

North Liberty Police Department Flock/ALPR Presentation



September 24, 2026

Rueben Ross

Rueben.Ross@northlibertyiowa.gov

Presentation Goals

1. Define what an ALPR system is (and what it isn't)
2. Discuss Flock's unique capabilities
3. Show how NLPD uses Flock
4. Explain the safeguards in place
5. Clarify what data the system actually provides
6. Answer some of the most commonly-asked questions we receive
7. Reaffirm the North Liberty Police Department's commitment to serve the community in accordance with our core values of Integrity, Professionalism, and Respect

Definitions

- ALPR- Automated License Plate Reader
 - A system that captures images of vehicle license plates and converts them into machine-readable text using optical character recognition
 - Think of an ALPR as a tool that does a single function

Definitions (continued)

- Flock
 - A proprietary system that incorporates multiple AI models to include vehicle color, make, model, and distinguishing characteristics in addition to license plates.
 - Think of Flock as a platform that includes access management, auditing, and search refinement

For the purposes of this discussion, we will use “Flock” and “ALPR” interchangeably.

Legal Authority and Case Law (US Supreme Court)

- United States v. Knotts, 460 U.S. 276 (1983)
 - There is no reasonable expectation of privacy in movements on public thoroughfares.
- New York v. Class, 475 U.S. 106 (1986)
 - A driver does not have a reasonable expectation of privacy in an object required by law to be located in a place ordinarily in plain view from the exterior of the automobile.
- United States v. Jones, 565 U.S. 400 (2012)
 - Use of GPS monitoring is a 4th Amendment search, but “mere visual observation does not constitute a search.”

Legal Authority and Case Law (Federal Appellate Courts)

- US v Walraven 892 F.2d 972 (10th Cir. 1989)
 - “Because they are in plain view, no privacy interest exists in license plates.”
- US v Ellison 462 F.3d 557 (6th Cir. 2006)
 - “The very purpose of a license plate number, like that of a Vehicle Identification Number, is to provide identifying information to law enforcement officials and others.”
- US v Diaz Casteneda 494 F.3d 1146 (9th Cir. 2007)
 - A license plate check does not constitute a search under the 4th Amendment

Legal Authority and Case Law (Iowa Supreme Court)

- State v Coleman 907 N.W.2d 124 (Iowa 2018)
 - The validity of the stop based on information gained through a random license plate was not even challenged in this case
 - The stop must be continually supported by reasonable suspicion/probable cause

Why it Matters How We Use ALPRs

- ALPR technology is widely used by public and private entities
- There is a strong legal foundation supporting responsible use
- Tonight's primary focus will be on NLPD's specific safeguards and practices

NLPD Policy Overview

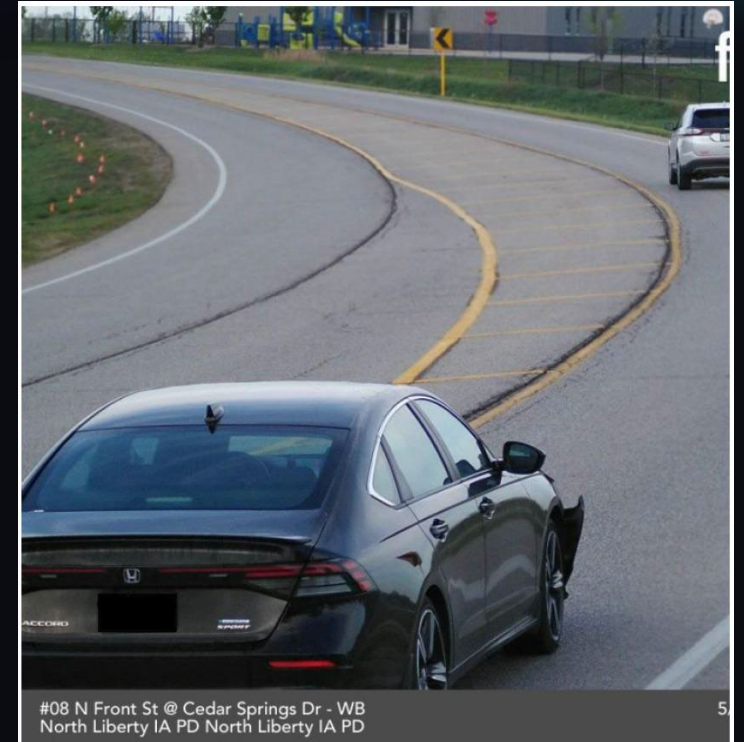
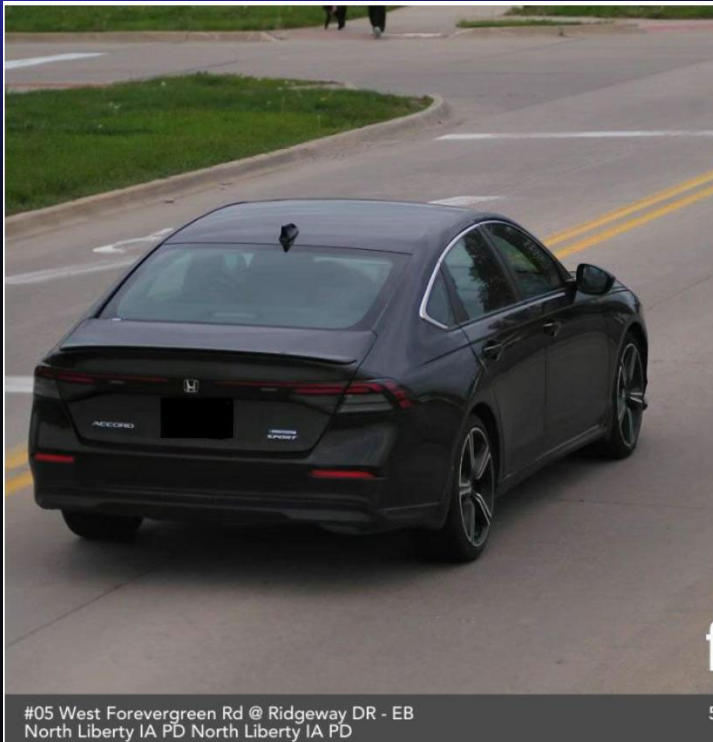
- [IACP Statement on the Responsible Use of Automated License Plate Recognition Technology](#)
- https://northlibertyiowa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Automated_License_Plate_Readers_ALPRs_-1.pdf

