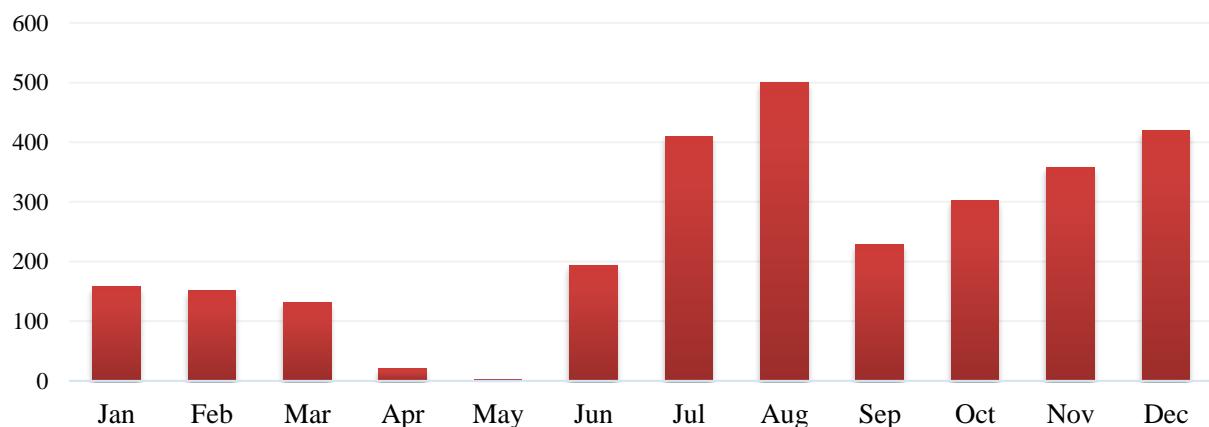
The Municipal Court's annual caseload data includes: drug or alcohol offenses such as, driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, drunk and disorderly conduct, drinking in public, and drug objects. Accountability courts are designed to address individuals experiencing substance abuse through enhanced judicial oversight. The programs are designed to enhance public safety by reducing recidivism rates, the number of traffic accidents, injuries and deaths related to DUI offenses. This initiative promotes sobriety to improve the quality of life for participants and the community.

An accountability court can identify offenders with substance abuse issues and place them in an intensive court-supervised program. The Municipal Court can provide substance abuse treatment, community supervision, drug and alcohol testing and frequent judicial monitoring. The program can assist the participants in making healthy lifestyle changes while gaining insight and knowledge about their disease and addiction. The Task Force recommends the Municipal Court partner with an existing accountability court.

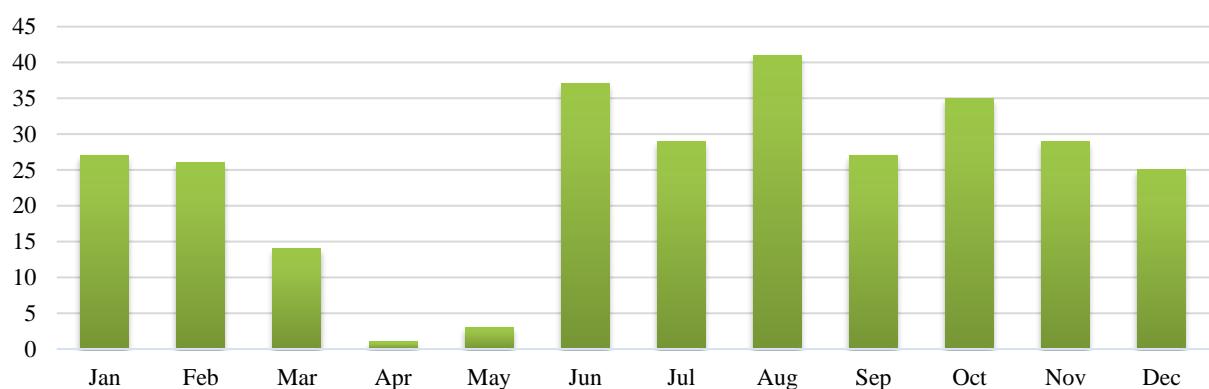
## **Drug Cases 2018**



## **DUI Cases 2018**



## **Alcohol Cases 2018**



## **Implementation**

The Municipal Court has begun a partnership with Fulton County State Court's DUI Treatment Court. The mission of the treatment court is to enhance public safety and provide a better quality of life for participants to promote sober living and healthier lifestyles for repeat offenders: thereby reducing recidivism.

The DUI Court Program is an interdisciplinary team approach involving the judge, prosecutor, public defender or private defense attorney, probation, Marshal's Department, program coordinator, case manager and substance abuse treatment professionals. The program is a post-conviction treatment program for those who have multiple driving while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicant violations.

The program involves the following core components of participation and treatment:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Completion of Department of Driver Services (DDS) DUI, alcohol or drug risk reduction program
- Submission to random drug testing
- Participation in compliance reviews
- Participation in community support meetings

Individuals who have been identified as eligible for DUI Court will be referred directly to participate in the Fulton County program. This will allow defendants access to treatment programs offered in DUI court. As a result, candidates will maximize resources and the program will provide a support system to assist with sobriety.

## **Homelessness Task Force**

**Expand Restore Atlanta's alternative sentencing programs to establish a diversion program specifically designed to rehabilitate offenders who are experiencing homelessness to reduce recidivism.**

<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Providing services to offenders who are experiencing homelessness or chronic poverty.	Partner with other entities within the city to provide resources and services to individuals experiencing homelessness or chronic poverty.

