



AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY

Meeting Date: May 9th, 2023

Subject Automated License Plate Readers

Prepared by: Angela Averiett, Chief of Police

Reviewed by: Gabriel Engeland, City Manager

Approved by: Gabriel Engeland, City Manager

Attachment(s):

1. Los Altos Police Department Policy 462 (Automated License Plate Readers)
2. Letter of support from Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen
3. Map of Proposed Camera Locations
4. Responses to Council questions

Initiated by:

Police Department

Previous Council Consideration:

Council previously discussed use of ALPR cameras on March 28th, 2023.

Fiscal Impact:

The total expected financial impact to the City to complete the 1-year pilot project is \$42,750. If approved, staff will include this amount in the proposed 2023/24 Fiscal Year budget (line item 00065-6800).

Environmental Review:

Consideration of the purchase of the Automatic License Plate Reader cameras is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines since there would be no possibility of a significant effect on the environment.

Policy Question(s) for Council Consideration:

Does Council wish to approve the acquisition of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras to complete a one-year study of their effectiveness?

City Manager

GE

Reviewed By:

City Attorney

JH

Finance Director

JD



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Summary:

The City Council considered this item at the March 28th, 2023, Council Meeting and directed staff to:

1. Update the ALPR policy for both mobile and stationary units.
2. Provide responses to Council questions.
3. Provide more information on the expected impact of the cameras as it relates to crime and solvability.
4. Research whether the program can include a regular audit and independent review.

This staff report and presentation responds to the direction given by the City Council.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the City Council approve a one-year pilot program for the purchase and installation of 15 ALPR cameras.

Background:

Law enforcement agencies use Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) systems for the purpose of rapidly identifying and locating vehicles of legitimate interest to law enforcement. ALPR cameras are currently being used extensively in the greater Bay Area and across California. In Santa Clara County, Los Altos is one of the few remaining cities not using ALPR technology. ALPR systems contain the data sets of license plate numbers, photos of vehicles, and geospatial locations from where the images were captured. There is no connectivity in the ALPR system to the vehicle's registration information or the driver's license information of the owner. The Los Altos Police Department seeks to utilize technologies that can assist efforts to solve crime and locate at risk missing persons identified in Amber and Silver alerts. The goal of the pilot program is to increase arrest rates for all crimes, but for purposes of the pilot program, the focus will be on crimes involving stolen vehicles, burglary, and catalytic converter thefts. Finding technology that can meet our current and future needs is imperative to increase safety, efficiency, and efficacy.

Discussion/Analysis:

ALPR systems function to capture an image of a vehicle (not the occupants), the vehicle's license plate, and geospatial location where the image was captured. The license plate is queried through various databases and compared to lists of vehicles of legitimate interest to law enforcement, also known as "hot lists." When a vehicle of interest is in the databases, such as a reported stolen



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vehicle, local law enforcement is alerted. The license plate is then verified by law enforcement before any enforcement action is taken.

Additionally, the stored license plate data provides law enforcement investigators with a pointer system that may help them identify vehicles associated with suspects, witnesses, or victims, and to develop exculpatory information that assists them with focusing their investigative resources. The data allows law enforcement to connect serial criminal activities that may have occurred in multiple law enforcement jurisdictions. The stored data is kept for a fixed retention period, though it is only accessible by law enforcement given a legitimate law enforcement purpose.

The ALPR system logs each user's activity by a unique log in identifier, date, time, and purpose of search associated with a case or incident number. Designated Los Altos Police Department personnel will perform random sample audits to the system to confirm it is functioning properly, and that required data is being appropriately accessed on a "need to know right to know basis." Additionally, an outside law enforcement agency will conduct an annual ALPR system audit to ensure the Los Altos Police Department is following department policy and state law. Improperly accessing the ALPR systems for purposes of personal use, traffic enforcement, or immigration enforcement is strictly prohibited per Los Altos Police Department policy #462.

The Los Altos Police Department is seeking authorization to purchase ALPR cameras for a one-year pilot to gauge its effectiveness as a resource multiplier. The goal is to increase our arrest rates for all crimes, but for purposes of the pilot program, the focus will be on crimes involving stolen vehicles, burglary, and catalytic converter thefts. We intend to use the system as an additional investigative tool to combat crime. The ALPR cameras will be placed throughout Los Altos in areas that are publicly accessible such as public roadways and public property that are within public view. The recommended locations of the cameras are included as an attachment to this report. Furthermore, a transparency portal will be put in place to inform the community about the usage of the ALPR system.

The proposed pilot will assist Los Altos PD with gathering specific evidentiary data helpful to criminal investigations. The data will be accessed to gain leads on crimes that have already occurred and will also provide real time alerts to focus our patrol officer's crime fighting efforts more effectively. The data collection and usage will be analyzed at the 6-month mark to determine how many investigations the ALPR technology has assisted with as well as how many real time hits were received and responded to.



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When a “real time” hit is responded to and the involved vehicle is located, the data will be analyzed to determine how many of those stops ended with an arrest.

The goal of the proposed pilot program is to increase arrest rates for all crimes, but for purposes of the pilot program, the focus will be on crimes involving stolen vehicles, burglary, and catalytic converter thefts.

Please see table below for total arrests and arrest by specific crime for 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Year	Total Arrests	Burglary Arrests	Grand Theft	Vehicle Theft
2020	170	4	4	3
2021	145	1	2	2
2022	133	9	3	1

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the City Council approve a one-year pilot program for the purchase and installation of 15 ALPR cameras.