

What We've Learned from the ALPR Pilot Program



A new political
reality.



list.

9. The license plate reader data collected by the Austin Police Department will not be used for the purpose of investigations related to immigration status or access to reproductive health services to the extent legally possible.

“One of the big issues we hear from a lot of people is fear that this is going to be used by the Federal Government and ICE for immigration work or used by the State for reproductive, access to reproductive healthcare . . . **We think it’s probably unlikely that those kinds of requests would be made of us.**”

-Former Mayor Adler, [September 2022 Council Meeting](#)

ICE Taps into Nationwide AI-Enabled Camera Network, Data Shows

[JASON KOEBLER](#), [JOSEPH COX](#) · MAY 27, 2025 AT 9:36 AM

Flock's automatic license plate reader (ALPR) cameras are in more than 5,000 communities around the U.S. Local police are doing lookups in the nationwide system for ICE.

It is particularly notable that the data in question came from an Illinois police department, because Illinois is one of the few states that specifically bans the use of ALPR data for immigration enforcement. Illinois-based police

404 Media:

A Texas Cop Searched License Plate Cameras Nationwide for a Woman Who Got an Abortion

<https://www.404media.co/ice-taps-into-nationwide-ai-enabled-camera-network-data-shows/>

May 29, 2025

New York Times:

Inside Trump's Crackdown on Dissent: Obscure Laws, ICE Agents and Fear

President Trump is clamping down broadly on dissent using the tools of the federal government.



The New Republic:

Trump Taps Palantir to Create Master Database on Every American

Trump's dystopian plan is already underway.

Hafiz Rashid

May 30, 2025

<https://newrepublic.com/maz/post/195904/trump-palantir-data-americans>

* Palantir was founded by Peter Thiel, a major investor in Flock, which also integrates with Palantir

Previously
unfathomable levels
of surveillance.



WHEREAS, license plate readers only record the vehicle make, model, and license plate number of a vehicle; and

WHEREAS, license plate readers are not a "live camera" and cannot be used for surveillance, traffic enforcement, or any other purpose; and

CM Vela: “Does it take photographs of the vehicle?”

Former Chief Chacon: “No... It scans the license plate, and then that license plate that's six or seven digit characters go into the database. There are no photos that are actually stored.”

-September 2022 Council Meeting

Flock ALPRs capture footage of all vehicles



And they go “the extra step”





VEHICLE FINGERPRINT® TECHNOLOGY

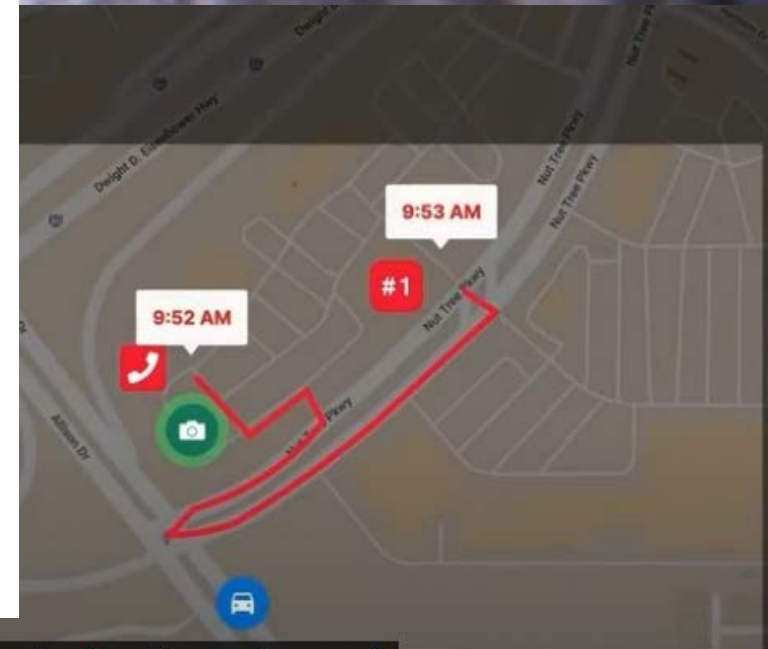
Identify vehicles by make, color,
decals; transforming footage into
actionable evidence. No plate
required.



Flock Safety Falcon® LPR Camera

1. No more gaps – just evidence.

A license plate is just a start. Flock's Vehicle Fingerprint® tech turns footage into evidence that solves cases by pinpointing vehicles by make, color, type, and unique characteristics like decals, bumper stickers, and accessories. This capability proved to be instrumental in a



...ary to find their direction of

Beyond license plates, vehicles matter

Individuals planning to commit a crime also know that license plates are identifiable data points, so what happens if they steal a car or a license plate tag to commit a crime? Flock is a step ahead. Using patented Vehicle Fingerprint™ technology, the camera captures the vehicle make, color, type, license plate, state of the license plate, missing plate, covered plate, paper plate, and over 20 unique vehicle details like roof racks and bumper stickers.

