



Bruins 3, Penguins 4, Final

New State Police contract calls for raises, GPS tracking of police cruisers

The adoption of cruiser tracking technology ends a lengthy battle over a reform pushed in the wake of the agency's payroll fraud scandal.

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) Globe Staff, Updated January 14, 2020, 3:34 p.m.



Massachusetts State Police march up Hanover Street as the annual Columbus Day Parade winds through downtown Boston. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF/BOSTON GLOBE

The State Police union has reached a contract agreement with the state that gives troopers modest pay raises in exchange for adopting GPS technology that tracks the location of police cruisers — a measure pledged in the wake of the agency's overtime corruption scandal.

The State Police Association of Massachusetts, which represents the vast majority of the 2,200-member police force, agreed to the contract terms in recent weeks, according to officials on both sides of negotiations. Troopers had been working for two years under an expired contract.

The GPS technology is now installed and activated in all cruisers, with few exceptions, and commanders can track the vehicles in real-time, said department spokesman David Procopio.

The union's adoption of the GPS tracking ends a lengthy legal battle over a reform pushed by the department and Governor Charlie Baker in the wake of the agency's payroll fraud scandal. Still, the two sides are poised to square off again over plans to deploy cruiser dash cameras and body cameras, another promised reform.

Officials from Baker's office, State Police, and SPAM declined to comment on specifics of the collective bargaining agreement. A spokesman for the state's office of Administration and Finance said the pay increases for State Police were the same as in other collective bargaining agreements throughout state government. Those contracts, records show, typically call for 2 percent annual raises over a three-year period.

Baker's office last week asked the Legislature for \$16.3 million to cover the cost of the new State Police contract through the rest of the fiscal year, which ends June 30. The request was made as part of a supplemental budget bill seeking sign-off from state lawmakers for funding on a range of issues. The funding has yet to be approved by the Legislature.

In a press release announcing the bill, the governor's office noted the funds were to cover "a recently concluded collective bargaining agreement," and didn't name the agency.

Nancy Sterling, spokeswoman for SPAM, said more than 90 percent of union members voted in favor of the agreement last month. The raises outlined in the SPAM contract will trigger pay hikes for all sworn State Police personnel — even those outside the union — because state law mandates that supervisors are paid a certain percentage more than their subordinates.

The State Police have the highest average pay per employee of any state agency by a wide margin. For 2019, that average was \$126,929. The next closest agency pay average was more than \$25,000 lower.

Last year, some 325 troopers -- about 15 percent of the force -- took home \$200,000 or more, records show. Overtime remained a major driver. As in previous years, the department spent more money on overtime in 2019 than any other state agency, except for the MBTA, which employs more than twice as many people.

The department has been rocked over the past two years by an overtime fraud scandal. Dozens of troopers and their supervisors were accused of collecting the premium pay rates for hours they never worked and officers were found to have falsified documents to cover up their absences.

In an effort to reform the department, Baker and then-Colonel Kerry Gilpin [announced](#) in the spring of 2018 that the agency would activate GPS tracking in cruisers as a way to ensure troopers were working. But the effort faced immediate pushback from the union.

Just days after some GPS tracking was activated, SPAM filed a [complaint](#) with the state's Department of Labor Relations, [arguing](#) State Police must first bargain over the change. A year later, SPAM contended the department had

begun rolling out a “more invasive” GPS tracking system in cruisers, again without bargaining with the union. The union filed another labor relations [complaint](#) and a lawsuit in Suffolk Superior Court.

Since agreeing to the new contract, the union has withdrawn its complaints and the lawsuit, Sterling said.

The GPS technology cost about \$255,000 to install and will cost about \$50,000 per month to run. Eventually, troopers of all ranks will be able to see the locations of other cruisers around them.

In a statement, SPAM President Trooper Corey Mackey said the technology “will increase Trooper’s safety, command and control capabilities during critical incidents, and enhance public accountability.”

“We recognize that a strong partnership with the community and the cooperation and trust of those we serve is vital to the performance of modern policing, and we are committed to implementing the necessary measures to strengthen and build upon this relationship,” Mackey added.

Spokespeople for SPAM and State Police said the two sides will soon bargain over another set of technological changes. The department is currently seeking vendors to launch a permanent body camera system as well as dash cams, and potentially other cameras on cruisers.

The department recently conducted a six-month [pilot program](#) for body cameras. SPAM negotiated that troopers could choose if they wanted to participate -- those who did received a \$500 stipend.

Procopio said the department has told SPAM about its plans to pursue permanent camera systems, and “acknowledges that implementation will require impact bargaining, and anticipates further discussions with the union.”

Sterling said the union expects to start discussions as early as the end of the month.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at matthew.rocheleau@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)

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