



TO: Chairman Leo Delperdang and the House Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Telecommunications

SUBJECT: Proponent Testimony on House Bill No. 2589

FROM: Chief of Police Joseph P. Sullivan, Wichita Police Department

DATE: February 8th, 2024

I am honored to provide testimony in support of the deployment of law enforcement equipment on utility poles and the proposition in front of you today. As the Chief of Police of the largest city in Kansas and a member of law enforcement for the past 40 years, I want to emphasize the critical importance of leveraging utility poles as a strategic asset for enhancing public safety, improving response capabilities, combating crime effectively, and saving lives.

Using utility poles as platforms for law enforcement equipment offers multiple advantages. By strategically placing technology equipment on utility poles, law enforcement agencies can extend their reach, enhance situational awareness, deter criminal activity, and save lives.

I would like to highlight several key reasons why the deployment of law enforcement equipment on utility poles is essential for effective, modern policing:

1. **Expanded Coverage:** Utility poles provide elevated vantage points that enable cameras and LPR's to capture wide-ranging views of public spaces, thoroughfares, and critical infrastructure. This increased visibility deters criminal activity, enhances situational awareness, and allows for a more rapid and targeted response to incidents as they occur, ultimately contributing to enhanced public safety and crime reduction.
2. **Strategic Deployment for Data-Driven Effectiveness:** Law enforcement agencies can strategically position data-driven technology equipment on utility poles to target specific areas of concern. This intentional approach allows for the efficient allocation of resources and concentrated efforts where data indicates intervention is most urgently required.

3. **Cost-Effective and Scalable Solution:** Leveraging utility poles as platforms for law enforcement equipment represents a cost-effective and scalable solution for enhancing public safety. Using existing infrastructure minimizes costs and deployment time, allowing law enforcement agencies to maximize the impact of their resources and respond to changing crime patterns and community needs.

4. **Enhanced Collaboration with Utility Providers:** This proposal encourages collaboration between law enforcement agencies and utility providers. This collaboration facilitates the seamless integration of law enforcement equipment onto existing infrastructure, minimizes disruption to communities, and maximizes the efficiency and effectiveness of public safety initiatives.

5. **Legal Protections and Risk Mitigation:** This proposal also provides essential legal protections and risk mitigation for both utility providers and law enforcement agencies.

License Plate Recognition (LPR) Technology has proven to be an asset for law enforcement and homeland security operations for nearly twenty years.

Since November 2020, the WPD's LPR program has led to the recovery of over 400 stolen vehicles totaling over five-million dollars in value, the seizure of 56 guns used in crimes, making numerous violent crime arrests, and locating kidnapping victims and missing persons.

Using LPR technology, our officers have located missing juveniles, cleared Silver Alerts, solved homicide investigations, and quickly recovered stolen property.

One example of a case where LPR technology was critical was a Silver Alert where a 74-year-old female diagnosed with dementia went missing from her residence. The female's vehicle was entered into NCIC and alerted on an LPR camera nine hours after she was last seen and nearly 13 miles from her residence. Officers responded to the LPR alert and located the female and her vehicle lost in a field. Officers were able to successfully reunite this female with her family. Without LPR technology on a utility pole, that female may never have been located safely.

In 2016, officers utilized LPR technology in the homicide investigation where baby Sophia was kidnapped and taken to Texas after her mother was killed. LPR technology helped investigators determine that the suspect had left Kansas with baby Sophia. Investigators were eventually able to locate baby Sophia and the suspect in Texas and return baby Sophia to her family. This case resulted in a conviction in 2018 and the suspect was sentenced to over 55 years in prison.

These are just two examples out of the incidents that occur hourly in our City.

The Wichita Police Department Homicide section had an astounding 95% clearance rate in 2023. This is, in large part, due to the use of LPR technology in their

investigations. Homicide investigators review LPR data on nearly every homicide and many times, they garner leads they would not have found otherwise.

It is important to address potential concerns and considerations associated with deploying law enforcement equipment on utility poles:

1. Privacy Protections: Law enforcement agencies are committed to respecting individuals' privacy rights and adhering to applicable laws and regulations. Clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure that technologies are used responsibly and transparently, with appropriate safeguards to protect privacy and civil liberties. In addition, standardized training programs have been implemented to ensure compliance with policy. License plate reader data is only housed for 30 days and can only be accessed for specific, articulated reasons.

2. Data Security: Rigorous data security measures, including encryption protocols, access controls through legitimate law enforcement purposes, data retention policies and regular audits, are implemented to safeguard sensitive information from unauthorized access or misuse.

3. Community Engagement and Transparency: As we develop our Real Time Crime Center, The Wichita Police Department is committed to actively engaging with community members to solicit feedback, address concerns, and promote transparency. Public outreach efforts ensure that community members are informed about the purpose, scope, and impact of data driven technologies, fostering trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the public.

In conclusion, the deployment of law enforcement equipment on utility poles represents a key part of intelligence and data led policing. By harnessing the capabilities of utility infrastructure in partnership with utility providers, law enforcement agencies can maximize the impact of public safety initiatives.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I am available to provide further information or answer any questions you may have.