



AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READER

Responsible Executive: Chief of Police
Responsible Office: Vice President for Public Safety
Approved by: Dr. Branville G. Bard Jr.
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Policy Statement

Like other technological tools, automated license plate reader (ALPR) systems have an increasingly important role in public safety. ALPRs use high-speed cameras to photograph vehicle license plates and then compare them against a list of vehicles bearing some significance to law enforcement (e.g., vehicles associated with missing persons cases, criminal investigations, child abductions, etc.). Used correctly, ALPRs can be an effective way to prevent crime and proactively address serious threats to community safety.

At the same time, the Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD) recognizes the need to preserve the delicate balance between the privacy and constitutional rights afforded to each member of the community and the legitimate needs of law enforcement. Therefore, the JHPD will limit its use of ALPRs only to situations that involve a legitimate and significant law enforcement purpose, refrain from using ALPRs to enforce minor violations that do not impact public safety, follow ALPR procedures designed to promote constitutional policing and privacy rights, and only operate ALPRs in accordance with all relevant laws and policies. ALPRs will only be used in a manner that is consistent with the JHPD’s jurisdictional boundaries set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the JHPD and the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), dated December 2, 2022.

Who Is Governed by This Policy

All personnel, including sworn, nonsworn, and contractual or voluntary persons in service with the JHPD, are governed by this Directive.

Purpose

The purpose of this Directive is to provide guidance for the proper operation, management, and maintenance of the JHPD's mobile ALPR technology.

Definitions

Alarm/Hit:	A positive indication by visual and/or audio signal of a potential match between data on the Hot List and the license plate scanned by the ALPR.
ALPR Coordinator:	Member charged with coordinating all aspects of the ALPR system for the JHPD.
ALPR Data:	Any data collected or derived from an ALPR system, including global positioning system coordinates, dates and times, photographs, license plate numbers, etc. Includes both active data and historical data. (MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-509(a)(4)(i)(ii))
Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) System:	A system of one or more mobile or fixed high-speed cameras used, in combination with computers and computer software, to automatically recognize and interpret the characters on vehicle license plates. This data is then compared with a list of license plates bearing some significance to law enforcement. The JHPD will only be using mobile ALPR units, which are affixed to JHPD vehicles and interface with the vehicle's mobile data computer.
Hot List:	A list of license plates associated with vehicles of specific concern to the investigative and/or enforcement interests of law enforcement. This list contains information compiled from several databases, including the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), etc. The Hot List does not include real-time information.
Legitimate Law Enforcement Purpose:	In the context of ALPR programs, Maryland law defines a legitimate law enforcement purpose as "the investigation, detection, or analysis of a crime or a violation of the Maryland vehicle laws or the operation of terrorist or missing or endangered person searches or alerts." (MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-509(a)(8)) The JHPD will use its ALPR system to identify potentially significant public safety issues, as described in Procedures, Section I, of this Directive.
Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC):	Maryland's Fusion Center, which serves as the focal point for federal, state, local, and private-sector partners in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of criminal and homeland security information within Maryland.
Member:	All members of the JHPD, including employees, officers, and volunteers, unless the term is otherwise qualified (e.g., member of the public, member of the BPD, etc.).

Officer:	All sworn police officers, at any rank, as defined by MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-201, in service with the JHPD.
Reading:	A license plate that was captured and recorded by an ALPR unit.

Policy

The JHPD shall use ALPR technology only in furtherance of legitimate and significant law enforcement purposes and in accordance with all relevant federal, state, and local laws. The primary goal of the JHPD's ALPR program is to provide an additional tool for increasing safety and reducing violent crime within the JHPD's jurisdictional area. A positive ALPR hit alone is not sufficient for establishing probable cause, and the hit must be confirmed prior to taking enforcement actions. JHPD officers will take all steps to ensure that the use of ALPRs does not, intentionally or otherwise, compromise the legitimate privacy concerns or constitutional rights of members of the public.

