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## Collection of traffic fines goes electronic

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The state Judiciary is speeding up collection of unpaid and delinquent traffic fees and fines by referring them electronically to a collection agency.

Since October 2005 the Judiciary has been referring unpaid judgments manually to Municipal Services Bureau, a collection agency based in Texas. Unpaid judgments of \$500 or less are referred after 90 days. Those greater than \$500 are referred after 180 days.

Previously, the Judiciary referred those accounts to the state attorney general's office, which could issue garnishment orders or tax intercepts.

Manual referral required the Judiciary staff to periodically research and generate reports of delinquent accounts, then send the reports to the collection agency. As MSB collected money for the accounts, it sent the Judiciary one check a month with a list of which accounts to credit. Judiciary staff then manually updated the files.

Last month it began taking referrals electronically through a secure interface to its Judiciary Information Management System.

"It's reduced the intensity of the labor," said Deena White, JIMS project manager.

Not only are referrals made daily, as MSB collects delinquent judgments, files are also updated daily, White said.

The Judiciary electronically referred \$6,169,000 in delinquent and unpaid traffic fees and fines last month, of which MSB has so far collected \$82,000.

From October 2005 to October 2007, the Judiciary manually referred \$7,851,000 in delinquent and unpaid judgments of which MSB had collected \$777,160 by the end of October. The Judiciary said many of the initial referrals involve repeat offenders and cases dating back several years.