

Santa Clara County Office of the Sheriff
Fixed Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR)
Flock Safety Technology-Town of Los Altos Hills
Annual Surveillance Report
July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

1. DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE TECHNOLOGY WAS USED

Fixed automated license plate readers (ALPRs) use high speed cameras to photograph vehicle license plates. Forty Flock Safety ALPRs were leased and installed by the Town of Los Altos Hills during this reporting period. The Sheriff's Office, consistent with a current law enforcement agreement, serves as the police department for the Town of Los Altos Hills and manages the utilization of the Flock Safety ALPRs.

Usage of the fixed ALPRs is for authorized law enforcement and public safety purposes as set forth in the Surveillance Use Policy. The Town's fixed ALPRs were used to collect license plate information from vehicles on public roadways and purged after 30 days unless the license plate was associated to a specific crime.

The Flock Safety technology consists of two main components, which are the hardware and its related software. The hardware involves a system of fixed, stationary cameras, strategically positioned throughout the Town in order to capture license plates of vehicles wanted in connection with crime or missing persons, as determined through interface with state and national law enforcement stolen vehicle and missing person telecommunication systems. The cameras are affixed to existing infrastructure, connect to the software using an embedded cellular connection, have night vision capability, and can capture a license plate up to 50 feet away. In addition to generating notifications for wanted license plates, these cameras collect geographical locations, dates, and times related to the image captured.

The Flock Safety software interface allows users to create customized lists in order to alert the Sheriff's Office of vehicles associated to crime. When a camera captures a wanted plate, otherwise referred to as "a hit", the Flock Safety system generates a notification. The notification alerts both deputies and dispatchers to the presence of the wanted license plate at a certain location, or the location of the camera that captured the plate. Individual users may opt to receive those notifications in variety of ways. They may receive Flock Safety pop-ups, if logged into the software on patrol car computer terminals, or they may receive an email or text notification. Additionally, all deputies on patrol will receive notification via dispatch broadcast.

2. DATA SHARING WITH OUTSIDE ENTITIES

Consistent with the Board-approved Surveillance Use Policy and Agreement with the Town of Los Altos Hills, the Sheriff's Office ALPR data was shared with law enforcement organizations who requested assistance.

During this reporting period, the Sheriff's Office shared data with Atherton Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Hillsborough Police Department, Los Altos Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, Los Gatos Police Department, Palo Alto Police Department, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, and Ventura County Sheriff's Office. The data shared with each agency was for the purpose of an active, specific investigation. With exception of the aforementioned law enforcement agencies, the Sheriff's Office did not share data with any other organization, including ICE. SB 54 California Values Act ensures no state and local resources are used to assist federal immigration enforcement.

Privacy concerns remain a high priority with the use of this system and controls are in place to ensure that the data is only used and shared pursuant to legitimate law enforcement and public safety needs.

3. COMMUNITY COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS

Any community complaint regarding the use of the ALPRs is routed to Internal Affairs for tracking and response.

During this reporting period, there were no community complaints or concerns expressed to the Sheriff's Office regarding the fixed ALPR technology being utilized within the Town of Los Altos Hills.

4. AUDITS AND POLICY VIOLATIONS

All Sheriff's Office staff authorized to use the fixed ALPRs were provided with the Sheriff's Office and Town of Los Altos Hill's Surveillance Use Policies. Policies were reviewed with each authorized user prior to use of the system. Internal audits were conducted to ensure compliance with those policies, and no misconduct or misuse of the equipment or Surveillance Use Policy violations were discovered.

There is no evidence to suggest that the technology was used with disproportionate affect to lower-income community members or community members of color.

5. EFFECTIVENESS AT ACHIEVING IDENTIFIED PURPOSE

The fixed automated license plate reader technology is meant to alert law enforcement of stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, vehicles associated with crime, vehicles involving missing persons, and vehicles associated to Amber Alerts.

Flock Safety system captured the following:

Los Altos Hills Hits Summary	
Type	Total
Lost or Stolen License Plates	2,542
Stolen Vehicle	53
Missing Person	3
Felony Vehicle	11

Though the system captured 2,542 lost or stolen license plates, many were likely duplicate notifications from the same or multiple cameras. For example, a camera may quickly photograph a license and produce multiple record for the same plate. There were also multiple misreads (where the optical recognition incorrectly translates the license image

to alphanumeric characters) and hits on license plates which actually belonged to the vehicle. In other instances, deputies were simply unable to locate the vehicle. In total, six events resulted in the recovery or seizure of wanted or stolen vehicles and lost or stolen license plates. Three notifications resulted in the arrest of four suspects for charges related to possession of a loaded firearm, stolen property, burglary tools, controlled substances, and drug paraphernalia. Four warrants were also served pursuant to those arrests.

Of the three notifications resulting in an arrest, the first was received on December 21, 2022, when an ALPR hit alerted deputies to a vehicle wanted in connection to a felony police evasion incident in San Jose. Deputies located the vehicle, confirmed it was still wanted, then attempted to stop the vehicle. The suspect driver did not initially yield but eventually stopped. The suspect had multiple outstanding warrants and numerous convictions for delaying or resisting a peace officer. Inside the cargo area of the vehicle, deputies located and recovered a stolen license plate.

Another notification resulting in arrest was received on February 16, 2023. Two suspects were arrested as a result of the ALPR hit. Deputies responded to an alert for a stolen vehicle, tracked the vehicle as it triggered multiple cameras through the Town, and with that information were able to locate the stolen vehicle. An enforcement stop was attempted, but the suspect driver did not yield and recklessly evaded until crashing into a center road median. In addition to the stolen vehicle, the vehicle's two occupants were also in possession of a loaded firearm and burglary tools.

On April 10, 2023, another stolen vehicle notification resulted in an arrest. In this instance, deputies responded to a stolen vehicle hit and quickly located the vehicle parked and occupied by someone sitting in the driver's seat. The suspect was detained without incident and found in possession of a controlled substance and drug paraphernalia. The suspect was arrested, and the stolen vehicle was recovered.

The technology has also proven fruitful in providing detectives with multiple investigative leads, leading to the identification of outstanding suspects and the ascertainment of specific crime trends affecting the Town, providing law enforcement with the situational awareness necessary to effectively patrol for crime.

Database Searches

For this reporting period, the fixed ALPR system was searched a total of 7,135 times; however, many were duplicative or related to the same crime, whereby one or more deputies ran potential license plate or vehicle description information in a variety of ways, or different combinations and permutations.

40 searches were associated to auditing of the system to ensure compliance with surveillance use policies and 61 searches were associated to training deputies. A total of 372 inquiries were made in proactive efforts with information received from outside law enforcement agencies.

6. PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

The Sheriff's Office has a process in place to track public records requests, with staff designated to receive and respond to each request. The Sheriff's Office did not receive any public records requests regarding the ALPR equipment, nor for any images or data captured by the fixed cameras.

7. ANNUAL COSTS

All costs associated to the lease and maintenance of the fixed ALPRs, to include storage and access of data, are incurred by the Town of Los Altos Hills pursuant to the previously approved Board Agreement. Any cost that may be incurred by the Sheriff's Office is reimbursed by the Town.