

Caseload Trends in the Municipal Courts

Analysis of Activity for Year Ended August 31, 2003

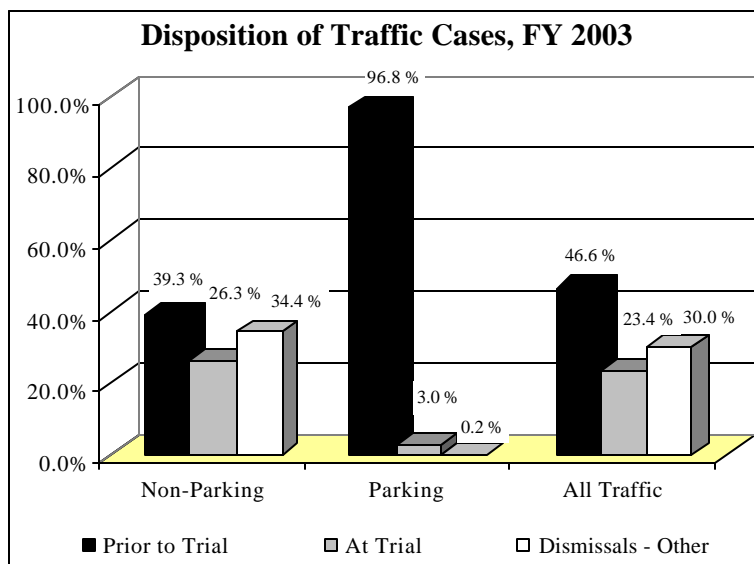
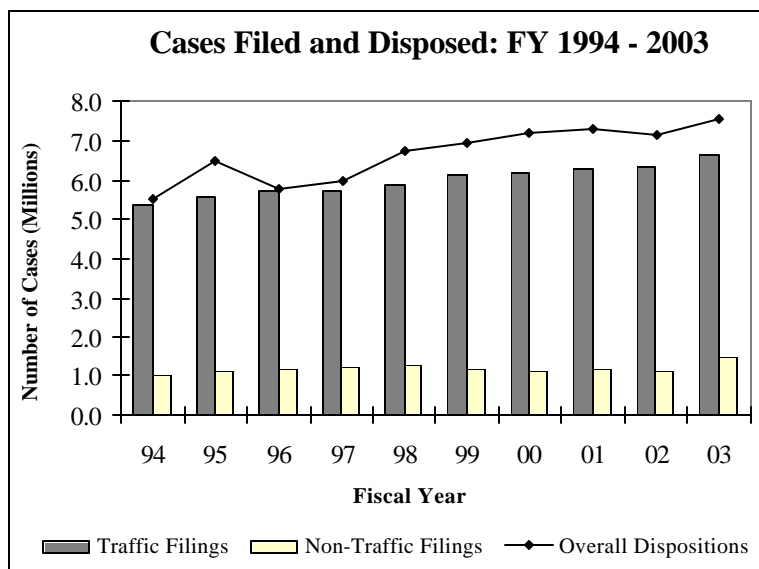
BACKGROUND

In FY 2003, municipal courts and municipal courts of record operated in 883 Texas cities. Municipal courts have original and exclusive jurisdiction over violations of city ordinances and resolutions, rules or orders of joint boards that operate airports under Section 22.074, Transportation Code and that are punishable by a fine not to exceed: 1) \$2,000 in cases arising under ordinances or resolutions, rules or orders involving fire safety, zoning, public health, and sanitation; and 2) \$500 in all other cases arising under a municipal ordinance or airport board resolution, rule or order.

In addition, municipal courts have concurrent jurisdiction with justice of the peace courts in misdemeanor cases resulting from violations of state laws within the city limits or property owned by the municipality located in the municipality's extraterritorial jurisdiction when punishment is limited to a fine and does not include confinement as an authorized sanction, pursuant to Article 4.14, Code of Criminal Procedure. Municipal courts of record may also have additional jurisdiction provided by local ordinance.

