
Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

415.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the capture, storage and use of digital data obtained through the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology.

415.2 POLICY

The policy of the Santa Barbara Police Department is to utilize ALPR technology to capture and store digital license plate data and images while recognizing the established privacy rights of the public.

All data and images gathered by the ALPR are for the official use of this department. Because such data may contain confidential information, it is not open to public review.

415.3 ADMINISTRATION

The Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR), allows for the automated detection of license plates. It is used by the Santa Barbara Police Department to convert data associated with vehicle license plates for official law enforcement purposes, including identifying stolen or wanted vehicles, stolen license plates and missing persons.

All installation and maintenance of ALPR equipment, as well as ALPR data retention and access, shall be managed by the vendors - in communications with the Public Safety Information Technology Manager, and in compliance with contracted policy and procedures.

415.3.1 ALPR ADMINISTRATOR

The Investigative Division Commanders shall be responsible for developing guidelines and procedures to comply with the requirements of Civil Code § 1798.90.5 et seq. This includes, but is not limited to (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53):

- (a) A description of the job title or other designation of the members and independent contractors who are authorized to use or access the ALPR system or to collect ALPR information.
- (b) Training requirements for authorized users.
- (c) A description of how the ALPR system will be monitored to ensure the security of the information and compliance with applicable privacy laws.
- (d) Procedures for system operators to maintain records of access in compliance with Civil Code § 1798.90.52.
- (e) The title and name of the current designee in overseeing the ALPR operation.
- (f) Working with the Custodian of Records on the retention and destruction of ALPR data.
- (g) Ensuring this policy and related procedures are conspicuously posted on the department's website.

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415.4 OPERATIONS

Use of an ALPR is restricted to the purposes outlined below. Department members shall not use, or allow others to use the equipment or database records for any unauthorized purpose (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53).

- (a) An ALPR shall only be used for official law enforcement business.
- (b) An ALPR may be used in conjunction with any routine patrol operation or criminal investigation. Reasonable suspicion or probable cause is not required before using an ALPR.
- (c) While an ALPR may be used to canvass license plates around any crime scene, particular consideration should be given to using ALPR-equipped cars to canvass areas around homicides, shootings and other major incidents. Partial license plates reported during major crimes should be entered into the ALPR system in an attempt to identify suspect vehicles.
- (d) No member of this department shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data without first completing department-approved training.
- (e) No ALPR operator may access department, state or federal data unless otherwise authorized to do so.
- (f) If practicable, the officer should verify an ALPR response through the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) before taking enforcement action that is based solely on an ALPR alert.

415.5 DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

The Investigative Division Commander is responsible for ensuring systems and processes are in place for the proper collection and retention of ALPR data. Data will be transferred from vehicles to the designated storage in accordance with department procedures.

All ALPR data downloaded to the server should be stored for a minimum of one year and in accordance with the established records retention schedule. Thereafter, ALPR data should be purged unless it has become, or it is reasonable to believe it will become, evidence in a criminal or civil action or is subject to a discovery request or other lawful action to produce records. In those circumstances the applicable data should be downloaded from the server onto portable media and booked into evidence.

415.6 ACCOUNTABILITY

All data will be closely safeguarded and protected by both procedural and technological means. The Santa Barbara Police Department will observe the following safeguards regarding access to and use of stored data (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53):

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- (a) All ALPR data downloaded to the mobile workstation and in storage shall be accessible only through a login/password-protected system capable of documenting all access of information by name, date and time (Civil Code § 1798.90.52).
- (b) Members approved to access ALPR data under these guidelines are permitted to access the data for legitimate law enforcement purposes only, such as when the data relate to a specific criminal investigation or department-related civil or administrative action.
- (c) ALPR system audits should be conducted on a regular basis.

For security or data breaches, see the Records Release and Maintenance Policy.

415.7 RELEASING ALPR DATA

The ALPR data may be shared only with other law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies for official law enforcement purposes or as otherwise permitted by law, using the following procedures:

- (a) The agency makes a written request for the ALPR data that includes:
 - 1. The name of the agency.
 - 2. The name of the person requesting.
 - 3. The intended purpose of obtaining the information.
- (b) The request is reviewed by the Investigative Division Commander or the authorized designee and approved before the request is fulfilled.
- (c) The approved request is retained on file.

