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Stephen Williams
Police Chief
Franklin Police Department
911 Pantha Way
Franklin, MA 02038

August 2, 2012

Re: Public Records Request / Automatic License Plate Readers

Dear Chief Williams:

This letter is a request for public records under Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 66, §10, made by the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts (ACLUM) for records regarding Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPRs)¹.

Use of ALPR cameras has increased throughout the Commonwealth in recent years, and has been in use in Franklin for some time, yet the public knows little about how this technology is deployed. While understanding its value to law enforcement, ACLUM is concerned that there has been little public debate about the capacity to record the location of thousands of Franklin motorists per minute, even when those motorists are not suspected of being involved in illegal activity.

In order to understand the operation of the ALPR program in Franklin, we are requesting documents that include information on policies governing the use of ALPRs, the kind of data that is collected and retained, databases into which ALPR data is entered, the sharing of ALPR data with other agencies, and the cost of the system.

The following is a list of documents that we believe will contain the information we seek. We would, however, welcome an opportunity to speak with you about refining the request to obtain the information without overburdening the department.

Records Requested

¹ ALPRs are also sometimes referred to as Automatic Vehicle Identification, Car Plate Recognition or License Plate Recognition equipment and/or software. This records request uses ALPR in reference to any of this technology.

Please provide the following records made or received by the Franklin Police Department from January 1, 2006 to the present.

1. Records regarding policies or procedures for the use of ALPR technology, including policies on retention and deletion, and any necessary legal justification for collection or retention of data.
2. Records that include statistical data on the use of ALPRs, including the number of units in use, the types of data collected, the number of license plate "hits" currently stored in your system, and the number of license plates scanned in a given time period.
3. Records regarding the procurement of ALPR technology, including the sources of funds used to pay for ALPR technology, requests for proposals, contracts with vendors to provide ALPR technology, and any documents supplied by vendors describing their products.
4. Records relating to any auditing mechanism in place to monitor access to ALPR data.
5. Records relating to the sharing of data obtained through ALPR technology, including the types of data that can be shared, the databases into which ALPR data is entered, and agreements to share ALPR data with outside agencies, corporations or other entities.
6. Training materials used to instruct members of the FPD on the use of ALPR technology.

Because this request involves a matter of public concern and because it is made on behalf of a nonprofit organization, we ask that you waive any copying costs pursuant to 950 C.M.R. § 32.06(5). ACLUM is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the protection of civil rights and liberties for all persons in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Thank you for your assistance. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Laura Rótolo
Staff Attorney