



Strategic Focus: Funding of Automatic License Plate Reader Systems

Purpose

The purpose of the document is to provide a strategic focus for Auto Theft Prevention Authorities (ATPAs) when considering funding equipment, software and the development of infrastructure design related to the use of ALPR systems.

Funding

Many ATPAs have provided funding of ALPR projects to law enforcement agencies, where these projects have demonstrated high levels of efficiency and effectiveness in identifying, interdicting and apprehending stolen vehicles and criminal offenders. Appropriate funding of law enforcement ALPR systems can evidence efficient investment value return when simply considering the amount of funds expended to support the ALPR system contrasted with the estimated fair market value of recovered stolen vehicles identified by the ALPR. The following strategies are offered for an ATPA to consider when contemplating the funding of an ALPR project.

Strategy 1: Education

The ATPA should assess the project proposal to identify a plan in addressing public perception and concern regarding the use of ALPR in the project area. The ALPR project should identify goals, objectives, measurements and/or project reporting standards to inform the community on the purpose, experience and intended effectiveness in using an ALPR to combat motor vehicle crimes. The funding ATPA should consider an education plan that addresses the problem of motor vehicle crimes in the intended project area, the goals of funding the ALPR system that will impact motor vehicle crimes, and how the project may demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of the investment return as related to the prevention, enforcement and apprehension of stolen vehicles and associated criminal offenders.

Strategy 2: Policies and Procedures

The ATPA should review a project proposal to determine if the agency(s) have established policies and procedures address consistency with national, regional, state and local laws and administrative policies. ALPR projects funded by ATPA should require the use of the ALPR, and associated databases, to be classified as For Official Use Only (FOUO) and considered Law Enforcement Sensitive (LES). Historically, ATPAs that have funded ALPRs have experienced minimal concern regarding direct tactical deployment of an ALPR, as these funded projects have an incredible investment return where stolen vehicles are recovered quickly and efficiently. However, if an ALPR project intends to support the investigative use of an ALPR database, the use of the database (including retention and retrieval) should be clearly addressed and consistent with national, regional, state and local laws and administrative policies. Agencies requesting funds from an ATPA should be encouraged to use professional resources when developing or revising ALPR policies, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, local prosecutorial attorney associations, or in-house professional counsel.



Strategy 3: ALPR Information Technology Projects

A significant concern for ATPAs funding an ALPR project is the ability of the ALPR system to demonstrate programmatic and financial efficiency.

First, and foremost, the ALPR system should be deployed using information technology which enables retrieval of base-line information to ascertain efficiency levels regarding the identification, apprehension, and recovery of stolen vehicles. Due to the enormity and complexity of information processed by an ALPR, information technology should be designed and used to provide timely and efficient reporting with minimal cost to personnel allocation. The ALPR information technology should enable the project agency to report the following key factors to the funding ATPA on a timely basis.

1. Date parameter for reporting (based on the ATPA reporting requirement of month, quarter, bi-annual or annual),
2. Number of stolen vehicles identified by the ALPR,
3. Number of stolen vehicles recovered by the use of the ALPR,
4. Estimated fair market value of the recovered stolen vehicles,
5. Number of total license plates read by the ALPR, and
6. Number of ALPR units deployed.

Secondly, the infrastructure design and composition of information sharing capabilities in an ALPR project should identify compliance with federal, regional, state and local laws and policies. ATPAs should encourage the use of information sharing among law enforcement agencies, understanding that political, legal and administrative concerns preempt this encouragement. Innovative approaches should be considered when presented by project proposals to enhance law enforcement information sharing of ALPR data, such as the use of Nlets. Privatized vendor-based information sharing solutions should be reviewed by project proposal agencies to ensure configuration of software applications comply with federal, regional, state and local laws and administrative policies.

Strategy 4: Evidence Based Reporting

When considering funding an ALPR project, the ATPA should establish clear expectations and reporting requirements to demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of the ALPR project. Reporting requirements by the project agency should provide sufficient information to justify the intended use of financial appropriation and/or its continuation. As such, the following benchmarks may provide the ability to determine investment return values:

1. User success stories related to the tactical or investigative use of a funded ALPR, related to the interdiction, enforcement and apprehension of motor vehicle crimes and/or offenders,
2. The number of stolen vehicles recovered facilitated by ALPR per stolen vehicles recovered not using an ALPR,
3. The estimated fair market value of stolen vehicles recovered facilitated by ALPR per the number of ALPR license plate reads, and/or



4. The estimated fair market value of stolen vehicle recovered facilitated by ALPR per the unit cost of the ALPR (actual or depreciated).

The above strategies are provided to assist in the continuation or initiation of ATPA to use ALPRs to prevent, educate, enforce and prosecute offenders of motor vehicle crimes and elevate the recovery of stolen motor vehicles.

Strategy 5: Recommendations for Funding ALPRs

- A. As ALPR technology is a critical law enforcement tool for the investigation, recovery and prosecution of automobile theft and related vehicle crimes, funded law enforcement agencies should be encouraged to research current trends, news, practices, and privacy issues as provided by the International Association of Chiefs of Police at www.iacp.org/alpr.
- B. Law enforcement agencies receiving funds to purchase an ALPR from an ATPA should have policies and procedures in place regarding the use, data storage, retrieval, and purging parameter consistent with federal and state laws, and model policy recommendations from the International Association of Chiefs of Police (www.iacp.org/alpr).
- C. License plate “reads” captured from an ALPR on an official government vehicle should be considered law enforcement sensitive/for official use only (LES/FOUO)
- D. Data from ALPR equipment purchased with ATPA funding should be housed in a secure database which limits access to unauthorized persons.
- E. ALPR data from private vendors is not only useful, but in some cases, critical to support investigators and criminal investigations.
- F. Data captured with ATPA funded ALPR’s should not be sold or shared with non-criminal justice entities.
- G. Data captured with ATPA funded ALPR’s not be used for the purpose of “policing for profit”, i.e. checking for unpaid parking tickets or fines.
- H. Prior to an ATPA funding a request for an ALPR, the ATPA should obtain assurance from the requesting agency that the above recommendations are met.