Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR)

Automated License Plate Readers are cameras mounted on stationary objects (telephone poles, the underside of bridges, etc.) or on patrol cars. The cameras snap a photograph of every license plate that enters their fields of view—up to thousands of cars per minute. The devices convert each license plate number into machine-readable text and check them against agency-selected databases or manually entered license plate numbers, providing an instant alert to a patrol officer whenever a match or "hit" appears. When the ALPR system captures an image of a car it also tags each file with the time, date, and GPS location of the photograph.

- **Currently, ALPRs are used to collect and store information not just on people suspected of crimes, but on every single motorist, and are increasingly becoming a tool for mass routine location tracking and surveillance.**

- ALPRs are a legitimate tool when used for narrowly tailored law enforcement purposes, such as identifying vehicles that are stolen, involved in a crime, or associated with fugitives. These are reasonable uses of technology because they are focused on people suspected of wrong-doing. **But law enforcement agencies are routinely collecting and storing ALPR-generated information on the location of *all of us*, sometimes for years.**

- **The deployment of ALPR systems is increasing rapidly**, and if current trends continue we will quickly reach a point where the devices are in operation on every block, and the data that they record will become equivalent to monitoring every vehicle with a GPS tracker.

- **Local and federal law enforcement agencies are rapidly building systems for pooling stored license plate location information across jurisdictions and regions.** If current trends continue, we will eventually see the construction of a national database.

- **The tracking of people's movements is a significant invasion of privacy that can reveal many things about our lives**, such as what friends, doctors, protests, political events, or churches we visit.

- In our society, it is a core principle that the government does not invade people's privacy and collect information about citizens' innocent activities *just in case* they do something wrong.

Clear regulations must be put in place to keep authorities from tracking our movements on a massive scale. State and federal law should prohibit ALPR devices from storing data where there is no match to an offender list or other evidence of wrongdoing. Because police can use the tool for legitimate law enforcement purposes without storing data on the rest of us, adequate privacy protections will not interfere with legitimate law enforcement uses of this technology.

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