NLPD Transparency Portal

[Flock Safety - North Liberty IA PD Transparency Portal](#)

What the Info Actually Looks Like

Search Examples



What the Info Actually Looks Like

Hotlist Hit Example

NCIC

9/2/2026 at 8:41:17 AM
1 hour ago

warrants

Plate

IA [REDACTED]



Source Entry Details

F 0 RD, F 15



Device

F#011 W Penn St (CR F 28) @ Heartland Wy EB

Estimated Location

595 N Kansas Ave, North Liberty, Iowa 52317, US



Search Nearby Video

Mark Outcome

Open Map

Comments

Common Questions and Concerns

Officer Misuse

- Training requirements
- Restricted and logged access
- Policy Requirements
 - Legitimate law enforcement purpose
 - Case or call number required
 - Reason/offense required
 - Regular auditing
- System features that flag potential misuse
- No misuse found at NLPD

Common Questions and Concerns (continued)

Wrongful Incrimination

- Verification requirements (policy and practice)
 - Flock hits are handled like an anonymous tip
- There are known causes of misreads (zeroes, eights, some states)
- Officers trained, empowered, and supported to make proper decisions regarding Flock. (stolen vehicle example)
- Flock resources can corroborate an alibi, quickly removing a person from an investigation

Common Questions and Concerns (continued)

Unauthorized Government Access

- Customizable sharing is not automatically reciprocal
- We share with all Iowa law enforcement agencies
- We have access to many out-of-state networks but do not allow access to our network

Common Questions and Concerns (continued)

Unauthorized Government Access (Continued)

- We do not use Flock for immigration enforcement and do not allow other agencies to use our system for immigration enforcement
- Agency assists require written requests, usually in the form of a call-for-service
- Private organizations (malls, businesses, HOAs, etc.) may allow access to their devices, but never have access to law enforcement systems

Common Questions and Concerns (continued)

Security Vulnerabilities

- ALPR vendor is responsible for device/platform security
- NLPD requires MFA to access the system, and every action is recorded/auditable
- There have been no known breaches of the Flock system or NLPD networks

How ALPRs Help North Liberty

- Missing Children and Adults
- Stolen Vehicles
- Hit and Run Drivers
- Wanted Individuals
- Narrowing the Focus of Investigations
- Increase Investigative Accuracy, Fairness, and Efficiency

National Context

- Several thousand private organizations and government agencies use ALPRs, with over 100,000 devices online nationwide
- At this scale, errors or misconduct are statistically inevitable
 - These are serious events and should be addressed on a case-by-case basis
- NLPD's use is controlled by strong policy, oversight, and scale to mitigate these risks locally

Closing

Integrity

Professionalism

Respect

Thank You

Rueben Ross

Rueben.Ross@northlibertyiowa.gov