## **Background**

According to the recent City of Atlanta Point in Time Count (PIT), there are 3,076 individuals experiencing homelessness. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires the City of Atlanta to conduct the PIT count at least every two (2) years. HUD recognizes four (4) broad categories of homelessness:

1. People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or exiting a temporary stay at an institution.
2. People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel.
3. Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state.
4. People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

Chronic poverty is defined as individuals who consistently live below the poverty line. Both groups of individuals may experience or encounter the justice system by allegedly committing quality of life crimes. These charges involve arrests for petty misdemeanors such as

urinating in public, drunk and disorderly conduct, standing in the roadway, or solicitation. The Municipal Court is in a unique position to identify those who might be experiencing homelessness and or chronic poverty. The Task Force recommends the creation of an alternative sentencing system to connect these individuals with resources that may reduce the recidivism rates and improve their quality of life.

## **Implementation**

The Municipal Court is in a unique position to connect qualified offenders, experiencing homelessness, to resources that can improve their circumstances. The Municipal Court will embark on comprehensive efforts to humanely respond to Atlanta's homeless population. The Task Force recommends working with the American Bar Association (ABA) Commission on Homelessness & Poverty to establish a Homeless Court.

The Homeless Court combines a progressive plea bargain system with alternative sentencing structure. Additionally, the alternative sentencing program substitutes fines and custody with participation in agency programs. The assurance of "no custody" and proof of participation in program activities help to address a full range of misdemeanor offenses. Program activities include: life skills; chemical dependency or Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)/ Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings; computer or English literacy classes; employment assistance; counseling and education.

The Task Force has identified the opportunity to expand its alternative sentencing programs that are offered through Restore Atlanta/ Community Court to provide more services to offenders experiencing homelessness. Qualified participants will be able to voluntarily sign-up for programs offered through Restore Atlanta before appearing in court. Upon successful completion, these programs will serve as a court-ordered sentence for the offender and their case will be dismissed. The Municipal Court plans to partner with existing non-profits and to apply for grant funding to secure additional resources.

### Core Elements of Homeless Court:

- The Homeless Court is completely voluntary.

- The Homeless Court will address a broad spectrum of misdemeanor and ordinance violations.
- The Homeless Court will use an alternative sentencing system apparatus.

## Homeless Courts Initiative

The ABA Commission on Homelessness & Poverty has had a hand in creating or enhancing over 50 Homeless Courts across the nation. Since 2001 when the ABA Commission first began its initiative to foster the replication of homeless courts, it has provided technical assistance to more than 100 communities across the nation and abroad (Australia, Canada and Mexico). The Commission provides technical assistance and educational resources to communities via conference call and in-person trainings, participation in regional and national conferences, and new educational resources and reports.



## **Public Outreach via Amnesty**

<b>Assist citizens with resolution of outstanding failure to appear cases and warrants.</b>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Increase opportunities for citizen resolution of outstanding matters	Launch amnesty program to assist citizens with the resolution of cases during non-traditional days and times

### **Background**

The Municipal Court can improve public outreach by engaging in an amnesty program. The program will offer individuals with delinquent traffic violations and outstanding warrants the opportunity to clear past violations without additional penalties. The Task Force recommends the creation of a Warrant Amnesty Program to capture individuals who are unable to attend court during traditional days and times.

### **Implementation**

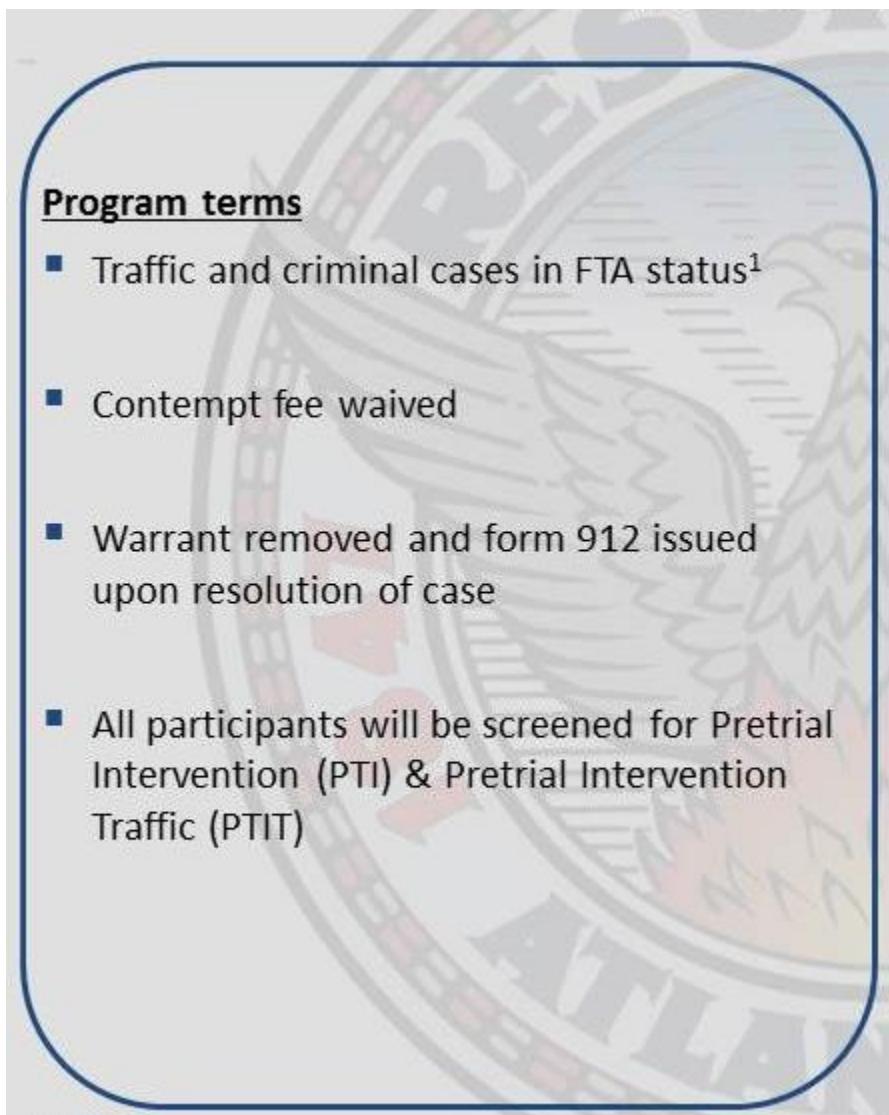
The Municipal Court can create programming to assist citizens with resolving their criminal matters. If an individual misses court, a failure to appear (FTA) is issued and a warrant for arrest will be generated. This may also result in an individual losing their driving privileges with the Department of Driver Services (DDS).

