



Memorandum

TO: Kevin Jackson, Village Manager 

FROM: LaDon Reynolds, Chief of Police 

FOR: President and Village Board members

DATE: April 01, 2022

SUBJECT: Flock Safety Automatic License Plate Recognition (ALPR) Technology

The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding the basis for the proposal, the activities conducted in support of community engagement, the proposed internal policies to safeguard data and the next steps for implementation of the Flock Safety ALPR Program as an investigative tool for the Village of Oak Park Police Department.

Background

Since 2017 the Chicago region has seen a substantial increase in carjackings. In December of 2017, the Village of Oak Park held a community safety meeting in council chambers that was standing room only. The result of this meeting yielded further community discussions on the subjects of street lighting, communications (social media) and cameras. In response to the uptick in crime and the community's desire for more real time information, the police department created a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter in 2018 and launched the camera share program in 2019. The Oak Park Police Department (OPPD) solicited the assistance of the Cook County Sheriff Police for extra patrols, joined the regional carjacking task force and continued to collaborate with regional partners in tactical operations and information sharing. One of the most beneficial investigative tools utilized by task force operations was the Chicago Police Department Police Observation Device (POD) and ALPR cameras. While exploring our financial capability to support such a tool locally, Oak Park benefited from the technology implemented by the City of Chicago and several suburban municipalities.

In August of 2021, the OPPD was called to a scene of a homicide at Harlem Avenue and Garfield Blvd. The preliminary investigation revealed that the incident began in Forest Park and the offending vehicle fled into the City of Chicago. In furtherance of the investigative process, detectives solicited the assistance of the Forest Park and Chicago Police departments to recover any camera footage that held investigatory value. These discussions led detectives to the Flock Safety platform and Representative Dan Murdock. Mr. Murdock provided information to detectives regarding accessibility to the Flock Safety database for the current and subsequent investigations.

According Mr. Murdock, Flock safety had a program that would allow an agency, through a memorandum of understanding (MOU), access to their database and dashboard for investigative purposes, without a financial commitment. The Flock Safety platform and capabilities were brought to the attention of OPPD executive staff by the Detective Commander. Upon reviewing the research provided by staff, it was my determination that the Flock Safety System was the best fit for Oak Park ethically, financially and operationally. A MOU was subsequently forwarded to the Village Attorney and the interim Village Manager for review and approval.

Concurrently, in southwest Oak Park a spike in crime was developing. Residents experienced a running gun battle, two homicides and an officer involved shooting at Harlem and the I-290. The officer suffered permanent injury. A Problem Oriented Policing (POP) initiative was implemented in Zone 7/8 to address an uptick in violent crime and traffic safety. The Flock Safety platform was again considered as a viable tool in the investigative process. The department experienced several positive investigative outcomes from the utilization of POD and ALPR technology through partnerships with regional agencies. For example, since 2019 camera technology has aided in the recovery of 28 carjacked vehicles and in the arrest of 37 offenders responsible for those crimes. During this period, we have not encountered any inappropriate use of camera technology through these partnerships.

In reviewing this proposal, the Department initially entertained a directed approach and sought to secure eight cameras in support of the POP initiative in southwest Oak Park. After further analysis, it was determined that a more comprehensive and proactive approach to addressing violent crime, Village wide, would be to evaluate all available data. This research led to the recommendation of 20 cameras to support the comprehensive approach.

There are approximately 106 three-way and 445 four-way intersections for a total of 551 intersections in the Village of Oak Park. Twenty cameras represent the ability to cover, at the most, 4% of the total intersections in the Village. As it relates to the placement of cameras, the department will employ a multi-point crime analysis of current criminal incidents, historical criminal incidents and areas where have been applicable POP initiatives. The department is committed to making data driven decisions to place the cameras in intersections where they would make the greatest impact. It is the opinion of the command staff and the investigations unit that integrating Flock Safety into our operational infrastructure would add value to our community safety efforts. Note that there is a contractual clause that allows the Village to opt out, with a marginal penalty, if we find the system does not add value to public safety.

Community Engagement

In furtherance of citizen engagement and collaboration the department held a community wide meeting during the regularly scheduled Zone 7/8 beat meeting. This meeting was attended by Oak Park Police command staff, several Trustees from the Village Board (who acted in an observation only capacity), the interim Village Manager, the Vice President of External Affairs for Flock Safety, Bailey Quintrell and Sales Representative Dan Murdock. The meeting began with introductions, a PowerPoint presentation by VP Quintrell, followed by an extended question and answer session.

In addition to the community meetings, the presentation was shared internally during the department's annual in-service training, presented by staff at various Zone meetings and disseminated to all Community Policing Unit (CPU) zone residents through email contacts on file. It should be noted that Commander Paul Kane attended several Zone meetings, virtually, to present and answer questions specifically related to the Flock Safety platform. Through the community engagement and a subsequent story published by the Wednesday Journal there were several FOIA requests and emails to the Village Board. The department responded to approximately 35 emails and completed two comprehensive FOIA request.

Operational Policy

The Department is drafting a wide-ranging policy to provide protocols on the use, collection, access, dissemination, retention and purging of ALPR data to ensure that the information is used for legitimate law enforcement purposes only and the privacy, civil rights and civil liberties of individuals are not violated. The use of the Flock system for traffic enforcement, fines, towing or immigration enforcement will be strictly prohibited. Any access to the system will require an event/report number, for tracking purposes, and must be for an authorized department purpose. User audit reports will be produced and inspected monthly to ensure compliance with department policy. Any department member found to be in noncompliance with department policy in their use of the Flock system will be suspended from the platform and be subject to the disciplinary process. We anticipate collaborating with the Citizen Police Oversight Commission (CPOC) to assist with monitoring and evaluating implementation of the Flock Safety platform.

Additionally, we have contacted Flock Safety to verify our ability to control access to the data. According to the Flock representative, the Department controls who has access to Oak Park data and we retain the ability to restrict outside agencies. This ability to restrict extends to agencies that have access to the platform via a contract with Flock.

Next Steps

Should the Village Board authorize the use of Flock Safety Technology, we envision the following next steps:

- Negotiation of final contract with Flock Safety;
- Engagement of the Civic Information System Commission for privacy review;
- Engagement with Citizen Police Oversight Committee for operational policy review;
- Comprehensive analysis by the Investigations unit and Crime Analysis for placement;
- Collaborate with Flock Safety during the installation process;
- Implementation within six to eight weeks; and,
- Monthly audit of activity for investigative value, policy adherence and disparate impact in collaboration with CPOC upon implementation.

OPPD staff and Flock representatives will be present at the April 4, 2002 Village Board meeting to address any questions concerning the use of ALPR camera technology. Any questions in advance of the Village Board meeting should be directed to Chief LaDon Reynolds at lreynolds@oak-park.us.

cc: Lisa Shelly, Deputy Village Manager
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager
Paul Stephanides, Village Attorney
Christina Waters, Village Clerk
All Department Heads