



Office of the City Manager

October 15, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Re: Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) and Fixed Surveillance Cameras  
- Progress Update

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## Background

The City of Berkeley is implementing Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) systems and fixed surveillance cameras to enhance public safety and support criminal investigations. This initiative involves multiple departments, with Public Works (PW) handling installation and maintenance and the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) managing operations. ALPR technology will soon be deployed and will provide a powerful tool to identify vehicles of interest quickly, aid in locating stolen vehicles, and supporting critical investigations. Fixed surveillance cameras are already in use at San Pablo Park, the Berkeley Marina, and the intersection of University Avenue and 6th Street. Following the approval of relevant ordinances, acquisition reports, and usage policies, the City is now moving forward with the installation and operation of these surveillance technologies.

## Summary

*ALPR:* City Council approved 52 ALPR locations, 32 on City of Berkeley right of way (ROW) and 20 on Caltrans ROW along Ashby and San Pablo Avenues. All ALPR cameras in the City of Berkeley ROW have been installed. City staff have submitted applications for permits for the 20 cameras that are on Caltrans ROW and are continuing to move that process along.

*Fixed Cameras:* The City recently finalized a contract with Edgeworth with sufficient funding to install 12 of the 15 Council approved fixed surveillance cameras. Seven of these cameras on City of Berkeley ROW are expected to be installed by the end of the year. City staff are submitting applications for permits for the fixed surveillance cameras on Caltrans ROW.

## **Implementation Steps**

There are a number of steps underway at BPD to prepare for the use of both ALPRs and the additional fixed surveillance cameras.

The installation of Automated License Plate Readers in our city is a significant project that involves multiple phases before the system can go live. Initial steps included securing City Council approval in accordance with the Surveillance Technology Ordinance (STO), allocating necessary funds, obtaining required permits, and completing the installation of the cameras.

The City has successfully completed the initial phase of the ALPR system by installing 32 ALPRs within the City's ROW. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, the Department launched an introductory period involving key users—such as experienced officers, supervisors, and detectives—to test the system's deployment. The primary goals of this phase are to conduct initial training, develop and refine operational protocols, and train a group of instructors who will facilitate departmental implementation. Ultimately, we are committed to leveraging the system's data to effectively enhance public safety in our city.

The introductory period is expected to conclude by mid-November, after which the technology will be fully operational. All personnel who will be using or supervising ALPR technology will be required to complete mandatory training before accessing the system. This training will cover relevant updates to pursuit policy and operational procedures associated with the technology, ensuring that ALPR technology can effectively support our work while maintaining ethical standards and legal compliance.

As with any new program or technology, a learning curve is anticipated. The phased implementation approach is designed to minimize the impact of any challenges or issues that may arise.

Regarding the additional fixed surveillance cameras, preparations include refining the software solution that tracks access to these cameras for more comprehensive auditing and detailed reporting.

## **Usage Guidelines and Ethical Considerations**

The implementation of these surveillance technologies is governed by our Surveillance Technology Ordinance (STO). This ordinance establishes clear expectations for the ethical and responsible use of these technologies to ensure that their deployment aligns with our community's values and legal standards. By outlining the parameters for usage, data management, and privacy protections, the STO serves as a framework that guides all personnel in their interaction with surveillance tools.

Under the STO, the deployment and operation of fixed surveillance cameras are subject to strict guidelines to prevent misuse and protect individual privacy. Personnel are required to adhere to protocols that dictate when and how surveillance footage can be accessed, shared, and stored. These measures are designed to balance the benefits of enhanced security with the necessity of upholding community members' rights.

We have established clear guidelines to ensure the effective and responsible use of ALPR systems. From other jurisdictions that have implemented this technology, we know that ALPR systems can generate a significant number of "hits" from license plate reads. Therefore, the Chief of Police has clearly instructed all personnel that, as with all enforcement actions, officers must take steps to not only verify and confirm ALPR information but also use their judgment when deciding whether to initiate law enforcement action. Officers are directed to balance several factors, including current workload and calls for service, available cover, the severity of the crime associated with the ALPR alert, the overall need for immediate enforcement action, and the overall benefit and risk to our community.

We will use these new law enforcement tools responsibly, ethically and in compliance with all relevant policies and laws to ensure their effective and safe use while maintaining our community's trust and support.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions.

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