

FEBRUARY 27, 2023

# Overview of Trial Court Construction and Facility Maintenance

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PRESENTED TO: Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5 on  
Public Safety  
Hon. Mia Bonta, Chair



LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE

# Background

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## State Assumed Responsibility for Trial Court Facilities in 2002

- ***Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002.*** Chapter 1082 of 2002 (SB 1732, Escutia)—also known as the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002—shifted ownership and responsibility for maintenance of nearly all trial court facilities from the counties to the state. (Facility transfer to the state began in 2007 and concluded in 2009.) Chapter 1082 also gave Judicial Council the authority to construct future trial court facilities.
- ***County Facility Payments.*** While the state assumed responsibility for trial court facilities, Chapter 1082 required counties to make annual payments to the state based on the amount the county had historically spent on the maintenance and operation of the transferred facilities. The state would be responsible for all maintenance and operation costs above the fixed county payment. Currently, these county facility payments total just under \$98 million annually.
- ***Judicial Branch Facilities Program.*** The Judicial Branch Facilities Program currently manages around 450 facilities across all 58 counties. The program is responsible for various activities including maintaining these facilities, managing leases, and constructing new courthouses to replace outdated facilities.



# Background

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## Trial Court Construction and Facility Maintenance Supported by Various Funds

- **State Court Facilities Construction Fund (SCFCF).** The SCFCF supports trial court construction, facility modification, and other facility-related expenses. Existing law also allows funds to be transferred to support trial court operations. Its revenues—currently estimated at \$215 million annually—generally come from certain criminal and civil fines and fees.
- **Immediate and Critical Needs Account (ICNA).** The ICNA was created in 2008, but was consolidated into the SCFCF as part of the 2021-22 budget to address solvency issues in both funds. Its revenues also generally came from certain criminal and civil fines and fees.
- **Court Facilities Trust Fund (CFTF).** The CFTF was created to generally receive the above annual county facility payments. The CFTF generally supports facility operations and maintenance costs.
- **Reimbursements.** Trial court facilities may be fully managed by the state, county, state and county, or by private entities (if the facility is leased). The state is reimbursed by counties for their share of facility costs where the state and county share space.
- **General Fund.** The state’s General Fund has provided one-time and ongoing support for trial court construction projects, facility modifications and deferred maintenance, as well as facility operations and maintenance.



# **Trial Court Construction**

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## **Projects Were Fully Supported by SCFCF (and ICNA) Until Funds Became Insolvent**

- Initially, trial court construction was supported by the SCFCF and ICNA. However, both funds became insolvent due to transfers from the funds as well as declining revenues.
- Since 2009-10, nearly \$1.7 billion has been transferred from the judicial branch's construction accounts to the General Fund or to support trial court operations. Currently, a total of \$55.5 million is redirected annually to support trial court operations. These redirections were generally made during the last fiscal downturn and were intended to reduce pressures on the General Fund or to offset reductions made to trial court operations.
- The amount of revenue deposited into the SCFCF—and the ICNA, before being consolidated with the SCFCF—has steadily declined over time, largely due to declining criminal fine and fee revenues. This resulted in both funds becoming insolvent.
- The construction program was effectively suspended in 2012-13—with certain projects being indefinitely delayed and others being put on hold or canceled—due to the transfers from the construction funds and the declining revenue.

## **New Projects Supported by General Fund**

- The construction program resumed when the 2018-19 budget provided General Fund to finance the construction of ten trial court projects—nine projects previously put on hold and one that was previously indefinitely delayed. These projects were estimated to total \$1.3 billion by 2019-20—effectively backfilling the \$1.4 billion that had been transferred to support the General Fund and trial court operations up to that point.
- Given the insolvency of the SCFCF, the 2021-22 budget permanently shifted support for the construction of future courthouses to the General Fund. Since then, the construction or renovation of nearly a dozen projects have commenced.



# Trial Court Construction

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## Projects Selected Based on Ranked Need