Warrant Amnesty allows citizens to resolve their case after their missed court date without the penalty of arrest. The citizen can resolve outstanding traffic and criminal cases that are in failure to appear (FTA) status. There may be an opportunity to waive contempt fees at the discretion of the court. If there are outstanding warrants, the warrant can be removed and updated in the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC). The defendant can receive paperwork to reinstate his or her driver license.

The Municipal Court should consider conducting the Amnesty program on the weekends or after hours, as it may be more impactful. Individuals seeking to participate in the program will have the opportunity to speak with a prosecutor and a public defender, if necessary. Once final adjudication is entered, the court will provide a court release (DDS 912) form and a certified case disposition if requested.

In order to qualify for the warrant amnesty program individuals must have:

- An unadjudicated citation filed at the court;
- A case/citation in Failure to Appear (FTA) status;
- Proof of Identification



# Court Procedure

## Open Records Process

<b>Streamline the Open Records Request Process so there is a clear point of contact and method for delivery of requested documents.</b>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Establish a dedicated contact person and method for responding to all open records requests.	Appoint a compliance officer and coordinator to respond to and manage the court's open record's requests.

## Background

Open Records Requests (ORR) are governed by O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 which provides for public examination of government records. The City of Atlanta has adopted the State rules regarding ORR in Sec. 3-1 to Sec. 3-32. The Municipal Court of Atlanta enhanced its internal protocol for ORR with three (3) goals:

- 1) Openness and transparency;
- 2) Accountability and accuracy of responsive information; and
- 3) Timely response and production.

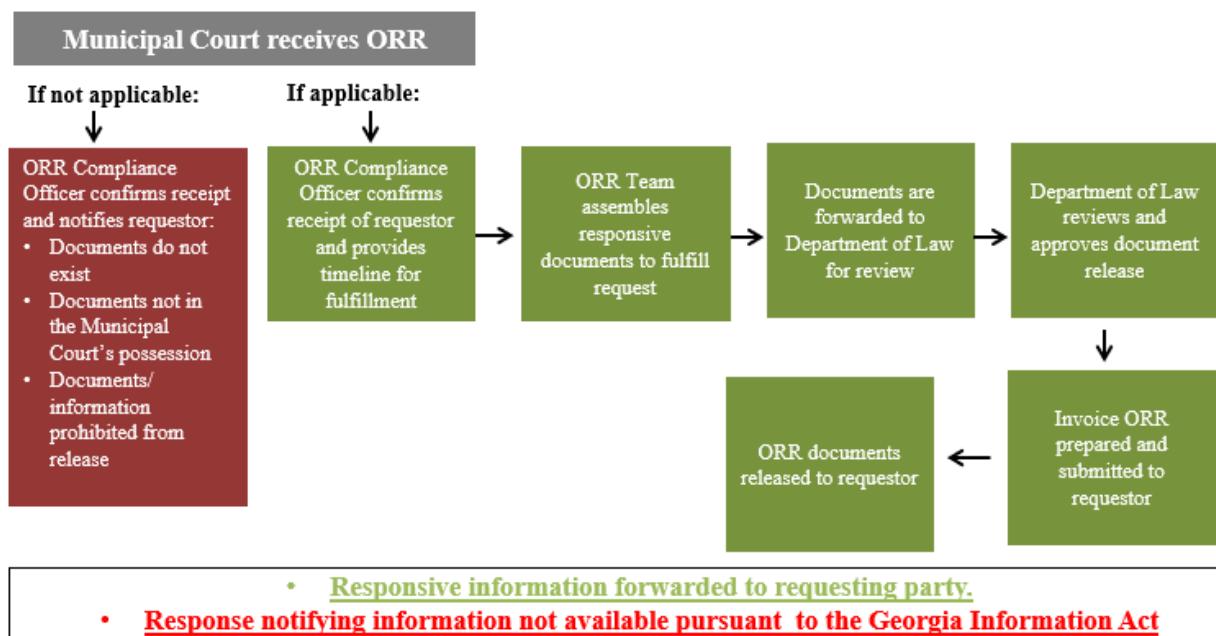
## Implementation

The Municipal Court has designated an ORR Compliance Officer to serve as the principal point of contact for all ORR including communication, review, and coordination with each internal department for the efficient retrieval of all documents. The Municipal Court has a dedicated email and telephone account to receive ORR:

