BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AB 6830
December 2, 2025
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AB 6830: Police Technology Upgrades	☐ Discussion Only ☒ Action Needed: ☒ Motion ☐ Ordinance ☐ Resolution
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Place the Flock Pilot Program on hold; appropriate $100,710 to procure a new police in-car digital video recording system and a digital evidence management system; and authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute a contract.	

DEPARTMENT:	Police
STAFF:	Ali Spietz, Chief of Administration Michelle Bennett, Police Chief Carson Hornsby, Management Analyst II Amelia Tjaden, Management Analyst I
COUNCIL LIAISON:	n/a
EXHIBITS:	n/a
CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY:	4. Focus efforts and actions to be an environmentally and fiscally sustainable, connected, and diverse community.

AMOUNT OF EXPENDITURE	$ 100,710
AMOUNT BUDGETED	$ 0
APPROPRIATION REQUIRED	$ 100,710

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to provide an update on the technology objectives in the 2025-2026 Police Department Work Plan and request appropriation to procure a new in-car digital video recording (DVR) system and digital evidence management system.

- In May 2025, the City Manager presented an update on the 2025-2026 Work Plan (AB 6688) and the City Council discussed the Police Department goals. The Police Department Work Plan includes the evaluation of new technology programs including body worn cameras and a digital evidence management system. The work plan also includes scoping a replacement for the in-car DVR system and automated license plate reading (ALPR) cameras.
- The City recently purchased new police vehicles which are in the process of being outfitted with equipment. Staff recommend moving forward with procurement of a new in-car DVR system to replace the Department's aging system.

- The current in-car DVR system is failing and while staff had hoped its use could be extended for another year, that is no longer recommended. Expediting the replacement will allow for this technology to be installed in the new cars, which are anticipated to be delivered in early 2026.
- A digital evidence management system will also be necessary to store recordings from the in-car DVR system as well as digital evidence from other sources.
- Staff are in the process of gathering cost information for the technology systems from vendors. A total appropriation of $100,710 is recommended to support negotiation of a contract with the selected vendor by December 31, 2025 and the annual expense for 2026.
- Ongoing expenses for the technology upgrades will range from $45,000 to $55,000 per year and will be incorporated into the Police Department's operating budget in the 2027-2028 biennium.
- The Police Department is also in need of new automated parking enforcement equipment given that the current equipment has failed. Staff intend to return in early 2026 to address procurement of parking enforcement technology separately.
- Staff explored the feasibility of implementing stationary automated license plate reading cameras with a Flock Pilot Program. Staff recommend placing this program on hold and reappropriating the funds from the Flock Pilot Program toward the procurement of a new in-car DVR system and digital evidence management system.

BACKGROUND

2025-2026 Police Department Work Plan

The City Council adopted the 2025-2026 Biennial Budget on December 3, 2024. As part of the Biennial Budget, each department established work plan goals for the 2025-2026 biennium that include specific action items and deadlines.

In May 2025, the City Manager presented an update on the 2025-2026 Work Plan (AB 6688) and the City Council discussed the Police Department goals and objectives. The Police Department Work Plan includes the following goals and objectives related to implementation of new technology programs:

Goal #3: Enhance public safety technology and communication.

- Objective 3.2: Develop a body-worn camera program recommendation/budget proposal for City Council consideration to include funding options, policy considerations, software fees, data storage, and staff support for the anticipated public records requests by Q3 2025.
- Objective 3.3: Develop a program recommendation/budget proposal to replace in-car camera systems with an updated system that integrates City operating systems by Q3 2026.
- Objective 3.4: Develop a program recommendation/budget proposal to update the City's Digital Evidence Management System to allow for better storage, ease of indexing and retrieval, and the ability to interface with City operating systems by Q3 2026.
- Objective 3.5: Implement a pilot program to test stationary Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) equipment on Mercer Island and appropriate $15,000 from available funds to support the installation, operation, and evaluation of the pilot program. City staff are further directed to return to the City Council no later than the first quarter of 2026 with a follow-up presentation on the results and findings from the pilot program, including:
    - System performance and operational evaluation
    - Legal, privacy, and data retention considerations
    - Community feedback and outreach outcomes
    - Proposed policies, procedures, and recommendations for future use

The sections below provide a summary of the technology systems identified in the Goal #3 Objectives, outlined on page 2, and the current status of the technology systems utilized by MIPD, if applicable.

