

## Middlesex sheriff launches bail review videoconferencing

by Mass. Lawyers Weekly Staff

Published: February 9th, 2012



Bail review in one corner of the commonwealth just entered the 21st century.

Middlesex County Sheriff **Peter J. Koutoujian**'s office has launched a video conferencing program that allows Superior Court bail reviews to take place without incarcerated individuals having to leave the jail in Cambridge.

Koutoujian, a former Middlesex prosecutor, says he initially warmed to the idea of doing bail reviews via video conferencing because it would save resources and cut down on transportation, but he soon realized it would also help with security.

"Any type of transportation of an inmate, whether it be to the hospital or to the court, is the weak link to our security," he says.

"There's more of a risk for an inmate to flee or harm themselves. And also, of great concern to me, my corrections officers can get hurt. This is a safer way."

Currently, there is a video conferencing unit in the Cambridge jail, as well as a corresponding unit in the Superior Court in Woburn, Koutoujian says, and there's talk of installing another unit in Billerica, where his office operates the Middlesex House of Correction. All told, the units cost about \$30,000, all of which came from federal funding, he says.

Video conferencing for bail reviews has already been "legally vetted," he adds. "There is precedent for this around the country."

In fact, Suffolk County has long embraced the practice.

Koutoujian says his office would consult with both defense attorneys and prosecutors if he were to expand the program to court activities other than bail review.

Complete URL: <http://masslawyersweekly.com/2012/02/09/middlesex-sheriff-launches-bail-review-videoconferencing/>