Core Principles

- I. Protecting Public Safety:** The primary goal of the ALPR initiative is to increase public safety and reduce violent crime, while enhancing information sharing through technology. All uses of the ALPR system must be strictly for legitimate and significant law enforcement purposes. The JHPD shall refrain from using the ALPR system to identify minor violations (e.g., expired registrations) that do not impact the safety of the Johns Hopkins community.
- II. Protecting Privacy:** A breach in ALPR data security, careless handling of ALPR data, and/or intentional release of ALPR data to nonauthorized persons could jeopardize the privacy of the general public. JHPD members shall therefore take the utmost care and caution to ensure that ALPR data is not mishandled or misused. Additionally, JHPD officers will not use ALPRs to intentionally capture images where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists.
- III. Promoting Constitutional Policing:** The JHPD strictly prohibits using ALPRs to harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any person or group. JHPD officers must utilize ALPRs in accordance with JHPD Directive #106, Fair & Impartial Policing, and with all other laws and directives relating to constitutional policing. Unless there is a criminal nexus, the JHPD will not use ALPRs for the sole purpose of obtaining plate read intelligence at public gatherings such as political rallies, public demonstrations, and religious gatherings.
- IV. Leveraging Technology:** The JHPD utilizes ALPRs to identify vehicles, license plates, registered owners, and operators via digital photographic images without direct intervention by a JHPD officer. Locating vehicles with a special law enforcement interest is consistent with the mission of the JHPD. ALPRs enhance information sharing capabilities with regional law enforcement personnel and provide JHPD members with timely access to criminal intelligence data. ALPR technology will be employed to locate vehicles sought in connection with active investigations into missing persons and crimes of physical violence, as well as stolen vehicles and registered vehicle owners with active arrest warrants.

Procedures

I. **Authorized & Prohibited Uses of** ALPRs (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) 41.3.9.a)

- A. The use of an ALPR system and access to ALPR data require a legitimate and significant law enforcement purpose. Authorizing the use of ALPR equipment or data for any other reason, including enforcement of minor violations that do not threaten public safety, is strictly prohibited. Legitimate and significant law enforcement purposes include but are not limited to:
- Locating endangered or missing persons,
 - Locating subjects of AMBER, Silver, and other alerts,
 - Enforcing the Maryland Transportation Code, including detecting stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, and/or suspended owner's license or tags,
 - Detecting wanted persons,
 - Enforcing protection order violations,
 - Conducting a criminal investigation,
 - Canvassing areas in which a felony is in progress and/or a crime of violence has just occurred, to include the immediate area as well as likely routes of escape from that area, and
 - Any additional circumstance deemed appropriate by the Chief of Police to enhance public safety.
- B. All JHPD officers utilizing and maintaining the ALPR systems shall be properly trained to ensure that operation of the system is for legitimate and significant law enforcement purposes. Only JHPD officers who have successfully completed ALPR training are permitted to operate the ALPR equipment. (CALEA 41.3.9.c)
- C. ALPRs will not be used to intentionally capture images in private areas or areas where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists, nor shall they be used to harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any person or group. All uses of ALPRs will be in accordance with JHPD Directive #106, Fair & Impartial Policing; JHPD Directive #109, Procedural Justice; JHPD Directive #486, Assemblies, Demonstrations & Disruption of Campus Activities; and all other JHPD directives.
- D. Unless there is a criminal nexus, supervisors will not assign ALPR-equipped vehicles to public gatherings such as political rallies, public demonstrations, and religious gatherings where the sole purpose is to obtain plate read intelligence.

- This does not preclude an ALPR-equipped vehicle from being assigned elsewhere during the event and responding to a call for service where there may be incidental plate reads or from searching for stolen vehicles and vehicles of interest in these areas.
- E. ALPRs will be considered an investigative tool only, and a positive ALPR hit alone does not establish probable cause.** The Hot List does not include real-time data, and thus it may contain outdated, flawed, or incorrect information. Any positive hits against the Hot List must therefore be verified in accordance with Procedures, Section II, of this Directive prior to taking any enforcement action.
- F.** Any covert deployment of ALPR units is prohibited, unless specifically authorized by the Chief of Police.
- G.** The receipt of a positive ALPR hit shall not be used as a reason for diverting resources away from responding to priority calls for service. JHPD officers shall continue to prioritize their responses in accordance with JHPD directives.

II. ALPR Operation

- A.** Mobile ALPR systems will be installed in designated JHPD vehicles.
- B. Downloading & Maintaining the Hot List:**
- ALPRs work by downloading a Hot List of potential vehicles of interest. The list is loaded into the processor of the ALPR device. The device, which is mounted in designated JHPD vehicles, captures images of license plates that come into view and compares them to the Hot List. The device alerts the JHPD officer operating it to potential matches and the source database that provided the license plate for use in the device.
 - The Hot List is maintained by MCAC and contains data obtained from:
 - NCIC stolen vehicle, stolen tag, temporary wanted felony vehicles, wanted person files, terror watch list, and the sexual offender registry,
 - MVA records of suspended drivers, suspended registration, license plate confiscation orders, and possible wanted persons, and
 - Any additional data deemed of interest to law enforcement and included in the Hot List compiled by Maryland State Police, to include, but not limited to, AMBER, Silver, and Blue Alerts.