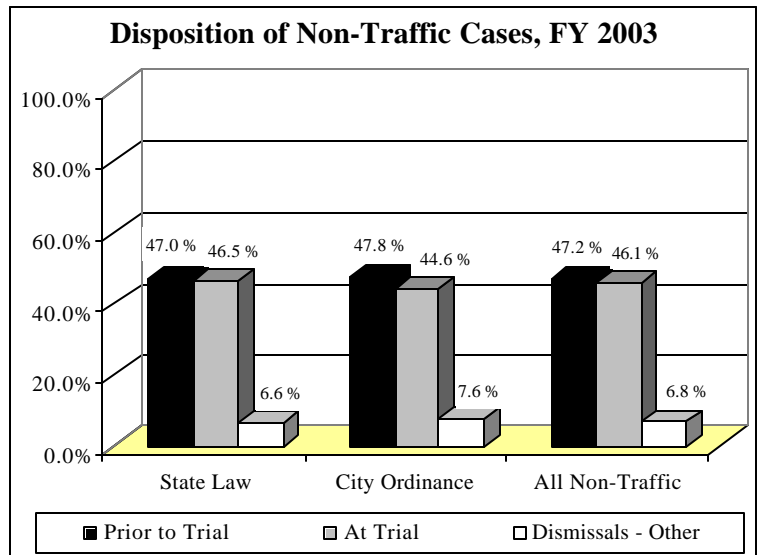
FILINGS AND DISPOSITIONS

- Over the past ten fiscal years (FY 1994 to FY 2003), there has been a gradual increase in the overall number of new cases per year. In FY 2003, a total of 8,099,088 new cases were filed, 27.0 percent more than the 6,376,571 new cases filed during FY 1994. Over the past five fiscal years (FY 1999 to FY 2003), an average of 7,516,223 new cases were filed per year in the municipal courts.
- Traffic cases accounted for 81.9 percent (6,635,939 cases) of all cases filed in the municipal courts during FY 2003. Non-traffic cases comprised the remaining 18.1 percent (1,463,149 cases), which was a higher percentage than in any of the previous ten fiscal years. The ten-year (FY 1994 to FY 2003) average percentage of non-traffic cases filed per year was 16.5 percent.
- Case filings in the eight largest metropolitan cities accounted for 45.1 percent of all municipal court filings in the state. In FY 2003, 3,649,548 cases were filed in Texas' eight largest cities—Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, El Paso, Fort Worth, Arlington, and Corpus Christi.
- In FY 2003, municipal courts disposed of 7,568,050 cases, which exceeded both the five-year (FY 1999 to FY 2003) average of 7,224,721 dispositions per year, as well as the ten-year (FY 1994 to FY 2003) average of 6,657,668 dispositions per year. Overall, there has been a gradual upward trend in the number of cases disposed in municipal courts over the past decade.
- During FY 2003, non-parking traffic cases accounted for the majority (75.2 percent or 5,693,650 cases) of all municipal court cases disposed. Parking cases comprised 11.0 percent (832,392 cases), non-traffic state law cases totaled 10.7 percent (813,040



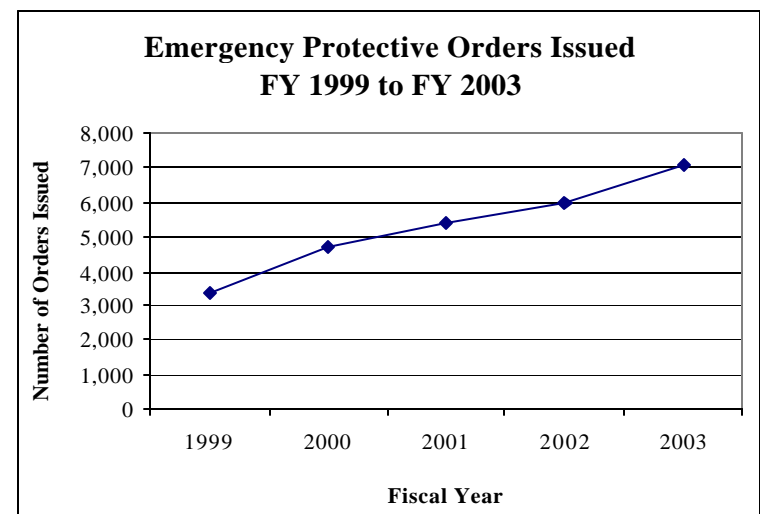
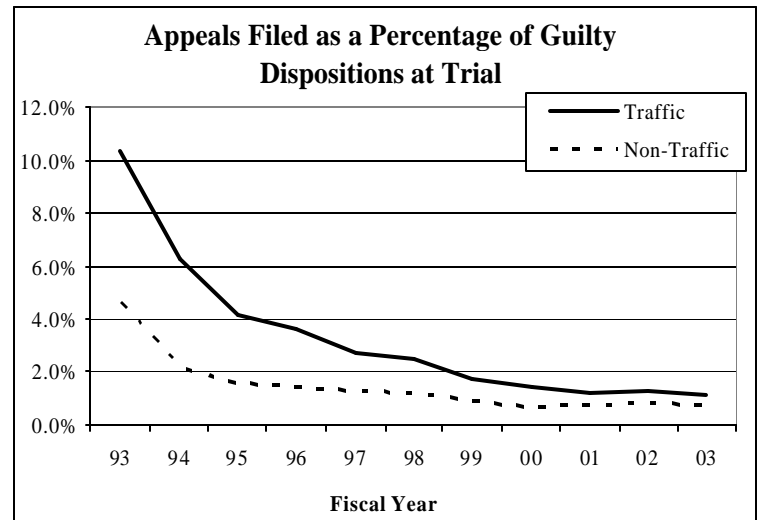
cases), and non-traffic city ordinance cases accounted for the remaining 3.0 percent (228,968 cases) of all dispositions during the fiscal year.

