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CITY OF UKIAH UPDATES SAFEGUARDS FOR AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READER SYSTEM

Ukiah, CA. November 9, 2026. – The City of Ukiah has implemented additional safeguards governing the use of its automated license plate reader (ALPR) system, following community discussion and concerns regarding the use, retention, and sharing of vehicle data.

The City currently operates 14 Flock Safety cameras, located primarily at entrances and exits to the city. The cameras have proven to be a valuable investigative and public safety tool, helping law enforcement identify vehicles associated with criminal activity and locate vehicles connected to active investigations.

At the same time, the City recognizes that the use of this technology raises legitimate questions about privacy, data retention, access, and information sharing. In response to concerns raised by community members, the City has reviewed its practices and implemented additional restrictions intended to ensure that the system is used responsibly and for legitimate public safety purposes.

Under the City's current requirements:

- The UPD has completely revoked all Flock sharing to all law enforcement agencies except jurisdictions within neighboring counties such as Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Humboldt, Marin, and California Highway Patrol. This is a dramatic reduction from the approximately 250 California agencies. Those remaining agencies will also be required to sign an MOU agreeing that access will be revoked if any misuse is revealed. The Ukiah Police Department conducts weekly internal audits of system use to ensure searches are appropriate and consistent with City policy.
- The City of Ukiah has ownership and control of all data collected by its Flock cameras.
- Data is retained for no more than 30 days unless it is part of an active case. After 30 days, the data is automatically, permanently deleted and unrecoverable, giving police exclusive control of the data and preventing external access.
- Flock Safety is prohibited from using City of Ukiah data for training purposes.

- Officers must complete mandatory training before receiving access to the system, and existing authorized users receive annual refresher training to make officers aware of any changes or legislation regarding use of ALPR cameras.
- The system catalogs vehicle information—not facial images for identification—and does not use facial recognition technology.
- In conformance with state law and UPD policy, no data shall be shared with any federal or out-of-state agencies except under very limited circumstances such as valid court orders, warrants, or subpoenas."

These safeguards reflect the City's effort to balance the value of modern public safety tools with its responsibility to protect individual privacy and maintain public trust.

The City's automated license plate readers do not continuously track individuals or provide officers with unrestricted access to personal information. Rather, the system captures information associated with vehicles passing a camera location, which authorized personnel may search for legitimate law enforcement purposes. Access is controlled, searches are logged, and use of the system is subject to regular review.

"We take both public safety and privacy seriously," said Police Chief Tom Corning. "We choose to support tightly controlled data sharing with strict limits rather than an outright ban. This technology has been an important tool for our officers, but its value depends on using it responsibly. The safeguards we have put in place are intended to make clear who can access the information, how long it is retained, how it may be shared, and how we hold ourselves accountable for its use."

The City will continue to evaluate its policies and practices as technology, laws, and best practices evolve. The goal is not simply to use available technology, but to ensure that the tools used by the City serve a legitimate public purpose and are accompanied by appropriate safeguards, oversight, and transparency.

For more information, please visit www.cityofukiah.com/flock-camera.

Shannon Riley, Deputy City Manager

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