



CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

City Council Communication

Date: August 16, 2023

Prepared By: Chief Michael D. McCoy and Deputy Chief Jeff Stevens

Agenda Item: Automated License Plate Readers – Test and Purchase as a Service

Explanation: In 2020, the Department tested automated license plate readers (ALPRs) as investigative aids. We completed that test without contracting for ALPR services based on technical performance concerns we believe have been rectified. This belief is based on vendor representations, our investigators' continued use of the search platform, and the experience of other regional agencies that implemented ALPR systems after our 2020 test including Peoria, Pekin, East Peoria, Morton, Eureka, Bloomington, Normal, and Champaign. Each of those agencies is using ALPRs from the same vendor based largely on the same reasoning we advocated in 2020. The value of having ALPRs on a shared network in Central Illinois is that we can easily share those investigative resources with agencies that employ ALPRs in a similar fashion, making our work and theirs more efficient.

Prior to 2020, we rejected ALPRs because of their high cost, limited application, and privacy concerns. Flock Safety is a vendor with a business model that addresses these concerns (the same vendor we used in 2020). Flock sells ALPR as a service, so while we will own the accumulated data, we will not own the equipment. While as-a-service applications typically are more expensive in the long term, the advantage is low capital outlay compared to purchase, as well as included maintenance and updates. This is particularly valuable with software-included applications. This vendor offers a unique service, with patented software, making it the sole source of this package. It allows the subscriber to control the resulting database, but requires unused data to be removed from its instant search platform after 30 days. We can allow reciprocal database access to other law enforcement with the same parameters. Additionally, the vendor offers a similar service to private groups, such as shopping centers or apartment complexes. Those groups could share their database with law enforcement without having reciprocal access. We also note that Flock's substantial regional presence provides interoperability and efficiency advantages not obtainable with other vendor networks. We continue to be familiar with Flock's search tools for investigations because Flock intentionally allowed WPD free, continued access to search tools using ALPR data area agencies allowed us to access. Flock also works within the Axon ecosystem (bodycams, in-car cameras, records systems), which is important for future efficiency.

This type of ALPR offers robust, patented search capabilities, allowing searches for suspect vehicles by license plate number or state, vehicle make or type, color, and description (e.g. front fender damage), among other descriptors. The combination of search functions offered by this vendor is unique.

Applications for this technology include identification of hit and run vehicles, identification of crime-involved vehicles where no license plate number was reported, automated notification of stolen vehicles (important with involvement of stolen vehicles in burglaries and other crimes) and automated notification of cars connected to arrest warrants, crime alerts, Amber Alerts, Silver Alerts, or missing

persons. WPD could also input suspect vehicles for automated notification, making in-person surveillance more effective by reducing the need for direct visual contact while waiting for a suspect car to move.

While we believe this technology, with the individual features and protections available from this vendor, will make law enforcement significantly more efficient without privacy harms associated with long-term storage of or sale of vehicle data, we are seeking a short-term trial of approximately 60 days to evaluate the hardware, software, and our ability to use it effectively. Upon a successful conclusion of the test, we would contract for a year of service with our expectation that we would build on the ALPR service within the City in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Fiscal Impact: For the 60-day test, the fee would be payable only if the cameras remain beyond the test period. The total fee, should we keep the cameras after the test period, is \$17,850.00 for the first year. This fee includes 4 cameras, installation, and permit work through IDOT. The recurring annual cost for the cameras and service is \$12,000, with the first-year difference covering installation and permit work. In 2020, we also bought archive storage beyond the 30-day instant search database, such storage required by the Illinois Local Records Act. We expect we will not require this archiving based on the passage of HB3326, now awaiting Gubernatorial action. That bill would remove the need for archival storage beyond 30 days.

For the current fiscal year, we expect to shift funds from general fund line items and/or transfer from special projects line items such that we can fund the cameras for the current fiscal year with no impact to the total PD budget. We expect to enter specific funding in our FY 23-24 budget request. This offset could delay other technical projects, but would provide more immediate impact to investigative efficiency.

Action Requested: Consideration and approval of a sole source, 1-year contract with Flock Safety for 4 ALPRs and system applications, conditioned upon the successful testing of those systems, in an amount not to exceed \$17,850.00.