- **Approximately 47 percent (3,533,462 cases) of all municipal court cases disposed in FY 2003 were disposed prior to trial.** Of the 3,533,462 traffic and non-traffic cases disposed prior to trial, 83.5 percent involved payment of a fine or forfeiture of a deposit made to ensure appearance.
- **The percentage of non-traffic cases disposed at trial (46.1 percent, or 479,996 cases) in FY 2003 was nearly equivalent to the percentage of non-traffic cases disposed prior to trial (47.2 percent, or 491,355 cases).** In contrast, only 23.4 percent (1,524,309 cases) of traffic cases were disposed at trial during the fiscal year.
- **The average municipal court clearance rate (total cases disposed divided by total cases added) for FY 2003 was 93.4 percent, which was the lowest rate for any year since FY 1997.** The five-year (FY 1999 to FY 2003) average clearance rate was 96.1 percent, while the ten-year (FY 1994 to FY 2003) average clearance rate was 93.1 percent.



OTHER ACTIVITY

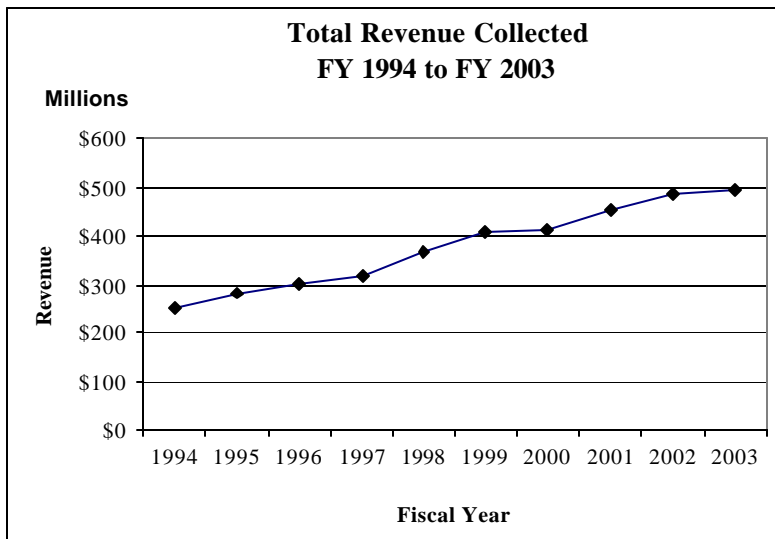
- **In FY 2003, guilty findings were made in 98.2 percent (1,175,472 cases) of the 1,197,564 bench trial cases that were not dismissed.** In contrast, guilty verdicts were reached in 70.8 percent (3,295 of 4,651 cases) of jury trial cases that were not dismissed.
- **Of all cases in which a finding of guilt was reached at trial by judge or jury (1,178,767 cases), 1.1 percent (12,469 cases) were appealed, which continued an overall downward trend in the number of cases appealed since FY 1993.** The five-year average (FY 1999 to FY 2003) percentage of cases appealed was 1.4 percent per year, indicating stabilization of the decreasing trend.
- **Over the last five fiscal years, the number of emergency protective orders issued increased 110.9 percent (from 3,353 in FY 1999 to 7,071 in FY 2003), and the number of arrest warrants issued for felony and misdemeanor cases increased 9.9 percent (from 1,992,988 in FY 1999 to 2,190,291 in FY 2003).**
- **Juvenile case activity was greater in FY 2003 than at any time during the previous five fiscal years.** In FY 2003, municipal courts handled 339,945 juvenile matters, 32.2 percent (109,595 cases) of which involved Transportation Code violations. The 72,466 Alcoholic Beverage Code cases filed during FY 2003 greatly exceeded the five-year (FY 1999 to FY 2003)



average of 46,296 cases filed per year. The number of Failure to Attend hearings (29,376 hearings) and the number of Education Code violations filed (11,797 cases) also exceeded their respective five-year (FY 1999 to FY 2003) averages of 12,721 hearings held and 8,758 cases filed per year.

REVENUE

- **The amount of revenue collected by municipal courts grew 97.8 percent over the last ten fiscal years (from \$249,799,816 in FY 1994 to \$494,194,876 in FY 2003).** Excluding cases dismissed prior to or at trial, the amount of revenue collected in FY 2003 per disposition averaged approximately \$80. Although municipalities collect this revenue, a portion of it is remitted to various special funds maintained by the state government.



Note: The dollar amounts of total revenue collected are not adjusted for inflation.