

SD County Launches Pilot Program to Track Graffiti Using GPS-Based System

An 18-month pilot program has been launched in San Diego County to track graffiti. The San Diego Unified Port District, the North County Transit District, the Metropolitan Transit System, and every city in the county will play a part in testing a GPS-based graffiti tracking system so that offenders guilty of multiple crimes can be more easily tracked through the analysis of the symbols or monikers that such vandals leave behind. Overall, the program is set to cost \$361,000, and the county will pony up \$126,000 toward that amount. County Supervisor Greg Cox stated that “Any law enforcement officer will tell you graffiti says basically, ‘Do crime here,’ and that it can mark gang turf and stir up gang warfare.” Cox was prominent in getting all cities in the county to join the effort. KPBS reports:

“San Diego County Sheriff Bill Gore said that under the new system, public-works crews will document the graffiti once a vandal paints on public property. ‘They go out with a GPS camera, take a picture of the graffiti which identifies the date, the time and the exact location of that graffiti,’ Gore said. ‘That information is put into a database, where it’s then analyzed and that’s how you get these patterns.’ Think of it as a kind of digital paper trail to identify prolific taggers across the county. Before, the District Attorney’s office could only prosecute single acts of vandalism. Now taggers can be charged on multiple counts. That means they could face more jail time ... or a hefty sum of restitution.”

It is hoped that the tracking system helps to cut down turf wars between gangs. AT&T, San Diego Gas & Electric and Cox Communications will be providing \$58,000 in support so that the cost of equipment is covered.