



City Council Agenda Report

To: Mayor Grisanti and Members of the City Council

Prepared by: Susan Dueñas, Public Safety Manager

Approved by: Steve McClary, Interim City Manager

Date prepared: August 25, 2021 Meeting date: September 13, 2021

Subject: Automatic License Plate Readers

RECOMMENDED ACTION: 1) Authorize the purchase and installation of eight Automatic License Plate Readers for use by the Sheriff's Department, as recommended by the Public Safety Commission; and 2) Appropriate \$25,000 from the General Fund Undesignated Reserve to Account No. 100-7031-7800-00 (Public Safety Services – Other Equipment).

FISCAL IMPACT: If approved, the initial cost of purchasing and installing eight cameras would be approximately \$25,000. The ongoing cost of the system will be approximately \$2,500 per year, per camera. Funding for this project was not included in the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. An appropriation from the General Fund Undesignated Reserve in the amount of \$25,000 to Account No. 100-7031-7800-00 (Public Safety Services – Other Equipment) is needed. The projected General Fund Reserve on June 30, 2022 is \$29.45 million.

WORK PLAN: This item was not included in the Adopted Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

DISCUSSION: In 2010, the City Council approved the purchase of one Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) that was installed in a Sheriff's vehicle for exclusive deployment in Malibu. ALPRs capture car license plate numbers and type (in state, out of state), vehicle build and color, place of residence, and the location, date, and time of the information capture. This information can be used by Sheriff's deputies after crimes have occurred to assist in locating suspects and can also alert deputies to a vehicle that is identified as being linked to a crime.

The City Council approved one mobile ALPR in 2010 because of the cost, and the Council wanted to evaluate the effectiveness before investing in more. In 2010, fixed ALPRs cost between \$12,000 and \$18,000 and a mobile ALPR cost approximately \$32,000. Since then, the camera has proved to be effective for identifying stolen vehicles and suspects wanted for serious crimes. However, with just one camera in one vehicle, the effectiveness is limited.

In the last ten years, ALPR systems have become substantially more sophisticated in their capabilities and have become much more affordable. For example, fixed ALPRs can cost as little as \$2,500 per camera, per year, which includes hardware, software, and upgrades, and one-time installation costs are approximately \$250. The cameras can be installed anywhere and can be hard-wired or solar powered.

The advantage of a fixed ALPR is that it is less expensive, is always collecting data, and can be placed in strategic locations. However, when a vehicle is flagged by a fixed APLR, there may not always be a deputy nearby to pursue the vehicle and numerous cameras may be needed due to the length of the City.

The advantage of a mobile APLR installed in a vehicle is that when a deputy is alerted to a suspect vehicle that has just passed by, they are more likely to be able to quickly pursue the vehicle that was flagged. However, it is only collecting data at the location where the vehicle is located, which may not always be in an effective location.

Whether the camera is mobile or fixed, it captures multiple still images as vehicles pass by and almost immediately uploads them to an encrypted cloud server. Once in the cloud server, the system software identifies the license plate, vehicle make, type, and color and holds that information for a set period of time. The cloud server has an administrative portal, and the City administrator would give access to the Sheriff's Department for the purpose of solving crimes. For example, if a resident reports a crime and knows the time that it occurred or the type or color of a vehicle involved, police can search camera footage during that timeframe or search by type and vehicle color. In addition, the system can alert deputies who are on patrol to a vehicle in the area that is wanted in connection to a crime.

ALPR data that is kept in the cloud server is deleted after a specified period of time set by the administrator. Notably, unless the ALPR data can be anonymized or redacted, this data is exempt under the Public Records Act's "catch all" exemption because disclosing unaltered plate scan data threatens individual privacy by revealing where a person's vehicle was at a certain time — potentially giving away where a person lives, works or frequently visits.

At its Regular meeting on April 7, 2021, the Public Safety Commission recommended that the City Council approve: 1) Installation of approximately eight fixed Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras at locations to be determined in conjunction with the

Sheriff's Department; 2) that oversight of the system data be controlled by the City; 3) that the system be modeled after the systems installed by the City of Calabasas and other cities; and 4) that it be a two-year pilot project with a report back on results.

Since the cost for eight cameras exceeds \$10,000, this item was reviewed by the Administration and Finance Subcommittee at its Special meeting on August 24, 2021. The Subcommittee supported the Public Safety Commission recommendation and recommended that the City Council appropriate \$25,000 from the General Fund Undesignated Reserve to Account No. 100-7031-7800-00 (Public Safety – Other Equipment) for this purpose.

Should the Council approve the purchase of the fixed ALPR, staff will work with the Sheriff's Department and Public Safety Commission to identify the most effective locations for installation.

ATTACHMENTS: None.