So if a traditional security camera or an eyewitness saw a yellow SUV with a roof rack, a detective would use Flock to turn thousands of hours of video into the one suspect vehicle that happens to be a yellow SUV with a roof rack. Narrowing the focus to the pertinent evidence saves a tremendous amount of time and leads to a faster case clearance.

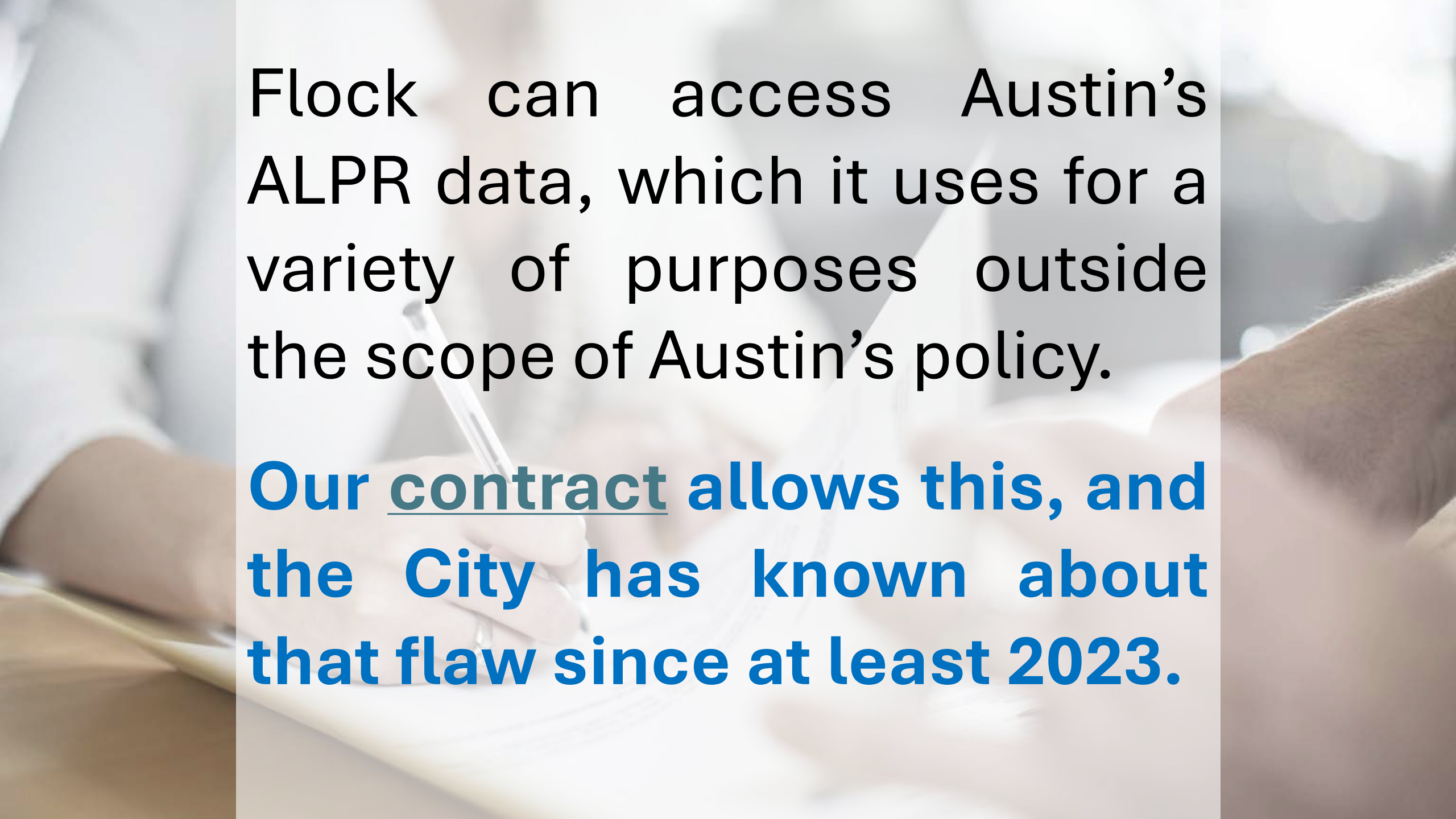
Inability to keep
data safe.



344.5 RELEASE OF DATA

- (a) ALPR data shall not be distributed, sold, or transferred to any non-law enforcement entities.

2. Data used for the license plate reader program will be kept for a maximum of 30 days and destroyed thereafter. License plate reader data may not be retained or transmitted unless it matches with a vehicle on a hot list or is related to an active criminal case or investigation, in which case it may be stored in a criminal case folder



Flock can access Austin's ALPR data, which it uses for a variety of purposes outside the scope of Austin's policy.

Our contract allows this, and the City has known about that flaw since at least 2023.

“Agency hereby grants to Flock . . . a non-exclusive, perpetual, irrevocable, worldwide, royalty-free, fully paid license to use, reproduce, modify and distribute the Agency Data as a part of the Aggregated Data. . . For the sake of clarity, Aggregated Data is compiled anonymous data which has been stripped of any personal identifying information.”