- [OpenRecords-Courts@AtlantaGa.gov](mailto:OpenRecords-Courts@AtlantaGa.gov)
- 404-546-1048

The updated procedure developed to respond to an ORR is as follows: A valid ORR is received – the appropriate time to respond is calendared and concerned department is identified. The Municipal Court begins to cull all responsive documents and information. The court generates an initial response to the requesting party confirming receipt of ORR and provides a timeline for requested information if not otherwise immediately available. All responsive materials are transmitted to the Department of Law for review to ensure private, confidential and/ or items prohibited from release are restricted or redacted. After all documents have been reviewed, the information is assembled for production to the requesting party. The invoice for the ORR is generated and the requester is notified the documents are available for retrieval. Since this process has been implemented, the Municipal Court has responded to approximately 203 ORR.

## Open Records Process



## **Initial Appearance Process**

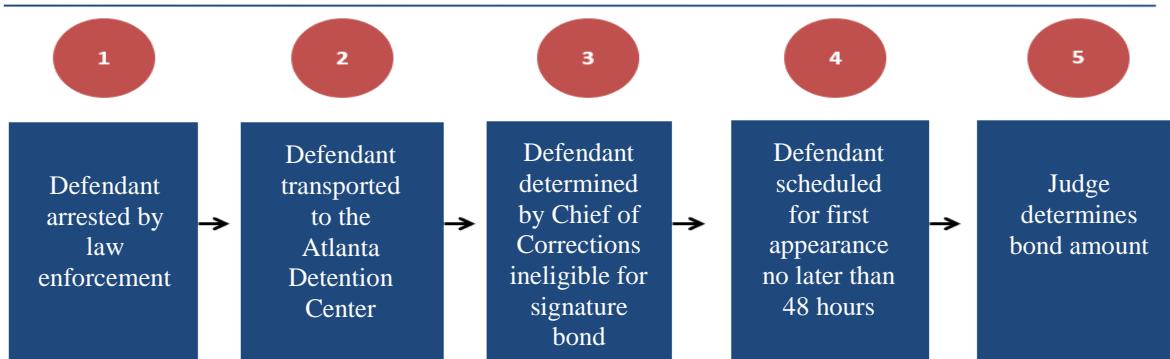
Update the Initial Appearance Process.	
Challenge to the Court	Recommendation from Task Force
Implementing the Signature Bond Ordinance in a way that balances the interests of the defendants and the administration of justice.	Develop a clear and well-outlined procedure that implements the bond ordinance in a fair and impartial way.

## **Background**

Defendants should be scheduled for their initial appearance, as soon as is reasonably practicable following any arrest. If the arrest was without a warrant the initial hearing must be held within forty-eight (48) hours of arrest. However, if the arrest was with a warrant, then the initial hearing must be held within seventy-two (72) hours following the arrest.

Unless the accused posts bond or receives a signature bond, the arresting officer or other law enforcement officer shall present the accused, in person, before a municipal judge or other judicial officer for first appearance within the abovementioned time period.

## **Initial Appearance Process**



At the first appearance, the municipal judge:

- informs the accused of the charges: their right to remain silent, that any statement made may be used against the accused and of the right to the presence and advice of an attorney (either retained or appointed);
- determines whether or not the accused desires and is in need of an appointed attorney and if appropriate, advise the accused of the necessity for filing a written application;
- sets the amount of bail.

In 2018, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms signed 18-O-1045, primarily aimed at eliminating the requirement of a cash bond to secure pretrial release. The most immediate effect of this ordinance eliminated a bond schedule, which was a mechanism that automatically assigned a bond amount for certain charges, allowing individuals to bond out of jail without waiting to see a judge.

The new bond ordinance replaced the traditional bond schedule with a two-prong model:

1. Certain offenses are eligible for a signature bond without the need to see a judge unless otherwise determined by the Chief of Corrections; and
2. Certain offenses within the discretion of the Chief of Corrections are ineligible for a signature bond and need to see a judge for an individualized bond determination. The accused's financial ability is an added consideration before setting the bond amount.

Other factors considered during a bond determination as it relates to the accused:

- whether accused poses a significant risk of fleeing from the jurisdiction of the court or failing to appear in court when required;
- whether accused poses a significant threat or danger to any person, to the community, or to any property in the community;
- whether accused poses a significant risk of committing any felony pending trial; and

- whether accused poses a significant risk of intimidating witnesses or otherwise obstructing the administration of justice.

The court considers these additional factors when determining bail:

- The accused's financial resources and other assets, including whether any such assets are jointly controlled;
- The accused's earning and other income;
- The accused's financial obligations, including obligations to dependents;
- The purpose of bail; and
- Any other factor the court deems appropriate.

## **Implementation**

The Municipal Court implemented several procedural changes regarding the In-Custody calendar. First, any individual in custody, due to prior unresolved cases or Failure to Appear, can have all open cases addressed at the same time for a plea or trial as quickly as forty-eight (48) hours. Any person that appears on the In-Custody Calendar, whose case is signature bond eligible under the plain language of 18-O-1045, is permitted to sign their own bond and be immediately released.

If an individual has a detainer or hold from another jurisdiction, they are afforded a signature bond which releases them to the detainer or hold without further delay. Absent extenuating circumstance, individuals requesting a bind-over for a jury trial are afforded signature bonds to avoid any prolonged detention. To streamline operational procedure, the In-Custody calendar is held daily, Sunday through Friday.