- Prior to each use, the JHPD officer assigned the ALPR unit shall ensure that it is properly networked with the MCAC server and that the most recent Hot List has been installed.
 - If an automatic Hot List download cannot be obtained, the JHPD officer will obtain the most recent Hot List via a manual download from MCAC.
 - At no time will ALPR equipment be used with an installed Hot List that was installed more than 24 hours prior.
 - JHPD officers may request to manually enter license plates into the Hot List for a legitimate and significant law enforcement purpose (e.g., to aid in an investigation). These “local” Hot List entries must be approved by the ALPR Coordinator.
 - The JHPD officer assigned to operate the ALPR unit is responsible for the clearance of local Hot Lists on a daily basis by the end of their shift.
 - Security of the Hot List 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 JHPD officer assigned to operate the ALPR unit.
- C. When a license plate is scanned that matches a license plate in the ALPR system, an alarm is received alerting to a positive hit.
- The ALPR device alerts the operator to the source database that provided the license plate for use in the device.
 - The ALPR must be set to alarm at or above the minimum level determined by the Chief of Police.
- D. **Upon receiving a positive hit, JHPD officers shall do the following:**
- Verify that the subject tag and the tag read by the ALPR are the same.
 - Initiate a query to the appropriate database in order to confirm the hit and obtain more detailed information regarding the reason the vehicle is of interest to law enforcement.
 - Once a hit is confirmed, accept a verified positive hit by activating the “accept” alarm key on the video monitoring center screen.
 - Activate the “reject” alarm key if the alarm does not result in a verified positive hit.
 - Take the appropriate investigation/enforcement action in accordance with JHPD directives, specifically JHPD Directive #442, Traffic Control & Enforcement, and the MOU between the JHPD and BPD.

NOTE: A positive ALPR hit alone does not establish probable cause. The hit must be confirmed prior to taking any enforcement action.

- Inform the Communications Center of any traffic stop or police action that was related to an ALPR.
 - Ensure that any reports related to ALPRs note that the incident was “ALPR related” in addition to the type of crime or incident.
- E. Upon notification of the issuance of an AMBER, Silver, or Blue Alert by the Maryland State Police, it is the responsibility of each JHPD officer assigned to the ALPR unit to do the following:
- Immediately enter the license plate associated with the issued alert into their ALPR to determine the presence of a previous read of that license plate. If the JHPD officer determines that the ALPR has previously read that license plate, the location of the previously read plate will be obtained and transmitted to the Communications Center for the dispatch of JHPD officers to that location.
 - Proceed to a heavily traveled area within the JHPD’s jurisdiction to perform either stationary or mobile patrols to increase the likelihood of encountering the vehicle associated with the issued alerts.

III. Searching & Accessing ALPR Data (CALEA 41.3.9.b)

- A. ALPR data may be accessed for legitimate and significant law enforcement or homeland security purposes only.
- B. A request for ALPR data must be made to the ALPR Coordinator or their designee using an ALPR Request Form. All requests must:
- Be approved by the requestor’s supervisor,
 - Include the case number for which the request is being made, and
 - Provide justification for the requested action.
- C. Only JHPD members who are trained and authorized may access ALPR data stored by the JHPD.
- D. JHPD members are permitted to use ALPR data for the purpose of locating vehicles of significance to law enforcement only within the JHPD’s jurisdiction. Any attempts to use an ALPR to locate or take enforcement actions against vehicles will:
- Be consistent with the JHPD’s jurisdictional authority and limitations set forth in the Community Safety and Strengthening Act and the MOU between the JHPD and BPD, and

- Occur while conducting routine patrol activities or other official duties as specifically directed.
- E.** In the event that an ALPR alert contributes to an arrest, the JHPD officer operating the ALPR unit shall perform a manual export of ALPR data from the alert. That ALPR data printout will be inserted into the Records Management System file.
- F.** JHPD members who request ALPR data must describe the details surrounding the requests and corresponding results in the related police reports.
- G.** Information gathered by the ALPR system is not subject to disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act. (MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-509(d))
- H.** ALPR data will only be shared with other law enforcement or prosecutorial agencies for official law enforcement purposes or as otherwise permitted by law. No information shall be released to any agency or person that is not law enforcement.

