



## CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS Public Safety Committee Agenda Communication

**Meeting Date:** November 16, 2020

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

**Agenda Item:** Discussion Regarding License Plate Readers

**Explanation:** The Department has investigated placement of video cameras in public areas (such as Washington Square) as investigative aids. While we will continue to look at options in that area, the cost of high-quality video coupled with storage, as well as the inefficiency of search methods limits the practicality of those cameras. During that consideration, we examined license plate reader (LPR) technology.

In the past, we rejected LPRs because of their high cost, limited application, and privacy concerns. We have identified a vendor with a business model that addresses these concerns. This vendor sells LPR as a service, meaning that the equipment is essentially rented and regular maintenance is a part of the price. 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. While at least one other vendor does offer the as-a-service model for LPRs, that arrangement typically allows the vendor to keep and sell the resulting data, which is a privacy concern. 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 deleted after 30 days. We could allow 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.

This type of LPR 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.

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 frequent involvement of stolen vehicles in burglaries and further vehicle thefts here), 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. For an example use, see [washingtonpolice.link/LPR](http://washingtonpolice.link/LPR)

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.

**Fiscal Impact:** Varies by number of cameras and software package integration. A camera package is typically \$5,000 annually per bi-directional location, while additional software features, if selected based on utility and location, add approximately \$1,200 annually. We have plotted 10 initial locations, although we are seeking a trial period with a single bidirectional application.

**Action Requested:** Discussion and a communicated consensus regarding this technology.