

The Cost of Operation Metro Surge

by [Jake Schwitzer](#) | Jan 22, 2026 | [News](#)

Introduction

For the last six weeks, Minnesota has been the target of Operation Metro Surge. Conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the human cost of this operation has been tremendous. This cost has been epitomized by violence against numerous residents, including the killing of Renee Good, a 37-year-old U.S. citizen. Beyond these extreme incidents, residents are also experiencing a more mundane but pervasive daily violence, involving restricted freedom of movement and new, informal responsibilities to protect neighbors, family members, and community members from federal harassment.

Beyond the human toll, Operation Metro Surge is imposing a substantial economic cost on Minnesota. This cost can be understood in two ways.

First, there is the direct expenditure of taxpayer dollars required to fund the operation. These include federal taxpayer costs, such as lodging and meals for out-of-state federal agents, as well as local costs, such as overtime payments for local police agencies.

Second, there is the loss of economic activity stemming from what many residents describe as a federal occupation. It has become clear that [many people in the state, predominantly but not exclusively immigrants, are staying home out of fear](#). People report being afraid to go to work, send their children to school, or shop for necessities. The result is a broad reduction in economic activity, as businesses close or reduce hours, and fewer people spend money in their communities.

The analysis conducted here attempts to estimate these economic costs, demonstrating how Operation Metro Surge is causing deep harm not only to Minnesota residents, but also to the state's economy. Throughout our analysis, we utilize conservative assumptions, suggesting that our estimate is almost assuredly an undercount of the true cost.

Taxpayer Expense for Operation Metro Surge

This analysis follows similar [work conducted by the Chicago Tribune](#) to calculate the cost of Operation Midway Blitz, which estimated a price tag of \$59 million, roughly three months into that operation. Notably, the scale of Operation Metro Surge appears to be much larger. While Chicago's operation was generally described as involving several hundred agents, the Twin Cities are seeing thousands of agents, [including approximately 2,000 from ICE and 1,000 from Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#). This surge comes as the number of ICE agents across the country has grown from [10,000 to 22,000 in just four months](#).

- **Agent Compensation**

Drawing on average salary and benefit information for [ICE](#) and [CBP agents](#), we calculate that each week of Operation Metro Surge costs nearly \$ 9 million in personnel compensation alone. Importantly, this salary estimate does not include any overtime pay or bonuses, meaning it is likely an underestimate of the true personnel cost.

- **Lodging and Meals**

While some may argue that these agents would be paid regardless of the operation, several other aspects of Metro Surge clearly generate additional costs that would not otherwise exist. One such cost is lodging and meals for agents deployed from outside of Minnesota. Agents coming from out of state require hotels and per diem allowances. Using the [General Services Administration's per diem rates for federal employees staying in the Twin Cities](#), which are \$148 per night for lodging and \$92 per day for meals and expenses, we calculate that each week of the operation costs approximately \$4.5 million to feed and house agents.

Notably, this estimate assumes that ten percent of all agents involved in the operation are Twin Cities-based, which is highly unlikely. As a result, this figure should be understood as a conservative underestimate. In addition, this analysis does not consider costs associated with renting vehicles, damage to those vehicles, the use of tear gas or other munitions, or the use of helicopters, again suggesting that the true cost of daily activities is higher.

- **Detention**

Another major expense arises from detention. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has stated that it arrested [approximately 3,000 people during the last six weeks of the operation](#). It remains unclear how many of those individuals have been detained for extended periods. We know that many have been released within hours, often following obvious mistakes [involving the arrest and public humiliation of U.S. citizens](#). At the same time, available data indicate that the [average detention lasts 44 days and costs approximately \\$152 per day](#). We make the conservative assumption that only half of those arrested in Minnesota are detained. Under that assumption, the weekly cost of detention is approximately \$1.6 million.

This estimate does not include the cost of transfer flights or court expenses. Nor does it include the likely future costs associated with civil penalties resulting from excessive force and [wrongful detention lawsuits](#) brought against federal agents during the operation.

- **Police Overtime**

A final cost considered here is police overtime. As federal agents continue their chaotic and violent tactics, calls to local police are increasing. Unlike most of the other costs discussed above, police overtime is not borne by taxpayers nationwide but instead falls directly on local residents. Data on this cost are limited, but the Minneapolis Police Department alone [reported spending more than \\$2 million on police overtime in just four days](#). While it is possible that this cost has declined somewhat since the days immediately following Renee Good's death, it is also important to recognize that Minneapolis is one of [400 law enforcement agencies](#) in the state. Accordingly, we make a very conservative assumption that agencies across the state are spending \$3 million per week on police overtime to deal with Operation Metro Surge.

Taken together, these components suggest a taxpayer cost of at least \$18 million for every week that Operation Metro Surge continues, with an understanding that our conservative methods suggest the cost is likely much higher. Notably, some of these costs do return to the local economy. For example, meals and lodging for out-of-state agents support local businesses. But this modest boost must be weighed against any reduced economic activity fostered by the federal government's activity, as we discuss in the next section.

Reduced Economic Activity Due to Operation Metro Surge

Estimating the reduction in economic activity caused by Operation Metro Surge is difficult. To begin, it is important to understand how vital immigrants are to Minnesota's economy. In the Twin Cities, [immigrants account for roughly one in seven entrepreneurs](#), bringing in \$600 million in business income annually. Taken together, immigrant workers and business owners [generate \\$41 billion in economic output in Minnesota](#) each year.

Unfortunately, Operation Metro Surge puts that output at risk. Reports indicate that [revenues at immigrant-run businesses have fallen by between 50 and 100 percent in some areas](#), while more than three-quarters of restaurants in these areas have closed entirely. Absences among immigrant students have jumped rapidly. In St. Paul, [one-in-four Latino students have been absent every day since December 12](#).

