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ICE proposes ‘mobile detention facilities’



The plans do not say how long detainees could remain in the vans or when they would receive food, water or medical screening, how they would use a bathroom or whether they could contact their families. VINCENT ALBAN/REUTERS FILE

Documents detail plan to hold immigrants in locked vans

María Luisa Paúl
USA TODAY

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement plans to hold immigrants in locked vans – with no stated time limit – so its officers can remain in the field and detain more people, according to government contracting documents that describe the vehicles as “mobile detention facilities.”

Under the proposal, armed contractors would be assigned to ICE officers conducting operations across Pennsylvania and Delaware. Those contractors would wait at staging sites nearby. People taken into custody would be held in their vans until they are full or until ICE operations in the area have ended.

In Pittsburgh, where the agency wants to establish a new transportation hub, the documents say, ICE deportation officers are “better utilized as a force multiplier in the field to make more arrests.”

The plans do not say how long detainees could remain inside the vans. They also do not explain when they would receive food, water or medical screening, how they would use a bath-

“The only reason you need a mobile kind of support center like this is if you are trying to go catch as many as you possibly can at once. It’s about volume.”

John Sandweg,
ICE’s acting director and the Department of Homeland Security’s acting general counsel during the Obama administration

room or whether they could contact their families or attorneys.

ICE has not disclosed how much the proposal would cost taxpayers. The broader solicitation asks companies to submit bids for the work. No contract award had been posted as of Sept. 29.

DHS declined to comment on the proposal, citing “operational security.”

ICE has long used vans and buses to move detainees between facilities, collect them from local jails and transport them to airports or court hearings. But three former ICE officials and detention

experts told USA TODAY they had not seen the agency propose using vehicles this way, essentially as holding cells on wheels.

“The only reason you need a mobile kind of support center like this is if you are trying to go catch as many as you possibly can at once,” said John Sandweg, who served as ICE’s acting director and the Department of Homeland Security’s acting general counsel during the Obama administration. “It’s about volume.”

The documents offer a glimpse into how the Trump administration’s push for mass deportations has shifted ICE’s priorities. Former agency officials said ICE has moved away from operations focused on specific targets and increasingly turned to traffic stops and broader sweeps, leaving officers with less discretion over whom to take into custody.

That shift has unfolded during record-breaking months for ICE arrests, per agency figures. As of July 11, 70.6% of people in ICE detention had no criminal convictions, according to data

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U.S.-Iran peace deal remains elusive

Miles J. Herszenhorn
and **Kim Hjelmgaard**
USA TODAY

NEW YORK – Seven months after the United States started a war with Iran, negotiators were back at the table to find a solution to end the fighting.

Amid the sudden burst of meetings

and note-passing between U.S. and Iranian officials on the sidelines of the United Nations, one thing has been missing: measurable progress.

The talks in New York, the first between the two sides since June, come as U.S. and Iranian negotiators are seeking to leave the door open to a peace deal despite President Donald Trump’s

threat to attack Iran and deep mistrust between the two countries.

The effort to broker a ceasefire faces major obstacles as Trump demands that Iran agree to his terms for ending the war, including the abandonment of Tehran’s nuclear program. The

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Lawsuit says NCDOT failed

Fairgrounds crossing unsafe after woman killed

Rebecca Sitzes
Shelby Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

A new lawsuit has been filed by the family of a woman who was killed a year ago while attempting to cross the street to volunteer at a booth at the Cleveland County Fairgrounds.

Sarah Queen, 79, was struck and killed Oct. 1 just before 3 p.m. as she was crossing the street in the crosswalk to begin her volunteer shift at the Cleveland County Democratic Party booth.

The 82-year-old driver, Arthur Joseph Durazzi, from Lancaster, South Carolina, was charged with misdemeanor death by motor vehicle and failure to reduce speed. Shelby Police said Durazzi was working as a delivery driver for a medical courier service.

Sarah Queen’s daughter, Jerrienne Queen, filed the lawsuit Sept. 17 against the N.C. Department of Transportation, specifically Mark Stafford and other Division 12 employees. Marion Street near the fairgrounds, including the crosswalk where Queen was hit and killed, is part of U.S. 74 Business and under the control and maintenance of NCDOT.

The lawsuit requests an NCDOT site visit “so that consideration be given by NCDOT to the need for crosswalk signalization, pedestrian activation mechanisms, signage and striping.”

The lawsuit says at some point prior to 2009, the crosswalk was first demarcated with white painted lines.

According to the court document, the speed limit is 45 mph along that stretch of Marion Street and average daily traffic is 12,000 cars a day and there is no in-street or overhead pedestrian crossing sign at the crosswalk.

“The traffic volumes on East Marion Street do not have sufficient gaps in the traffic stream long enough for a pedestrian to walk to the other side or to a median refuge,” the lawsuit states. “The speed of vehicles approaching the crosswalk is too high to permit pedestrians to cross safely.”

In addition, the lawsuit says, the crosswalk is unsignalized, there is no raised median pedestrian refuge within the crosswalk, it is not marked with high-visibility crosswalk marking, there are no curb extensions in or near the crosswalk and no advance yield lines to reduce collisions ahead of the crosswalk in either direction.

The lawsuit alleges the NCDOT did not ensure the crosswalk was reasonably safe and is out of compliance with Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices and NCDOT standards.

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