

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

462.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the capture, storage and use of digital data obtained through the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology. This policy is intended to assist the Los Altos Police Department with:

- Increasing public safety.
- Minimizing the threat and risk of injury to individuals.
- Promoting governmental legitimacy and accountability.
- Minimizing the potential risks to individual privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.
- Protecting the integrity of the criminal investigatory, criminal intelligence and justice system processes and information.
- Increasing trust by maximizing transparency

462.2 POLICY

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The policy of the Los Altos Police Department is to utilize ALPR technology to capture and store digital license plate data and images while recognizing the established privacy rights of the public.

All data and images gathered by the ALPR are for the official use of this department. Such data is not open to public view, as it may contain confidential information. The Los Altos Police Department does not permit the sharing of ALPR data gathered by the City, [vendors](#) or ~~its~~ subcontractors, [as defined below](#), for [\(1\) any purpose that violates this policy or any applicable laws and regulations](#), [\(2\) the purpose of federal immigration enforcement, pursuant to the California Values Act \(Government Code 7282.5: Government Code 7284.2 et seq\)](#) - these federal immigration agencies include Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), [or \(3\) any purpose that would assist another state to carry out enforcement actions that violate California laws](#).

[For purposes of this policy, city contractors, vendors and subcontractors \("Contracted Entities"\) refers to any individual or entity that has a contract with the City related to ALPR technology. Prior to the Los Altos Police Department sharing or giving access to ALPR data and technology to Contracted Entities, the City is required to enter into a written contract. Other law enforcement and governmental agencies are not considered Contracted Entities. The Los Altos Police Department will only share and give access to ALPR data and technology to Contracted Entities, law enforcement and governmental agencies, subject to the terms of this policy.](#)

462.3 ADMINISTRATION

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The ALPR technology, also known as License Plate Recognition (LPR), allows for the automated detection of license plates along with the vehicle make, model, color and unique identifiers through the Los Altos Police Department's ALPR system and the vendor's vehicle identification technology. It is used by the Los Altos Police Department to convert data associated with vehicle license plates for official law enforcement purposes, [and in compliance with this policy](#), including identifying stolen or wanted vehicles, stolen license plates and missing persons. It may also be used to gather information related to active warrants, homeland security, electronic surveillance, suspect interdiction and stolen property recovery.

All installation and maintenance of ALPR equipment, as well as ALPR data retention and access, shall be managed by the Administrative Division Captain. The Administrative Division Captain will assign members under his/her command to administer the day-to-day operation of the ALPR equipment, and data access. The Custodian of Records will be responsible for data retention in accordance with applicable law.

462.3.1 ALPR ADMINISTRATOR

State **MODIFIED**

The Administrative Division Captain shall be responsible for compliance with the requirements [of this policy and](#) of Civil Code § 1798.90.5 et seq, [as amended, and any other applicable California state laws and regulations](#). This includes, but is not limited to (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53):

- (a) Ensuring that only properly trained sworn police officers, crime analysts and communication dispatchers are allowed access to the ALPR system or to collect ALPR information.
- (b) Ensuring that training requirements are completed for all authorized users, prior to use.
- (c) [Monitoring ALPR system](#) ~~m -monitoring~~ to ensure the security of the information and compliance with applicable privacy laws.
- (d) Ensuring that procedures are followed for system operators and to maintain records of access in compliance with Civil Code 1798.90.52.
- (e) Continually working with the Custodian of Records on retention and destruction of ALPR data.
- (f) Ensuring this policy and related procedures are conspicuously posted on the department's website.

462.4 OPERATIONS

State **MODIFIED**

~~Use~~ [Department _ members use](#) of an ALPR is restricted to the purposes outlined below. Department members shall not use, or allow others to use the equipment or database records for any unauthorized purpose (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53), [or in violation of this policy](#).

- (a) An ALPR shall only be used for official law enforcement business.