Requests for ALPR data by non-law enforcement or non-prosecutorial agencies will be processed as provided in the Records Maintenance and Release Policy (Civil Code § 1798.90.55).

415.8 TRAINING

The Training Manager should ensure that members receive department-approved training for those authorized to use or access the ALPR system (Civil Code § 1798.90.51; Civil Code § 1798.90.53).

415.9 CITY OF SANTA BARBARA ALPR POLICY

The City of Santa Barbara ALPR system creates a searchable computerized database resulting from the data collected by fixed cameras located at the entrance/exit of numerous City-operated public parking lots, and vehicle-mounted or handheld cameras for on-street parking spaces designated as priced or paid parking. ALPR system data includes license plate numbers as well the date, time, and location when the image was collected.

The City policy is separate from any ALPR technology used by the Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD).

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[See attachment: ALPR City Policy 2024 council approved update.pdf](#)

The City shall provide ALPR data to a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency for use in criminal investigations or to respond to public safety incidents upon receipt of a request that contains a case or incident number. In addition, information gathered shall not be disclosed to the public or in a civil matter unless such disclosure is required by law or court order.

Attachments

ALPR City Policy 2024 council approved update.pdf

City of Santa Barbara
Automated License Plate Recognition Policy

Adopted September 28, 2020

Updated January 9, 2024

What is it: Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology utilizes cameras to capture and store digital images of license plates and uses character recognition algorithms to identify license plate characters. An ALPR system creates a searchable computerized database resulting from the data collected by fixed cameras located at the entrance/exit of numerous City-operated public parking lots, and vehicle-mounted or handheld cameras for on-street parking spaces designated as priced or paid parking. ALPR system data includes license plate numbers as well the date, time, and location when the image was collected.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to define the City's appropriate use, maintenance, collection, security, and retention of all ALPR information, and the authorized users of the City's ALPR technology, in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. This policy is separate from any ALPR technology used by the Santa Barbara Police Department (SBPD). The SBPD maintains their own policy for ALPR.

The City of Santa Barbara utilizes ALPR technology to capture, analyze, and store digital license plate data and images to enable the rapid identification of vehicles in support of parking operations and compliance activities. ALPR shall supplement or replace paper tickets to log the times at which a vehicle enters or exits a City parking lot in order to determine the fee due upon exit. ALPR and customer license plate data shall also supplement or replace proximity access cards and permit stickers to grant lot entry to monthly and annual parking permit holders.

License plate information paired to vehicles entering City-operated public parking lots is used to improve access control and the enforcement of City parking ordinance violations in the lots that utilize ALPR. For example, information on vehicles coming into a lot is anonymized and aggregated to analyze various metrics including parking patterns, permit-type usage, and compliance.

Restricted Uses: The City only uses ALPR technology to collect license plate data within public view. The City does not use ALPR technology for the purpose of monitoring individual activities that are otherwise protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The cameras shall not be used in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, and shall not be used to harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.

Training: Pursuant to California Civil Code Section 1798.90.51(b), all authorized users

shall receive training prior to being granted access to an ALPR system and data. A record of all completed training is maintained by the respective City departments. ALPR operators receive initial training from the vendor providing the ALPR software and hardware. The training includes the procedure and proper use of the system prior to being granted access to an ALPR system. In addition, each user also receives an annual refresher training from the Program Manager or designee. The training includes:

1. Applicable federal and state law;
2. Functionality of the equipment; and
3. Safeguarding of password information, access to ALPR systems, and ALPR information.

Access: Authorized users with access to ALPR data shall include staff with a City operational need to specifically oversee such a system and/or are responsible for parking operations and enforcement within City Departments including Public Works, Waterfront, and Airport, as well as City-contracted parking operations and enforcement vendors. The Program Manager for each City Department employing an ALPR system is the custodian and head administrator of its ALPR systems and their operation. The only individuals with access and the ability to query data in the system are:

- Program Manager, and their designee(s);
- Parking Supervisors;
- Parking Coordinators;
- Parking Resources Specialist;
- Parking Office Specialist;
- Waterfront Operations Manager;
- Downtown Plaza and Parking Manager;
- Harbor Patrol Supervisor;
- Airport Patrol Supervisor;
- Harbor Patrol Officers; and
- Airport Patrol Officers.