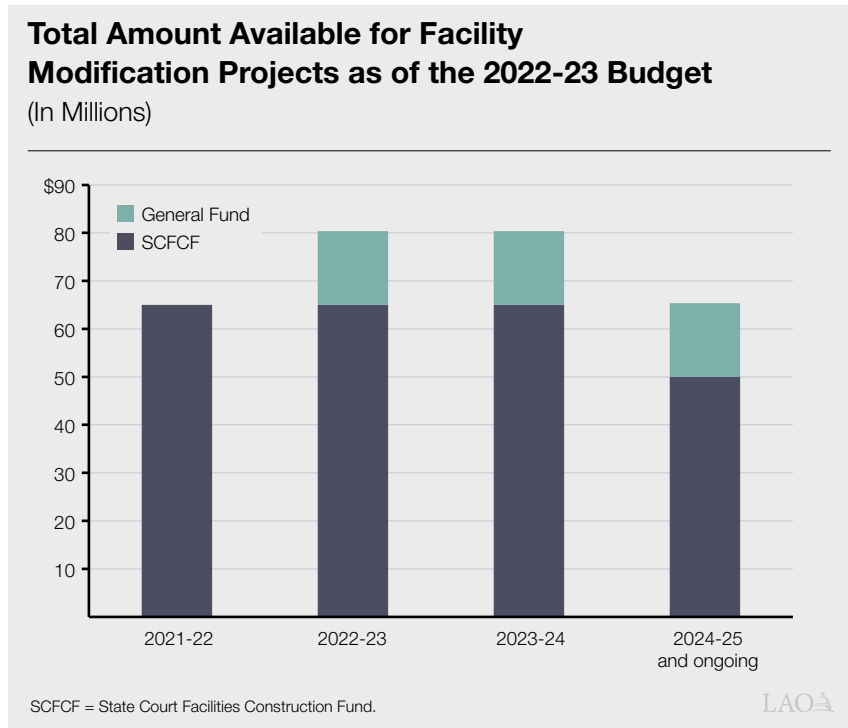
<b>Priority Group</b>	<b>Number of Projects</b>	<b>Estimated Project Costs (in billions)</b>	<b>Number Initiated</b>
Immediate Need	18	\$2.3	11
Critical Need	29	7.9	—
High Need	15	1.3	—
Medium Need	9	1.6	—
Low Need	9	0.1	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>\$13.2</b>	<b>11</b>

- The 2018-19 budget package required the judicial branch to reassess its trial court facility needs by December 2019. Facilities were measured against a wide range of factors—such as seismic, fire, and life safety; security risks; access to court services; and cost avoidance or savings realized through operational or organizational efficiencies.
- The 2019 reassessment identified a need for a total of 80 construction projects—56 new buildings and 24 renovations—totaling \$13.2 billion. As shown above, these projects were categorized into five groups and were further ranked within each group.
- New trial court construction projects are initiated in the order of their priority ranking. The number of projects initiated annually generally depends on the condition of the General Fund and budgetary priorities.



# Trial Court Facility Modifications

## SCFCF and General Fund Provided Annually for Discretionary Use



- Facility modification projects involve physical changes to a facility (or its building components) that improves its designed level of functionality. Such projects are generally smaller than construction projects, which involve more significant changes (such as renovating more than 50 percent of the facility).
- The annual budget provides a specified amount of funding for trial court facility modification projects for use at Judicial Council’s discretion. As shown in the figure, the 2022-23 budget provided \$65 million from the SCFCF—including \$50 million in annual funding and \$15 million in temporary funding set to expire after 2023-24. The budget also provided \$15.4 million ongoing from the General Fund.



# **Trial Court Facility Modifications**

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## **Some One-Time General Fund Provided Separately for Specific Projects**

- Separate from the annual funding, some one-time funding has been provided from the General Fund to support specific, larger facility modification projects.
- For example, budget packages have separately funded facility modification projects at the Orange County Central Justice Center (\$64.1 million), San Diego County East County Regional Center (\$28.4 million), and San Diego Hall of Justice (\$27.1 million).

## **Projects Selected Based on Ranked Need**

- Facility modification projects are categorized into one of six priority categories. In declining order, these are: (1) immediately or potentially critical, (2) necessary but not yet critical, (3) needed, (4) does not meet current codes or standards, (5) beyond rated life but serviceable, and (6) hazardous materials managed but not abated. Projects are further ranked within each category based on various factors (such as feasibility and cost/benefit).
- Judicial Council uses facility modification funding to target the highest-priority needs that arise.



# **Trial Court Facility Operations and Maintenance**

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## **Facility Operations and Maintenance Supported by CFTF and General Fund**

- Trial court facility operations and maintenance monies are used to support ongoing facility operations, repairs, and maintenance. These include preventative and routine maintenance, equipment replacement, utilities, and leases.
- As of 2022-23, approximately \$184 million—\$99 million from the CFTF and \$85 million from the General Fund—was provided to support facility operations and maintenance costs.

## **Deferred Maintenance Addressed by Periodic One-Time General Fund Support**

- Deferred maintenance broadly refers to facility needs that are not met by the facility modification or facility maintenance monies. As of August 2022, the judicial branch identified 22,042 deferred maintenance projects—21,851 related to trial courts and 191 related to appellate courts—totaling around \$4.5 billion. The state’s share of these projects is estimated to be around \$3.3 billion.
- The state has provided one-time General Fund support for deferred maintenance in different budgets—such as \$188 million for trial court and appellate court facilities included as part of the 2021-22 budget, which could be spent through the end of 2023-24.