Body-Worn Camera System

A body-worn camera system consists of wearable audio and video recording devices that provide an objective record of encounters between officers and the public. This demonstrates accountability and openness in police operations while strengthening officer and public safety. Body-worn camera systems have the added benefit of protecting officers and agencies against false claims. Recordings are uploaded through a docking station, cellular, or Wi-Fi connection from the field to a cloud-based storage platform for later retrieval and processing.

Current Status

MIPD has not adopted a body-worn camera system, primarily due to the cost of the technology and the need to add at least 1.0 FTE to address the public records requests associated with the use of this equipment. Staff will prepare an analysis and bring this item to the City Council for discussion in 2026. The technology systems procured now will integrate with a future body worn camera system.

In-Car Digital Video Recording System

An in-car Digital Video Recording (DVR) system consists of audio and video recording devices that are mounted in patrol vehicles to capture patrol activities and responses to calls for service. DVR systems capture evidence and interactions with the public by providing the perspective from the vehicle.

DVR systems include a front-facing camera to record in front of the vehicle, and a backward-facing camera to record the backseat passenger area. Outward-facing cameras may be equipped with an Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) component to automatically compare visible license plates with law enforcement "hotlists" of stolen vehicles or cars associated with wanted or missing persons.

DVR systems are programed to begin recording automatically when the vehicle's light bar is activated and can also be manually activated. Modern DVR systems integrate with other technology such as the vehicle's mobile data terminal computer systems, body-worn cameras, and digital evidence management systems allowing for seamless cataloging of the entire call for service, regardless of the number of officers present at the scene.

Current Status

MIPD utilizes an outdated version of Motorola's WatchGuard DVR system in all patrol vehicles, which includes a front-facing camera, backseat camera, and microphone. The WatchGuard system activates when the vehicle light bar is activated and can also be activated manually. Recordings from the system are stored on WatchGuard servers hosted and owned outright by the City.

MIPD previously had two patrol vehicles equipped with standalone vehicle mounted ALPRs. The system is at the end of its useful life, and it is not recommended to be transferred to the new fleet of patrol vehicles. A third system is mounted on the Police Services Officer's (PSO) vehicle for use with parking enforcement. The retired ALPRs from the two patrol vehicles are being used as spare parts for the ALPRs in the parking enforcement vehicle.

The City's contract for the WatchGuard system began in 2014 and ended in 2022. Motorola no longer offers product support for the outdated WatchGuard hardware and software. The IT Department has maintained

the system through procurement of used and old stock hardware to bridge the gap until the Police Department upgrades to a new DVR system.

Digital Evidence Management System

A digital evidence management system is a secure software solution for collecting, organizing, storing, and sharing digital evidence, while documenting chain of custody to maintain the integrity and legal admissibility of the evidence for investigations and court proceedings. A digital evidence management system:

- Stores digital audio, video, and image information in a centralized location.
- Automatically categorizes and saves recordings from other systems as digital evidence with auto-transcribing, redaction/disclosure, sharing, and audit trail capabilities.
- Integrates with other law enforcement technology including body-worn cameras and in-car DVR systems.

Current Status

MIPD does not have a digital evidence management system. MIPD utilizes a manual process for collection and storage of all digital evidence. Digital evidence is saved and stored on physical media devices such as CDs, DVDs, USBs, and hard drives. The Department's manual storage and access procedures for digital evidence are cumbersome, time-consuming, and more difficult to manage compared to a modern digital evidence management system.

Automated Parking Enforcement

ALPR systems used for parking enforcement are different from the ALPR component of a standard in-car DVR system. Parking enforcement ALPRs are positioned at an angle to capture images of parked vehicles as the parking enforcement officer drives past. Depending on the system, parking enforcement ALPRs capture details about parked vehicles at a point in time to enforce established parking restrictions with a digital record of the license plate, tire position, and GPS location.

