



# NEWPORT BEACH

## City Council Staff Report

July 9, 2024  
Agenda Item No. 10

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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**TITLE:** Professional Services Agreement with Flock Group Inc. for  
Fixed-Location ALPR Units and Related Services

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The Police Department requests City Council approval of a sole source procurement and a professional services agreement (Agreement) with Flock Safety (Flock) for fixed-location automated license plate readers (ALPRs). The Agreement is for ALPR units at 69 locations throughout Newport Beach and related web-based services and enhanced search features at a cost of \$1,412,700 over five years.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly;
- b) Approve a sole source procurement of fixed-location ALPR services from Flock Group Inc.; and
- c) Approve a Professional Services Agreement with Flock Group Inc. of Atlanta, Georgia, for ALPR installation and services at a not-to-exceed cost of \$1,412,700, and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the Agreement.

### **DISCUSSION:**

**Background:** ALPRs are in use by law enforcement agencies, bridge and toll authorities, parking enforcement, and other public and private entities throughout the United States to record the location and license plates of vehicles. Fixed-location law enforcement ALPRs are set up to scan license plates and vehicle characteristics as vehicles pass through their field of view on public roadways. The images captured by the ALPR unit are then processed and uploaded to a database where they can be accessed by authorized law enforcement users. The database can be searched using several criteria, including date, time, location, direction of travel, and vehicle description to identify vehicles used in crimes. Once a vehicle is identified, the data can be searched to identify patterns of movement and to find vehicles that are associated with identified vehicles.

Flock is a significant provider of ALPR systems to law enforcement agencies, offering integrated ALPR cameras, video cameras, a cloud database, and a user interface with advanced search functions. Flock's business model is providing ALPR-as-a-service, so the City pays an initial installation fee and then set annual fees for each ALPR unit and the enhanced LPR advanced search functions. The City will not own the units and is not responsible for providing electrical power or data network access. Flock ALPR camera units are fully self-contained, using solar panels for electrical power and cellular modems for data transmission. The units can be mounted on existing traffic signals and streetlights or newly installed standalone poles.

**Sole Source Justification:** Flock has several features not available from other ALPR vendors and has an established network of private customers, homeowners' associations (HOAs), and law enforcement agencies throughout Southern California.

Flock has several unique features that are critical for identifying and locating vehicles involved in crimes and generating investigative leads. The attached sole source letter (Attachment B) lists these features with important highlights below:

- Real-Time Routing analyzes data sources to determine where a suspect vehicle has been and its direction of travel.
- Vehicle Fingerprint Technology
  - Patented, proprietary analysis of captured images for license plate, state and vehicle attributes like color, make, type and attached items such as roof racks, bumper stickers, etc.
  - Ability to capture and identify vehicle characteristics of vehicles with paper plates or no license plates
  - Alerts based on saved searches of vehicle descriptions without the need for an identified license plate
  - Visual Search that generates leads by matching uploaded non-Flock digital images with vehicles in the Flock database based on vehicle attributes
- Ability to capture 2-4 lanes of traffic, reducing the number of ALPR units needed and minimizing visual impact
- Standalone ALPR units that do not need local electrical power or data access and can be easily relocated
- Integration with upcoming and existing technology systems in use by the Police Department:
  - Fusus – full integration with the primary Crime Information Center (CIC) data visualization/integration platform that will be installed within the next two months
  - Axon Fleet 3 in-vehicle video recording systems can be converted to mobile Flock ALPRs

Regional ALPR data connectivity is critical to generating investigative leads and locating and identifying vehicles used in crimes as they move throughout Southern California. Flock has established ALPR installations in the bordering cities of Costa Mesa, Irvine, Huntington Beach, and Laguna Beach, creating an integrated network that provides coverage of many of the primary routes in and out of the city and the area. Flock also has hundreds of ALPR units throughout Los Angeles County, all of which are accessible to Police Department detectives and CIC civilian investigators.

The critical importance of regional connectivity and Flock enhanced search capabilities was recently demonstrated in the identification and arrest of two suspects in a murder that occurred in the area of 33rd and West Oceanfront in Newport Beach. A Newport Beach resident was robbed and stabbed at approximately 1:30 a.m. on September 30, 2023. Detectives were able to develop a description of the suspect vehicle, including distinctive features of the vehicle, however, they were unable to generate any workable leads. Detectives, assisted by a Costa Mesa Police Department Flock expert user, searched the Flock database for the vehicle and the distinctive vehicle features near the time of the murder. A suspect vehicle and license plate were identified using data from a Flock unit on Newport Boulevard. Detectives located that vehicle at the registered address and subsequently arrested two suspects for robbery and murder. Without the Flock hit on the vehicle, detectives would not have been able to identify the vehicle or suspects and the case would have gone cold without any further leads.