## **Bind-Over Process**

Streamline the transfer of case records to State and Superior Courts.	
Challenge to the Court	Recommendation from Task Force
Handling the bind over cases in a streamlined process that ensures all relevant information is transmitted.	Develop one system for the entire court and all judges to allow for the efficient transfer of case records.

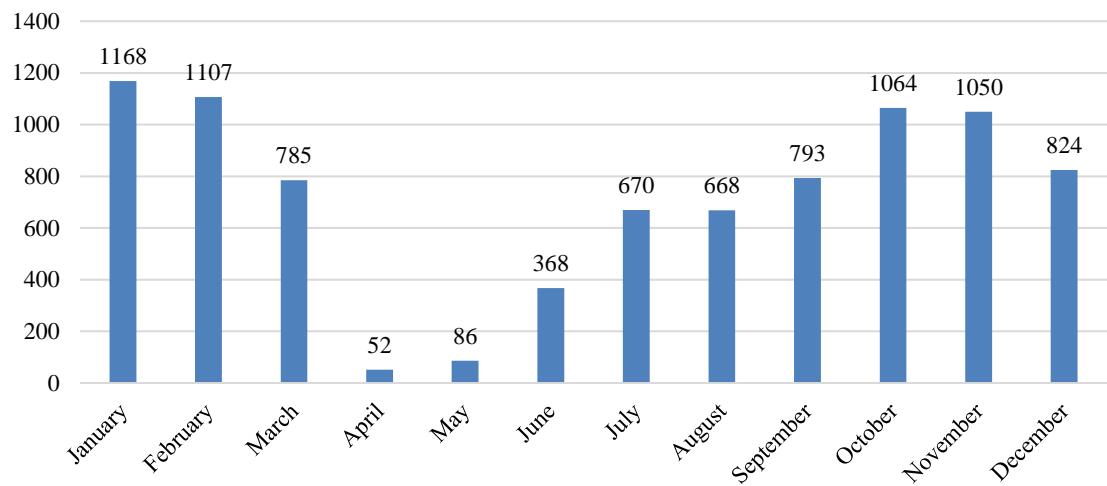
## **Background**

Pursuant to the United States Constitution Am. 7 and Georgia Constitution Art I § Par XI, in criminal matters, the defendant shall have a right to a public and speedy trial by an impartial jury. The jury applies the facts to the law. When a defendant invokes his right to a trial by jury, for qualifying offenses, the Municipal Court of Atlanta is required to bind the case over to the higher court.

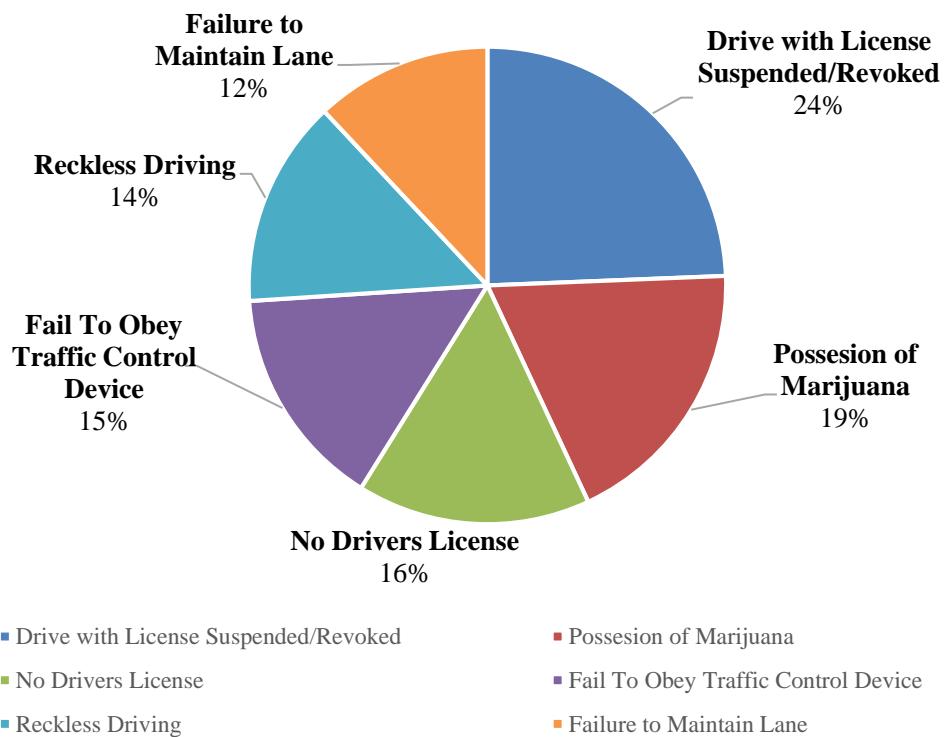
A case may also be bound over to a state or superior court if the charge is amended in the discretion of the Solicitor such that the violation is no longer in the jurisdiction of the Municipal Court. The ordinance violation may be amended to a state offense or a misdemeanor offense may be upgraded to a felony. Most cases are either bound over to Clayton County, DeKalb County, or Fulton County based on the location of the alleged offense.

The Task Force considered whether there was an opportunity to streamline the process for transferring the official records to state and superior courts when a bind-over is necessary. A streamlined process ensures that the case file information is submitted completely and without unreasonable delay.

