

Date: July 25, 2025

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager

From: Wally Hebeish, Chief of Police
Doug Haubert, City Prosecutor

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **DIRECT CONNECT RETAIL THEFT PROGRAM**

At the State of the City Address on January 14, 2025, Mayor Rex Richardson described holding those accountable for shoplifting and other retail theft crimes as a priority for the City of Long Beach. He also emphasized the importance of the Police Department to work collaboratively with the Long Beach City Prosecutor to identify innovative ways to bring a reduction in retail theft crimes.

To advance this initiative, the Long Beach Police Department and City Prosecutor's Office propose a program to be named DirectConnect, which is a streamlined reporting strategy, designed to give local businesses a direct pathway to report qualifying theft incidents for prosecution. This program will allow businesses to avoid some of the complexities of traditional police reporting, while maintaining prosecutorial and investigative integrity.

It is recommended that DirectConnect be launched as a six-month pilot program starting August 2025 and will include a select group of retailers. Following this test period, an evaluation will be conducted to assess program performance, gather participant feedback, determine the level of stakeholder confidence in the program, as well as identify steps to improve on the pilot as necessary.

The following objectives will facilitate the program's success and are intended to be the benchmarks to assess the six-month pilot:

Empowering Businesses Through a Secure Reporting Portal

DirectConnect will be a secure online portal, accessible via a link on the City Prosecutor's website. This portal will allow participating businesses to report theft incidents directly to the City Prosecutor's Office. The portal is particularly valuable in situations where the business possesses compelling evidence, such as security camera footage, receipts, or witness information; and when the suspect is known or identifiable. Cases submitted with sufficient evidence will be reviewed for potential misdemeanor filing in court.

Training and Certification for Participating Businesses

To ensure submissions through DirectConnect meet legal standards, the City Prosecutor's Office will provide mandatory training and certification to business owners and designated loss prevention personnel. This training will cover qualifying offenses, proper evidence collection and handling, report formatting, and witness statement requirements. Only businesses that

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have completed this training and received certification will be eligible to submit reports through the portal.

Seamless Handling of Misdemeanor and Felony Cases

While DirectConnect is primarily intended to expedite misdemeanor prosecutions, it is designed with safeguards to appropriately handle more serious crimes. If an incident submitted through the portal rises to a felony crime, a Police Department detective will be assigned to investigate the case. The incident will also be referred to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

A Complementary Tool, Not a Police Replacement

DirectConnect is not intended to replace emergency police response. Businesses experiencing active or violent theft incidents will continue to call 911. The portal is intended to handle non-emergency, after-the-fact theft reports, and evidence submission. It will serve as a valuable tool for businesses dealing with repeat retail crime. By reducing the reporting burden on both the Police Department and the victims, the program aims to increase follow-through on theft prosecutions and reduce future incidents through accountability.

Budget Impacts

During the six-month trial period, the Long Beach Police Department and City Prosecutor's Office will implement the DirectConnect program by temporarily reassigning existing staff. The program is expected to be labor intensive, requiring approximately 25% to 40% of the time of five full-time employees across both departments. The estimated cost for the trial phase is \$193,946, which includes start-up costs for development and launch of the online reporting portal. If the program proves successful, a request for permanent funding may be included in the FY 27 proposed budget process.

Conclusion

DirectConnect reflects Long Beach's commitment to proactive, technology-enabled solutions that support both public safety and small businesses. By simplifying the path to prosecution and encouraging evidence-driven reporting, this pilot program has the potential to deter future thefts, build stronger community partnerships, and ensure more effective use of law enforcement and prosecutorial resources.

If you have any questions, please contact me or my Chief of Staff, Commander Norma Carrillo at (562) 570-7301.

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