

SUBJECT: LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION SYSTEM (LPR)

Sec. 1 Purpose

The purpose of this special order is to establish procedural guidelines and responsibilities for personnel and units utilizing the automated License Plate Recognition System (LPR).

Sec. 2 Policy

LPR is a computer-based system that utilizes special cameras to capture license plate information. The LPR system captures an infrared image of a license plate and converts it to a text file utilizing Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. The text file is then compared with data from various "Hotlists." It is the policy of the Somerville Police Department to utilize LPR technology to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its public safety efforts in a manner that safeguards the legitimate privacy concerns of law abiding citizens. Those public safety efforts include reducing crime through the identification of suspected criminals and their vehicles, preventing crime through the collection of data for legitimate intelligence purposes, ensuring the safety of vulnerable individuals through the recovery of missing and endangered persons, and improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods through the identification and removal of stolen or unregistered vehicles from our streets.

Sec. 3 Equipment – LPR Cameras: LPR cameras are mounted on a vehicle (mobile cameras). LPR equipment operates in most weather conditions, day or night and is capable of scanning the plates of vehicles on either side of a passing LPR mobile camera.

Sec. 4 Specific License Plate Inquiries

Sec. 4.1 Manual Plate Entry: Officers with LPR administrative capability can input individual license plates into the LPR system. This would include lists of parking violator vehicles who had a pre-determined number of unpaid parking tickets and may be booted or towed in compliance with established policies. It may also include the registration number of vehicles that are the subject of a criminal investigation.

Sec. 4.2 Investigatory Inquiry Request: When a legitimate investigatory reason exists for use of LPR, an officer may submit an LPR Entry Request Form (attached hereto as Appendix A) to a Supervisor for approval. This inquiry allows the requested license plate to be entered into the LPR system and run against future license plate scans performed by LPR cameras. LPR Investigatory Inquiry Requests shall not be approved by a Supervisor without:

- ☐ a stated investigatory reason for the inquiry,
- ☐ an expiration date for the license plate number(s) entered, and
- ☐ what action is to be taken by an officer should the license plate be flagged by an LPR camera.

Upon approval of the Investigatory Inquiry Request, the Supervisor shall forward the LPR Entry Request Form to the LPR Administrator who then enter the license plate number into the LPR System. The Deputy Chief of Patrol Operations shall receive a copy of the Investigatory Inquiry Request.

4.3 Hotlists: A Hotlist is a list of license plate numbers compiled by a law enforcement agency to serve specific law enforcement needs and may include license plate numbers associated with specific individuals. Hotlists are either developed by the Department, or provided to the Department from another law enforcement entity. Each hotlist will be updated at a minimum of once per week. Such lists may include, but are not limited to, license plates which are associated to:

- ☐ stolen and wanted vehicle information;
- ☐ vehicles associated with AMBER alerts;
- ☐ individuals with an outstanding arrest warrant;
- ☐ suspended registration information, and
- ☐ registered sex offenders

Sec. 5 LPR Information Received from other law enforcement agencies:

Information from other law enforcement agencies may be used by the Department to generate Hotlists for specific law enforcement purposes.

Section 6 Authorized Uses for LPR: The Department has determined LPR will be utilized for the following purposes:

Sec. 6.1 Random Scan. As directed by the duty supervisor, LPR may be utilized on random patrol in an effort to collect license plate information and compare it to license plates entered into the system individually, or contained on Hotlists.

Sec. 6.2 Proactive Directed Scan. As directed by the Chief of Police, a Deputy Chief, or a District Captain or CID Captain, an LPR may be deployed to a defined geographical area for purposes of an ongoing investigation or an intelligence gathering operation.

Sec. 6.3 Reactive Directed Scan. As directed by the Chief of Police, a Deputy Chief, a District Captain or Captain of CID, may deploy a vehicle equipped with LPR as a result of an incident to a defined geographical area.

Sec. 7 LPR “Hits”

Sec. 7.1 Notification of a Hit: The LPR comparison is completed within seconds after a plate is scanned into the system. If a match, or “hit,” is found, the LPR system notifies the operator of the “hit” by an audible alert and an associated notation on the operator’s computer screen.

