



# PROGRAM EVALUATION DIVISION

## NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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## Stronger Reporting and Management Structure Would Improve State Bureau of Investigation Vehicle Oversight

### Summary

A 2011-12 series of Program Evaluation Division reports on motor fleet management of state-owned vehicles prompted legislative interest in law enforcement vehicles. The present evaluation examined vehicles operated by the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) in the North Carolina Department of Justice (DOJ). Although results indicated SBI's vehicle management generally followed best practices, findings identified room for improvement.

**SBI's decentralized vehicle management and weaknesses in internal controls have resulted in inconsistent oversight.** Because law enforcement vehicle management is independent from the Department of Administration, responsibility for oversight of SBI's 384 motor vehicles falls to the managers of 28 units, sections, or districts and to individuals with assigned vehicles. This evaluation found weaknesses in three of eight identified internal controls: written policies and procedures, monitoring, and data integrity assurance. Further, managers' approaches to oversight were inconsistent. Until these weaknesses are addressed, SBI's ability to implement and enforce effective controls will continue to be compromised and the potential to achieve cost savings will be limited.

**Although SBI follows best practices for vehicle acquisition and disposal, SBI has not established clear criteria to guide vehicle replacement planning, assignment, and maintenance.** Budget reductions may constrain the ability to replace vehicles, but they do not preclude planning, especially at a time when the fleet's average mileage exceeds 90,000 miles.

**SBI collects vehicle data with a recently implemented electronic fleet management information system, but increased attention to replacement planning, vehicle assignment, and reporting would promote a more comprehensive approach to fleet management.** Improvements to routine reporting could enhance the system's usefulness as a management tool by, for example, providing detailed division-wide vehicle utilization data, setting thresholds for vehicle replacement to aid in planning, issuing alerts for approaching scheduled maintenance, and providing more detailed reporting to managers.

**The General Assembly should direct DOJ to implement a fleet-management approach for SBI law enforcement vehicles.** Elements of implementation should include using electronic vehicle data to enhance business decisions; conducting annual internal vehicle audits that test internal controls and data validity; and revising policies and procedures related to vehicle replacement planning, assignment, and maintenance to make them more explicit.