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- (b) An ALPR may be used in conjunction with any routine patrol operation or criminal investigation. Reasonable suspicion or probable cause is not required before using an ALPR.
- (c) ~~While an~~ ALPR may be used to canvass license plates around any crime scene, ~~particular consideration should be given to using ALPR -equipped cars to canvass areas around homicides, shootings and other major incidents.~~ Partial license plates and unique vehicle descriptions reported during major crimes should be entered into the ALPR system in an attempt to identify suspect vehicles. In the event that only a partial license plate is available, any further law enforcement action must be done in compliance with applicable laws.
- (d) No member of this department shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data unless the purpose of such actions is allowed under this policy and only after completing department-approved training.
- (e) No ALPR operator may access department, state or federal data unless otherwise authorized to do so, pursuant to this policy.
- (f) Log in/ log out procedure. To ensure proper operation, facilitation, oversight and auditing of the ALPR system, all users will be required to have individual credentials for access and use of the systems and/or data.
- (g) Unless exigent circumstances exist if ~~practicable~~, the officer should verify an ALPR response through the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) before taking enforcement action that is based solely on an ALPR alert. Once an alert is received, the operator should confirm that the observed license plate from the ALPR system matches the license plate of the observed vehicle. Before any law enforcement action is taken due to an ALPR alert, the alert will be verified through a CLETS inquiry via MDC or through dispatch. Members will not take any police action that restricts the freedom of any individual based solely on an ALPR alert unless it has been validated or unless exigent circumstances exist.
- (h) Hot Lists- designation of hot lists, which are lists of vehicles determined to be criminally involved or associated with a missing person, to be utilized by the ALPR system shall be made by the ALPR Administrator or her/his designee. Occasionally, there may be errors in the LPR's system's read of a license plate. Therefore, an alert alone shall not be a basis for police action (other than following the vehicle of interest). Prior to initiation of a stop of a vehicle or other intervention based on an alert, Los Altos Police Department members shall undertake the following steps:
 - 1.) Verification of status on a Hot List. An officer must receive confirmation from a communications dispatcher or other department computer device, that the license plate is still stolen, wanted or otherwise of interest before proceeding (absent exigent circumstances)
 - 2. Visual verification of license plate number. Officers shall visually verify that the license plate of interest matches with the image of the license plate number captured (read) by the LPR, including both the alphanumeric characters of the license plate, state of issuance, and vehicle descriptors, before proceeding. Officers alerted to the fact that an observed motor vehicle's license plate is entered as a "Hot plate" or "hit" (a "hit" means the ALPR system has been alerted

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- to the involved license plate) in a specific BOLO (be on the lookout) list are required to make a reasonable effort to confirm that a reasonable basis exists before a Department member would have a lawful reason to stop the vehicle.
3. Department members will clear all stops from hot list alerts by indicating the positive ALPR hit, i.e. with an arrest or other enforcement action. If it is not obvious in the text of the call as to the correlation of the ALPR hit and the arrest, then the Department member shall update the Communications Dispatcher.
 4. General Hot Lists will be automatically downloaded into the ALPR system a minimum of once a day with the most current data overwriting the old data.
 5. All entries and updates of specific Hot Lists within the ALPR system will be documented by the requesting Department member within the appropriate general offense report. - Department issued Hot Lists shall be approved by the ALPR Administrator (or her/his designee) before initial entry within the ALPR system. The updating of such a list within the ALPR system shall thereafter be accomplished pursuant to the approval of the Department member's immediate supervisor. The hits from these data sources should be viewed as informational: created solely to bring the officers' attention to specific vehicles that have been associated with criminal activity or missing persons.

All Hot Plates and suspect information entered into the ALPR system will contain the following information at a minimum: Department member's name, related case number and a short synopsis describing the nature of the originating call for service. The member may add any additional information they deem to be relevant.