IV. ALPR Data Storage & Retention (CALEA 41.3.9.d)

- A.** Locally collected, active ALPR-captured data is the property of the JHPD and MCAC. The locally collected, active captured plate data is shared with MCAC and temporarily stored on a secure university server for not more than 24 hours after acquisition, after which time the data is automatically uploaded to MCAC and deleted from the JHPD server, and it becomes historical captured plate data that is under the sole control of MCAC.

V. Audits

- A.** The Public Safety Accountability Unit (PSAU) will conduct an annual audit of the JHPD's ALPR system, as required by MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-509.
- B.** The purpose of the audit is to ensure the following:
- The ALPR system is being used in compliance with this Directive and with other relevant laws and directives.
 - The ALPR system is used only for legitimate and significant law enforcement purposes.
 - JHPD members with access to and use of ALPR data have been properly screened and trained.
 - The JHPD has adequate procedures related to the use of the ALPR system.

- Queries and information obtained through the system are conducted, shared, and/or disseminated according to this Directive and for legitimate and significant law enforcement purposes only.
 - There have been no data breaches.
- C. The annual audit must capture, at a minimum, the number of:
- ALPR units being operated by the JHPD,
 - Authorized personnel who have received department-approved ALPR system training,
 - ALPR readings made by JHPD officers, and the number of readings submitted to MCAC,
 - Requests made that resulted in a release of information,
 - Out-of-state requests and the number of those that resulted in the release of information,
 - Federal requests and the number of those that resulted in the release of information,
 - Data breaches or unauthorized uses of the ALPR system, and
 - Audits that were completed by the JHPD.

VI. ALPR Coordinator Responsibilities

The ALPR Coordinator shall do the following:

- A. Maintain a list of qualified/authorized operators and trained JHPD officers in the proper setup and use of ALPR equipment.
- B. Maintain statistical data on ALPR usage.
- C. Develop procedures for updating the Hot List and approve JHPD member requests for making local Hot List entries.
- D. Review and approve JHPD member requests to search and retrieve ALPR data.
 - If the request is not approved, send emails to the requesting member(s), their supervisors, and commanders explaining the reason for denying approval.
 - If it is determined that the request is for activities that are not law enforcement, dissemination of the data is prohibited, and the requesting JHPD member's supervisor must be immediately contacted.
- E. Ensure ALPR software updates are completed.
- F. Ensure all maintenance and repairs of ALPR equipment are completed.

- G. Serve as a liaison with partner agencies including the Maryland State Police Mobile Systems Unit, MCAC, the Council of Governments, and ALPR equipment vendors.
- H. Ensure that the JHPD submits written yearly reports as required by MD Code, Public Safety, § 3-509.

VII. Equipment Maintenance & Care

JHPD officers assigned to operate the ALPR units shall do the following:

- A. Ensure the physical security of ALPR equipment. ALPR equipment will not be left in the passenger area or mounted to the exterior of a vehicle when the vehicle is unattended for a long period of time.
- B. Inspect and maintain all mobile ALPR computer systems and all related hardware and software assigned to them.
- C. Care for and maintain ALPR equipment according to the manufacturer’s recommendations.
- D. Immediately report any damage to or loss of ALPR equipment to the JHPD officer’s first-line supervisor, the ALPR Coordinator, and the Director of Information Technology Services for Public Safety.
- E. Not make any modifications to the hardware or software of the ALPR system.
- F. Ensure that the ALPR equipment is moved only when necessary and notify the ALPR Coordinator immediately if there are issues with camera alignment.

Policy Enforcement

Enforcement	JHPD managers and supervisors are responsible for enforcing this Directive.
Reporting Violations	Suspected violations of this Directive should be reported to PSAU.

Related Resources

University Policies and Documents
<p>Conduct & Responsibility #106, Fair & Impartial Policing</p> <p>Conduct & Responsibility #109, Procedural Justice</p> <p>Administrative Procedure #210, Records Management</p> <p>Operational Procedure #442, Traffic Control & Enforcement</p> <p>Operational Procedure #464, Missing Persons Investigations</p> <p>Operational Procedure #486, Assemblies, Demonstrations & Disruption of Campus Activities</p> <p><u>Records Retention and Destruction Policy (GOV029)</u></p>
External Documentation
<p>MD Code, Public Safety § 3-509, Automatic License Plate Reader Systems</p> <p>Memorandum of Understanding Between the Johns Hopkins Police Department & City of Baltimore Police Department, dated December 2, 2022</p>
Police Department Forms and Systems

Contacts

Subject Matter	Office Name	Telephone Number	Email/Web Address
Policy Clarification and Interpretation	Policy Management	(667)306-8618	jhpdpolicyinquiry@jh.edu