## Bind-Over Cases 2018



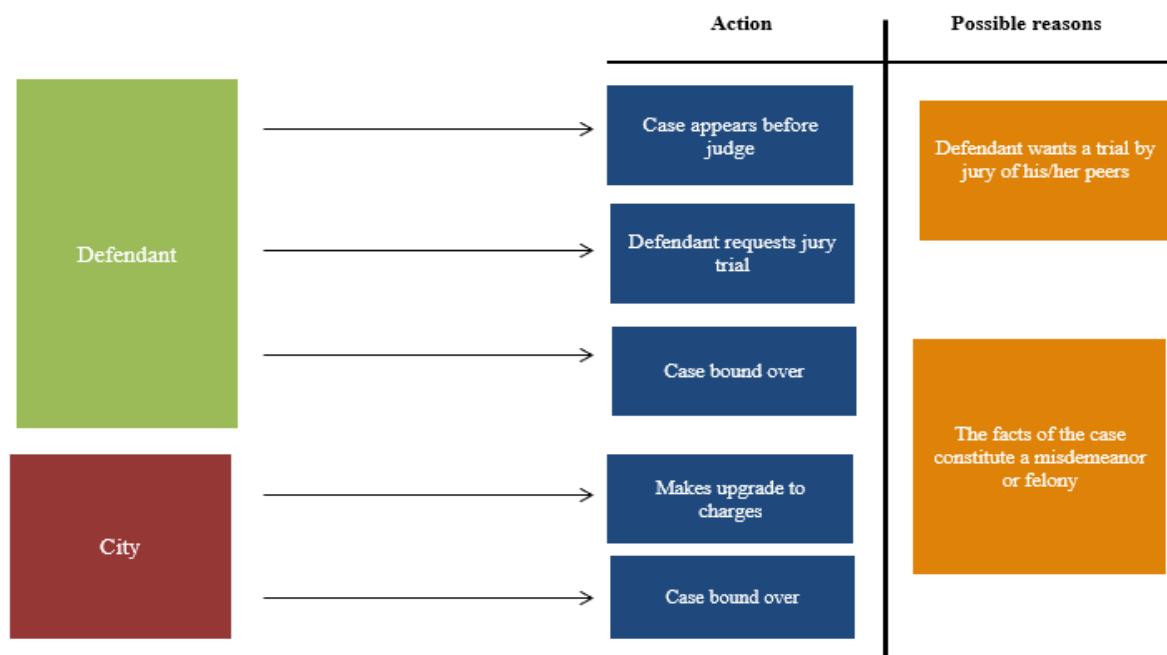
## Top Bind-Over Offenses 2018



## Implementation

The Municipal Court of Atlanta established a system to identify bind-over cases in the case management system, prepare the case information including original charging documents and bond documents and fingerprints (if applicable). Once the information is assembled, the court certifies all documents and notifies the corresponding clerk's office in the appropriate jurisdiction and prosecutor of the cases being bound-over.

## Bind-Over Request



## Bind-Over Workflow



## **Electronic Citation Integration**

**Expand the electronic citation platform for uniformity in the charging document, accuracy of information and ability to access citations quickly in the case management system.**

<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Efficiently handle the large amount of citations filed in the Municipal Court	Engage local law enforcement agencies to expand their electronic citation platforms and to integrate with the case management system.

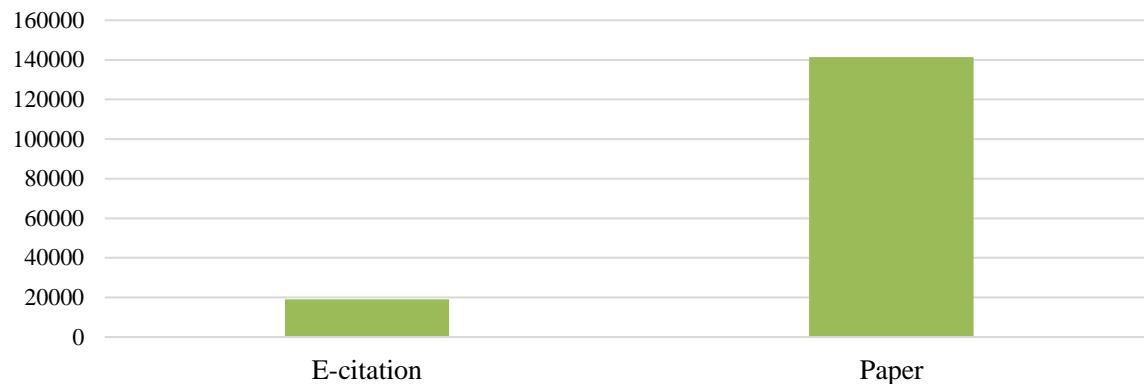
## **Background**

The Citation Management Process is the very beginning of a case's life within the Municipal Court System. The Citation Management process impacts how quickly the case is entered into the system; it determines how quickly case information is made available to defendants and prosecutors and how quickly the case is docketed and heard.

The Municipal Court of Atlanta primarily receives tickets from local law enforcement agencies in paper form. The paper format requires officers to write out each ticket issued to individuals accused of violating the traffic, criminal, misdemeanor, or ordinances. The physical tickets must be delivered in-person to the Municipal Court.

Once the physical ticket is received, the Municipal Court staff manually enters each ticket including all fields of information. This is a tedious process and can result in human error. Some agencies utilize an electronic citation application which allows for the transmittal of tickets and information into the case management system on the same day. The Task Force recommends engaging with local law enforcement agencies to encourage investment in electronic citation technology for easy, convenient and accurate entry of ticket information.

