

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: May 6, 2024  
Reviewed by: NA

**SUBJECT:** Automated License Plate Reader Program

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**SUMMARY**

Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology systems are an investigative tool designed to help law enforcement agencies prevent and solve crimes. The majority of cities in the surrounding area currently have ALPR's systems or have recently been approved to obtain ALPR systems, including Berkeley, El Cerrito, Kensington, Richmond, and Emeryville. The ALPR's will be leased using Citizens Option for Public Safety (COPS) grant funds, at a cost not to exceed \$215,100 for up to 34 ALPR's for a two-year program. This ALPR program will support one of Albany Police Department's goals of leveraging technology options to improve police services and improve public safety.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council receive a presentation on automated license plate reader technology camera systems and adopt Resolution No. 2024-25, authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement with Flock Safety to provide automated license plate reader cameras to the City of Albany for an amount not to exceed \$215,100.

**BACKGROUND**

Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology camera systems are investigative tools designed to help law enforcement agencies prevent and solve crimes. ALPR cameras take still images of vehicle license plates for felony hits or other urgent wants, such as missing persons and Amber alerts.

Deployment of ALPR's systems have resulted in numerous auto theft recoveries and case clearances for departments who have implemented this technology.

To engage with the community, the police department hosted a Coffee with a Cop focused on the Flock Safety camera system on April 16, 2024. Additionally, staff spoke with members of the business community and large residential complex representatives and presented this crime

prevention tool to the Policing Commission on April 18, 2024. To date, feedback regarding the camera system program has been supportive.

## **DISCUSSION**

ALPR camera systems can increase the effectiveness of police department personnel by notifying officers in real time when a wanted vehicle (i.e. stolen vehicle, one used in a robbery, or other serious crime, Amber Alert or missing person) enter or traverse areas where ALPR cameras are located and provide more tangible evidence to solve and prosecute crime. ALPR cameras take photographs of the rear of the vehicles only, capturing distinctive characteristics of a vehicle such as the make, model, color, and license plate. Photographs are maintained for a 30-day period and are then deleted and unrecoverable from the encrypted cloud storage.

The system is designed to alert local law enforcement if the system detects a wanted vehicle within seconds. The system checks every license plate that traverses the area covered by the ALPR camera system against a constantly updated hot list (includes National Crime Information Center (NCIC) wanted vehicles and vehicles entered by our department after approval from a supervisor). The hot list includes a list of stolen vehicles, as well as vehicles wanted in connection with other crimes or wants, such as Amber Alerts or missing persons. When the system detects one of these license plates, it sends an alert to dispatch and officers with the vehicle information and camera location. The license plate is confirmed as a match via dispatch. The system does not check every license plate against a DMV record, it only checks license plates against the hot lists.

After a crime has been committed, officers and investigators would be able to access the Flock system for specific license plates, vehicle colors, vehicle makes and models, and other distinguishing characteristics to develop investigative leads. The system itself does not identify the person responsible for a crime. It is up to an investigator to identify facts that lead to the identification of a suspect. By knowing a vehicle is involved in criminal activity, efforts can be focused on that specific vehicle to develop investigative leads.

The Flock ALPR system does not have video recording capabilities, it is a license plate reader only system. Only authorized Albany Police Department staff will have access to the Flock system, and they will be required to use personalized login information. Any use will require a reason for the ALPR investigative search, creating an audit trail for every search. This mandatory login process allows the Department's administration to oversee and audit exactly when, who and why the Flock ALPR system was utilized. Flock has taken significant system security measures to ensure that the collected data is safe and secure, such as using end-to-end encrypted cloud storage.

To provide adequate coverage throughout the city, staff has worked in collaboration with Flock Safety to ensure ALPRs are placed in strategic locations throughout the city to help support our business and residential communities.

Staff will utilize the Flock Transparency Portal to serve as a hub for all information related to the Albany Police Department's Flock ALPR program to provide transparency and accountability.

By entering into a lease for this camera system, the City will join the Alameda County cities of Alameda, Berkeley, Piedmont, Livermore, Pleasanton, Hayward, San Leandro, Fremont, Union City, Newark, Dublin, and Oakland, as well as the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, who are all currently using or have recently approved using the Flock camera system.

### **ANALYSIS**

Flock cameras have been proven to reduce crime and assist law enforcement in their investigations.

Flock cameras and California state law do not allow for data to be shared solely for immigration purposes and data will be purged in 30 days.

Flock Safety is the only fully integrated ALPR one-stop solution, from production of the camera to delivery and installation. Additionally, Flock Safety is the only vendor to provide a customizable Transparency Portal that provides metrics and information related to the use of the Flock Safety System.

### **SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

The Flock cameras being installed will run on solar panels.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Due to the ALPR camera system being leased, the cameras are owned, maintained, serviced, and installed by Flock Safety. The ALPR cameras are wireless, free of infrastructure setup and powered by solar. They also include a two-year warranty, Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) compliant cloud-based hosting, unlimited user licenses, ongoing software enhancements, camera setup, mounting, shipping, handling, and a cellular connection. The lease program prevents the city from being burdened with maintaining costly equipment at the end of the agreement, which could require replacement.

The project includes installation of 34 cameras for 24 months at a cost not exceeding \$215,100. This will include the one-time installation charge as well as 2-year lease fees.

An appropriation of \$215,100 of COPS funds is required for this program.

COPS funds are provided by the State to fund front line police activities not budgeted in the City's annual operating budget and this program meets the requirements for the use of these funds.

Longer term funding for the ALPR system would need to come from the general fund or grant funds should this tool be determined to be a valuable investment and continued use is desired.

**Attachments**

1. Resolution No. 2024-25
2. Sole Source
3. Flock Quote