Permitted/ Prohibited Uses

The ALPR system, and all data collected, is the property of the Los Altos Police Department. Department personnel shall only access and use the ALPR system for official and legitimate law enforcement or public safety purposes consistent with this policy. Any official legitimate law enforcement or public safety purposes referenced in this policy shall be limited to purposes that comply with this policy and any applicable laws, including California Civil Code 1798.90.5 et seq (as amended). The following uses of the ALPR system are specifically prohibited:

- 1.) Invasion of Privacy: Except when done pursuant to a court order, such as a search warrant, it is prohibited to utilize the ALPR system to record license plates except those of vehicles that are exposed to public view (e.g. vehicles on a public road or street, or that are on private property but whose license plate (s) are visible from a public road, street or place to which members of the public have access, such as the parking lot of a shop or other business establishment).
- 2.) Harassment or Intimidation: It is prohibited to use the ALPR system to harass and/or intimidate any individual or group.
- 3.) Use based on a protected characteristic: It is prohibited to use the ALPR system or associated files or Hot Lists solely based on a person's or group's race, gender, gender identity, religion, political affiliation, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, age, or other classification protected by law.

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4.) Personal Use: It is prohibited to use the ALPR system or associated files or Hot Lists for any personal purpose.

5.) First Amendment Rights: It is prohibited to use the ALPR system or associated files or Hot Lists for the purpose or known effect of infringing upon First Amendment rights. Nothing in this policy is intended to create an independent right of action in any person.

Any member who engages in prohibited uses of the ALPR system, regarding the collection, receipt, access, use, dissemination, retention, or associated files or Hot Lists, may be subjected to:

- Criminal prosecution

- Civil liability and/or

- Administrative sanctions, disciplinary action up to and including termination, pursuant to and consistent with the relevant collective bargaining agreements and Department policies.

462.5 MOBILE ALPR CAMERAS

Agency Content

It is the policy of the Los Altos Police Department that ALPR cameras used by this department will be in a fixed position. The Los Altos Police Department will not use mobile ALPR cameras without the prior authorization of the City Council.

462.6 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

Best Practice MODIFIED

The Administrative Division Captain is responsible for ensuring systems and processes are in place for the proper collection and retention of ALPR data.

All Contracted Entities ~~The City contracted ALPR vendor~~ will store the fixed position ALPR data and ensure proper maintenance and security of data stored in their data towers. All ALPR data will be purged by the City and any Contracted Entities from all systems, devices, and files, at the end of 30 days of obtaining the ALPR data. ~~The vendor will purge their data at the end of 30 days of storage.~~ However, this will not preclude Los Altos Police Department from maintaining any data obtained from the system after that period pursuant to any open/active investigations relevant to the vehicle data. Once an active investigation has been closed or adjudicated, the data should be purged from all systems, devices and files at the end of 30 days of the investigation being closed or adjudicated. -

Information gathered or collected and records retained by Contracted Entities ~~the vendor~~, will not be sold, accessed or used for any reason other than legitimate law enforcement or public safety purposes. In accordance with this policy, data collected by ALPR cameras will not be accessed by Contracted Entities without prior authorization by the Chief of Police and/or her/his designee.

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462.7 ACCOUNTABILITY AND SAFEGUARDS

State **MODIFIED**

All data will be closely safeguarded and protected by both procedural and technological means. The Los Altos Police Department will observe the following safeguards regarding access to and use of stored data (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53):

- (a) All ALPR data downloaded to the mobile workstation and in storage shall be accessible only through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date and time (Civil Code § 1798.90.52).
- (b) [If mandated by applicable law, the City will provide access to stored ALPR data in response to non-law enforcement requests](#) ~~for access to stored ALPR data will be processed in accordance with applicable law.~~
- (c) Members approved to access ALPR data under these guidelines are permitted to access the data for legitimate law enforcement [or public safety](#) purposes only, [as defined in this policy](#), such as when the data relate to a specific criminal investigation or department-related civil or administrative action.
- (d) ALPR data may be released to other authorized and verified law enforcement officials and agencies for legitimate law enforcement purposes, [as defined in this policy](#).
- (e) Every ALPR browsing inquiry must be documented by either the associated Los Altos Police Department case number or incident number, and the reason for the inquiry.
- (f) ALPR system audits shall be conducted on a semi-annual basis by the Administrative Division Captain [and violations of this policy shall be documented and steps should be taken to prevent such violations in the future](#).
- (g) Annual ALPR audits will be conducted by an outside law enforcement agency as an added measure of transparency and to ensure policy compliance by members of the Los Altos Police Department. [If a violation of this policy is identified, it shall be documented and steps should be taken to prevent such violations in the future](#).
- (h) [All requests for ALPR data by other law enforcement or governmental agencies that have been approved by the Los Altos Police Department shall be made public and posted on the transparency portal monthly for the prior month.](#)

