

Recommendation to Council

Austin Technology Commission

Recommendation:

Discontinue use of automated license plate readers, or Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPRs), in all of their forms, and to ensure that any future use of any broad surveillance tools such as ALPRs or others, are accountable to the citizens of Austin, TX, and do not store data at all beyond absolute need.

Description of Recommendation to Council:

WHEREAS, License plate readers, are known to collect significantly higher amounts of data from the public than what is ultimately used for public safety; and

WHEREAS, Austin city council has passed the TRUST act, legislation designed to curtail the types of surveillance that is outside of the public interest; and

WHEREAS, Our neighboring municipality, Pflugerville, has discovered that their citizens data was accessed in ways that cause concern for both citizens and government through similar surveillance technologies; and

WHEREAS, Several other neighboring municipalities such as Manor, Leander, and Bastrop have also discontinued their ALPR programs as the public has raised concerns around privacy and improper data access; and

WHEREAS, There are several documented cases of misuse of public surveillance technologies by law enforcement and non-government individuals; and

WHEREAS, ALPR test data has been used alongside real data of people's movements, leading to dangerous scenarios for citizens and law enforcement alike based on erroneous conclusions from said test data; and

WHEREAS, ALPR training scenarios have included monitoring protests, a vital First Amendment protected activity that must not be subject to perceptions that the government is taking actions that could chill citizen participation; and

WHEREAS, Any technology that can collect, track, store, share, and create insights using surveillance technologies of the public without public accountability are unwanted by the Austin public; and

WHEREAS, The City of Austin discontinued its contract with an ALPR company, and passed legislation to engage public surveillance, data collection, and accountability; and

WHEREAS, Other public surveillance operations are active within the city of Austin, including on some self-driving vehicles, that are not accountable to the Austin public; and

WHEREAS, data storage from these systems does not need to happen at all, beyond the milliseconds to validate if said data is involved in an ongoing investigation, however its routinely found that data storage occurs at very significant lengths or permanently; and

WHEREAS, 3rd party technology contracts that lead to the storage of citizen data in databases not subject to city control or oversight limit the city's ability to ensure that the handling of said data is secure and managed in a way consistent with the desires of the city's voters

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Technology Commission recommends that the Austin City Council adopt policies eliminating the use of mass surveillance tools such as ALPRs, both in static and mobile positions such as within self driving cars , and adopt a policy that minimizes the collection and storage of data non-consentually collected from citizens, especially location data or other personally identifying information that allow for the historical recreation of an individual citizen's movements or daily activities.