According to Flock, nothing their devices collect counts as personal identifying information, **so they can use our data for whatever they want.**

“Flock devices do not capture any Personal Information and rather capture the license plate data itself”

“You have a number of rights available to you in relation to your Personal Information. . . . Kindly note **that Flock devices do not collect Personal Information** and would not be able to authenticate your identity to process any of the above rights.”

“Legal scholars can argue all sides of these issues. But at Flock, our perspective is that because license plates are **public information** owned by the state [sic].”

“Flock Hardware captures footage of license plates via Flock devices. This is referred to in our terms and conditions as Customer Data. **Flock devices do not** use facial recognition or **capture any personally identifiable information** such as name, phone number, or address. Rather, Flock captures such images in public spaces where there is **no expectation of privacy**. While many privacy laws regulate the use of Personal Information (i.e., access, deletion, etc.), it is important to distinguish those rights from non-personal information.”

Data is
valuable.

ALPR
data is a
treasure
trove.

The screenshot displays a law enforcement dashboard interface. At the top, a green navigation bar contains links for Search, Hot List, Cameras, Insights, and Organization Management. Below this, a secondary navigation bar includes Search, Map, Devices, Insights, and Admin. The main content area is divided into several sections. On the left, an 'ALERTS' panel shows a 'ROBBERY IN PROGRESS' alert for vehicle GA RLC7937 at 220 Nut Tree Parkway, received 8 seconds ago. Below the alert, a 'DETAILS' panel shows a 'START REAL-TIME ROUTING' button, a license plate image for RLC7937, and case information: List Name, Case Numbers (8917641), Reason (Armed Robbery), and Priority 1. A video feed of the vehicle is shown at the bottom of the details panel. On the right, a map view shows the vehicle's real-time route in red, with timestamps 9:52 AM and 9:53 AM, and a red '#1' marker. A text overlay on the map reads 'necessary to find their direction of travel'. At the bottom, a video player shows a progress bar at 0:23 / 1:26.

Search | Search | Map | Devices | Insights | Admin

ALERTS

ROBBERY IN PROGRESS
GA RLC7937
220 Nut Tree Parkway
8 seconds ago

DETAILS

START REAL-TIME ROUTING

9:52 AM
9:53 AM
#1

necessary to find their direction of travel

19 ACTIVE | 0 INACTIVE

0:23 / 1:26



Whistleblowers reveal that Flock is willing to use stolen data to develop more powerful surveillance tools.

"The new product development has also led to **Flock employees questioning the ethics of using hacked data as part of their surveillance product**, according to the Slack chats. Flock told 404 Media the tool is already being used by some law enforcement agencies in an early access program."

"'You're going to be able to access data and **jump from LPR to person** and understand what that context is, link to other people that are related to that person [through] marriage or through gang affiliation, et cetera,' a Flock employee said during an internal company meeting, according to an audio recording."

"One pointed to the use of hacked data like the Park Mobile Breach. 'I was pretty horrified to hear we use stolen data in our system. In addition to being **attained illegally**, it seems like that could create really perverse incentives for more data to be leaked and stolen,' they wrote. 'What if data was stolen from Flock? Should that then become standard data in everyone else's system?'"

Other ALPR companies have similar problems.

NEWS Home / News

Massive ANPR camera data breach reveals millions of private journeys

Sheffield's ANPR system left wide-open for hackers, putting drivers' privacy and security at risk

License Plate Readers Are Leaking Real-Time Video Feeds and Vehicle Data

Misconfigured license-plate-recognition systems reveal the livestreams of individual cameras and the wealth of data they collect about even by them.

Documents Reveal ICE Using Driver Location Data From Local Police for Deportations

Contract documents show that ICE has long desired the ability to locate people with laser-like precision. After prior attempts were scuttled because of privacy concerns, ICE rushed to finalize a 2017 contract with Thomson Reuters for access to the Vigilant database.

Researcher Turns Insecure License Plate Cameras Into Open Source Surveillance Tool

Failure of the
guardrails.



344.7 TRAINING

- (a) All sworn personnel and any other personnel utilizing the ALPR system shall complete annual training on the policies and restrictions regarding ALPR use, data handling, and processing requests for ALPR data. Among other topics, this training shall cover:
1. Appropriate use and collection of ALPR data and **emphasize the requirement to document the reason for the inquiry;**
 2. General Order 344.4 Safeguards;
 3. Examples of negative consequences resulting from misuse; and

B. Designation of a Chief Security Officer with responsibility for the following: receiving daily alerts on attempts to log in, limiting access to the license plate database for only permissible

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use, and/or regularly monitoring access to data stored under this provision; and

Over **11,000** of APD's Flock
searches (**18 percent**)
violated the General Order
requirements.

For each quarter of the pilot program, what percentage of searches did not identify a Resolution-compliant reason as required by GO 344?

Quarter	Total searches	Percentage in line with resolution	% did not have a clear Resolution-compliant reason
Q2 2024	7,761	78.47%	21.53%
Q3 2024	12,534	88.95%	11.05%
Q4 2024	15,895	83.87%	16.13%
Q1 2025	29,103	79.64%	20.36%

Source: Email from Asst. Chief Askew, June 2, 2025