

To: All Legislators

From: Representative Todd Novak and Senator Jesse James

Date: May 2nd, 2025

Re: Co-sponsorship of LRB 2599/: Relating to: a grant program for the purchase of automated registration plate reader systems

Deadline: Friday, May 16th, 2025 at 5:00 PM

As law enforcement works to keep our communities safe, many law enforcement agencies have turned to technology to serve as a force multiplier to assist their officers in solving crimes and identifying suspects. Automated license plate readers (ALPRs) are one of those technologies.

Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) capture computer-readable images of license plates and vehicles, allowing officers to compare plate numbers against those of stolen cars or wanted individuals on a crime database like the NCIC. ALPRs do not include facial recognition capabilities and do not capture personally identifiable information (PII). The data is not stored permanently and is only retained if it is needed in an ongoing investigation.

ALPR devices assist law enforcement in solving crime in two ways: Proactive - ALPR devices provide real-time alerts when a vehicle that is stolen or associated with a known suspect is detected. Investigative ALPR cameras help determine whether and which vehicle(s) were at the scene of a crime.

Several Wisconsin law enforcement agencies have already implemented this technology with great success. The challenge for local law enforcement is the funding necessary to implement or expand the use of ALPRs in their community.

This legislation will create a grant program at the Department of Justice that law enforcement agencies can apply for purchase of ALPR's. The bill also ensures that at least half of the funding would be awarded rural communities, where resources are typically more limited.

Over the last year alone, there were several high-profile cases involving the use of ALPRs. Below are a couple examples:

1/27/25 Germantown: On January 27th, Fond Du Lac Police officers responded to reports that a convicted sex offender had removed his GPS monitor and couldn't be located. After further investigation officers discovered that the suspect had recently sold his vehicle and was renting a new one. Investigators entered that rental vehicle's information into their ALPRs, and Germantown Police officers soon received an alert from their LPR that the vehicle had been detected near a local business. Officers responded to the area and located the vehicle and suspect. After further investigation the suspect was arrested.

12/28/24 Waukesha PD: Officers responded to reports of a hit-and-run. They located a seriously injured victim on the scene and interviewed witnesses and reviewed debris from the crash to obtain a description of the suspect vehicle. They then entered the vehicle's description into their ALPRs and noticed that a vehicle matching the description had been detected in the area around the time the crime occurred. They responded to a residence associated with the vehicle's owner and arrested a suspect, who is facing multiple charges.

8/10/24 Altoona PD: On August 10th, authorities responded to reports of a hit-and-run involving a pedestrian in Eau Claire. A witness provided dispatch with the license plate information of a suspect vehicle, which Altoona PD entered into their ALPRs. A few minutes later officers received an alert that the vehicle had been detected traveling westbound on Highway 12. Officers located the vehicle and initiated a traffic stop but the suspect fled. Eau Claire Sheriff's deputies and Wisconsin State Troopers eventually managed to stop the vehicle, detaining two suspects. After further investigation authorities arrested the suspects, both of whom are facing multiple charges.

LRB-2599/1 is attached for your review. If you would like to co-sponsor, please respond to this email or contact Rep. Novak's office or Sen. James office by 5 PM on Friday, May 16th. Respondents will be added to both versions unless noted otherwise.