All logins and queries are stored and monitored, and contain the following information:

- Username;
- Date;
- Time;
- Purpose of query; and
- License plate and other criteria used to query the system.

This data shall be stored and monitored by each respective Department's Program Manager, Harbor Patrol, Airport Patrol, Parking Services, and Parking Operations staff. License plates are only referenced against the respective Department's Annual Parking/Parking Permit vehicle database, and tickets generated at the entrance columns.

The Program Manager or their designee also run periodic audits to ensure access to the data was made by authorized persons for authorized uses.

Information Collected: The following information may be collected by the ALPR system:

- License plate image captured;
- License plate number;
- License plate state;
- Date;
- Time; and
- Location.

Information Stored & Data Retention: ALPR data shall be sent to and stored in the ALPR vendor's regional database. The database stores license plate numbers of monthly and annual parking permit holders and hourly customers. This information is used by the ALPR system to allow permit holders to gain entry to the City parking lot for which their permit is valid and to exit without having to provide payment. The permit holder's license plate number is used to supplement or replace proximity access cards, plastic hang tags, stickers, and other permit materials.

Routine data collection shall not be stored beyond 30 days except when lawfully required by court order. After the aforementioned retention times elapse, the vendor shall purge routine data records. The data records stored on the regional ALPR server include photographs of the vehicle (close-up of the license plate and context photo of the rear of the vehicle), and accompanying license plate number, date, time, and location in the field; such records do not directly identify a particular person.

Security: The City of Santa Barbara uses administrative, operational, technical and physical safeguards to protect ALPR information from unauthorized access, use, destruction, modification or disclosure including the following safeguards:

- **Administrative:** Username and password-protected access to the ALPR system. The system shall document all information accessed by username, and the database usage shall be monitored and audited.
- **Operational:** Training system users on proper use and secure practices when using ALPR and its database.
- **Physical:** All network equipment and servers containing sensitive data are maintained in a secure off-site location, and accessed only by authorized personnel. This includes the secure storage of computers with access to the off-site database.
- **Technical:** All information is encrypted to protect any personally identifiable information. ALPR system workstations and servers shall be updated with the latest security patches on a regular basis. ALPR data shall be secured, encrypted, and backed up regularly.

In the very unlikely event of an information breach that constitutes a violation under California Penal Code Section 502, all individuals who are believed to be affected or

have their information compromised shall be notified by the City of Santa Barbara, via the affected City Department(s).

Quality Assurance: Collection of ALPR data is automated so the license plate images and details of collection are included in the system without review. Although infrequent, license plate translation may be incomplete or inaccurate. The Program Manager or their designee ensure accuracy and correct license plate translation errors when identified. Users also confirm the computer translation prior to taking any action based on ALPR results.

Releasing ALPR Data: The City does not share ALPR information with any commercial or private entity, other than City parking contractors and enforcement vendors, as necessary to conduct City parking operations. The City includes confidentiality provisions in its agreements with any parking contractors and/or vendors to prohibit any use or distribution of ALPR information for any purpose other than the authorized Uses under this Policy. Information gathered or collected and records retained by the City of Santa Barbara must not be:

- Sold, published, exchanged, or disclosed for commercial purposes.
- Disclosed or published without authorization.
- Disseminated to persons not authorized to access or use the information.

The City shall provide ALPR data to a federal, state, or local law enforcement agency for use in criminal investigations or to respond to public safety incidents upon receipt of a request that contains a case or incident number. In addition, information gathered shall not be disclosed to the public or in a civil matter unless such disclosure is required by law or court order.

Requests for Images from Members of the Public: Persons that have a court order or preservation letter, and are interested in requesting ALPR data, are directed to the Santa Barbara City Clerk's Office. Persons that do not have a court order or preservation letter and are interested in requesting ALPR data are also directed to the Santa Barbara City Clerk's Office.

Enforcement: Violation of this Policy by a City employee, contractor, or other authorized user, may lead to suspension or termination of that user's access to the ALPR system.