

Policy Recommendation

To: Chief Lisa Davis, Austin Police Department

From: Director Gail McCant, Austin Police Oversight

Date: September 17, 2026

Subject: **APO Policy Recommendation: 214 Vehicle Pursuits, 215 Foot Pursuits**

Dear Chief Davis:

This memorandum provides feedback and recommendations for improving the Austin Police Department's (APD) General Orders (GO) 214 Vehicle Pursuits and GO 215 Foot Pursuits.

The specific policy recommended in this memorandum is as follows:

- 215.1.1 POLICY
- 214.1.1 PHILOSOPHY

This analysis reviewed APD's practice of allowing officers to commandeer civilian vehicles when there is a continued threat of physical violence against another. While officers may use all lawful means to preserve the peace, commandeering civilian vehicles exposes civilians and their property to unnecessary risk and can lead to violations of APD General Orders, particularly when a foot pursuit shifts to a vehicle pursuit. The following recommendations identify opportunities to strengthen APD policies and practices to reduce risk, enhance clarity, and prevent avoidable harm to civilians and officers.

APO believes this APD policy can be improved and will benefit the City of Austin, APD, and community members. APO is committed to improving APD's policies to increase transparency, accountability, and public trust in law enforcement.

Sincerely,

Gail McCant Digitally signed by Gail McCant
Date: 2026.09.21 11:15:08 -05'00'

Gail McCant
Director
Austin Police Oversight

Policy Recommendation

214 Vehicle Pursuits & 215 Foot Pursuits

Recommendation #1:

APO recommends replacing the phrase “the continued threat of physical violence against another” in GO 215.1.1 and GO 214.1.1 with “a violent felony.”

APD should clearly define which offenses constitute a violent felony for the purpose of authorizing vehicle commandeering. Aligning this standard with GO 214.3.2, which prioritizes felonies involving violence in pursuit situations, will promote consistency and ensure commandeering is limited to urgent, high-risk circumstances.

Recommendation #2:

APO recommends that GO 215.1.1 and GO 214.1.1 be amended to reflect the safety considerations for vehicle pursuits outlined in GO 214.3.3(a) before deciding to commandeer a vehicle.

Because commandeering civilian vehicles and/or civilian drivers carries heightened safety risks, officers must consider the same factors before commandeering a vehicle as they do before initiating a pursuit. This helps ensure that officers weigh potential harm carefully, act in a manner that protects the community, and maintain accountability and public trust.

Recommendation #3:

APO recommends that GO 215.1.1 and GO 214.1.1 be amended to reflect APD officers’ requirements laid out in GO 214.4.2 regarding police units without emergency equipment.

Given that a civilian vehicle would not have emergency equipment, officer(s) commandeering a civilian’s vehicle should terminate their pursuit upon the arrival of other officers in marked law enforcement vehicles equipped with emergency lights and a siren, or any law enforcement aircraft.