Current Status

In July 2020, Council authorized the City to outfit one vehicle with parking enforcement ALPRs offered by Motorola (AB 5718). The parking enforcement vehicle uses three ALPR cameras to capture images of parked vehicles. Two of the three cameras installed on the PSO's vehicle to conduct parking enforcement have failed. The City's contract with Motorola for the parking enforcement ALPRs and warranties ended in September 2025. The 'hotlist' ALPRs have been removed from the two patrol vehicles to use as replacements for the failed parking enforcement ALPRs until a suitable replacement is identified and acquired.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

Project Summary

The original plan to address the Police Department Work Plan technology goals was to package them together for a presentation and discussion with the City Council for potential funding in 2027-2028. However, the City purchased new police vehicles in 2025 which are currently in the process of being outfitted with equipment. Given the failure and near failure of the in-car camera systems, staff recommend immediate procurement of a new in-car DVR system to replace the Department's ten-year-old system that is no longer supported by the vendor. A digital evidence management system will also be necessary to enable storage of recordings from the new DVR system and digital evidence from other sources.

It is recommended that the Flock Pilot Program be paused, and the funds reappropriated to fund this procurement (see the Flock Pilot Program section below). Staff will return to Council in 2026 to address parking enforcement technology and body-worn cameras separately.

The Police and IT Departments recommend the following features be included in a new in-car DVR system and digital evidence management system:

- Forward-facing camera and a rear-facing cabin camera covering the rear passenger areas.
- Internal microphones and a body-worn wireless microphone for when officers are out of their patrol vehicles.
- Automatic activation of the in-car DVR system upon activation of the emergency lighting/siren systems, as well as manual activation by the officer.
- Automatic upload of recordings to a cloud-based, digital evidence management system via Wi-Fi or cellular connection.
- Support for passive recordings for future evidentiary recovery.
- Automatic license plate reading (ALPR) capability.
    - Ability to compare visible license plates with a "hotlist" of known stolen vehicles and vehicles associated with wanted or missing persons. Hotlists are developed by the National Crime Information Center and the Washington Crime Information Center.
- Digital evidence management system with capability to store, manage, collection, and share digital media through a cloud-based service. Strict controls are built in controlling access to only our agency and established agreements with local or county prosecutor's office for the adjudication of cases.

MIPD is also in need of new ALPR parking enforcement equipment with "digital chalking" and GPS verification for up to three vehicles. Parking enforcement ALPR equipment is not included in this proposal. Staff anticipate returning in early 2026 to address procurement of parking enforcement ALPRs separately.

Flock Pilot Program

Staff discussed project options with representatives from Flock Safety, a company that provides automated license plate reading (ALPR) cameras. Staff reviewed potential ALPR camera locations on Mercer Island and gathered more information about stationary ALPRs. Several concerns were raised about the feasibility of the project in addition to recent reports on Flock's data security and public records implications. Given the status of Flock and the issues that recently surfaced, the City Manager is recommending this project be paused and revisited at a future date.

The City Council appropriated $15,000 to fund the Flock pilot program. Staff recommend reappropriating these funds towards a new in-car DVR system and digital evidence management system.

Budgetary Impacts

Depending on the final negotiated terms, staff anticipates the acquisition of in-car DVR system and a digital evidence management system will result in $45,000 to $55,000 per year to operate and maintain the interconnected systems.

Staff recommends a total appropriation of $100,710 to support negotiations with the selected vendor and to minimize future annual costs by potentially investing more up front.

Resources to acquire and install the new systems in the current biennium include $15,000 repurposed from the Flock Pilot Program and the police in-car camera replacement reserve in the Technology and Equipment Fund (330). At the end of November, the police in-car camera replacement reserve is $85,710.

Ongoing expenses to operate and maintain these new systems will be incorporated into the Police Department's operating budget in the 2027-2028 biennium. Budget authority for subsequent years will be requested in each biennial budget for City Council approval. Future funding is contingent on Council budget approval.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will review final quotes and technical specifications from vendors for in-car DVR system and digital evidence management systems. Staff aims to complete negotiations and enter into contractual services agreement for these systems by December 31, 2025.

Staff will return to the City Council in early 2026 with an appropriation request to fund a new parking enforcement system separately from this procurement. Staff also anticipates returning to Council later in 2026 to address procurement of a body worn camera system. Finally, staff will return to discuss and evaluate body-worn cameras in 2026, for funding consideration in the 2027-2028 biennium.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Place the Flock Pilot Program on hold and re-appropriate $15,000 to replace the police in-car camera systems.
2. Authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute a contractual service agreement to procure an in-car DVR system and a digital evidence management system and appropriate $85,710 from the police in-car camera replacement reserve in the Technology and Equipment Fund (330).