Sec. 7.2 Validation of Hit: When encountering a hit that requires immediate action, an officer must confirm that the LPR hit information is correct and still valid. Validation can be achieved through a MDT or the Somerville Control. Due to the possibility of error, it is essential that all personnel validate Hits immediately. Officers shall not take any police action that restricts the freedom of any individual until validation is complete.

Sec. 7.3 Stolen Vehicle Hit: When encountering a stolen vehicle hit, an Officer must validate the hit and comply with the Department's pursuit policy.

Sec. 7.4 "Hit" Resulting in Error: An LPR device may produce a hit in error as a result of:

- a) damage to the license plate,
- b) the misidentification of a vanity plate, or
- c) an out of state plate which contains the same numbers and letters.

Sec. 7.5 Operations Notification of Hit After validation, officers shall notify Somerville Control of any relevant information that should be broadcast to other officers in the field, such as stolen vehicle information.

Sec. 7.6 Justification for Traffic Stop: An LPR vehicle alert identified via license plates entered into the system individually or Hotlist information does not necessarily justify stopping and / or detaining the vehicle and its occupants. Often times, license plate Hits will identify a "vehicle of interest" which does not necessarily justify a stop. Officers should rely on their training and experience when making a motor vehicle stop, cognizant that all stops must be constitutionally valid.

Sec. 7.7 Documentation of Hit: If an officer stops and / or detains a vehicle and its occupants as a result of a Hit, the officer must document the Hit and subsequent police action taken in an incident report.

Sec. 8 Use and Access to LPR Data

Access to LPR information shall be facilitated through the LPR Administrator. Any Police Officer may request access to search information contained in the LPR license plate scan database. Any such request for access must be for legitimate law enforcement purposes and approved by the Chief of Police, a Deputy Chief, a District Captain or the Captain of CID. Use and access to LPR data shall be for legitimate law enforcement purposes only. Any other use of this data is strictly forbidden.

Sec. 9 Accuracy and Security of LPR Data

Sec. 9.1 Data Accuracy: The Somerville Police Department will make every reasonable effort to ensure that LPR information collected, retained and posted to the server is accurate, current, and complete.

Sec. 9.2 Data Security: The Somerville Police Department shall secure LPR information in the LPR system in a manner such that it cannot be added to, modified, accessed, destroyed, or purged except by personnel authorized to take such actions.

Sec. 10 Data Retention.

Sec. 10.1 General Retention Period for LPR Data: LPR information shall be retained for a period of 14 days unless it is needed for investigatory or intelligence purposes or as discovery / exculpatory evidence after the expiration of the 14 day retention period.

Sec. 10.2 Investigatory Information / Intelligence / Exculpatory Evidence: LPR information may be retained indefinitely for investigatory or intelligence purposes and for discovery / exculpatory evidence.

Sec. 11 Audit of LPR Data: In order to ensure that use of the LPR system is consistent with this policy, the Professional Standards Unit shall periodically review Hotlist entries, data collection deployments, and data access records to determine compliance with the procedures incorporated above.

Sec. 12 Training on LPR Usage: All Department personnel who may utilize LPR technology shall participate in a training program regarding implementation of and adherence to this LPR policy.

Sec. 13 Public Information Requests / Subpoenas

No Department employee shall confirm the existence or nonexistence of LPR information to any person, organization, or other entity not otherwise entitled to receive the information. All public records requests and subpoenas for LPR information shall be referred to the Law Department.

LPR INVESTIGATORY INQUIRY REQUEST

Request to add license plate number(s) to the License Plate Recognition System (LPR) for investigatory purpose.

All requests to add plate numbers to the LPR for a specific law enforcement purpose must be submitted to ***the LPR Administrator:***

Name of officer submitting plate number(s):

_____ D# _____
Contact# _____ Unit _____

Name of Unit Commander authorizing the submission: (plate will not be entered without this)

_____ ID# _____

DATE SUBMITTED: _____

PLATE # _____ **STATE** _____

(if multiple plates list below or attach a separate sheet)

State law enforcement purpose for entering plate into LPR:

What actions/limits should be taken if the plate results in a “hit”?

On what date should the plate(s) be removed/expire from LPR?