Flock also has an established and growing local ALPR network with HOAs in the city. Two HOAs already have Flock cameras installed with several others in the process of installing Flock cameras or considering installation of Flock cameras. One other improvement association has also integrated its existing ALPR system with the Flock database. Police Department personnel can access any HOA or private Flock data through the same powerful search tools described above, allowing investigators to access the data with one interface, username and password. Investigators recently used local Flock data to solve a package theft case and stolen outboard motor case.

**Locations:** Department staff worked closely with Flock representatives to determine the best location for the Flock units to be installed throughout the city. Special care was given to cover the major entry and exit paths from the city, and existing infrastructure was used wherever possible to minimize the visual impact of the ALPR units. Of 69 ALPR units, only two will be mounted on newly installed poles; 67 will be installed on existing streetlights approved by the Utilities Department or on traffic signals approved by the Public Works Department. An overview map of the Flock locations is attached and a very detailed listing of locations is included in Exhibit A (the scope of services) in the Agreement (Attachment A).

**Data Retention:** Staff has determined 30 days' retention is standard for most Flock customers and will be sufficient to provide investigative leads while efficiently managing the amount of data generated. The City's records retention schedule will be updated to include a 30-day retention period for Flock ALPR data accordingly.

**Costs and Term:** The appropriated FY 2024-25 budget of \$283,500 for this project was based on an initial quote that included 80 Flock Falcon units at \$3,000 each, one year of data retention at \$48,000, and installation costs of \$19,500.

During a detailed analysis of the Flock project, the number of ALPR units was reduced from 80 to 69 through the use of 29 longer range units that will scan 3-4 lanes of traffic. (This was accomplished without reducing the number of locations and lanes of traffic to be covered.) However, the long-range Falcon units have higher costs of \$5,000 per year. Installation costs were also reduced to \$12,700 for a subtotal of \$277,700.

The Police Department requests the addition of the Enhanced LPR upgrade at a cost of \$15,000 per year, bringing first-year costs to \$292,700, \$9,200 higher than the appropriated budget. The upgrade provides six important search functions described on the following page. The budget shortfall of \$9,200 will be funded from budget savings.

The Agreement will renew annually for one additional year up to a total of five years, unless either party provides notice at least 30 days prior to the end of the then-current year.

Costs over the life of the Agreement are shown in the table below:

<b>ANNUAL COSTS</b>			
<b>COMPONENT</b>	<b>QUANTITY</b>	<b>COST PER UNIT</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Falcon ALPR Unit	40	\$3,000	\$120,000
Long-Range Falcon Unit	29	\$5,000	\$145,000
Enhanced LPR Package	1	\$15,000	\$15,000
Installation (one-time fees)	1	\$12,700	\$12,700
<b>First Year Costs</b>			<b>\$292,700</b>
<b>Annual Cost - Years 2-5</b>			<b>\$280,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$1,412,700</b>

**Enhanced LPR Upgrade:** Police Department investigators would have access to six important advanced functions that are critical to investigating serial and pattern property crimes such as residential burglaries committed by the South American Theft Group, organized retail theft and smash-and-grab robberies.

1. Visual Search – Allows upload of digital images for matching with Flock data
2. Convoy Analysis – Searches for vehicles traveling together at multiple locations
3. Multi-Geo Search – Searches for vehicles that were logged at multiple locations
4. Hotlist Deconfliction – Alerts investigators when another agency queries a vehicle they have searched for previously, and vice-versa
5. Custom Hotlist Attachments – allows attachment of relevant documents and files for easy retrieval of case materials
6. Vehicle Description Alerts – Allows set-up of vehicle description searches, even without a license plate

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25 includes \$283,500 in funding for the first year, which is \$9,200 short of the required funding. The budget shortfall will be funded from budget savings. The \$9,200 increase over the approved FY 2024-25 budget of \$283,500 resulted from refinement of the Flock ALPR deployment and the addition of the Enhanced LPR search package. Costs for the Agreement in future fiscal years will be addressed during the annual budget preparation process.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

**NOTICING:**

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Attachment A – Professional Services Agreement with Flock Group Inc.
- Attachment B – Sole Source Letter
- Attachment C – Flock Locations Overview Map