It is the responsibility of the Administrative Division Captain, or her/his designee, to ensure that an audit is conducted of ALPR detection browsing inquiries at least twice during each calendar year. The Department will audit a sampling of the ALPR system utilization from the prior 6 month period to verify proper use in accordance with the above authorized uses. The audit will randomly select, at minimum, 15 detection browsing inquiries conducted by department employees during the preceding 6 month period and determine if each inquiry meets the requirements established in this policy.

The audit will be documented in the form of an internal department memorandum to the Chief of Police. The memorandum will include any data errors found so that such errors can be corrected. After review by the Chief of Police, the memorandum and any associated documentation will be filed and retained by the Custodian of Records.

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In addition, a designated law enforcement agency will do an annual audit of ALPR data, as an added layer of accountability, to ensure members of the Los Altos Police Department are in compliance with this policy.

462.8 RELEASING ALPR DATA

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The ALPR data may be shared only with other law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies for official law enforcement purposes or as otherwise permitted by law, using the following procedures:

- (a) The agency makes a written request, [via completion of a form supplied by the Los Altos Police Department](#), for the ALPR data that includes:
 - (a) The name of the agency.
 - (b) The name of the person requesting.
 - (c) The intended purpose of obtaining the information.
 - (d) [Acknowledgement that the ALPR data will only be used for the intended law enforcement purposes stated on the form.](#)
- (b) The request is reviewed by the Administrative Division Captain or her/his authorized designee and approved before the request is fulfilled.
- (c) The approved request is retained on file.
- (d) The Chief of Police or the authorized designee will consider the California Values Act (Government Code 7282.5; Government Code 7284.2 et seq), before approving the release of ALPR data. The Los Altos Police Department does not permit the sharing of ALPR data gathered by the City or ~~by its Contracted Entities, its contractors/subcontractors~~ for purpose of federal immigration enforcement, these federal immigration agencies include Immigrations and Customs (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) [or any local, state or federal agency for purposes that violates this policy or any federal regulation or California law.](#)

Requests for ALPR data by non-law enforcement or non-prosecutorial agencies will be processed as provided in the Los Altos Police Department Records Maintenance and Release Policy, policy 810 (Civil Code § 1798.90.55), [and as defined in this policy.](#)

462.9 TRAINING

State MODIFIED

The Administrative Division Captain shall ensure that prior to use, members receive department approved training for those authorized to use or access the ALPR system (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53), [to include review and acknowledgement of this policy.](#)

462.10 CONTRACTED ENTITIES

Agency Content

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All Contracted Entities are expected to comply with the relevant sections of this policy. Contracted Entities are also required to keep written documentation of who accesses the ALPR data and who the data is released to. Contracted Entities are prohibited from:

- sharing the ALPR data received from the City with any individual, entity or agency without express written permission from the Los Altos Police Department.

- accessing, downloading, or decrypting the ALPR data received from the City without express written permission from the Los Altos Police Department.

-storing the data in any form or length of time that violates this policy.

- allowing their employees, other than those with authorized authority, to access the ALPR data

-using the data in a manner that is not consistent with this policy or approved by the Los Altos Police Department.

462.11 ALPR LOCATIONS

Agency Content

ALPR cameras approved by Council shall be located in areas of the City where there is a demonstrated need for the cameras to be placed. Placement of the cameras shall not be solely based on targeting any particular residential neighborhood, street, or groups based on any protected characteristics or class.