



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/2/2026

File #: 26-264

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Steve Madrone

Agenda Section: Initiated by Board Member

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Automated License Plate Reader Program

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive a briefing on the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office automated license plate reader program; and
2. Provide direction to staff regarding next steps, including, without limitation, whether to request a formal review of the automated license plate reader program's compliance with applicable local, state and federal laws regulations and standards.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommended actions support the following areas of the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Plan:

Area of Focus: Safe & Healthy Communities

Strategic Plan Category: 1001 -Support and sustain partnerships between public safety and partner agencies to enhance public safety in our communities

DISCUSSION:

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office has deployed an automated license plate reader system operated by Flock Safety, a private technology company that provides automated license plate reader systems to law enforcement agencies under subscription contracts. Flock cameras capture license plate numbers, vehicle descriptions and associated metadata, including, without limitation, time, location and direction of travel for all vehicles passing through camera coverage areas, regardless of any suspicion of criminal activity. Flock's automated license plate reader system is notable for its network architecture which allows participating agencies to share their data with other Flock customers statewide or nationally.

California's primary statutory framework governing automated license plate reader system use is Senate Bill 34 (2015), which requires, without limitation, public agencies to adopt a usage and privacy policy that is available to the public and limit the sharing of automated license plate reader data to other California public agencies.

California Attorney General, Rob Bonta has actively enforced SB 34 compliance. In October 2025, the Attorney General sued the City of El Cajon for sharing automated license plate reader data with federal and out-of-state law enforcement agencies in violation of

state law. The Attorney General has also issued warnings to more than a dozen California law enforcement agencies about potential violations.

The controversy surrounding Flock cameras is not unique to Humboldt County. In the past year, a significant number of California jurisdictions and communities across the country have taken action ranging from increased oversight to full contract cancellation. A summary of those actions is provided in Attachment 1.

Common concerns driving community and government action include, without limitation, all of the following:

- Data-sharing with federal immigration enforcement and other unauthorized agencies.
- Flock's conduct as a vendor, including, without limitation, lack of proactive disclosure, unauthorized camera installations and failure to honor deactivation requests.
- Automated license plate reader data has been documented as being used to track individuals crossing state lines to access abortion services and for other purposes beyond local crime investigation.
- Research on whether automated license plate readers are an effective method of reducing crime is inconclusive.

Options for next steps regarding the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office's continued use of its automated license plate reader program, include, without limitation, all of the following:

- Direct the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office to compile information on automated license plate reader program compliance, contract terms, data-sharing practices and network audits and return to the Board with findings before formal action is taken.
- Direct the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office to draft a surveillance use policy requiring Board approval before any surveillance technology is deployed using county resources.
- Direct the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office to assess whether its automated license plate reader program may be suspended pending a compliance review or community process.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Byrne JAG Local Grant (1100-221910); Homeland Security Grant (1100-221820); General Fund Contribution (1100-221140); Prop 172; COPS Grant

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no direct costs associated with this item. Per agenda item 24-325, seven cameras were purchased in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-23 with Byrne JAG Local grant funding budget unit 1100-221910 in the amount of \$21,150 with one-year annual maintenance included. Two mobile cameras were purchased in FY 2023-24 with Homeland Security grant funding in budget unit 1100-221820 in the amount of \$14,000 with two years of annual maintenance included. The annual maintenance of the cameras after the initial purchase/maintenance term were planned to be included in the NorCal Coalition donation funding budget unit 1100-221955

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starting in FY2024-25, however the Sheriff's Office noted this did not occur due to budget cuts.

Currently, maintenance for all of the cameras totals \$21,000 per year and those costs are shared by the General Fund and other state funding contributions via Prop 172 and the COPS grant (budget unit 1100-221-140), as well as the Homeland Security grant (1100-274).

STAFFING IMPACT:

This item will not impact current staffing levels. Work associated with a formal review will increase staff workloads.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Summary of Flock-related actions by other California jurisdictions
2. Flock Safety Use and Privacy Policy
3. California Attorney General Guidance on ALPR Compliance (OAG, 2023)
4. File #24-325 dated April 9, 2024

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: April 9, 2024

File No.: 24-325