There are also reports of nearly half of workers failing to show up for certain jobs due to fear of ICE, especially in industries heavily dependent on immigrant workers, such as [child care](#) and [construction](#). The loss of childcare workers has led to some [providers cutting hours or closing classrooms entirely](#). The economic consequences of this change extend beyond the workers, as these reduced hours and options may be forcing parents across the state to lose work as they stay home with their children.

In addition to the impact on immigrant communities, there is evidence that non-immigrant US citizens are also reducing their economic activity due to fear, including the [closure of businesses operated by native-born citizens](#). Numerous events and concerts have also [been canceled](#), including a Red Bull-sponsored snowboarding competition. Recognizing that Operation Metro Surge has put Minnesota into a negative national spotlight, [the state's tourism agency has paused marketing efforts](#), reflecting an understanding that fewer people will want to travel to the state. As a result of all of these changes, spending from both immigrant and non-immigrant communities is lost.

This evidence suggests widespread economic harm. While a lack of quality data makes it difficult to estimate the size of this impact, if we assume even a modest 10 percent decline in economic output among just immigrants in the state, it would suggest a weekly reduction of nearly \$80 million for the state's economy. Again, it is too early to assess the accuracy of this figure, but it is suggestive of just how damaging Operation Metro Surge might be.

Finally, several future costs may not be fully realized for years. These include higher housing costs due to reduced construction, happening at a time when Minnesota urgently needs more housing. Additional harms are likely to come in the form of increased health care costs as [people cancel medical appointments](#) and require more expensive treatment later, higher mental health care costs resulting from an increase in anxiety and trauma, and reduced educational attainment stemming from the number of kids staying home out of fear. We are confident that in the years to come, we will understand that Operation Metro Surge will have resulted in billions of dollars in damage to the North Star State's economy.

Conclusion

The numbers above demonstrate the significant, ongoing costs associated with Operation Metro Surge, as it is currently constituted. While these costs are already high, there are reasons to think they will grow. More arrests will require increased detention, larger court costs, and more civil penalties in the future. Moreover, the possibility of moving military troops into the state would swell costs substantially, as can be seen in the [\\$20 million price tag](#) associated with troop movement during Operation Midway Blitz in Chicago.

Beyond taxpayer burdens, it seems clear that federal activity is relying on tactics that are fostering even greater fear in Minnesota, further chilling economic activity. The detention of children, including [the use of a five-year-old boy as bait](#), will only lead to more families deciding that it is not safe to leave their homes. This increased fear will lead to even more economic disruption.

Given the violence inflicted on individuals and communities, it may feel insensitive to discuss the consequences of Operation Metro Surge in economic terms. The human cost is immense and must remain at the forefront of public concern. Nevertheless, there is also a clear and significant economic cost that can no longer be ignored. [Too many Minnesota business leaders have remained silent](#), even as they must recognize the harm being done to their employees, customers, and bottom lines. It is time for them to join the many voices across the state calling for an end to Operation Metro Surge.

Appendix: Data and Methods

This appendix describes the data sources, assumptions, and methodological choices used to estimate the taxpayer costs and economic impacts of Operation Metro Surge. The analysis is designed to be transparent and conservative, relying on publicly available data and clearly stated assumptions.

Taxpayer Expense for Operation Metro Surge Estimates

- ICE and CBP Agent Salary and Benefits

To estimate personnel costs associated with Operation Metro Surge, we assume an average annual salary of \$80,018 for ICE agents. This assumption stems from two data sources. First, we take the [average of the salary range offered to new ice agents](#) (range: \$51,632 to \$84,277, average: \$67,955). To reflect that not all agents included in Operation Metro Surge are likely to be new, we then combine this average with the [average ICE salary reported on OpenPayrolls](#) (\$92,082). The average of these two numbers provides us with the \$80,018 estimate we utilize for our analysis. For CBP agents, we assume an average annual salary of \$77,061. This figure aligns with the [average salary reported for CBP agents on Indeed.com](#).

In addition to base salary, we assume that fringe benefits account for an additional 40 percent of compensation. This assumption reflects an [analysis by the Congressional Budget Office](#), which found that benefits, such as health insurance and retirement contributions, represent approximately 40 percent of total compensation for federal government workers.

- Lodging and Per Diem Costs

Lodging and meals and incidental expenses are estimated using the [General Services Administration \(GSA\) per diem rates for the Twin Cities metropolitan area](#). These rates are \$148 per night for lodging and \$92 per day for meals and incidental expenses.

As noted in the report, these estimates assume that ten percent of all agents involved in Operation Metro Surge are Minnesota-based and therefore do not require lodging or per

diem reimbursement. Given the scale of the operation, this assumption is highly conservative and likely understates the true cost.

- Detention Costs

The daily cost of detention is assumed to be \$152 per person per day. This estimate is drawn from the [Migration Policy Institute](#).

- Local Police Overtime

Local police overtime costs are estimated based on [publicly reported expenditures](#) by the Minneapolis Police Department, which spent approximately \$2 million on overtime between January 8 and January 11, 2026. This figure has been extrapolated to estimate \$3 million in statewide weekly costs.

Reduced Economic Activity Estimates

Estimates of the impact from a 10% decline in immigrant output in Minnesota are based on the \$41 billion annual economic output created by immigrant workers and business owners, as reported by the [Minnesota Budget Project and the Immigration Research Initiative](#). A 10% decline would represent a \$4.1 billion loss annually, or \$78.8 million lost per week.

SOURCE: <https://northstarpolicy.org/metro-surge-cost/>