



ACCELERATING ALPR CASES: HOW THE AXON ECOSYSTEM POWERED EFFICIENCY AT FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Fairfax County Police Department



Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD), employing about 1,500 officers, serves the most populous county in Virginia. Lying just a few miles west of the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., Fairfax County incorporates a number of major heavily-trafficked thoroughfares, including the Capital Beltway and Interstates 95 and 66. With so many vehicles passing in, out, and around the county every day on these major roads, FCPD handles a high volume of vehicle-related cases, including stolen cars and property, fleeing offenders, and missing persons. Relying on patrolling officers to maintain vigilance for wanted plates or vehicles of interest means that the quick resolution to a case could pass by in the blink of an eye. In light of this, FCPD was seeking a way to leverage technology to capture high-quality plate read data on a consistent basis. When they learned of Axon and Flock's partnership to bring the best of mobile and fixed ALPR cameras to public safety agencies, they set to work building an integrated network of cameras that would be useful for the agency and the complex set of challenges they faced.

BUILDING AN INTEGRATED NETWORK OF PLATE-READING CAMERAS

Fairfax County PD has long understood the potential benefits of ALPR. By automating the recognition of license plates, ALPR is a powerful system to facilitate crime prevention and investigation, hotspot management, and to help find missing persons or vehicles.

However, before implementing Axon and Flock cameras, the agency was not seeing the results they hoped for with ALPR, as a limited deployment of the technology at the agency contributed to fewer than 10 cases per year. Without technology effectively supplementing their work, the agency had to be more reliant on time-consuming processes to find plates of interest, like patrolling or manually reviewing footage, rather than focusing on other aspects of investigations.

In order to fully benefit from the opportunities ALPR could offer, Fairfax County PD knew they needed a high-quality, integrated network of plate-reading cameras to accelerate their investigations. During the review of their ALPR program, they concluded that installing fixed cameras in high-density areas and crime hotspots, along with equipping their police vehicles with mobile cameras to monitor major thoroughfares and capture plates at high speeds, was necessary. With deep search integrations between Axon Fleet 3's mobile ALPR capabilities and Flock Safety's Falcon LPR cameras, it became clear that Fairfax County PD could seamlessly implement a network that suited their needs with these solutions. "The two systems act as one," says FCPD First Lieutenant Hudson Bull.



Mobile Fleet 3 cameras affixed on cruisers pick up quality plate reads for the agency, including, as the Lieutenant mentions, a tag at high speeds going the opposite direction; something the human eye could never spot. Meanwhile, the agency's Flock Safety cameras capture plates that drive by their fixed outposts. The plate read data from Fleet 3 and Flock systems can easily be discovered, combined, and shared.

"The [integrated] search platform makes everything easy for us, especially because our staff can search by vehicle make, type, and color across Fleet 3 and Flock results if they don't have a plate," says First Lieutenant Bull. "We have cases where the victim can only remember that an involved vehicle was a white sedan. That's the information we type into the Flock [search] system, and we've got a white sedan with a tag within seconds; now we're off to the races to get them in custody. With that technology, combined with our Fleet 3 cameras, it's really putting the puzzle together as to where these people could be after they commit a crime."



The combination of Fleet 3 and Flock ALPR is a "force multiplier." One camera on the lookout is the same as 5 officers driving around a community looking for a vehicle that is involved in a crime.

Michael Lentz

Second Lieutenant, Fairfax County Police

ADVANCING CASES AT ASTONISHING RATES

This "force multiplier" has accelerated the resolution of cases in Fairfax County. Since the implementation of Fleet 3 and Flock Safety cameras at the end of 2022, Fairfax County PD has seen an enormous impact from the Axon ecosystem. The Axon ecosystem is a network of hardware and software solutions to drive safety and efficiency, not only including Axon's own products but also deep integrations with strategic partners like Flock Safety.

FAIRFAX COUNTY PD DROVE THE FOLLOWING OUTSTANDING RESULTS IN 2023



134 stolen vehicles recovered with an estimated \$2.25 million value

Cumulative approximate value of the 133 recovered vehicles



384 total ALPR-involved cases

(compared to <10 ALPR cases previously)



19 missing persons located



23 guns recovered



Estimated \$100,000 in stolen property for local businesses recovered



222 arrested persons

724 arrest charges, including 480 felonies

A large component of FCPD's ability to deliver these impressive results for their community was not only integrated ALPR, but also streamlined evidence management through Axon Evidence. "[With] two clicks our officers have saved a Flock image into Axon Evidence," mentions First Lieutenant Bull, allowing them to leverage both Flock and Axon plate reads and evidence with ease for investigations without needing to toggle between systems.



The agency used to drive evidence on DVDs and VHS tapes around the county to share with stakeholders. Now, Axon Evidence just makes prosecution, investigations, sharing and disseminating the evidence we procure through these products and everything else so easy. It saves time and work for the police who are on the street.

Michael Lentz

Second Lieutenant, Fairfax County Police

A COMMUNITY-FOCUSED APPROACH

The impact of Fairfax County PD's implementation of Fleet 3 and Flock ALPR goes beyond the staggering numbers and efficiency gains; it's about the humans behind them — the victims who get closure faster, the missing persons who are recovered, the suspects that are brought to justice, and the officers who can spend more time in their community focusing on what matters.

\$2.25 million in stolen vehicles recovered means a lot more than dollars and cents. After all, a vehicle is one of the largest investments a person can make, often second only to a home. Vehicles are a tool of connection, transporting people to work, school, activities; allowing them to connect with family and friends. A vehicle is "a lifeline for a lot of people," says Second Lieutenant Lentz.

Beyond stolen vehicles, in other cases solved, FCPD's integrated network of ALPR cameras helped them apprehend a child sex offender as well as locate a missing elderly woman who had become lost while driving, ultimately bringing her home safely.

"We've had that happen a few times now where legitimately you could say that our [ALPR] has saved someone's life, and there is no price that we can put on that," says First Lieutenant Bull.

In a public statement, Chief of Police Kevin Davis of the Fairfax County Police Department showed his appreciation to the agency and the community for their thoughtful approach to technology. "[A]LPR technology has proven to be a game-changer for our community...the pronounced results we've seen this year are a testament to the hard work of our officers and our community's steadfast support."

To learn more about leveraging advanced ALPR through the Axon Ecosystem.

Please visit axon.com/products/flock-evidence

