

Worksession

Agenda Item #	3
Meeting Date	April 13, 2009
Prepared By	Chief Ronald A. Ricucci
Approved By	Barbara B. Matthews City Manager

Discussion Item	Police Department Briefing on License Plate Scanner Technology
Background	<p>The Police Department has been awarded funding in the amount of \$27,030 from the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program, via the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention, for the purchase of an automatic license plate recognition scanner. License plate scanner technology systems are utilized to capture images of license plates, which are then compared against known lists of tags of interest (stolen autos, stolen license plates, wanted persons, etc.). Such lists are generated from a variety of sources, including FBI crime databases and MVA lists of suspended tags and drivers, and are downloaded from the originating database and loaded into the in-car computer system at the beginning of each officer’s shift. The license plate scanner technology allows an officer to automatically scan streets, parking lots, or passing traffic for vehicles of interest. The system immediately alerts the operator to any matches.</p> <p>License plate scanner systems do not handle or report information about the identity of owners or operators of the tags that are scanned. While the systems have the capability to store information on the tags that are scanned and couple that with photos of the vehicle and GPS data, the amount of time that the information is retained can be set at the discretion of the local jurisdiction, subject to data space requirements. Most law enforcement agencies using license plate scanner technology maintain about 30 days’ worth of scans.</p> <p>Prior to being presented with a procurement ordinance for its consideration, the Council requested a briefing on the Police Department’s proposed policy for the use of the device. A copy of the draft General Order is attached.</p> <p>As outlined in the draft General Order, the source databases will be restricted to NCIC files, MVA records of suspended drivers or vehicles, and amber alert databases. Scan files developed through use of the license plate recognition scanner will be deleted from the device upon completion of the operator’s shift. The General Order also prohibits the downloading of scan files to any other device, without the expressed permission of the Chief of Police.</p>
Policy	The Council has an interest in the protection and promotion of the safety of City residents, business owners/operators, and visitors to Takoma Park.
Fiscal Impact	The Police Department has been awarded funding in the amount of \$27,030 through the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program for the purchase of a license plate recognition scanner and the cost of related training.
Attachments	Draft Departmental General Order 717 – Automatic License Plate Recognition Scanner

Recommendation	<p>Staff recommends that the Council listen to the staff briefing and ask questions regarding the proposed use of the equipment by the Takoma Park Police Department.</p> <p>In the event that the policy meets the concerns of the community and appropriately safeguards the privacy of individuals, the Council should authorize the City Manager to accept the grant award from the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention and to proceed with purchase of the device.</p>
Special Consideration	<p>In accordance with the Takoma Park Code, any City purchases that exceed \$10,000 require Council approval. An ordinance authorizing acquisition of the license plate technology scanner will be presented to the Council at a future date.</p>

TAKOMA PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT - GENERAL ORDERS



TITLE: Automatic License Plate Recognition Scanner	NUMBER: 717
EFFECTIVE DATE: DRAFT 3/18/09	REVIEW DATE:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Amends <input type="checkbox"/> Rescinds	
AUTHORITY: Ronald A. Ricucci, Chief of Police	CALEA STANDARDS:
	TOTAL PAGES: 2

01 Purpose: To establish policy and procedures for Departmental use of a Automatic License Plate Recognition Scanner

02 Policy: It is the policy of Department to utilize technology in the furtherance of law enforcement efforts to locate and apprehend criminal suspects. It is further the policy of the Department to ensure that the use of technology devices such as the Automatic License Plate recognition Scanner should not, intentionally or otherwise, compromise legitimate privacy concerns of law abiding citizens.

03 Definitions:

A. ALPR Scanner - an Automatic License Plate Recognition Scanner is a device that uses cameras and computer technology to compare digital images of license plates to lists of known plates of interest.

B. Scan File - lists or data obtained by an ALPR Scanner of license plates viewed by the device, including potentially images of the plates and vehicle on which it is displayed, and information regarding the location it was viewed by the ALPR Scanner.

C. Extract Download - "hot" lists of license plates associated with vehicles of interest from the associated database.

04 ALPR Scanner Process:

A. This device works by taking extract downloads from various sources and creating a list of potential wanted vehicles or vehicles of interest. The list is loaded into the processor of the device. The device, either mounted in a vehicle or mounted in a fixed position, then captures images of license plates that come into view

and compares them to the list of vehicles of interest. The device alerts the operator of potential matches and the source database that provided the license plate for use in the device.

B. The operator, upon receiving an alert would then initiate or cause to be initiated a query to the appropriate database in order to obtain more detailed information regarding the reason that the vehicle is of interest to law enforcement.

05 Development of Vehicle License Plate Hot Lists:

A. Hot Lists will be developed by the authorized user at the beginning of the intended mission with the device, so as to use the latest available information from the extracted downloads.

B. Extract Downloads to be used in the development of the Hot Lists will be those obtained from:

1. NCIC stolen vehicle, stolen tag, temporary wanted felony vehicles, and wanted persons files only.
2. Maryland MVA records of suspended drivers or vehicles only.
3. Databases of Amber Alerts other than from NCIC, if available.

C. Operators becoming aware of additional potential sources of vehicles of interest are not authorized to use those sources to generate hot lists without the expressed authority of the Chief of Police.

06 Limitations on Usage:

A. Only officers or employees certified by a Command

level officer will be permitted to access the Extract Downloads, develop hot lists, or operate the device. Any such operator will be required to possess authorization to access NCIC and MVA files via the MILES system. Security of the extract downloads will be consistent with other directives, rules, regulations, laws, and procedures applying to the use of information from those databases and will be the responsibility of the operator.

B. Scanning Missions will not last any longer than the shift duration of the operator. If a successive officer takes over use of the vehicle in which the ALPR Scanner is mounted, or otherwise takes over use of the device, he/she will initiate a new scanning mission after development of a new hot list from the latest extract downloads.

C. Scan Files developed during the mission will be deleted from the device upon completion of the operators shift.

D. It will be a violation of this policy and procedure to download any scan file, without the expressed authorization of the Chief of Police.

E. Operators are reminded that, since the information obtained in the NCIC and MVA extract downloads are not real time data from those databases, action other than following the identified vehicle is not justified until an appropriate query of the source database has been accomplished, which then provides the justification for action as described elsewhere in agency directives.

F. Operators should also be aware that in certain cases—such as a match to an MVA record for a suspended drivers license or an NCIC record for a wanted person—the driver or occupant of the vehicle may not in fact be the person for which the tag is associated. In these instances officers should obtain independent reasons for believing the operator is likely the suspended driver or wanted person before initiating a traffic stop.

G. Use of the ALPR Scanner in conjunction with any other agency's operations will only be done with expressed authority of the Chief of Police, after verifying that the operation is a bonafide criminal

investigation.

07 Program Evaluation:

A. All operators utilizing the ALPR Scanner on a scanning mission will complete Form _____ and submit it to the Office of the Chief for use in evaluating the effectiveness of this program. Forms shall be submitted no later than the end of the operators current shift.

B. Damage or other malfunctions to the equipment will be reported expeditiously to the Office of the Chief via the chain of command.

08 Other Considerations:

A. Nothing in this General Order shall restrict or prohibit an officer from taking appropriate police action based on facts or reasons obtained independently of the operation of the ALPR Scanner.

B. Although other agencies have used this device for the purpose of conducting vehicle canvasses in the vicinity of major crime scenes, this use is not recommended since the ALPR Scanner does not necessarily capture 100% of the vehicle tags that come into view.