## E-Citations v. Paper Citations

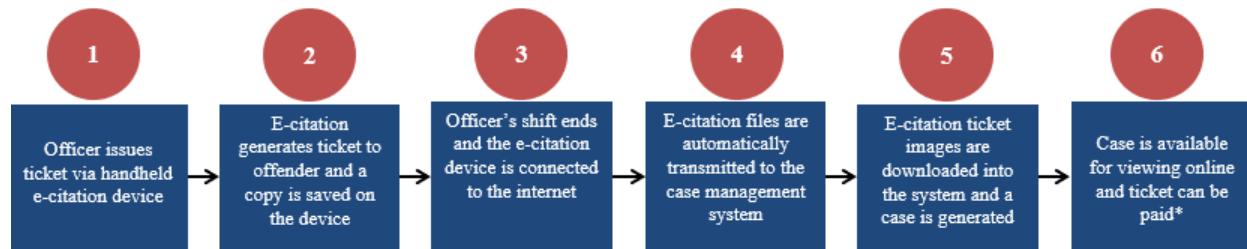


## Implementation

The Municipal Court should engage local law enforcement agencies in an electronic format of tickets. The expansion of electronic citation technology would reduce human errors, eliminate delays in filing tickets, make tickets available for payment earlier and reduce the need for officers to physically file tickets.

The manual paper-based citation process should be replaced with an electronic citation. Law enforcement and courts can benefit from operational efficiencies to reduce expenditures on paper resources and personnel. The electronic ticket should be integrated with the existing case management system to allow for easy transmittal to the Municipal Court.

## E-Citation Workflow



\*minor traffic offenses are eligible to be paid online

## **Records Management**

<b>Update the file management process to ensure the Court remains operable in the event of an interruption to electronic court records.</b>	
<b>Challenge to the Court</b>	<b>Recommendation from Task Force</b>
Establish an updated system to access physical file information.	Update the filing system so that the Court can access information if the electronic case management system is unavailable.

## **Background**

The Municipal Court receives hundreds of thousands of citations annually. As a result of the high volume, the Municipal Court uses an electronic platform to track and maintain data. In 2018, the City of Atlanta experienced a ransomware event which temporarily prevented access to the Court's electronic case files. The electronic files included: citations, filings, motions and other court related docket information.

The Municipal Court maintains a physical file system of each case. The Task Force recommends expanding the information maintained in physical form. The filing system should include other documents included in the electronic file.

## **Implementation**

The Municipal Court has updated the existing filing process. The Court developed an updated filing system as a backup so that the Court remains operable in the event of a compromise to court records. This means that there is a back-up of paper-based case information for each defendant in a centralized location.

## Failure to Appear (FTA) Process

Update the process for defendants who missed their court appearance date to address their open case.	
Challenge to the Court	Recommendation from Task Force
Allowing defendants who miss their initial court appearance to resolve or reset their cases quickly upon reappearance at the Court.	Create more options for the resolution of FTA cases.

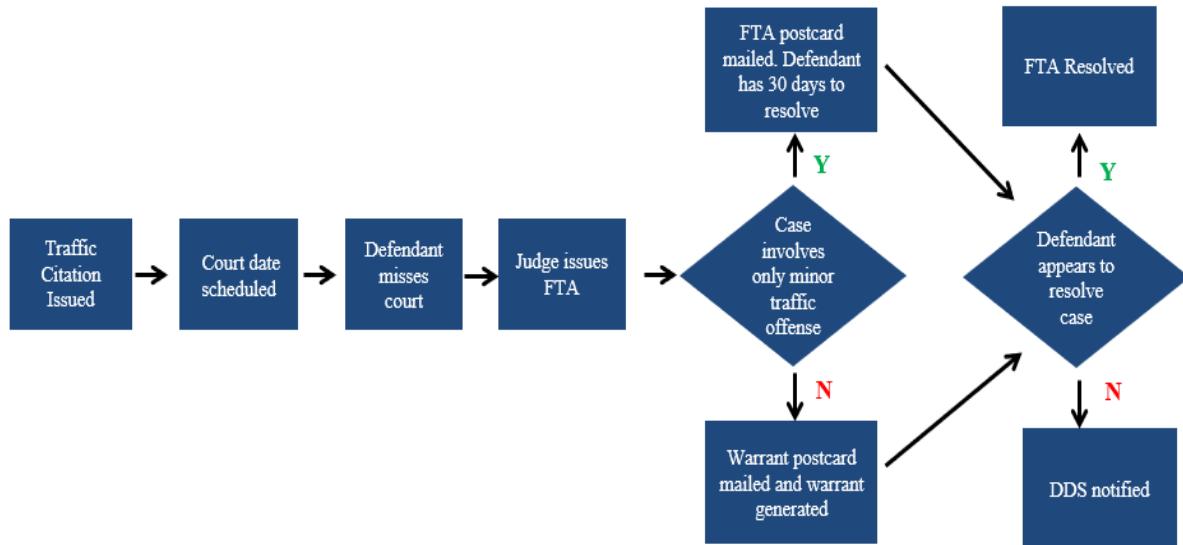
## Background

Defendants who miss his or her court date are in failure to appear (FTA) status. For certain criminal offenses or major traffic offenses, a missed court appearance will automatically result in the judge issuing a FTA and a bench warrant for the defendants' arrest. However, for minor traffic offenses governed by Title 40, the State of Georgia has required that courts first notify the defendant that he or she failed to appear (O.C.G.A. §17-6-11).

This notice allows the defendant thirty (30) days to dispose of the charges or waive arraignment and plead not guilty. If the case is not disposed of within thirty (30) days, the court shall forward the accused driver's license number to the Department of Driver Services (DDS). DDS will suspend the accused's driving privileges and the court may issue a bench warrant. Once a defendant is in FTA status, he or she needs to appear in person to resolve the outstanding case and get the FTA status removed.

Recently, there is a growing trend of defendants who fail to appear on his or her initial court date. This results in an increased demand for an alternative way to resolve the outstanding case. The Municipal Court FTA numbers have almost doubled over the last year. The Task Force recommends creating more options for the efficient resolution of FTA cases.

# Failure To Appear (FTA) Process



<p><b>Municipal Court of Atlanta 150 Garnett Street SW Atlanta, GA 30303</b></p> <p><b>CITY OF ATLANTA</b> vs. [REDACTED]</p> <p><b>CITATION      OFFENSE</b> [REDACTED]</p>	<p>You failed to appear and/or dispose of your charges at the Municipal Court of Atlanta. You have 30 days, from the date on this notice, to dispose of your charges or waive arraignment and plead not guilty. Failure to do so will result in a warrant for your arrest and your driver's license shall be suspended. Please contact (404) 658-6959 or email <a href="mailto:municourt@atlantaga.gov">municourt@atlantaga.gov</a> to discuss this matter.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>05/07/2019 COURT 6B</p>	

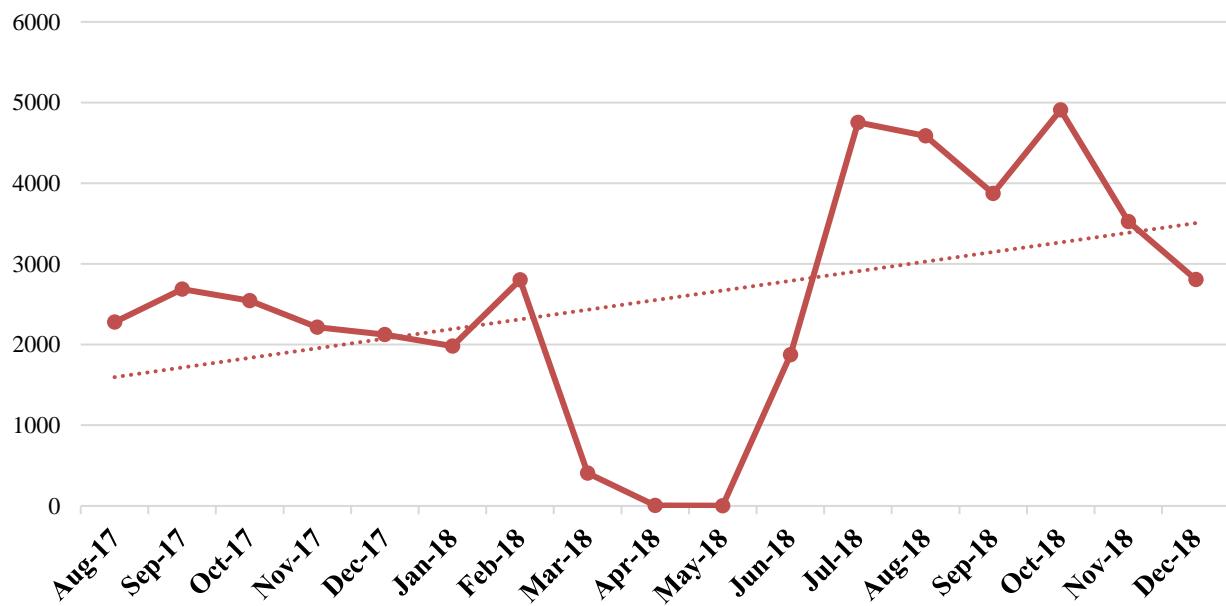
## **Implementation**

The Municipal Court has expanded its Failure to Appear (FTA) docket and walk-in court. The Municipal Court operates a daily FTA calendar Monday through Friday to resolve all open and outstanding cases for each defendant. The defendant may pay the fine and close out his or her case, request a trial, or enter a pretrial diversion program if eligible.

Upon the resolution of the case, the defendant will have the FTA and warrant (if issued) removed. Also, the defendant will receive a form allowing reinstatement of his or her license if the license suspension was a result of the FTA.

For minor traffic offenses, the defendant can resolve their case by paying his or her fine anytime Monday through Friday in FTA walk-in court. The defendant will be able to resolve all minor traffic cases at one time and have all the benefits of FTA court.

**Failure To Appear (FTA) Rate  
2017 v. 2018**



## **Conclusion**

The Municipal Court of Atlanta is on the correct track and thrives on great leadership and dedicated employees. This report is the result of the hard work and generosity of many people who hope to improve the public experience and efficiencies within the Court and continued access to justice. The Task Force is grateful to all the individuals who answered the call over the past year to become a part of this groundbreaking process. There is a general optimism about the future of the Court and its service to the City of Atlanta.

## **Acknowledgments**

The Task Force thanks the Municipal Court of Atlanta for providing a space to facilitate communication and collaboration between meetings. The Task Force is grateful to Chief Judge Christopher T. Portis for making this resource available. The Task Force thanks the Court staff, firms, Atlanta citizens and individuals who have provided support and leadership for the success of this endeavor.











The Municipal Court of Atlanta  
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Final Report and Recommendations  
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